GUTE FLAGGEN, SCHLECHTE FLAGGEN IST MÜLL

EINE DENUNZIATION PER ANNE ONIMOUS

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The flag design pamphlet entitled

"GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG"

is **RUBBISH**

A DENOUNCEMENT BY ANNE ONIMOUS

Antithetical to its ostensible purpose,
the pamphlet entitled *Good Flag, Bad Flag*
is actually an impediment to good flag design.
This denouncement thoroughly explains all of the failings of GFBF,
and it offers preferable approaches for producing good flag designs.

No set of universal principles of good flag design has ever existed, and expertise in the design of all flags is likewise a myth.
Scholars of the North American Vexillological Association have neither discovered such principles nor attained such expertise.
Even the individuals who have designed successful flags have neither discovered such principles nor attained such expertise.
Thus neither NAVA nor the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* possess any special insights or wisdom regarding good flag design.

You are also invited to visit the websites
https://flagoptions.com
and
https://flagalternatives.com ,
or if they no longer exist, facsimiles thereof at
The Internet Archive (https://archive.org)

Note: The nine complex flags that appear on
the front cover of this document have all been
embraced by the persons whom they represent.
Therefore all of them are "good" flags,
and none of them are "bad" flags.

The flag design pamphlet entitled

"GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG"

is RUBBISH

The claim that there are five principles of good flag design is a mindless fabrication.

The claim that simplicity is the most important principle of good flag design is ridiculous.

Arbitrary flag design criteria are not validated by examples that obey or ignore them.

Persons who use arbitrary criteria to belittle the flags of other persons are arseholes.

The only criterion for a 'good' flag is that it be well-regarded by those whom it represents.

If you are a flag designer or someone who is organising a flag design contest, and if you base your flag designs or the rules of your flag contest on the daft advice that is presented in *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, you will severely reduce your chances of producing a great flag design or of obtaining a great flag design from your contest.

A DENOUNCEMENT BY ANNE ONIMOUS

The claim that there are five principles of good flag design is a mindless fabrication.

An Internet search for 'five principles' will return a plethora of results for a wide range of endeavours, the actual principles of which will rarely if ever number an easy-to-remember five. Particularly impossible to encapsulate within five precepts is any form of visual art, such as painting, film, or flag design, for which dozens or even hundreds of considerations may need to be taken into account, and with their prioritisation dependent upon each individual set of cultural circumstances and intended purposes. The author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has pulled the simplistic fantasy of 'five principles of good flag design' from thin air. The extent to which his detestable guile has been widely embraced is not the result of human reason and discernment, but that of human irrationality and credulity. Poseurs will forever assert that the principles of complex arts and sciences can be packaged in small, tidy boxes, all the better to sell those boxes to dupes whilst projecting an air of expertise. When the author of GFBF claims to have 'distilled the collective wisdom' of others, his very language reveals his reductive approach, when any genuine attempt to illustrate how flags might best be designed should instead be *expansive*, should advise designers to exhaust all possibilities and to deeply explore theories and philosophies of design, symbolism, colour, and much else. If anyone ever truly writes 'the' book on good flag design, its subject matter will fill a fat volume, and not just a few paragraphs in an otherwise twaddle-padded pamphlet.

The claim that simplicity is the most important principle of good flag design is ridiculous.

Just as idiotic as the belief that there are five principles of flag design is the belief that simplicity is chief amongst them. Whilst 'simplicity' is often the knee-jerk answer to the question, *"What is the main principle of good flag design?"*, it is a false premise that one can easily disprove, merely by subjecting it to a modicum of logical scrutiny:

Premise: Simplicity is the most important principle of good flag design. Therefore:

The symbolism of a flag's design is less important than its simplicity.
The meaningfulness of a flag's design is less important than its simplicity.
The usefulness of a flag's design is less important than its simplicity.
The distinctiveness of a flag's design is less important than its simplicity.
The acceptance of a flag's design is less important than its simplicity.

These are the faulty conclusions that one must accept, should one be gullible enough to buy the *Good Flag, Bad Flag* credo that *"only simple designs make effective flags"*.

Arbitrary flag design criteria are not validated by examples that obey or ignore them.

Compliance with *any* set of arbitrary criteria can be used to sort flag designs. GFBF uses its author's arbitrary criteria to sort flag designs, but his criteria are not validated by that sorting. Flags have hundreds of different purposes across thousands of diverse human cultures. The arbitrary criteria of the white American author of GFBF can at best serve only a few of those wide-ranging purposes. Purpose-suited flag design precepts cannot be taught or learned by simply sorting flag designs into two piles.

Persons who use arbitrary criteria to belittle the flags of other persons are arseholes.

The author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* is a flag maligner. If you use his set of subjective 'bad' flag design criteria to scorn a flag by which you are not personally represented, or if you use any other set of such subjective criteria to do so, then you, too, are a flag maligner, pretending that your tastes are the 'right' tastes. When you insult a person's symbols, you are also insulting that person. Flag burners don't do it for the warmth.

The only criterion for a 'good' flag is that it be well-regarded by those whom it represents.

Whether a flag is rectangular or otherwise, whether it has a single colour, graduated colours, or even millions of colours, whether it has no symbols or dozens of them, whether it includes labels, inscriptions, seals, geographical outlines, or other non-reversible content, whether its features are complex or not, detailed or not, stylised or not, hard-to-print or not, hard-to-sew or not, or even if it has the identical design of *another* flag, if it is well-embraced by those whom it represents, then it is **GOOD**.

SEVEN REFUTATIONS OF *GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG*

1. THE MAIN PRINCIPLE OF GOOD FLAG DESIGN IS NOT SIMPLICITY, NOR IS SIMPLICITY OF ANY REAL IMPORTANCE
   To insist that "only simple designs make effective flags" is to wilfully ignore the countless good flags in the world that have complex designs. There is no logic behind the claim that a flag "should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory"...

2. THE SYMBOLISM IN A GOOD FLAG DESIGN NEED NOT BE RESTRICTED TO ONLY A SINGLE, STYLISED ELEMENT
   The inclusion of multiple symbols can bolster a flag's regard amongst those whom it will represent, and abstract symbols can often have less virtue than those presented realistically...

3. A GOOD FLAG DESIGN DOES NOT NEED TO HAVE ITS COLOURS LIMITED TO A MAXIMUM OF TWO OR THREE
   There is no valid reason to restrict a flag's colours to three, nor even to twelve, nor must a flag's colours be selected from a limited palette, given that standard flag fabrics and flag printing inks are available in a broad spectrum of colours...

4. GOOD FLAG DESIGNS CAN INCLUDE LETTERING, SEALS, AND OTHER COMPLEX AND NON-REVERSIBLE CONTENT
   The use of complex symbolic content such as words, names, mottoes, coats of arms, geographical outlines, constellations, seals, or other non-reversible features is often fully justified...

5. EFFICIENT AND ECONOMICAL MANUFACTURE IS POSSIBLE FOR VIRTUALLY ANY FLAG, NO MATTER ITS COMPLEXITY
   Twenty-first century flag production methods accommodate such complexities as abundant colour, intricate features, and non-reversible content with few difficulties or added costs...

6. THE COMMITTEES OF FLAG CHANGE INITIATIVES AND OF FLAG DESIGN CONTESTS SHOULD NOT JUDGE DESIGNS
   The finalists and winning candidate of any flag design contest should only be chosen by a majority of those whom the flag will represent. In an era of voting by post or by Internet, ceding judgements to an appointed committee or to a jury will only corrupt a selection process with subjective biasses...

7. FINDING FAULT WITH ANY FLAG EQUATES TO BELITTLING THOSE WHOM THE FLAG SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENTS
   No guide to flag design proves anything by criticising existing flags save the pretensions of its author and of its publisher. All of the flags put down by GFBF can just as easily be praised...

The previous page of this document lists seven refutations by which the later sections of the document are organised. Within this framework, most of what *Good Flag, Bad Flag* advises or infers about flag design is denounced, and more logical advice for flag designers and for flag contest organisers is offered, but GFBF's advice is rubbish in far more than seven ways, such that even the list below is not exhaustive.

- There is no scientifically legitimate system for rating the quality of a flag design.
- Any flag is 'good' if it is well-regarded by a majority of those whom it represents.
- Any flag is 'bad' if it is poorly-regarded by a majority of those whom it represents, or if to a majority of others it symbolises such evils as bigotry, terrorism, or genocide.
- All other criteria than those above for judging a flag to be good or bad are invalid.
- Belittling a flag equates to belittling all of the people whom that flag represents.
- One cannot judge a flag by simply subjecting it to an arbitrary set of evaluative criteria.
- Scholarly knowledge of the history, symbolism, and usage of flags does not equate to 'expertise' or 'wisdom' regarding the 'principles' by which flags should be designed.
- Rectangular flag shapes are not the only shapes that should be considered for flag designs.
- The symbolic meaning of a flag design is of far more importance than its simplicity.
- The distinctiveness of a flag design is of far more importance than its simplicity.
- The acceptance of a flag design is of far more importance than its simplicity.
- Serrated or otherwise undulating flag border treatments should not be forbidden.
- See-through cut-outs or other 'negative space' areas in flag designs should not be forbidden.
- Including serrations or cut-outs in a flag design will not make a well-made flag fray faster.
- Properly-made 'swallow-tail' flag shapes will not fray any faster than rectangular flag shapes.
- Curved lines in a flag design will not generally add significant costs to the production of a sewn flag.
- Manufacturing concerns are not design concerns, but in any event complicated flags do not appreciably “cost more to make”, and thus they will not be “less widely used”.
- Putting “a different design on the back” of a flag should not be forbidden.
- Double-layer flags with different reverse-side designs are just as feasible as single-layer flags.
- Silhouettes or images of animals on flags do not always need to face toward the hoist.
- The formal rules of European heraldry do not have any automatic relevance to flag design.
- A flag design cannot be “too simple”, any more than it can be too complex.
- Designing a flag on a small-dimensioned piece of paper is a pointless endeavour.
- The anticipated appearance of a flag when used as an emoji or as a small rectangular or circular logo, icon, or 'badge' on a web page or in a document is not a legitimate design consideration.
- A flag that includes the written name of the place that it represents is in no sense a 'failure'.
- Flag designs that include letters, words, or various forms of inscriptions should not be forbidden.
- The appearance of a flag in greyscale is not a legitimate design consideration.
- In the absence of any historical or contemporary context, a reliance on colours and/or shapes alone to convey symbolic meaning is an inferior flag design strategy.
- Flag details that can only be discerned in close-up viewing should not be forbidden.
- Dividing a flag field with a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal charge should not be forbidden.
- The appearance of a flag at lapel-pin size is not a legitimate design consideration.
- The purposes of flags being innumerable, no generalisations can be made about whether the simplicity or complexity of a flag's design will either bolster or defeat its purposes.
- The possible need to change a flag in future is not a legitimate design consideration.
- More than four colours in a flag design are not “hard to distinguish”, nor do they make a flag's production appreciably more difficult or expensive. Abundant colour should not be forbidden.
- Including one or more images of other symbolic flags within a flag's design should not be forbidden.
- Flag designs with only one symbolic element are not inherently better that those that include many.
- Gradient colours in a flag design should not be forbidden.
- The use of millions of colours or even photo-realism in a flag design should not be forbidden.
- No flag design will be “impossible to sew”, just as none will be impossible to print.
- Because no flag will be impossible to print, in many cases neither the ease nor difficulty of producing a sewn version of a flag will be a legitimate design consideration.
- The ease with which a flag may be repaired is not a legitimate design consideration.
- A possible loss of detail due to fraying at a flag's fly is not a legitimate design consideration.
- Whether a flag design will also make a good tattoo is not a legitimate design consideration.
- The only limits or restrictions on a flag's design should be those of human decency.
- Vexillological organisations should publicly condemn all flags that symbolise human evils.

PREFACE

Many of us readily and steadfastly believe enormous lies, no matter how obviously false nor how easily disproved those lies may be. Telling such lies loudly and repetitiously can often propel those who tell them into positions of power, prestige, and profit, motivations for lying that are as old as humanity, whether the liars are merely ignorant or they are knowingly unscrupulous. This applies not only to enormous lies but also to much lesser lies, such as those to be found within the pages of the inane little pamphlet entitled "*Good Flag, Bad Flag*". Indeed, the lies in GFBF provide the basis by which its author has become a supposed 'expert' in the subject of flag design, notwithstanding that he is a former businessman with no appreciable background in art or in design, and in spite of the fact that he has never designed a single flag of any note in all his life. The steps by which he rose to his current prominence are well-documented elsewhere, so they will only provide the occasional anecdote for this denouncement, the main purposes of which are to refute all of the falsehoods in *Good Flag, Bad Flag* and to offer more useful information to would-be flag designers and to flag contest organisers.

The reason that this denouncement is needed is that *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has become the world's pre-eminent guide to flag design, the go-to reference whenever a new flag or a new flag contest is needed or desired almost anywhere in the world, which makes it a deleterious influence on all future flag designs. GFBF purports to teach good flag design principles 'by example', in the same way that didactic children's literature tries to teach morality, but its 'principles' are merely the simplistic opinions of its author. GFBF is a triumph of stupidity. So juvenile that it even ends with a 'quiz', it is a sham, a con, a collection of transparent lies. It must be refuted, and it must be replaced with a more substantive resource for those who seek true insights into the art of flag design.

Ideally the replacement for GFBF would be a *book*, a fat, exhaustive volume like those accorded to virtually every other art, a tome that one could find in almost any library, a veritable 'textbook of flag design theory' that could be formally or informally studied. We are not speaking here of a scholarly book *about* flags, because those exist already, but rather a work that, with specific pertinence to the design of flags, would survey a wide range of topics including colour theory, humanities, aesthetics, anthropology, heraldry, symbolism, perception, psychology, ethnology, and much else. That no such book exists is a testament to the relative obscurity of flag design, a visual art that is only needed on rare occasions, possibly making it the *only* art for which the general public has not accrued the sort of sophistication that results from widespread lifelong exposure, as for example the sophistication that they have accrued regarding painting, film, literature, and music. If there were pamphlets claiming to teach all that is needed in order to produce a good canvas, film, novel, or song in a list of five 'do's and don'ts', they would be relegated by the public to such things as lining the bottoms of bird cages. Only disdain would be heaped on claims that the best plots of novels or of films are always simple, or that the best paintings and symphonies are always those with a maximum of four pigments or notes, because any more would be *"hard to distinguish"*.

Into the dearth of public sophistication about the art of flag design has strutted GFBF, its lies given credence simply because they are the only things being widely *said* about flag design. Not any more. This denouncement will not be the comprehensive 'book' about flag design that is actually needed, but neither will it skimp, and it will certainly do all that it can to discredit GFBF and the pretentious charlatan who has authored it.

Encapsulating the principles of any art-form in a brief list is impossible, yet many have pretended that those of the art of flag design can be adequately expressed by such a list.

The very first list may have been that of the late British heraldic artist Louis Loynes, or it may have been that of the late British flag scholar William G. Crampton. The English Wikipedia article 'Vexillography' initially parroted the list from GFBF, but in 2016 it switched to the list from *The Guiding Principles of Flag Design*, which unlike GFBF is a booklet that begins with modest disclaimers, wisely conceding that it *"...cannot hope to cover what will and will not work aesthetically...",* and that in consequence, flag designers should simply *"...do what you feel works for your flag..."*. It also offers its advice without stooping to the conceit of judging any existing or historical flags.

Another notable list is that of the French flag scholar Philippe Bondurand, a list that he humbly introduces as being only a personal opinion, strongly held yet open to debate. Foremost amongst his seven thoughtful and prioritised 'règles' is that *"The* first *quality of a flag...is that it must please those it represents"*. Bondurand is named in the list of seventeen prominent flag scholars on GFBF's back cover. GFBF supposedly 'distils' their collective 'wisdom', including Bondurand's, yet it ranks a flag's simplicity above all else, making no exception for the regard of a flag amongst those whom it represents.

It is true that some of the other flag scholars listed on GFBF's back cover have more or less championed simplicity in flag design, whether in written and verbal anecdotes or in their own published lists, and a few amongst them also possess the credential of having actually designed successful flags that fly today over cities, regions, and nations. The author of GFBF is not in their league, notwithstanding his wide and enduring regard amongst flag scholars and enthusiasts, chiefly for his organisational and editorial services. The charitable view is that he admits to his lesser standing by referring to himself only as the 'compiler' of GFBF rather than its author. The author of this denouncement holds the less generous opinion that 'don't kill the messenger' cannot apply when the messenger has altered the message. Here the altered message is that of the late American flag scholar Dr. Whitney Smith, the very founder and doyen of vexillology, whose name is also one of those that are included on GFBF's back cover. Smith never praised GFBF nor endorsed its tenets. In fact, he repeatedly cautioned that *"The study of flags must be value-neutral and analytical, not [ex]hortative or normative"*. Neither Smith nor his faithful followers, many of them also listed, ever made it their mission to criticise flags rather than to benignly study them, nor did they ever pretend that changing their hats from those of flag scholars to those of flag designers would give them licence to do so. Like anyone else they might have admired certain flags, and they might even have held some of them up as exemplars of good flag design, but to the extent that any of them ever tried to *teach* flag design, they rarely if ever held up exemplars of what they regarded to be 'bad' flag designs under the pretext that doing so would be a valid teaching method. To the extent that good flag design can actually be *taught*, theirs has always been at least a constructive approach.

In contrast, GFBF asserts that holding up exemplars of what it regards to be 'bad' flag designs is justified, because it will *"...serve to illuminate the principles by showing flags that fail to follow them."* The 'principles' thus 'illuminated', however, are strictly those of GFBF's author. His views are by no means universally accepted, and contrary to his implication, they are *not* those of a consensus of the flag scholars on GFBF's back cover. The mere display of that list of notable flag scholars does not validate GFBF, nor can cherry-picking ideas from a few such scholars make its author a flag design expert. As for GFBF's 'teaching method', there are thousands of proposed and fictional flags out there that it could *inoffensively* critique. New Zealand's flag referendums of 2015-2016 alone offered over 10,000 of them. GFBF's author has not chosen to insult *actual* flags in order to be instructive, but to maliciously ensure that GFBF will be widely read.

Good Flag, Bad Flag is a house of cards. Its validity relies upon the validity of a stack of supporting premises, the basic premise being that flag design expertise has been automatically bestowed upon at least a select group of flag scholars. The author of this denouncement cannot prove the basic premise untrue, because she cannot prove a negative. All she can say is that it is unlikely that a study of the history, symbolism, and usage of flags is some sort of alchemy that transmutes leaden opinions regarding flag design into golden *principles* regarding flag design. Nevertheless, if such alchemy existed, it would surely reveal only *one* set of universal principles of good flag design, so the second underlying premise of GFBF, that seventeen such alchemy-blessed flag scholars have been listed on its back cover, would require them to be of a single mind regarding those principles. As can be shown by Bondurand's views and those of others, they neither agree on what the principles actually are, nor on their number, nor on their prioritisation. Thus the third underlying premise of GFBF, which is that its author has determined from seventeen sage flag scholars that the universal principles of good flag design number five, with simplicity topping the list, simply cannot be true. The fourth premise of GFBF is that teaching the five universal principles of good flag design is best accomplished by presenting illustrated examples of flags that are either in compliance with or in violation of those principles, but since the principles being taught are untrue, any method of teaching them will be irrelevant. The fifth premise of GFBF is that its author has become an expert on the five universal principles of good flag design by the transitive property of having listed them and by the experience of having taught them, but since he has neither listed five true principles nor taught five true principles, it logically follows that he cannot have attained any such expertise.

'Flag Design Expert' is just a phony badge that GFBF's author has pinned to his own chest, yet countless people have bought and drunk his patent medicine, and they will continue to buy and drink it until the tide of public opinion turns against it. Making that time harder to reach is the fact that like all successful snake oil, GFBF is addictive. Clarifying the analogy, the public can be fully aware of the fake provenance and of the bogus curative claims of an elixir, yet still drink it because of its addictive properties. The previous paragraphs have revealed the fake provenance and the false premises of GFBF, but GFBF will remain psychologically addictive for those who delight in the license that it seemingly gives them to insult the flags of others, as well as in the easily-mastered 'expertise' in flag design principles that GFBF ostensibly offers, and for those who truly believe, against all evidence to the contrary, that simplicity really *is* the chief principle of good flag design, GFBF is a concoction that they may *never* stop drinking.

For such true believers, the sermons of GFBF and of certain flag scholars *prove* that simplicity is the chief principle of good flag design, yet if it were preached by *all* of the world's flag scholars, as well as by all of the members of its various vexillological organisations, and even by all of its casual flag hobbyists, no such thing would be proven. The Earth is not proven flat by the unanimous beliefs of the Flat Earth Society. Both of these 'societies' are essentially small, harmless fringe groups, but like all such groups they develop certain biasses in their beliefs, based on those of their leaders. Some of the most prominent and outspoken leaders in the society of flag aficionados, such as the author of GFBF, have been preaching 'keep it simple' for at least 25 years. More reflective and less opinionated flag scholars have not been the ones perched on the soap boxes, and the more moderate and considered views of the pioneers of vexillology are seldom even heard, because they are the voices of the long-deceased. Thus it would be no great wonder if most of the world's flag enthusiasts *did* believe the gospel of simplicity, but they would still be a tiny minority of the world's population, and their biasses would do less to confirm their beliefs than to call them into question.

Yet lies, once they are believed by flag enthusiasts or by anyone else, can be difficult to dispel. Moreover, lies are usually quickly and easily told, whilst completely disproving them can often be a slow and challenging endeavour. If this denouncement is to break through the psychological defences of the persons whom *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has already duped, and if it is to prevent other persons from being duped in the first place, it must take pains to disprove at least most of the overt or implied lies that GFBF tells.

That is not a small task, and unfortunately it cannot be done in a document as brief and as tidy as GFBF itself. For example, GFBF presents its five false 'principles' in a short, one-page listing, but whereas this denouncement has already presented a similar page of seven 'refutations', flanked before and after with what are essentially two pages of additional refutations, all of those refutations will need to be thoroughly explained if this denouncement is to be regarded by its readers as being credible, and once that goal has hopefully been accomplished, the denouncement must still fulfil its other stated goal of providing some viable alternatives to GFBF's bogus tenets, albeit as reasoned guidelines instead of as inviolable 'rules', and that too will require extensive discussion.

Moreover, all of the fifteen flags that GFBF calls 'bad' are actually good, but proving that fact will require at least some of those flags to have a written defence, and in most cases this will be impossible to accomplish without delving into their various histories. Further, some of the fifteen flags that GFBF calls 'good' are either good for reasons other than those that GFBF has provided, or they are not suitable as examples of the precepts that GFBF pretends to illustrate, so some of *their* histories will need to be explored as well. For illustrative purposes it will also be necessary to touch on some of the flags on GFBF's cover and on its back pages, as well as on other flags that are not even mentioned in GFBF, causing this denouncement to expand even further.

Yet even all of the above-described discourse will not be sufficient, because numerous sycophants have used GFBF's so-called 'principles of good flag design' to denigrate innumerable additional flags that are in fact embraced by those whom they represent, and that therefore have no failings. Possibly the most egregious case of this 'expansion' of the folly of GFBF is a project that has been dubbed "*Modern Flag Design*". With its accompanying PDF it is metaphorically akin to the biblical Pharisees, who searched far-and-wide for converts, only to make them twice the children of hell as themselves. Assisted by the author of GFBF, this witless 'project' insults more than another dozen perfectly good flags, all of them just as deserving of a written defence as any in GFBF.

As a result of these and other factors, this denouncement will be unavoidably lengthy. This is not to be taken as an apology to the reader, but as a simple acknowledgement that the denouncement will not be as effortless a read as the pamphlet that it refutes. Readers who have reached this point in the preface have already been presented with much in the way of argument and refutation, have tasted starter courses, as it were, so those readers should also have a fair idea of what is to follow, but if they think that the appetisers have been much to digest, wait until they reach the mains. Yet nothing less will suffice, not least because elsewhere the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has written:

> *"The key innovation of GFBF is its unapologetic use of examples of flags that follow the principles and flags that violate the principles."*

The author of GFBF is so wise in his own eyes, such a legend in his own mind, that he believes his false didactic to be an 'innovation', his subjective list of flag design opinions to be indisputable 'principles', and his insults to be too righteous for apology. There is nothing innovative about using a set of arbitrary criteria to criticise good flags. It is a crass and purposeless exercise that is without justification or merit of any kind.

GFBF first appeared on the website of the North American Vexillological Association in 2001, and it has appeared there and elsewhere ever since, without any substantive revision. GFBF is the coronavirus of flag design guides, having been distributed worldwide by NAVA in several languages, both as a printed pamphlet and as an online PDF. Its specious premise is that the essential principles of good flag design can be conveniently ticked off on the fingers of one hand. So psychologically seductive is that conceit, and so gullible the public, that GFBF has *"influenced and informed thousands of flag-design efforts"*, or so claims NAVA. Yet the actual legacy of GFBF has been far less stellar. As a guide to maligning flags based on simplistic criteria, it has indeed enjoyed wide support and imitation, but that is often the case for any such low concept.

In this case the low concept is easily expressed as 'a great flag is always a simple flag'. When that falsity has been exclusively embraced in actual flag contests, it has made the designing and judging of flag candidates quite facile. One need only follow the binary, reductive, and unforgiving method laid out by GFBF: flag designs that nicely adhere to its arbitrary list of limitations can have a 'pass', and those that do not should get a 'fail'. In the most egregious cases of contests guided by GFBF, only simple flag designs have been allowable, with more complex designs summarily forbidden, as was the case for the New Zealand flag referendums, in which the formal flag design guidelines stated: *"Flag designs that incorporate...complex objects will not be considered."* When ten thousand flag designs cannot unseat a mouldy colonial anachronism, the fault is not in the flag designers nor in their talents, but in the vapid, simplicity-based contest rules. The inadequacy of such rules is further exemplified by the failed Fiji flag change effort of 2015, in which the author of GFBF was personally involved as an 'advisor'. In flag design, saying 'keep it simple' is nearly always equivalent to saying 'keep it mundane'.

Since its first copyright in 2001, the English version of GFBF has been re-copyrighted in 2006, 2013 and 2020. In his column on the third page of a 2018 NAVA publication, then NAVA president Peter Ansoff seemed to twig, albeit far too late, that neither vexillologists nor vexillological organisations should be in the business of calling flags 'bad'. In his ruminations he observed that *Good Flag, Bad Flag* had been given a *"catchy but unfortunate"* title, and he hinted that *"some rethinking and revision"* might be appropriate. Perhaps because of Ansoff, the 2020 revision of GFBF includes some changes. Regrettably, all of them are utterly superficial and disingenuous. On the front and back covers, quotation marks now pretend to alter the meaning of the words 'good' and 'bad'. The bulk of the fourteen pages between the covers is still filled with pass/fail judgements of flag designs, notwithstanding that the words 'good' and 'bad' have been replaced by 'yes' and 'no', save for the 'quiz' at the rear of the pamphlet, which continues to invite readers to decide whether the flags it depicts are good or bad. In addition to GFBF's original, buried-on-the-last-page, *"all rules have exceptions"* disclaimer, a broader disclaimer now appears, but it is placed on GFBF's back cover instead of in its introduction, where it properly belongs. Retained in that introduction, however, is the same quotation that has always appeared in GFBF, although it is no longer attributed to the 'National Flag Committee of the Confederate States of America' but more innocuously to 'William Porcher Miles'. For the benefit of those who may not be aware, Miles was not only the source of the quote but the man who designed the battle flag of the Confederate States of America, one of the most reviled flags in the world, a blatant symbol of hatred and bigotry. One can only wonder at the mental workings of GFBF's author and of its publisher, who since 2001 have obviously thought this tolerable. Even the author of this diatribe, who herself believes that in flag design, simplicity is of little true importance, could offer a quotation or two in support of it from someone on GFBF's back cover, instead of one from a lifetime advocate of slavery.

1. The main principle of good flag design is not simplicity, nor is simplicity of any real importance. To insist that "only simple designs make effective flags" is to wilfully ignore the countless good flags in the world that have complex designs. There is no logic behind the claim that a flag "should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory" …

In the spirit of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, the noted American radio producer, broadcaster, pod-caster, and flag enthusiast Roman Mars has ridiculed flags both on YouTube and on-air, and he and others have even led TED Talk audiences into sessions of gleeful disdain over flags that they would otherwise never have had the ill manners to mock. Both the mockery and the tittering have at times been a bit tenuous, possibly with an awareness almost surfacing that insulting a flag equates to insulting those whom it symbolically represents. Yet even Mars, who has expressed an almost fawning admiration for GFBF and for its author, has been circumspect enough to admit that *"Loving your flag is the only rule that really matters."* This of course is just a succinct and elegant way of expressing Philippe Bondurand's 'first quality' of good flag design. Whitney Smith once said that, *"The essential idea is to create something pleasing but also significant, something that makes people feel good, something that makes people say, 'That's great!'."* The late South African flag scholar Frederick Brownell asserted that a flag should, *"...find its way into the hearts and minds of the population at large, and became a unifying symbol."* The Scottish flag scholar Graham Bartram has noted that, *"One of the mistakes we make is assuming that what's on the flag is what makes it powerful...it's what it means to someone, and that it belongs to them, and say perhaps to ten million other people, which gives it the power"*, and, *"You should have a flag that you're happy with... At the end of the day it's not the design, it's what people invest in it."* On some level even the author of GFBF must subscribe to the essence of the sentiments expressed above, because the final sentence on the final page of GFBF advises, *"And most of all, design a flag that looks attractive and balanced to the viewer and to the place, organisation, or person it represents."* Surely all of these quotes convey the *true* main principle of good flag design, and it is *not* simplicity.

A flag is good if it is well-regarded by a majority of those whom it represents, provided only that a majority of others do not consider it to be a symbol of repression, hatred, bigotry, violence, terrorism, or genocide. The flag of Canada is not a good flag because of its simple design, it is a good flag because it is well-loved by Canadians. The flag of Japan is not a good flag because of its simple design, it is in fact a bad flag because for a majority of Japanese it is a shameful reminder of the atrocities that were committed by their nation during World War II. Ask any of Japan's neighbouring nations, who were the victims of those atrocities, what they think of the simple flag of Japan. The flag of Hitler's Nazi Party also had a simple and effective design, but that flag and all others of its ilk were banned after the war. Japan's flag was no different but it somehow escaped censure. Even more loathsome is the 'Rising Sun' version of the flag, under which the Japanese atrocities were actually carried out, and under which the Japanese navy still sails. Those thinking that its negative historic associations have been exaggerated here need only note the protests that were lodged against it for the Tokyo Olympics of 2021. Rarely if ever are these Japanese flags condemned by vexillologists, who instead prefer to laud them for their simple designs alone. Much the same can be said of the attitudes that many vexillologists harbour for the Confederate Flag, which has a simple design but is nowadays no less a symbol of hatred and of racial nationalism than the Nazi flag. Any ethical form of flag scholarship should not rank a flag's simplicity above its infamy.

There may be no better way to illustrate that simplicity is not a hallmark of good flag design than by considering the flag of Turkmenistan. Regarded by some to be the most detailed national flag in the world, it is the first flag that GFBF arrogantly faults. The flag of Turkmenistan is utterly distinctive from many other Islamic national flags that include green fields. Because of its predominantly red vertical stripe, it is easily identifiable in any wind and at any distance. Viewed at a distance, of course, the small details in the stripe are much less distinct, leaving only the very redness of the stripe discernible, but that situation does absolutely nothing to make the flag less identifiable.

Turkmenistan gained its independence from the crumbled Soviet Union in 1991, and its current flag was commissioned in the spirit of celebration, with its basic design becoming official in early 1992. Turkmenistan is a nation with a rich cultural history, dating back to its time as a main crossroads for ancient eastern trade routes. It has always been famous for the intricately-woven carpets of its five tribes, with each of those tribes having its own carpet 'gul', a traditional geometric weaving pattern dating back centuries. It is those five distinctive carpet guls that appear in their customary colours atop the vertical red stripe of the flag. Although nowadays Turkmenistan's populace still suffers under one of the world's most authoritative and repressive regimes, there is nothing for them to resent in their current national flag, and although it is difficult to know for certain, from beyond Turkmenistan's borders, whether its populace loves their flag, the odds seem reasonably good that they do.

(from Wikimedia Commons, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic licence)

As a supposed flag scholar, the author of GFBF should be aware of all of this, but if so he simply ignores it, and instead disparages the flag of Turkmenistan because of its complex patterns and its numerous colours. His opinion is that the flag would be 'better' with its powerfully symbolic red stripe of carpet guls completely removed, leaving only its white crescent and stars on an otherwise completely empty green field. It seems a pity that such a wise North American has never visited Turkmenistan to personally offer its populace his opinion of their flag. No doubt his sage advice would be so welcomed by them that they would be reluctant to ever let him leave.

GFBF's inane criticism is nicely refuted by *The National Flag of Turkmenistan of 1992*, an in-depth commentary that was authored by the late Czech flag scholar Jiří Tenora. Both the introduction and the conclusion of his work seem directly aimed at GFBF: *"The national flag of Turkmenistan...is one of the most interesting national flags in the world"*, and *"...for all flags, vexillologists need to explore the designs as they lead us back to deeper understanding of the societies that fly them. In assessing this complex symbol, we develop not only a richer appreciation for a truly fascinating flag, but also a sensitivity for the history, culture, and concerns of an ethnic group too often overlooked by Western European and American scholars in the past."*

Also powerfully countering GFBF's casual disdain is "*A Flag Worth Dying For: The Power and Politics of National Symbols*", by the British geopolitical journalist Tim Marshall, in which he says: *"The flag of Turkmenistan positively brims with symbolism and is almost a work of art. It is an affirmation of independence from Moscow in that it owes nothing to the Soviet era. It has a green background with a white crescent moon, five white stars towards its top left-hand corner and a red-*

patterned vertical stripe down the left-hand side. The green and the crescent are obvious references to Islam, the dominant religion since the eighth century, but the white of the crescent and the stars is also supposed to convey serenity. The five stars represent the five main regions of Turkmenistan – Ahal, Balkan, Das¸oguz, Lebap and Mary – and legend has it that the points of the stars symbolise the five states of matter: solid, liquid, gaseous, crystalline and plasmatic. As if that isn't cool enough, the red vertical stripe on the left-hand side has another five – this time five guls, which are symmetrical medallions used in traditional Turkmenistan carpet-making and which themselves speak to the people's nomadic ancestry... At the bottom of the red stripe on the flag you see crossed olive branches. This reflects the policy of neutrality announced by the state in 1995 and enshrined in a law that declares: 'The State Flag of Turkmenistan is a symbol of the unity and independence of the nation and of the neutrality of the state.' The United Nations recognises this 'permanent neutrality', which is something the population is very proud of...". As they should be. The design of the flag of Turkmenistan is brilliant, *Good Flag, Bad Flag* be damned.

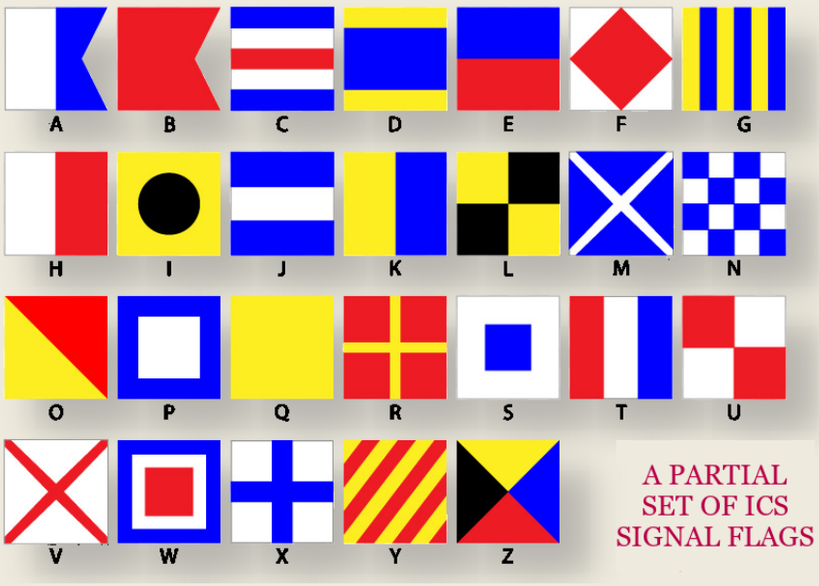
None of the other flags that GFBF has chosen to denigrate are actually bad, so most of them will be defended somewhere within this denouncement, but at this point consider the chart below, in which the nearly 200 national flags of the world have been arranged from left-to-right and from bottom-to-top according to their design complexity.

(Adapted from the Flag Stories website in accordance with a Creative Commons 4.0 Licence)

The scale at which all of the flags are presented simulates their appearances at both a distance and when they are reduced to the size of lapel-pins. Are the flags that include complex distinguishing features generally more difficult for you to recognise, or do you instead find that their complexity actually aids recognition? Conversely, are the flags with the simplest designs generally easier for you to recognise, or do the similarities amongst many of them actually make the task somewhat more confusing and difficult?

The answers will of course vary from person to person, and for only some of those persons will the chart prove conclusively that simplicity has nothing to do with good flag design. On seeing the chart, however, only the most obdurately oblivious persons will deny that many of the world's *greatest* flags have complex designs. Aspiring flag designers who limit themselves to simple designs, so as to keep them like those in the leftmost columns in the chart on the previous page, will only be hobbling themselves.

The Croatian flag scholar Željko Heimer summarises four flag functions, crediting their original identification to Whitney Smith. Flags of the lowest functional order are almost purely ornamental, such as the strings of small pennants, arranged in single or in alternating solid colours, that frequently decorate celebratory venues, amusement fairs, tourist attractions, and automotive dealerships. Their symbolism, if any, is usually limited to their colours, which may be those traditionally associated with a given festivity or holiday, or those that have become official for a region or for a nation.



A PARTIAL SET OF ICS SIGNAL FLAGS

Flags that serve the second-order function are those used for signalling. They communicate information or warnings, but not symbolism or emotion, and they must have simple, high-contrast designs in order to be functionally effective from a distance. Maritime signal flags using the International Code of Signals, as partially depicted to the left, are an excellent example. Standing for letters, numbers, and auxiliary functions, all of the ICS flags are designed with simple geometric shapes in one to four colours. Each flag also has an individual meaning, and various combinations not only make messaging possible over large distances but across multiple languages. Many of the ICS flags also strikingly resemble some of the simple national flags in the chart on the previous page.

Skipping over flags of the third functional order for the moment, flags of the fourth and final order are symbolic flags. These are flags of the highest functional complexity, in many cases intended to be practically sacred symbols of the identity, traditions, values, history, and aspirations of those whom they will represent. *Good Flag, Bad Flag* would have you believe that the ideal design for such a flag will be as geometrically simple as that of a signal flag, that it will have as few or fewer colours than a signal flag, that it can do without graphic symbols like a signal flag, and that it should be as identifiable at any distance and in any wind conditions as a signal flag. It is only logical that flag designers who follow the advice of GFBF will naturally have low odds of producing a fourth-order flag that has high functional complexity, but instead will have high odds of producing what amounts to a second-order flag that is as devoid of intrinsic meaning, emotional resonance, and symbolic impact as a signal flag.

Nations, states, territories, regions, cities, tribes, organisations, and all others who may need flags with high functional complexity, are not ships at sea. Their flags do not need to be as recognisable from a distance as signal flags, so their flags do not need to be solely comprised of large geometric shapes, nor of only a few high-contrast colours, nor of only a single large symbol. It is acceptable for their flags to include small details,

subtle shades of colour, multiple symbols, and other features that can only be clearly discerned from a normal viewing distance. Their flags only need to speak, not to shout.

The disciples of simplicity will call such assertions unfair, because flags are produced on a 'plastic' medium, meaning fabrics, which flutter and ripple and droop and drape. It is certainly true that a flag is not a painting on a wall, and that in any instant when a flag is waving only a part of its full design will be apparent, but it is also true that after a few moments of observation, the human mind will construct the full picture of any waving flag, no matter its complexity. In fact, the more details that appear in any instant, the easier and faster such recognition may be apt to take place. Have a look at the flags below, which actually *are* paintings, each depicted in only a single moment of waving. Far more complex than regular flags, are they not still easily recognisable?

Even paintings can become easily recognisable flags

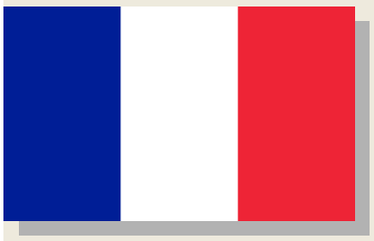
Without any supportive evidence, GFBF claims that simple flag designs are more *"effective"*, but the design of a flag is effective when it is unmistakable, meaningful, and pleasing to those whom it represents. Thus in terms of effectiveness, regardless of size, distance, or wind, simple flags possess no significant advantages over complex flags.

As for the hackneyed idea that a flag design *"should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory"*, the author of this denouncement can only observe that, as with most arguments that are invented to support an arbitrary premise, this one is absurd on its face, and beyond that she can only offer what she has written elsewhere on the subject: *"Insisting that designs must be 'child-level' is an insipid holdover from the nationalist sentiments of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when children were compelled to take irrational pride in the locational circumstances of the births or of their upbringings. In those days, mandatory primary school sessions of 'flag drawing' were often regrettably included in formal curricula, so the simpler the flag the better, but if one at least pretends that we now live in more enlightened times, continuing to assert that children must be able to crayon an accurate facsimile of their national flag will be as ludicrous as claiming that they should be able to produce realistic portraits of their own families rather than stick figures. There is not even a valid argument for* adults *to be able to draw their national flag, whether from memory or not."*

In summary, the notion that simplicity is the foremost principle of good flag design, overruling all other considerations, is moronic. It is nothing more than a knee-jerk assumption, mindlessly upheld as a profound truth when it has no basis in actual fact, and defended by sham 'experts' using specious arguments that wither under scrutiny. One need not be a flag scholar to realise that the symbolic meaning, distinctiveness, and widespread acceptance of a flag design are far more important than its simplicity, even if the effective accomplishment and conveyance of such qualities may require the design to have complex shapes and/or realistic graphical elements, numerous colours, non-reversible content, or even a different reverse. In all of these things and more, *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has the true tenets of good flag design completely backwards.

SIDEBAR ONE: *A CLARIFICATION REGARDING SIMPLICITY*

This censure of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* is not opposed to simple flag designs in any way, as long as they can be embraced by the persons whom they are meant to represent. Some of the world's greatest flags have had incredibly simple designs, yet they have been, and they continue to be, deeply meaningful to those for whom they have flown. However, it is fair to say that most such flags were designed long ago, or even centuries ago, under particular sets of historical and political conditions that make them woefully ill-suited to serve as exemplars of good flag design precepts in the present day. The great flag of France will serve as an example, not least because it is only indirectly referenced by GFBF, which holds up the nearly identical flag of Italy as a 'good' flag, with the implication that flag designers should try to keep their designs just as simple.



The author of this document is neither inclined nor qualified to do a deep dive into the French Revolution, which gave birth to the current flag of France, but there are many uncontested facts about said birth that are salient to this discussion, in that they can serve as self-evident proofs that the design of the flag of France offers few insights about designing a flag today.

The flag in question is so simple that but for a dexter reversal it is all but identical to the ICS signal flag for the letter 'T', yet unlike any emotionless signal flag it was brilliantly symbolic from the first moment it was hoisted. Before listing the circumstances that *made* it so symbolic, some facts. First, the flag was not designed to be the national flag of France. The concept of 'national' flags hardly existed at the time. Flags were for royals, for armies, and for political causes, but not yet for nations. Second, when the flags of that era had stripes, they were almost always horizontal. Europe had all sorts of arcane heraldic rules that applied to flags as well as to arms, including the convention of allowing only horizontal stripes on flags, not vertical ones. Third, the flags of political causes had to be 'home-made', stitched together manually. The few sewing machines that existed in the late-1700s were so rare and esoteric that they might as well have been on Mars. Fourth, there was no mass-production of flags.

"Portrait d'un sans-culotte"
1792, Louis-Léopold Boilly
(work is in the public domain)

The silk-screen printing methods of the Eastern World were relatively unknown in the West, so incorporating delicate features on flags required manual brocading or embroidery, something best afforded only by royalty or the otherwise rich. Fifth, in a sense the flag already existed before the revolution began, but with horizontal stripes. If one's only study of the French Revolution is a perusal of its related Wikipedia articles, one will still run across several depictions of such flags. Sixth, cockades were key to the design of the flag of France, but nowadays they are so anachronistic as to be nearly unknown, although they live on abstractedly as roundels on war planes. The modern-day analogue might be the political pin, but pins have probably never been as ubiquitous as cockades once were.

The French Revolution was not something that was effected quickly, as from a switch, but gradually, as a bloody, decade-long process near the end of the eighteenth century. Revolution was in the air, mainly because the American Revolution had only recently concluded. The centre of royal power and influence was Versailles, but the centre of revolutionary thought was Paris, with supportive ties not only in nascent America but in many parts of Europe well beyond France. One symbol of the French monarchy was the colour white, which reputedly had been the field colour of the battle flags of Joan of

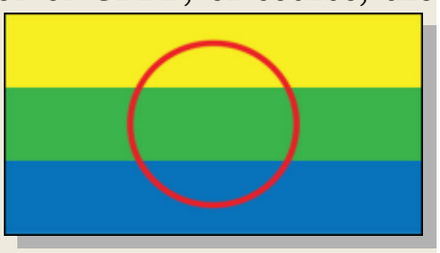
Arc, and which had thus found imitation in the field colours of several royal banners. As one might expect, those who were 'loyal to the royal' often pinned white cockades to their hats. Yet Paris had its own well-established symbolic colours, chiefly red and blue, as sourced from its coat of arms. At some point the Paris rebels wanted their own cockades to pin to *their* hats. Apparently all of them wore hats, if not Phrygian caps. In any event, green cockades had a moment, but they were soon rejected in favour of those in the Parisian colours of red and blue. Sometimes these were worn as-is, but at other times they were pinned atop white cockades, surmounting them as it were, with a symbolism starting to emerge. In response, those in power did a bit of appropriation, as those in power are often wont to do, and an 'official' French cockade was decreed, with white added between the rebels' red and blue. Afterwards there were some heavy-handed laws to force certain groups to wear the official cockade as a sign of loyalty. Such laws did not last long, but the official French colours of blue, white, and red apparently took hold permanently for all, royals and rebels alike. One could even say that the Paris rebels reverse-appropriated the three-colour combination.

When the rebellion got serious, and the rebels wanted a flag to symbolise it, they already had the colours that they would need, but they were not going to knock themselves out sewing up flags with circular colours to perfectly match their cockades. Some of them flew the aforementioned blue, white, and red horizontal tricolour that already existed. It was a flag that they could easily sew together themselves from whatever coloured cloth that they could find, although it was not particularly revolutionary. At some point, however, an unknown rebel had the idea of rotating the horizontal tricolour by ninety degrees. Maybe that person sewed up a rotated flag from scraps, or maybe they just rotated one of the horizontal tricolours and afterwards trimmed and hemmed it into a standard shape, but the powerful and obvious revolutionary symbolism of that ninety-degree rotation was immediately obvious to all who saw our nameless rebel's handiwork. Standing the old way on its head, and shouting that the new way would be different, at the very least, the vertical tricolour became standard for the French Revolution, and it was imitated in many other national revolutions that were soon to follow, most notably in Italy. From a modern viewpoint it is difficult to see just how revolutionary that simple rotation was, but it so alarmed the powers of the day that some of them even passed laws to outlaw vertical tricolours. Thus France found itself with a simple flag that nevertheless had complex symbolism, and one that eventually morphed into the current symbol of French national identity, glossing over the resurgence of the Bourbon Restoration, which flew a white flag for fifteen years until the Revolution of 1830, or more accurately until the Revolutions of 1848, when France finally put paid to royal white and raised the tricolour to fly forever.

What good does any of that do for a modern-day flag designer? Suppose France had remained a monarchy until today, and that only now its revolution was emerging, along with calls for a flag to symbolise it. Regrettably, the leaders of the revolution will not be wearing cockades to provide symbolic colours for such a flag, much less Phrygian caps to pin them to. Vertical tricolours are now so commonplace that they convey no revolutionary symbolism, with horizontal tricolours even more numerous. The point is that no flag designer of today could design a new flag for France that would be just as simple, yet just as symbolic, as the current flag, because that flag developed in conditions that no longer exist, and that will never exist again. More will be said in the next section about why this is equally applicable to Italy's flag. Pointing to brilliantly symbolic but simple flags like those of France or Italy, and telling would-be flag designers to strive for the same sorts of brilliant symbolism and simplicity, as *Good Flag, Bad Flag* does, is tantamount to telling them to jump into time machines.

Whether their stripes are vertical or horizontal, 'pure' tricolour flags like those of France and Italy represent the third-simplest form of flag design, followed by pure bicolour and pure single-colour flags. The next section will explain why none of these pure forms can be particularly relevant to modern-day flag design symbolism, and why GFBF is wrong about them all, not only about pure tricolours and bicolours being 'good' examples to follow regarding flag symbolism, but how it has chosen specious and altogether incorrect reasoning to judge pure single-colour flags as 'bad' examples to follow, although of course they are. When readers have reached that discussion they are asked to remember that this denouncement is not saying that it will be *impossible* for flag designers to come up with pure tricolour, bicolour, or even single-colour flag designs that have good symbolism, but only that such an accomplishment will be very unlikely, generally making it unworthy of pursuit, no matter the urgings of GFBF.

However, readers are also asked to realise that *modified* tricolour, bicolour, and single-colour flag designs are different animals altogether, because they have had their bland simplicity ameliorated in some way by the addition of a distinctive pattern or device, often formally called a 'defacement', which is an admittedly curious term for what will usually amount to an improvement in a flag's symbolism and distinctiveness. For examples readers are encouraged to page back in this section to the chart of national flags, as ordered by their complexity, where they should notice that many of the world's most complex flags are basically pure tricolour, bicolour, and single-colour flags that have simply been defaced. To find favour with the author of GFBF, of course, the defacements *themselves* must be simple, a daft criterion. For example, the author of GFBF gives a 'good' mark to the flag of the Peguis First Nation, the largest of Canada's indigenous First Nations tribes, saying, *"The contrasting colours with a single central symbol represent this Indian nation far better than could any seal"*, yet even his compliment comprises an insult, since it refers to a North American indigenous people using the centuries-old pejorative 'Indian', as GFBF does twice in its 2020 revision and thrice in all other revisions back to 2001. He should wash his mouth out with soap. When he is finished he should put the soap back in his mouth for pretending that there is good contrast between the adjacent blue and green stripes of the flag, which is particularly hypocritical because elsewhere in GFBF he faults a historical flag of the Chinese Admiralty for the low contrast of its three adjacent dark-coloured stripes. When he is finished with that he should put the soap back in for not actually explaining why the Peguis flag does *indeed* have a great design. Its creator, the Peguis elder Frida Bear, intended its three stripes to be a visual metaphor for the almost always-broken historical treaties between whites and indigenous North Americans, the terms of those treaties having often been intended to be binding forever, as expressed in the words, *"For as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow"*. She defaced the stripes with a simple red circle, to represent all of the people of the Peguis First Nation.



The next sections of this denouncement will explain all of the reasons why the author of GFBF should put soap in his mouth permanently, amongst those reasons his absurd criticisms of seal-like defacements in flag designs. These are often highly symbolic, as is the case for the flag of one of the *smallest* of Canada's First Nation groups, the Deh Gáh Got'ıę people who live in and near the NWT community of Fort Providence. The author of GFBF calls their flag 'bad', sadly proving that today, just as in the times of the duplicitous treaty violators, fork-tongued white da'alzhin walk amongst us.

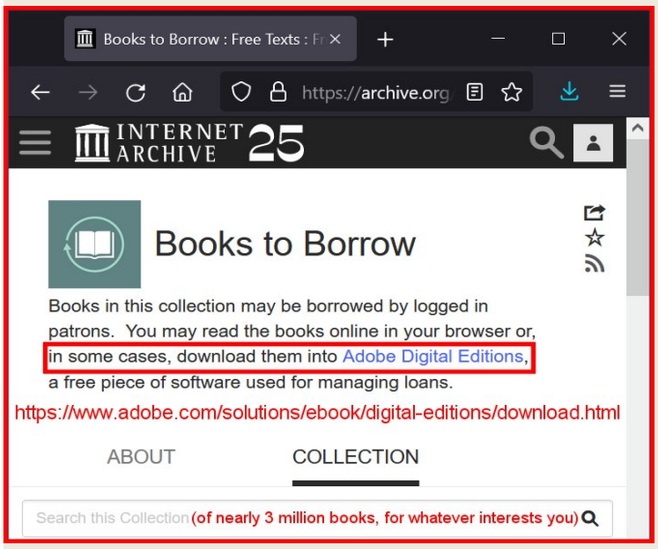
2. The symbolism in a good flag design need not be restricted to only a single, stylised element. The inclusion of multiple symbols can bolster a flag's regard amongst those whom it will represent, and abstract symbols can often have less virtue than those presented realistically . . .

It is intuitively obvious to flag designers that they should *"use meaningful symbolism"*, and that their flag designs should *"avoid those [symbols] that are less likely to be representative or unique"*. The banality of such statements typifies both the paucity and uselessness of most of the advice that GFBF has offered on this key subject, at least in all of its revisions prior to 2020, and *that* revision is not actually any more helpful: *"In choosing symbols, consider their history, cultural heritage, emotional value, branding, and usage—assure they resonate with the people or institutions represented."* Duh. In fact, the most *relevant* thing that *Good Flag, Bad Flag* says about flag symbolism does not appear in its 'symbolism' section but in its introduction: *"A flag's purpose is to represent a place, organisation, or person..."*. Yet that too is inadequate, because flags can 'represent' (meaning to symbolise) 'places' as diverse as worlds, continents, nations, sovereignties, regions, territories, provinces, states, cities, counties, oblasts, districts, plazas, arenas, theatres, convention centres, community centres, shopping centres, spas, jurisdictions, amusement parks, trails, preserves, monuments, reservations, camps, sanctuaries, and water courses, 'organisations' as diverse as governments, congresses, military forces, police departments, fire departments, emergency service providers, leagues, commonwealths, corporations, associations, coalitions, collectives, societies, sororities, fraternities, charities, ethnic groups, civic groups, trade unions, alliances, cooperatives, clubs, institutes, charities, circuses, troupes, political parties, workshops, universities, schools, and sports teams, and 'persons' as diverse as empresses and emperors, queens and kings, duchesses and dukes, princesses and princes, countesses and counts, baronesses and barons, ladies, lords, esquires, knights, nobles, presidents, popes, potentates, heralds, ministers, diplomats, autocrats, anarchists, chair-persons, chancellors, legislators, governors, executives, officers, mayors, and sheriffs, and of course flags can also symbolise populaces, tribes, social and political movements, revolutions, philosophies, ideologies, aspirations, and causes, just to name a few of the countless possibilities. Those readers who think that the above litany amounts to a nitpick will do well to ask themselves how one might better illustrate the fact that no brief set of supposed flag design principles that champions simplicity above all else, even over symbolic meaning, could possibly be universally applicable to all of the nearly limitless purposes of flags. More to the point, the symbolism that should be considered for a flag, including the amount and the complexity of that symbolism, will ideally depend upon the *purposes* of that flag. One cannot just pour some symbols into a flag and then give that flag its purposes. The purposes must be deeply considered first, and symbols should then be chosen to best serve those purposes. Moreover, of far more use to flag designers than simply saying *"use good symbols"* will be to offer them ways of finding and selecting good symbols, and ideally more symbols than those that they may already be familiar with, or those that may just come easily to their minds. Any supposed flag design guide that does not even try to provide that service is dross. Unlike GFBF, this denouncement will make every effort to provide advice about symbolism that flag designers can actually use.

Symbolism is a vast topic, on which countless volumes have been written, such that one can easily find informative books about symbols as they pertain to many fields of study, including but not limited to psychology, anthropology, mythology, literature,

religion, and the fine arts. Any or all of these works may potentially be helpful to a flag designer, but unfortunately there are no such works that focus primarily on the symbolism of flags. Apparently the late Polish flag scholar Alfred Znamierowski worked diligently on just such a book, the title of which was intended to be *"The Great Book of Symbols"*, but although the work was all but finished it could not find a suitable publisher, according to a recent memoir that was authored by Znamierowski's personal assistant. Znamierowski was not only a prominent flag scholar but an accomplished heraldist, as well as a celebrated writer and illustrator. In his lifetime he published many books about flags and heraldry, and he also designed many flags and coats of arms, so there is reason to lament the loss of *The Great Book of Symbols*, which surely would have been an especially good symbols reference for flag designers.

However, one can find flag symbolism aplenty in *"The World Encyclopaedia of Flags"*, which is probably Znamierowski's best-known book about flags. Unfortunately, in a brief and generalised paragraph at the top of page 29, he succumbs to the temptation of presenting his personal views about how flags should be designed. Although he acknowledges the importance of symbolic meaning and distinctiveness, his emphasis on simplicity of content and colour is regrettably aligned with *Good Flag, Bad Flag*. However, Znamierowski was entitled to his wrong opinions, and they can be tolerated in a book that is otherwise such a valuable resource. Readers who click the link for his book will find that it leads to the 'Books to Borrow' feature of the Internet Archive, which allows a vast library of books to be read online by signing up for a free account.



This, then, is the denouncement's first useful offering on the subject of flag symbolism, the value of which should become more apparent if the reader will follow similar links to the Books to Borrow search pages for symbols, symbolism, dictionary of symbols, and encyclopaedia of symbols, which display hundreds of free-to-read books and other works that reveal explanations for thousands of symbols, ranging from the commonplace to the obscure. Finding and selecting the symbols and symbolism to be incorporated in a flag design, so as to best accomplish that flag's intended purposes, is essentially a research project, and the earnest flag designer will probably want to avail themselves of the incredible resource that the free, Books to Borrow feature represents. Lest the flag designer be overwhelmed by the possibilities, a suggested starting point might be Steven Olderr's "Reverse Symbolism Dictionary" (rev. 19-May-22 note: this book is no longer free to read at Books to Borrow, but it is still in print, so it can be purchased). Whereas other symbols dictionaries are generally arranged as an alphabetised list of symbols, followed by explanations, the reverse dictionary works in the opposite way. That is, it is arranged as an alphabetised list of things that can be symbolised, and a list of symbols follows for each of those things. This makes it an invaluable tool for someone who already knows the thing or things that they would like to symbolise, but who may require more than an intuitive grasp of the potential symbols for those things. With such a list to hand, a flag designer can then learn more about each potential symbol by looking it up in more conventional dictionaries and/or encyclopaedias, such as "*A Dictionary of Symbols*", by J.E. Cirlot, or "*The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*", by Jean Chevalier. The latter is very broad, containing 1,600 articles in its 1,184 pages.

As previously mentioned, there are no books that deal exclusively with flag symbols. However, in what is arguably the finest book that has ever been written about flags, Whitney Smith's seminal "*Flags Through the Ages and Across the World*", a lengthy *chapter* has been exclusively dedicated to flag symbols, and it is a chapter that any aspiring flag designer will do well to read. **It is not supportive of GFBF advice** such as to *"focus on a single symbol"* and to *"avoid symbols at the fly end"*, nor of inferred or implied GFBF advice such as (1) to rely on colours alone to convey symbolic meaning, (2) to avoid the detailed and powerful symbolism of seals, shields, and coats of arms in favour of, at best, a single extracted element, (3) to stylise symbols until they have become as abstract, flat, and unrealistic as possible, and (4) to never use the most powerful form of symbolism known to humanity, namely written language. Smith's symbols chapter is instead a 'red pill' that can only expand one's thinking about flag symbolism. Particularly useful as food for thought is his 'Mosaic of Symbols', which begins on page 310. Within this framework, Smith proposes that the symbols that have been used in virtually all of the flags of the world can be grouped into eight categories:

- Celestial Objects
- Terrestrial Objects
- Flora
- Fauna
- Humans
- Artefacts
- Abstract Forms, and
- Inscriptions, which are just as widespread as any other category of flag symbols, revealing the vacuity of the GFBF admonition to "never use writing of any kind".

In addition to Smith's eight categories of flag symbols as shown to the left, this denouncement posits four more:

- Culturally-symbolic colours
- Geographical outlines (since they are not really terrestrial 'objects')
- Flag shapes other than rectangular, and
- Numerical signifiers

Smith's mosaic is followed by well-illustrated examples from each of his categories, and like everything else in Smith's fabulous book, they are wellsprings of information and inspiration for aspiring flag designers. Moreover, not only in his symbols chapter but throughout his entire book, Smith consistently observes items 10 and 17 of his formal "*Principles of Vexillology*", and never offers his personal opinions about flag design.

As Smith says at the end of his "*American Perspectives on Heraldry and Vexillology*", a thirteen-page essay that is also recommended reading, *"...the vexillologist is not beholden to any flags nor to any immutable laws about what constitutes their proper use and design."* A suitable subtitle for Smith's essay might well have been *"Good Heraldry, Bad Heraldry"*, because he is quite caustic in some of his evaluations of certain examples of 'American' heraldry. This is not the hypocrisy it may seem. Smith's essay is a comparison of the similarities and the differences between formal European heraldry, which is usually governed by strict rules, and what amounts to an American version of heraldry, which usually violates such rules, and it is a call for heraldic scholars to study each version equally and without Eurocentric prejudice. Although Smith criticises the symbolism in many of his examples of American heraldry, he does so according to European standards, and in any event his essay essentially defends the American version of heraldry, as well as the freer forms typified by American heraldry as they are sometimes applied to the symbolism of flag designs.

In what amounts to his manifesto, the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has tried to twist a part of the Smith essay above into a tacit endorsement of his flag design 'activism', which is of course exemplified by GFBF. Referring to page 52 of Smith's essay, he says: *"As Whitney Smith has noted, the allied field of heraldry does not differentiate between the descriptive and the prescriptive, it combines them..."*. That is false account of anything that Smith says on page 52 of his essay or on any of its other pages. Even if European heraldry might 'describe' coats of arms according to heraldic rules,

whilst also 'prescribing' what those rules should be, that situation would not imply that flag scholarship can be combined with flag design in such a way that the amalgam will be justified in both 'describing' flags and 'prescribing' how they should be designed. Heraldry, and most especially any non-European version thereof, is only loosely an *"allied field"* of 'descriptive' flag scholarship, and it in no way justifies the existence of, nor provides a viable model for, any 'prescriptive' rules of flag design, notwithstanding that European heraldry comprises several strictures that have been parroted by GFBF. Smith may have *tolerated* the idiocy of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, but he never endorsed it.

Smith's second-most famous book is probably "*Flags and Arms across the World*", which is exquisitely illustrated throughout by Znamierowski. Its 256 pages cover all of the salient history and symbolism of the flags of 174 nations, including their state and provincial flags, banners, and official coats of arms, generally with one-to-three pages dedicated to each, and augmented where needed by an appendix of additional text. This format allows readers to easily accrue concentrated insights about flag symbolism. In a similar vein, but written on a juvenile level, is Smith's "*Flag Lore of All Nations*".

No discussion of flag symbolism would be complete without mentions of Smith's Ph.D. thesis, "*Prolegomena to the Study of Political Symbolism*", and of William Crampton's Ph.D. thesis, "*Flags as Non-Verbal Symbols in the Management of National Identity*", which are deeply intellectual works by two giants of flag scholarship. Although these doctoral dissertations are recommended reading for aspiring flag designers, they are strictly copyrighted, so accessing them may require the payment of a small fee.

On a more visceral level, and even more mind-expanding than the Symbols chapter in Smith's *Flags Through the Ages and Across the World*, is a book authored in 2003 by Donald T. Healy and the late Peter J. Orenski, entitled "*Native American Flags*". Orenski was particularly suited to be its illustrator, because in 1990 he had founded a flag manufacturing firm that was the first to produce Native American flags as one of its primary missions. Possibly more than any other single work, the Healy-Orenski book demonstrates just how magnificently symbolic and beautiful flags can be when they are designed by-and-for a people themselves, relying only on the guidance of their own minds and spirits, instead of on tosh like GFBF. Readers should go immediately to the sixteen colour plates of flags that begin on page 171. Nothing could better illustrate how wondrous flags can be when their designs are not forced to obey a set of externally imposed strictures such as those of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, nor how hopelessly pedestrian flags with designs that do obey such strictures can seem by comparison. Another way to twig to that truth is to view the 382 Native American flags that are strikingly presented across five web pages on the website of Orenski's former company.

Also worth mentioning as a flag symbolism resource is the 1917 *National Geographic* issue "*Our Flag Number*", an historic milestone of flag scholarship that can likewise reveal a great deal about flag symbolism to its readers. The provided link leads to a public domain, 'Google Books' version that can either be read online or downloaded as a PDF file. The PDF version is more easily navigated, but page 285 of the online version has a hyperlinked index that will let readers go directly to the magazine's dozens of pages of beautiful colour plates. The numbers that accompany the illustration of each flag correspond to text that explains its history and symbolism, located elsewhere within the pages of the magazine. In a similar historical vein, but with flag illustrations only, is the 1916 book "*Flags of All Nations*". Its 200 numbered colour plates begin on page 40 or 52, respectively depending on whether one goes by the book's page numbering itself or that of the Books to Borrow navigation scrollbar.

With the exception of two theses, all of the above-listed works can be explored for free. For a pittance, flag designers can add an e-book or paperback version of Tim Marshall's "*A Flag Worth Dying For: The Power and Politics of National Symbols*", which was referenced earlier in this denouncement. Gathered together, these dozen-or-so works comprise a collection that would be the envy of any flag enthusiast, and they can all be easily accessed on any Internet-connected computing device. More resources will be pointed out as the denouncement continues, but its mention of *Native American Flags* has provided a convenient segue to a defence of one of the most brilliantly-symbolic flags that GFBF has called 'bad', that of the U.S. indigenous tribe of the Navajo Nation.

As preface to a defence of the Navajo Nation flag, it will be appropriate to note that the source material for Healy and Orenski's 2003 book, *Native American Flags,* was their 1996-1997 NAVA treatise entitled "*Flags of the Native Peoples of the United States*". Referring once again to the manifesto of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, which he presented in mid-2001, just weeks after the first publication of his pamphlet, he wrote the following self-serving drivel regarding the Healy-Orenski treatise:

> *"In my work on...Flags of the Native Peoples of the United States, I noted the poor design of most of the over 100+ tribal flags documented...Most showed a lack of understanding of sound flag design principles...However, this vexillonnaire, before attempting to help a tribe with a new flag or a redesign of an old flag, needed a tool to educate, influence, and guide the participants in the process. This spurred me to create Good Flag, Bad Flag..."*

It was in the paragraph above that the author of GFBF first anointed himself with the flamboyant appellation 'vexillonnaire', a concise definition of which is: A person who strives to bring the designs of all flags into conformance with their own aesthetic tastes.

It is hoped that the reader took the earlier suggestion to view the flags depicted in the sixteen colour plates of *Native American Flags*, and that as a result they will not agree that those flags *"showed a lack of understanding of sound flag design principles"*, but in any event the 'work' that the author of GFBF performed on *Flags of the Native Peoples of the United States* was as its editor, and not as its author nor as its illustrator, who were respectively Healy and Orenski. Given that he did *not* say, *"In my work as the* editor *of..."*, and given that he does not mention Healy and Orenski anywhere in his manifesto, it is difficult to see his choice of wording as an innocent oversight, rather than as an attempt to take credit for the work of others. Yet the main point to be made here is that regardless of what he may have edited, or even what he may have authored, whether GFBF, his facts-deficient "*Confederate Flag Facts*" PDF, or his narcissistic manifesto, neither those nor any other 'accomplishments' of his entire existence have endowed him with the authority, as a white man, to *"educate, influence, and guide"* U.S. indigenous tribes, whether about the designs of their flags or about anything else, and his belief that he *has* been so-endowed is presumptuous to the point of delusion.

In accordance with that delusion, the author of GFBF has had the insolence to call the flag of the Navajo Nation 'bad'. Yet there is no need for that flag to be defended by this denouncement, because its readers are now well-equipped to do that for themselves. They can begin by reading pages 107-109 of *Native American Flags*, in which they will learn how powerfully meaningful the flag is to the Navajo people, and how its design elegantly symbolises their entire world-view. Those readers now know that as the editor of the book's source material, the author of GFBF carefully read every word on those same three pages, so he must be fully aware that the various symbols in that flag represent all aspects of Navajo existence and culture, including their territories, industry, food, art, traditions, and spiritual beliefs. Readers may wonder, then, how he

can reconcile his presumably thorough awareness of the brilliant symbolism of the Navajo flag with its inclusion in the 'use good symbolism' section of his pamphlet, listed not only as an example of a 'bad flag', but as an example of bad flag *symbolism*. They will probably realise that the flag's only actual failing in his eyes has nothing to do with the effectiveness and distinctiveness of its symbolism, but with the fact that it does not have a simple design, such as that of the 'good' Native American flag that he presents for comparison, the flag of the Iroquois Confederacy. Whilst the Iroquois flag is brilliantly symbolic, as readers can learn for themselves, they should also realise that Native American flags with simple designs are in the minority, and that most of their designs are just as complex, or even more so, than that of the flag of the Navajo Nation. It follows that the author of *GFBF* has not only insulted the people of the Navajo Nation, but those of all other U.S. indigenous tribes whose flags have complex designs.

Finally readers can evaluate for themselves what the author of GFBF says in support of his judgement that the Navajo Nation flag exemplifies 'bad' flag symbolism: *"Over 20 graphic elements overwhelm the viewer and none are large enough to be seen easily."*

Although his statement proves that he can count to at least the number of his fingers and toes, what it proves about the symbolism of the Navajo Nation flag is a mystery. The flag of the U.S.A. has 64 *"graphic elements"*, for example, and readers have probably viewed that flag, just as they can view the Navajo flag shown to the left. In their viewing of those two flags, have they been *"overwhelmed"*? Has their experience been that *"none [of the graphic elements of those flags] are large enough to be seen easily"*?

The statement that the author of GFBF makes about the Navajo Nation flag typifies the negative but actually meaningless comments that he often uses in support of his fatuous flag design precepts. In the 'simplicity' section of GFBF, for example, he calls the white field of the 'bad' flag of the U.S. state of West Virginia *"boring"*, a profound precept that one assumes is also applicable to the white fields of the flags of Canada, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Finland, and numerous others. In his judgements of 'bad' graphic elements in flag designs, he often uses words such as *"indistinguishable", "difficult to distinguish",* and "*hard to distinguish"*, yet what individual graphic element of any flag in the world is always distinguishable in every light, at all distances, and in every wind and weather? The words of a book that has been propped open on a desk across a room will be unreadable, but will that mean that the book is a bad one? His are the flag design criteria of fools. Whatever the difficulty in discerning every element of its graphic symbolism under all possible viewing conditions, the Navajo flag proves that abundant symbolism in a flag design is not a shortcoming, but a strength.

Choosing symbols for a flag design is all about serving a flag's intended purposes, and the symbols to be chosen may need to be complex and/or numerous to best serve those intended purposes. GFBF offers some simplistic generalisations about flag purposes, but in only a single case does it bother to comment on the purposes of a specific flag. Paging back to its 'keep it simple' section, here is what GFBF has to say regarding the flag of the Bey of Tunisia (*sic*): *"Replete with stars, crescents, and the Sword of Ali, this 19th–century design's overwhelming complexity defeats its purpose."* Noting that

this is yet another instance in which the author of GFBF has found a flag design to be *"overwhelming"*, as well as another in which he has probably been the only person to find it so, this denouncement will again trust its readers to decide for themselves whether the intended purposes of the flag of the Bey of *Tunis* have been either defeated or served by the symbols in its design. Noting as well that the flag of the Bey of Tunis is an obscure historical flag of royalty that the author of GFBF has chosen to denigrate because he can do so with relative impunity, and therefore perhaps with cowardice, and that it is a flag that most readers are unlikely to even be familiar with, a bit of background material will be offered, after which readers should ask such questions as:

- What are the typical intended purposes of the flag of a royal personage?
- What are the typical intended purposes of the flag of a powerful ruler?
- What are the typical intended purposes of the flag of an *Islamic* ruler?

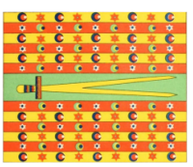
And finally, do the symbols in the Bey of Tunis flag serve or defeat the purposes above?

The modern-day Republic of Tunisia was once an autonomous governorate, or 'beylik', under the ostensible rule of the Ottoman Empire. For some 250 years, following 1705, the Beylik of Tunis was ruled by an ancestral succession of twenty governors, or 'beys'. Until about 1880 the Beys of Tunis were effectively sovereign kings, and despite being theoretical vassals of the Empire they were in full control of all aspects of the Beylik, including its powerful military forces both on land and along its Mediterranean coast. Accordingly, from about 1800 to 1880, the Beys even gave themselves their own flags, although the 'official' flags of the Beylik remained variants of Ottoman Empire flags. From 1881 until it became the Republic of Tunisia in 1957, the Beylik of Tunis was a French Protectorate. Although the Beys remained powerful heads of state during that period, they had to defer to the French, who were the real rulers of the protectorate. The French tricolour replaced the Ottoman Empire flags of the Beylik, but the flags of the Beys were generously allowed to remain waving. All of the Beys of Tunis enjoyed the typical privileges and accoutrements of royal life, and even some atypical privileges, given that each new Bey received his own, all-new castle. Many of the Beys also made minor changes to the various symbols of their individual reigns, including to their flag.

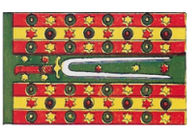
DEPICTIONS OF THE ROYAL STANDARD OF THE BEY OF TUNIS

As it appears in Whitney Smith's 1975 book "*Flags Through the Ages and Across the World*". Flag is shown as it may have looked circa 1780 to 1810, as described by a 1913 source. Smith called the flag 'magnificent'.

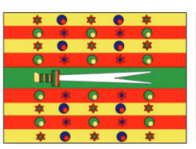
As it appears in 1899 U.S. Navy book "*Flags of Maritime Nations*".



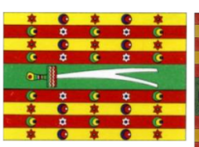
As it appears in 1916 British Admiralty book "*Drawings of the Flags In Use at The Present Time by Various Nations*" (also titled "*Flags of All Nations*").



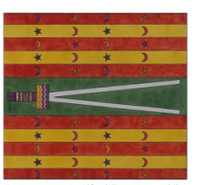
As it appears in *National Geographic* 1917 issue "*Our Flag Number*". Accompanying text opines that "The standard of the Bey of Tunis is a fearfully and wonderfully made flag."



As it appears in GFBF, copied from the FOTW *Flags of the World* website, probably based on a 1939 source. Like Smith, the author of the website commentary calls the flag 'magnificent'.



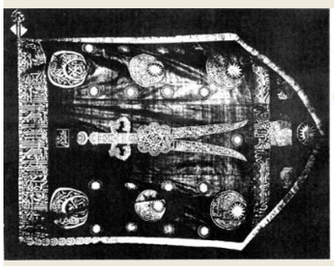
As it appears in 1950 book "*Flags of All Nations*" (no other information available)



As it appears in Alfred Znamierowski's 2001-2002 book "*The World Encyclopaedia of Flags*". Attributed to an undated French Navy Oceanographic Service source.

Regardless of minor changes to its appearance, the flag's symbolic elements remained the same. They included three colours (a wide central stripe of green, bordered above and below by a number of alternating red and gold stripes), two types of small charges (numerous 'crescents and stars', alternating along the red and gold stripes), and a single large and dominant central charge (the Sword of Ali, defacing the green stripe). Given that this was the flag of a royal, its stripes were probably cut from silk-based satin fabric and then sewn together manually along their lengths, with all of the small charges hand-embroidered rather than being painted on, probably using fine quality thread of various colours, and possibly even as brocade, giving them a 'raised' look. Embroidery and/or brocade probably also served for the hilt and blade-guard of the sword, as well as for any extra small charges on the green stripe, whilst representations of the split blade of the sword were probably cut in duplicate from white silk-satin, and then appliquéd to both sides of the flag, sandwiching the green stripe between them.

Having had a bit of time to suss out what the intended purposes of the flag must have been, readers can now ponder whether the symbols in its design *suited* those purposes. Green was reputedly the favourite colour of Muhammad's daughter Fatimah, so it is a deeply symbolic colour in Muslim cultures, finding wide usage in Islamic flags. The choice of its alternating red and gold stripes was probably meant to relate the flag to some of the Ottoman Empire flags of that time, which also used those colours, and the number and narrowness of the stripes was both creative and distinctive. The crescent is an ancient Islamic symbol, whether with or without an eight, six, or five-pointed star nestled in its arc, and for the Ottomans the arc sometimes even cradled a radiant sun. There were few if any fixed conventions for the colours of the symbolic crescents, stars, or suns, and their shapes and relative positions could also vary widely, which may explain why they sometimes may have seemed more like purely decorative concentric circles when viewed from a distance by the naval artists who depicted them. As for the small charges that alternated with, and were separate from, the crescents, they too may have sometimes been stars or suns with eight, six, or five points, yet they are often depicted with a centred circular area or 'cut-out' in a contrasting colour, indicating that they may not have been stars at all but the rowels of spurs, symbols of military might, particularly for a Bey in command of horse-mounted and camel-mounted land forces. As with the flag's stripes, its numerous small charges were symbolically innovative, such that they were often included, along with the flag itself, in the Bey's coat of arms.




The Sword of Ali is a strong symbol of Islamic authority that is known by many names, amongst them Zulfiqar, Zulfikar, Dhu ‘l-Fakar, and a few other variants, with possible meanings ranging from those as sublime as 'the belt stars of Orion' to those as ominous as 'the spine splitter'. According to varying accounts, Ali was Muhammad's son, his son by adoption, or his son-in-law by marriage to Fatimah. No ordinary scimitar, Zulfiqar was inherited or captured by Muhammad, who either gifted the sword to Ali or left it to him as an inheritance. It may have been forged with two blades to its hilt, or perhaps with an intentional split at its end, not only suitable for severing spines with a deep thrust but for simultaneously gouging out two eyes. Some accounts say that the sword was once held in its scabbard by a driven-through rivet or nail, and that Ali drew it with such force that the rivet or nail split the end of the blade. Others maintain that Ali struck an opponent's helmet and shield with such force that the blade was split, or that the force of his blow de-laminated the steel of the sword into parallel blades. Whatever the source of its split blade, Zulfiqar in Ali's hand was reputed to have slain hundreds of infidels. Its depictions vary, with its two blades shown straight, curving inwardly or outwardly, or widely spread, probably mistakenly. It is possible that Zulfiqar is today in the possession of someone who is either very holy or very wealthy.

In short, the Sword of Ali is the 'Sword of Islam', and its depiction on a flag attests to the high rank and authority of the flag's owner as a sworn defender of the Islamic faith. Internet searches for 'Sword of Ali', 'Zulfiqar', or 'Bey of Tunis flag' will return many results, but the author of this denouncement thinks that this one and this one reveal more than most about the symbolism of the flag and that of all of its symbolic charges, and they are the source of many of the images shown on this and on the previous page.

From the time it first appeared, the flag of the Bey of Tunis was flown at the Bey's castle and by his land and naval forces. It probably graced state affairs and public events. The production of each flag must have required weeks of labour by several skilled artisans. It was a flag with symbolism that suitably reflected the grandeur of the Bey's royal personage, as well as his military power and his Islamic authority, and the author of this denouncement regrets that she cannot see the actual flag, waving in North African sunlight from a mast on one of the Bey's Mediterranean ships.

Readers who visit Wikimedia Commons and perform searches for 'flags of royals', 'flag of king', 'flag of governor', and for good measure, 'flag of president', will see that there are at least a few thousand such flags, most of which have complex symbolic designs. Given that the 'principles' of GFBF cannot possibly be valid unless they are applicable to flags of all purposes, its author needed to include at least one example of the flag of a royal ruler or of a national leader with a 'bad' design. So why not tell the Queen of the United Kingdom that all of her flags are 'overwhelming' in their complexity, or why not inform the President of the United States of exactly how many small and 'difficult to distinguish' graphic elements there are in his flag, not to mention that it is just another example of what the author of GFBF likes to call a *"seal-on-bedsheet"*, or S.O.B. flag? Why instead choose to critique one of the most obscure royal flags that ever existed, one for which, as far as anyone knows, no actual cloth examples *remain* in existence, and one for which only the old, hand-drawn representations of various naval artists can offer a sense of its actual appearance during the reigns of any of the Beys of Tunis? Why does our valiant vexillonnaire cast his pearls before the last descendants of the Beys, when he could instead *"educate, influence, and guide"* some of the most powerful people in the world? Do not "a great Queen (or great President) deserve a great flag", to use the glib, 'fill-in-the-blank' defence that he offers for all of his flag-change efforts? The brave author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* leaves it to others to point out GFBF-based 'shortcomings' in the flags of the U.K. Queen or of the U.S. President, in the same way that he skewers the flags of other U.S. states than his own, or the flag of the Navajo Nation instead of the flag of the his own nation, to play it safe, to be able to feign innocence when others make such inferences. It would not do for him to offer such insults to the U.K. and to the U.S.A. himself, because that might bring blow-back from his mates in the U.K. Flag Institute and the North American Vexillological Association.

Other flag defences will be made in this section of the denouncement as it continues to deal with the vacuous offerings of GFBF on the subject of symbolism. However, because there can be symbolic meaning in each and every element of a flag's visual composition, our look at what GFBF has to say on the topic cannot leave all discussion of shapes, colours, inscriptions, words, names, mottoes, seals, coats of arms, geographical outlines, constellations, reverse-side content that differs from obverse-side content, and possibly even other issues to be exclusively sorted out in later sections of this document, because all of these things can be relevant to flag symbolism.

Amongst the flags that GFBF has used to illustrate 'good and bad flag symbolism' are three that are representative of the simplest of all possible flag designs: a solid-colour flag, an equally-divided two-colour flag or 'bicolour', and an equally-divided three-colour flag or 'tricolour'. (Three-stripe flags of two colours are instead 'tribars', and the horizontal and vertical divisions of bicolours and of tricolours/tribars can be unequal.)

At the end of the previous section, a brief overview of the French tricolour emphasised that a flag that originally symbolises only a combination of the cockade colours of Parisian rebels and of French royalty cannot count on evolving, long after cockades have faded into obscurity, into a flag that symbolises liberty and freedom. It can happen, but only if events in an unforeseeable future allow. Accordingly, GFBF's praise for Italy's tricolour should be parsed, and in a similarly short overview. Like the rest of the participants in Europe's widespread Revolutions of 1848, Italy had been inspired by the ultimate success of France's three revolutions. During the first, in 1789, a sympathetic Italian cockade of red, white, and green had emerged, and its colours had taken hold in the broader Italian imagination, such that by the end of the century a red, white, and green vertical tricolour had been flown by Italian forces, modelled on the French tricolour. When Napoleon 'liberated' Northern Italy from absolute monarchy, the people there felt themselves better off, only to became nervous in 1804, when Napoleon proclaimed himself the Emperor of France. Their unease must have turned to panic in 1805, when it became clear that Napoleon wanted to be the king of the world, beginning with Italy. In those years Italy's flags were basically red, white, and green, although not always as vertical or horizontal tricolours. When Napoleon met his Waterloo in 1815, Italy found itself in a power vacuum that was filled by Austrian authoritarians, who made anyone caught flying an Italian tricolour subject to a death penalty, a threat that naturally made that flag more symbolic than ever before. Italy's hopes in the Revolutions of 1848 were soon dashed, just as they were in heaps of other tried-but-failed Italian revolutions and uprisings during the entire nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth. In all of their attempts, Italian rebels flew nothing but their beloved vertical tricolour, so when World War II ended, the storied red, white, and green banner finally became Italy's great national flag.

Essentially what all of that means is that trying to design a flag that can be as symbolic and simple as the flag of Italy, a goal that GFBF is obviously telling flag designers to strive towards, will be even more futile than trying to design one as symbolic and simple as the flag of France, because all of the historical and political circumstances of *both* of those nations for well over the past two centuries would be the prerequisites for the successful accomplishment of such a design. Or to put it another way, in the twenty-first century, making three differently-coloured and identically-dimensioned vertical rectangles unambiguously symbolic of anything *other* than three differently-coloured and identically-dimensioned vertical rectangles will be virtually impossible. Although this third-simplest form of all flag design was often intensely meaningful at the end of the nineteenth century, it is basically irrelevant to considerations of symbolism in flag design today.

Also largely irrelevant to symbolism in flag design today is the second-simplest form of all flag design, equally-divided two-colour flags such as the horizontal bicolour of Ukraine. Ukraine's flag has always been great, and it is now greater still, as the 'freedom flag' of a democratic nation invaded by Russia. Yet GFBF is disingenuous to suggest that it is a good example of flag symbolism to follow, firstly because, just as with the flags of France and of Italy, its current design would have required the ability to foretell future events. In the mid-nineteenth century, many European nations did not have national flags as such, but only the flags of their royalty. What they did all tend to have, effectively, were national colours, generally derived from the armorial colours of their rulers. For Ukraine these colours were yellow and dark blue, as derived from the gold charges on the blue fields

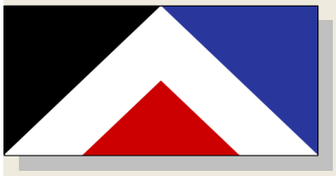
of the coat of arms and royal banners of Ukraine. The people of Ukraine had no quibbles with these national colours, which they identified as their own. In the Revolutions of 1848, however, the people of Ukraine and those of many European nations did have quibbles with their royal rulers, so they naturally made flags of revolution in their national colours, which for many of them numbered only two. For Ukraine these were yellow and dark blue, and even the order in which they were made into the horizontal stripes of a flag were by a convention: the armorial charge colour was usually used for the top, and the field colour was relegated to the bottom. So in 1848 Ukraine originally had a revolutionary horizontal bicolour with a yellow top and with a dark blue bottom, a design that had been fairly automatic, and one with colours that actually symbolised nothing at all. It was not until around 1918, when Ukraine first managed to break free of the Russian Empire, that the flag's colours were officially flipped, simply because someone in power thought that with that arrangement of its colours it would be more symbolic of Ukraine's vast wheat fields under a clear blue sky. For the common-folk both versions continued to be acceptable for the next few years, until Ukraine came under Soviet rule, and any form of the bicolour was outlawed. Still, when Ukraine became independent of the crumbled Soviet Union in 1991-92, the blue-on-top version became the flag of Ukraine. Certainly one can frame a photograph of a golden Ukrainian wheat field beneath a clear blue sky in such a way that it is evocative of the flag, but for GFBF to suggest that the Ukrainian flag is a great example of using colours and shapes alone to effect symbolism is ridiculous, not only because the order of the flag's colours were originally flipped, nor because the Ukrainian people remain ambivalent about which version of the flag is preferable, but because neither the sky nor fertile fields of wheat can be incontrovertibly symbolised by coloured horizontal rectangles. The flag has today become a symbol of freedom for the Ukrainian people, as well as for everyone else in the world who would like to see an end to Russian aggression and to its corrupt and repressive rule, but that symbolism is independent of the flag's design. If in future GFBF continues to claim that the flag symbolises Ukraine's sky and its wheat fields, it will not only be ignoring the true, present-day symbolism of the flag, but that it could have had literally *any* design prior to the Russian invasion, and still be just as symbolic of freedom from oppression as it is now.

This is not to say that flags with simple geometric shapes cannot be symbolic at all, because there are several examples where they have been so, and not only on flags that arose in the distant past but on flags that have been designed in modern times, such as the flag that Frederick Brownell designed for South Africa in 1994. South Africans certainly love the flag that he designed, but the tale of how it came to exist is one that illustrates just how subject to chance a 'geometric' approach to flag design can be. Following an utterly failed flag design contest, Brownell submitted his design in a rush, so that Nelson Mandela could at least have *some* flag to wave for his presidential inauguration ceremony. Neither Mandela nor anyone around him was convinced that Brownell's design would *continue* to wave until they had seen its enthusiastic reception by the public. Some citizens may have just liked the fact that, unlike most flags, it was full of colour. Brownell never intended its colours to be symbolic, but its geometry, at the end of Apartheid, effectively symbolised South Africa's progress towards its future. Brownell simply designed a flag that he liked the look of, without even having time to assign any symbolic spin to its colours or to its shapes, and then he was lucky enough to have the South African public *also* like the look of his flag, and to spin its symbolism *for* him. This is one of the supposed virtues of simple geometric shapes in flag designs, but the obvious pitfall of the approach is that it presupposes the sort of good fortune that befell Brownell's design for the flag of South Africa. For another example, consider the luck that was needed to make Whitney Smith's purely geometric design

for the flag of Guyana successful, a design that experienced its own near-rejection prior to 1966, when Guyana gained its independence from Britain. Smith's design had been buried away in a file since 1960, so it was fortunate to have even been remembered in 1966, but that is not quite the sort of luck being referred to here. The main feature of the design was a 'golden arrowhead' shape, which Smith thought would be symbolic of Guyana's nine indigenous tribes. Perhaps it was, or perhaps it was taken to be more symbolic of 'progress' or the like, but it might just as easily have been taken as an affront, an implication that Guyana's indigenous tribes and all other Guyanese were living in a 'bow and arrow' culture.

Yet luck *was* with Smith, so his basic design became that of Guyana's new national flag. In a 1997 televised interview, commenting on the flag that he had designed as a mere lad of twenty, Smith said, *"It's a simple flag, so people can put their own meaning into it, as well. The more complex, the more difficult it is, for a flag to have meaning for everybody."* This was one of the few times that Smith ever revealed any of his personal views about flag design, and like Znamierowski's they are not particularly defensible. His first opinion implies that people will *only* put their individual meanings into a *simple* flag, when in fact they will do so regardless of a flag's simplicity or complexity, and his second opinion claims that it is harder for complex flags to convey widespread meaning, which is belied by the mere existence of the countless flags in the world that have complex designs yet are deeply meaningful to those for whom they are flown. Incidentally, GFBF includes the flag of Guyana on its cover, and its latest version also includes the flag of South Africa in its last-page, *"all rules have exceptions"* disclaimer. This denouncement asserts that rules that have exceptions are not rules to begin with, and that only dullards find validity in the glib remark, *"The exception proves the rule"*.

For the flag designs of South Africa and Guyana everything eventually worked out fine, but their success stories are only anecdotes, proving nothing at all regarding simplicity versus complexity in flag design, much less proving any virtue in relying on shapes and on colours alone to convey meaningful symbolism. It is just as easy, if not easier, to catalogue the many abject failures of such simple, 'shape-and-colour-only' flag designs.



A convenient recent example is the Red Peak flag of the 2015-2016 New Zealand flag referendums. Its designer and its fans did all that they could to make the flag seem deeply symbolic to the New Zealand populace, both in its colours and in its geometry, even to the point of trying to force-feed the particulars of its intended symbolism by way of an animated GIF on social media that repeatedly morphed the design into the image depicted to the left, which depicted the peaked red roof of a Māori marae or meeting place, topped by a carving of a Māori warrior, situated in front of a snow-topped volcanic peak (New Zealand's Mount Taranaki, to be precise), with its slopes somehow simultaneously exposed to both a starry night-time sky and a cloudless daytime one. Additional symbolism supposedly included the tectonic plate collisions and uplifts that account for all of New Zealand's mountain ranges and volcanoes, the longitudinal position of its easternmost coastline, which often makes it the first (major) nation that sees the dawning of each new Greenwich Mean Time day, a variety of Māori myths and motifs, and even a bit of the Union Jack. What the design certainly did *not* include was even one of the primary and deeply meaningful symbols that New Zealand has cherished for well over a century, meaning in particular the silver fern and the Southern Cross. If the design had been submitted in its morphed format, it might have at least been recognisably symbolic of the approximately 17% of New Zealanders who are Māori, and perhaps ironically it would have accordingly

gathered more support, but as it was it appealed to far less than 10% of the voters, and perhaps to an even smaller percentage of Māori, who largely ignored the entire referendum process. The simple design of Red Peak did not make it easier for people to *"put their own meaning into it"*, or for it to *"have meaning for everybody"*. For most New Zealanders it was just a chevron and three isosceles triangles that stirred nothing within them. Even when Kiwis did put their own meanings into it, those meanings were often unflattering. One political party even devised a bizarre way to make the flag design seem sinister. As with beauty, symbolism is in the eye of the beholder. A red triangle cannot be forced to represent a Māori marae instead of a roadside warning marker, or indeed anything *other* than just a red triangle.

The Red Peak still has its admirers, one of whom is the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, who at the time of the referendums went on record to call all of the finalist flag designs, including Red Peak, perfectly good. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a flag design that could have been more in line with all of GFBF's 'principles', yet when such a design has been formally rejected by more than 90% of the people whom it is intended to represent, it cannot logically be called anything but bad. If Red Peak had emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, when New Zealand was barely a colony and when plain, geometric flag designs were still all the rage, it might well have stood a chance of being adopted, and perhaps today it would still be firmly entrenched in the wider Kiwi mindset, but instead it only serves as a cautionary tale for would-be flag designers: The simplicity that Smith praised for allowing flag designs of elementary shapes and colours to have multiple interpretations can be a curse as easily as a blessing. For any new flag, the odds of its acceptance will be far better if its symbols are clear, rather than being obscurities that are open to widely disparate interpretations. Modern-day flag designers should rarely if ever rely on the symbolism of shapes and colours alone, because graphic symbols will almost always be more obvious, meaningful, and lasting.

Proving that even great fans of GFBF can sometimes offer useful observations, a rather proud-of-himself young Kiwi called Brian Cham has produced a web page that he titles "*The Six Little-Known Deal Breakers of Bad Flag Design*". Making his own points about the poor strategy of using shapes and colours alone to convey symbolic meaning, he concisely sums up the problem with the Red Peak flag by referring to it an example of 'mystery symbolism'. He also perceptively notes that flag designers should avoid the pitfalls of being 'too close' to their own artistic creations, of simply designing flags that they themselves find aesthetically appealing, or those that will probably be most liked by a narrow segment of a broader population, instead of striving to design a flag that will represent *all* of those for whom it is intended. The example he gives is one of the countless Māori-centric, koru-based flag designs that emerged during the referendums. Yet his advice about trying to remain objective regarding one's own flag designs is ironic, given that after seeing the problem with Red Peak, he appears to be blind to what is much of the identical mystery symbolism in his own NZ flag design, shown to the right.

Mystery symbolism and being too close to one's own creations are respectively Cham's third and fourth 'deal-breakers', and there is little to argue with in his second, 'looks like a souvenir, not a flag', nor in his fifth, 'too radical', nor in his sixth, 'it works, but it's boring'. His first, however, 'looks like a logo, not a flag', is a convenient peg on which this section of the denouncement can hang more of the points that it needs to make about flag symbolism. Cham's observation parrots that of the author of GFBF,

who simply says, “Some logos work; most don’t”. Yet 'logo' is not the four-letter-word of flag design that Cham and the author of GFBF have made it out to be. As this denouncement repeatedly emphasises, it all depends upon a flag's intended purposes. As an example of a flag with a 'bad' logo-based design, GFBF has chosen that of the French department of Loir-et-Cher, shown right. The only international vexillological organisation is the Fédération Internationale des Associations Vexillologiques, and although FIAV is not headquartered in France, it might still be bad form for the author of GFBF to offer criticisms of any current French flags. As with the historical flag of the Bey of Tunis, however, finding fault with a *former* French flag, like that of the former 'logo-based' flag of Loir-et-Cher, is completely risk-free: *"All those words, plus an indistinguishable grey shape...Better to have used the stylized dragon on a more interesting background colour."* Before breaking down all of the vapidity in those dismissive comments, a clarification. The *actual* flag of the French Department of Loir-et-Cher is depicted to the right. It is based upon the department's historical coat of arms. The flag that GFBF has presented was formerly that of the Loir-et-Cher Departmental Council, the deliberative assembly of the French department of Loir-et-Cher, and not the department (French county) itself. The Council has an official logo that has varied somewhat over the years, as depicted below:

Like many logos, that of the Council has always included wording. For roughly the last three decades, it has also included a stylised, flame-breathing blue salamander (not a *“dragon”*), a historically symbolic emblem of the French department, superimposed upon a silhouette of the architecturally-famous Château de Chambord, a treasure of France that only a provincial American could call *“an indistinguishable grey shape”*. Sometime between 1991 and 2012, the Council flew a white flag that was defaced by its logo during those years, and it is that flag that GFBF has presented, although as a poor-quality image that was probably sourced from the “Flags of the World” website. Assuming that the Council flies a flag today, it probably has a field that is defaced by the current logo, whether on a white field or a blue one, and like the former flag, with its blue, white, and gold colours, it also pays homage to the colours in both the current flag of the Department, shown earlier above, as well as in the Department coat of arms.

In 2019 there was an effort to 'simplify' the logo, possibly due to the influence of GFBF. Alternative designs that removed both the salamander and the silhouette of the Château de Chambord were presented, but the public were not having it. They had developed deep affection for both the logo and for its symbolism, and they did not care to see it adulterated. The logo of the Council is therefore a great logo, since it is full of symbolism and it is well regarded by those whom it represents. These are the same criteria that determine the greatness of a flag. If one places a great logo on a flag, the logo does not lose its greatness, it simply conveys its greatness to the flag. There is no way in which a great logo will automatically become *“better”* with changes to its symbolism or to its colour. Words are acceptable in the Council's logo, and therefore in

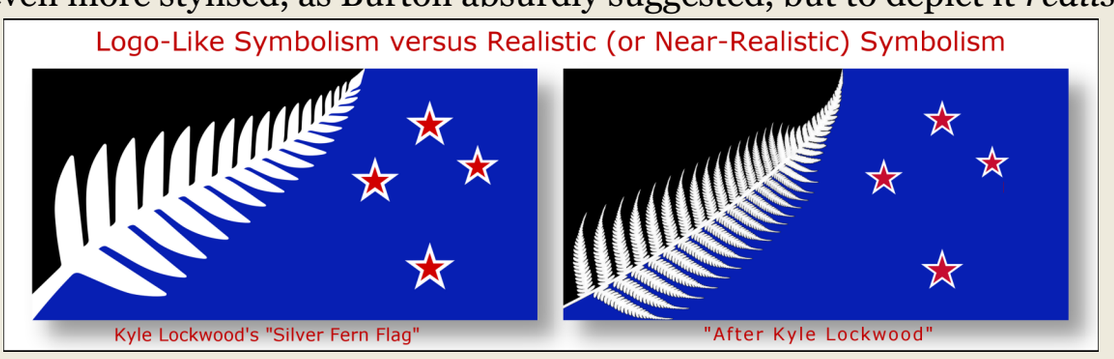
its flag as well. Nothing in the flag is *"indistinguishable"*, and white is no less an *"interesting background"* than any other colour. Thus there is nothing wrong with the flag of the Loir-et-Cher Departmental Council, despite its criticism by GFBF's author. Countless corporations and organisations have internationally-recognised logos, and to the extent that any of them might want to have their own flags, putting anything *else* than their logos on those flags would in most cases be, not to put too fine a point on it, stupid. Pick a contrasting field colour, slap on the logo, big and bold, and you're done. Of course there are cases where logo-like symbolism in a flag's design will *not* serve its purposes very well, and may instead seem to cheapen it, to make it seem blatantly commercial, crass, derivative, and mundane, or perhaps simply dull. For his example of such a flag, Cham has chosen the Kyle Lockwood silver fern flag, the finalist flag design of the 2015-2016 New Zealand flag referendums, and from which, all these years later, Lockwood is still trying to make bank, judging from his website.

Cham begins his commentary well enough, but he stumbles when he tries to invent an 'unspoken rule', namely the insupportable idea that a symbolic charge should never serve as a 'dividing line' between one field colour and another. As an example of his faulty tenet, and actually undercutting his own argument, he provides a speculative 'Statue of Liberty' U.S. flag design, in which the white silhouette of the statue divides red and blue fields. The design is good, but it might be improved by organising the fifty stars in the five 'rays' into thirteen rays, to achieve the same numerical symbolism as the red-and-white stripes of the actual U.S. flag (representing the number of original U.S. colonies). All of which is of course beside the point. What *is* pertinent to this discussion is that the silhouetted outline of the statue is fairly realistic. If it were at all stylised it would instead become logo-like, and turn the flag into a 'tea towel', the term that the New Zealand public used for most of the flag designs that emerged during their flag referendums. Cham is on solid ground when he calls Lockwood's stylised fern symbol logo-like, but the fact that it divides blue and black fields is irrelevant.
Cham hypes GFBF, but his take on the logo-like quality of Lockwood's fern flag design is diametrically opposed to that of GFBF's author, who as noted earlier was chuffed with *all* of the tea-towels. One of the cronies of GFBF's author, the Australian flag enthusiast Tony Burton, was interviewed about the referendums, and he even suggested that Lockwood's fern symbol was not stylised *enough*. What all of the witless worshippers of stylised symbolism cannot seem to fathom is that the more a symbol is simplified into a stylistic abstraction, the more logo-like it will usually become. As an American, the author of GFBF *might* be forgiven for not realising how many dozens or even hundreds of variations of silver fern frond logos that Cham and all other Kiwis have seen during their lifetimes. As an Australian, on the other hand, Burton was just being wilfully dense, and has no excuse.

Most often thought of as the artfully stylised symbolic emblem of a corporation or of an organisation, in a broader sense a logo can be a symbol of pretty much any separate entity, ranging from an individual to a world. For example, Brian Cham has invented a personal logo that figuratively waves at the top of his web page. If a flag designer invents a logo that is sufficiently unlike any other that has ever been seen before, and if no matter how stylised it is seen as a good symbol of what it is supposed to represent, then that logo will be a good one to include in a flag design, even for that of a national flag. The fern in Lockwood's flag did not even come close to meeting that criterion, but

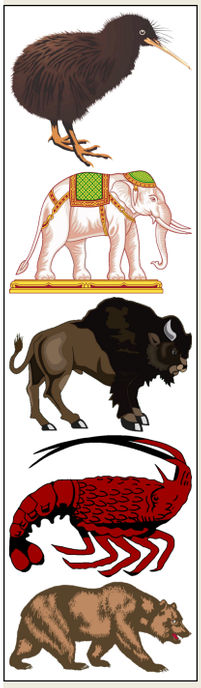
even so it missed becoming part of the New Zealand flag by less than 14% of the vote. If Lockwood's fern had been as original as the *other* logo on his flag, the one that has been symbolising New Zealand on its national flag since 1869, and officially since 1902, then his flag design might have been a shoo-in. The logo being referred to is of course the stylised and unrealistic representation of the constellation Crux, which the then 28-year-old, French-born British Royal Navy First Lieutenant Albert Hastings Markham created to symbolise New Zealand. New Zealanders accepted it as such, and they have seen it as a symbol of New Zealand ever since. If Markham's Southern Cross logo had already been in use by some well-known early New Zealand enterprise of the time, say, some consortium of dairy farmers, sheep ranchers, wool shippers, gum diggers, whalers, or gold miners, it would not have been acceptable for use on the flag. On the other hand, if at the time Markham had invented a silver fern frond logo like Lockwood's, and put *that* on the flag, it would likely be there still, no matter how many imitations of it might later have emerged for New Zealand corporations, organisations, and sports teams. Markham's Southern Cross logo may not be world-famous, such that outside of the southern hemisphere it is never confused with a similar logo that was invented for Australian flags, but that is irrelevant, because the two respective logos are 'world famous in New Zealand', and 'world famous in Australia'. The citizens of those two nations never get their flags confused (well, rarely). Today Markham's logo means 'New Zealand' to every New Zealander, whether in its original colours in the fly of the national flag, or in other colours and sizes in the flies of New Zealand's naval and civil ensigns. Many designs in the flag referendums made attempts to 'improve' Markham's logo, whether with round white stars, eight-pointed stars, or four-pointed 'radiant' stars or the like, but they were in effect inventing other logos that stood only for Crux, and not for New Zealand. Corporate logos are sometimes changed without raising any ire, but when *national* logos are as well-loved as those in the flies of the flags of both New Zealand and Australia, they become off-limits for being tampered with. In the referendums all such tampering crashed and burned, too radical, as Cham might put it.

Both Markham's and Lockwood's logos are stylised representations of real entities that unquestionably symbolise other entities, but only Lockwood's *seems* logo-like to Cham, and probably to a majority of other Kiwis. To paraphrase what one radio programme commentator said during the New Zealand flag referendums, *"I really like silver ferns, but all of the ferns in the referendum designs haven't even* looked *like silver ferns"*. Her comment was pretty much lost in the noise, a reed blowing in the wind, and if her insight was shared by any of the referendum's ten thousand submitters of flag designs, who not only universally stylised the silver fern but New Zealand's other great symbol, the kiwi, they apparently never took it to heart, probably because they thought it would violate the formal rules, which prohibited the submission of complex designs. Yet the germ of truth that she offered remains. When a logo is primarily *seen* as a logo, instead of as what it symbolises, it may not serve a flag's purposes. The probable cure is not to make it even more stylised, as Burton absurdly suggested, but to depict it *realistically*.



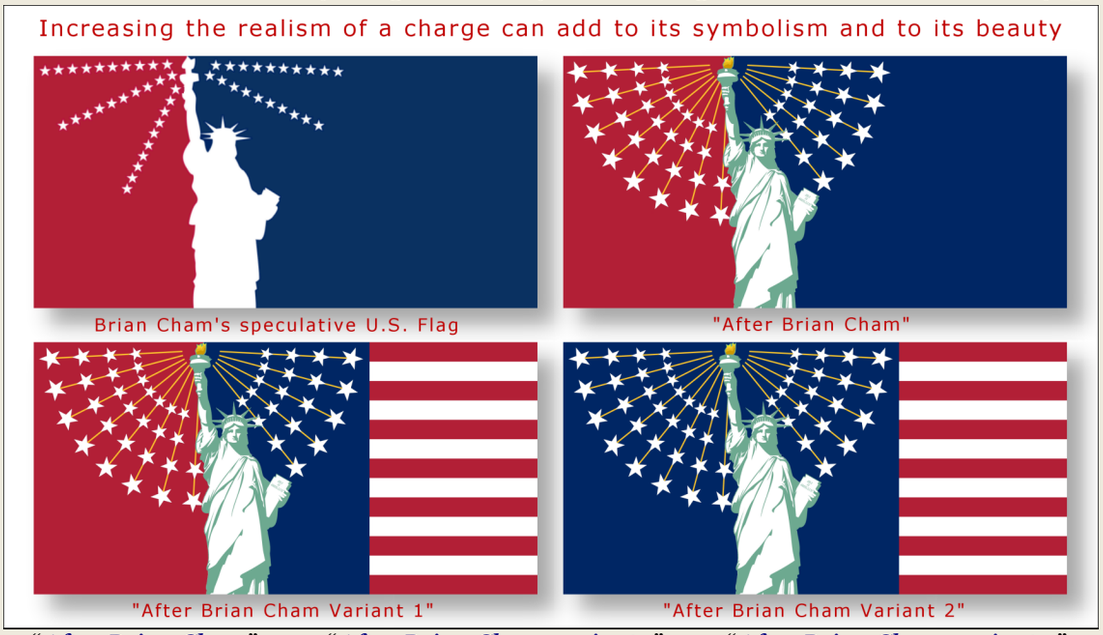
Observant readers will note that Lockwood's flag design, shown at left on the previous page, also mucked with Markham's Southern Cross logo, by giving it larger stars, an 'improvement' that was probably meant to make the stars more recognisable at a distance. Fair enough, but to New Zealanders it could still seem a bit off, so its original version has been restored in *After Kyle Lockwood*. Only Kiwis are qualified to judge whether either of the flags on the previous page is 'better' than the other, but all of this document's readers should now be qualified to judge which fern symbol is best, and if the above comparison does not make the salient point for them, then nothing will.

Objections are easy to anticipate. Those who actually know little or nothing about flag manufacture, including the author of GFBF, will claim that the design shown to the right on the previous page would be more difficult and/or expensive to produce. Flags are either screen-printed, digitally-printed, sewn together, or made using some combination of those three methods. All of the operations and costs of making screen-printed or digitally-printed versions of either flag would be identical. Making sewn-together versions of either design would require several steps. The black and blue field fabrics would be sewn together along an interlocked, double-stitched seam. The handling of the Southern Cross would be the same for either flag. Star-shaped holes would be cut into the blue fly, and either pre-sewn stars of red fabric with white fabric outlines would be stitched to the hole edges, just as a red maple leaf is stitched to a hole on sewn Canadian flags, or red fabric stars would be stitched to the hole edges, and white outlines would then be embroidered around the stars. For the Lockwood version, white fabric cut-outs of the silver fern would be appliquéd (stitched along their entire outlines) to both sides of the flag over the black-to-blue seam, either manually or by using a computer-controlled stitching machine. The fern in the After-Lockwood version would be too difficult to appliqué. Instead it would be accurately and efficiently applied by a computer-controlled embroidery machine, the same sort of machine that rapidly embroiders fifty white stars in pre-set intervals along a roll of dark blue flag fabric for use in the cantons of mass-produced, sewn-together versions of U.S. flags. Thus the per-flag costs of either version would be comparable. For the After-Lockwood version, the upper and lower thread colours for the embroidery machine could even be different, such that the obverse side of the flag could show the fern in white, whilst the reverse could increase the design's symbolism by showing the fern in green.



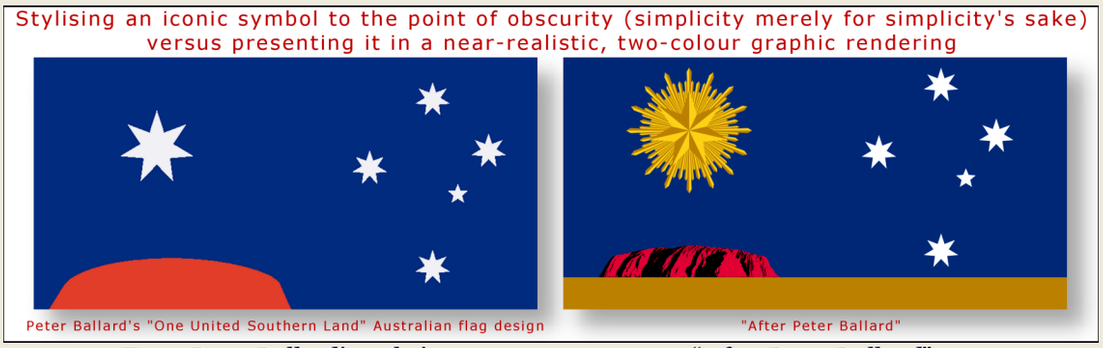
A silver fern frond is essentially a two-dimensional object that is green on its topside and whitish on its underside, so it can appear realistic when depicted entirely in either of those colours, and the silhouettes of many other possible symbolic charges that are suitable for use in flag designs are so unmistakable that a single colour may suffice for them as well. Still, most charges do not represent something two-dimensional, and even rendering them in two or three colours will usually give them more realistic depth and beauty, and often more symbolic impact, than mere silhouettes. Even renderings with as many as a dozen finely graduated colours will not be a significant detriment to the cost or difficulty of manufacturing a flag. Most manufacturers of screen-printed flags can set up production runs of at least twelve colours, using eleven screens and a base-coloured roll of flag fabric, often pre-dyed white. The additional set-up and labour costs of manually squeegeeing several colours on a production line becomes negligible for mass production, and of course there will no additional labour required for automated, machine-based screen-printed flags. In either case, the total amount of ink needed for a

twelve-colour flag will be identical to the amount needed for a two-colour flag. Digital printers, or course, do not care how many colours they print. Symbolic charges and fields that use 'stepped' colours or even linear-gradient colours do not lend themselves to being produced by sewing techniques, but they can always be printed separately, cut out, and stitched into sewn-together flags. The author of GFBF often claims that flags with complex designs and many colours *"cost more to make"*, and that they are *"hard to sew"*, *"difficult to sew"*, or even *"impossible to sew"*, but he is no more speaking as an expert on flag manufacture than he is on flag design. Aspiring flag designers should pay him no mind, because any flag that they can design can be economically produced.



"*After Brian Cham*" "*After Brian Cham variant 1*" "*After Brian Cham variant 2*"

The words 'beauty' and 'beautiful' do not appear in *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, yet beauty is of obvious importance in flag design. There is no better way to effect such beauty than by using meaningful symbolism, and no better way to increase such beauty than by using *abundant* symbolism. There *can* be beauty in simplicity, but not *only* in simplicity. Symbolic detail is not a sin.



From Peter Ballard's website "*After Peter Ballard*"

Flags themselves become not only symbols, but iconic logos, of whom or of what they represent, and in fact they are used as logos quite often, as anyone who may have looked up such things as international calling codes or Internet domain suffixes can attest. One finds flag logos, or emoji, as small rectangles depicting entire flags, but they can also appear as small circular 'badges' or other shapes. Some of the proponents of simplicity in flag design assert that flag designers should ponder how their designs will look when they are reduced in size, not only to the dimensions of lapel-pins, but even to the Lilliputian sizes of iconic flag logos, to which the author of this denouncement can only reply, *"Oh, do me a favour"*. If a flag design serves its purposes, and if it also happens to be simple enough to be easily recognisable when

reduced to the size of a pea, then more power to it, but if its intended purposes have been compromised, just so that it will be more easily recognised when is is pea-sized, then its designer has strained out a gnat, but swallowed a camel.

As an example of symbolism in the simplest of all possible flag designs, the solid-colour flag, the author of GFBF has chosen Libya's flag as it appeared during that nation's many years under the authoritative rule of Muammar Gaddafi. The plain green flag was mandated by Gaddafi in 1977, and it remained the world's only monochromatic national flag for the next 34 years. After Gaddafi's government was overthrown during the Libyan Civil War, which was part of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings of 2011, and after Gaddafi had been killed by militants, the flag of Libya was returned to the design that it had used between 1949 and 1969, before Gaddafi came to power, and today it retains that design. The author of GFBF has called Gaddafi's all-green flag 'bad': *"Although Libya's green field was chosen for its Islamic symbolism, a solid–colour flag is too simple to represent a country, and is meaningless when depicted in greyscale."*

Here we essentially have a paradox, in that GFBF claims that flag designs should be as simple as possible, yet *not* as simple as possible. The reader who does not choke on *that* conundrum is then asked to swallow the premise that the colour green can only be symbolically meaningful if it somehow remains green when depicted in a shade of grey. The appearance of a flag in greyscale is the last refuge of the pretentious flag critic. Other than pure black or pure white, no perceivable colour is identifiable when it is rendered in greyscale, and even grey shades *between* black and white can just as easily be the greyscale versions of colours, so how can the author of GFBF ascribe meaningful symbolism to, say, the Ukrainian flag's colours of blue and yellow, but not to green? Moreover, we live in an era when most of the images that we encounter are presented to us in colour, but even if, for example, Gaddafi's green flag of Libya had appeared in some magazine's monochrome 'black-and-white' photo, or even in an old newspaper's halftone image, those appearances would still have been in the context of some kind of accompanying text. Because Gaddafi's flag was the only solid-colour national flag in existence for the entire duration of its use, it would still have been instantly recognisable when depicted in greyscale, even if utterly without overt identification by corroborative text. If anything, it would have been *more* identifiable in greyscale than any bi-or-tricolour, because it would still have been a solid shade of grey. In the real world there will never be any need for a flag's colours to be identifiable in greyscale, even if that were possible, which it is not, but the more important messages here are that (1) the appearance that a flag may have when it is rendered in greyscale can never be a legitimate consideration for its design, and that (2) when supposed flag design experts assert the opposite, they have revealed themselves to be charlatans.

Yet charlatan that he is, the author of GFBF acknowledges that Gaddafi's green flag was symbolic of the Islamic faith. He does not explain *why* that is so, because GFBF is utterly devoid of the sort of flag scholarship that might mention, at least in passing, that green was not only a colour that the Koran associates with paradise, but as the readers of this denouncement now know, if they did not already, it was supposedly the favourite colour of Muhammad's daughter. Thus it came to be a symbolic dynastic colour of Shi'ite Islam. GFBF also cannot be bothered to mention that Gaddafi's solid green flag was further symbolic of a pure observance of that faith, nor that green was additionally symbolic of Gaddafi's 'Green Revolution', the name that he gave to his stated goal of reversing the desertification of Libya and of making it once again as verdant and as lush as it had been when it was ruled under ancient Rome. In a chapter supposedly dedicated to good flag symbolism, Gaddafi's green flag ironically

exemplifies just that, being just as symbolic of Gaddafi's Libya as are Italy's tricolour or Ukraine's bicolour of *their* respective nations. It was in no way a bad flag because it was "t*oo simple*", but because in addition to its indisputably good symbolism it had become irrevocably associated with a brutal dictator, such that a majority of Libyans were determined to be rid of it just as soon as they had managed to be rid of Gaddafi.

Solid-colour flags are not particularly commonplace, but that does not mean that they are *"too simple to represent a country"*, as evidenced by the fact that history has seen several of them, flying over both nations and nations-in-effect, including sultanates, protectorates, and autonomous regions. Bolivia had a solid green flag for a year in the mid-nineteenth century. Bolivia's Department of Beni waves that flag still, whilst its Cochabamba region waves a flag of solid sky-blue. France's revolutionary period briefly saw flags of both solid white and solid red, respectively symbolic of 'rightful' royalty and of unified rebellion, and for a time the latter almost replaced the tricolour. The sultanate and later British protectorate of Muscat and Oman had a solid red flag for well over a century, or actually for well over three, if one counts its time as part of the earlier Omani Empire. When Zanzibar broke away from the sultanate it kept the red flag for its own century until the 1960s, when it joined with Tanganyika to form Tanzania. Afghanistan had solid black flags for two separate, multi-decade periods in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, black being as much a symbolic colour of Sunnite Abbasid Islam as is green of Shi'ite Fatimid Islam. The Sultanate of Maguindanao flew a solid yellow or gold-hued flag for nearly 400 years.

These and the rest of the solid-colour flags of history have had their virtues, not least being their relative rarity, making each appearance of one automatically distinctive. This document is not suggesting that modern-day flag designers should give deep thought to single-colour flags any more than to bicolours or to tricolours/tribars. It is just pointing out that the author of GFBF is daft to say that a flag design can be too simple, because obviously even a solid-colour flag can be both deeply symbolic and distinctive, and because such a flag is not *"meaningless when depicted in greyscale"*. No matter the utter simplicity of its design, a flag that is successful enough to fly for many generations, or even for centuries, cannot logically be called anything but 'good'.

In addition to Gaddafi's flag of Libya, the 'symbolism lesson' in GFBF disparages the flag of the Organisation of American States. Its criticism of the OAS flag symbolism is:

> *"Believe it or not, this flag depicts the flags of all the member countries,*
> *and must be changed each time one joins, drops out, or changes its flag!"*

Shocking. Or perhaps not, given that the last time such a change occurred was in 1991. In any event, a change in OAS membership would not require an instantaneous flag revision, nor cause any other situation that would be worthy of an exclamation point. The possible need to change a flag in future is not a legitimate basis for criticising a flag's symbolism, nor a valid basis for criticising a flag design at all. All sorts of flags see minor changes over the years. For a history of national flag changes, for example, see the graphic charts '20/A' through '20/D' on the Flag Stories website. At around thirty, depending upon how one counts, the U.S. flag has seen the greatest number of changes, yet somehow the strain of those changes has not yet crumbled the U.S. nation. The explanation for the numerous changes to the U.S. flag is that it is required by statute to have a white star in its canton for each of of the U.S. states. The design of the 'grid' of those stars has been changed during the history of the flag as the U.S. has gathered more states, the last being Alaska and Hawaii as the 49th and 50th states, respectively, yet the overall character of the flag has remained the same. If or when the United States accrues more states, the design of the grid of stars will accommodate

them. Amongst the potential candidates that have long wanted to have their own stars in that grid are the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.), and the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and Guam, so the U.S. flag will probably change again, but in such small ways that much of the rest of the world may not notice, because the appearance and character of the flag will remain virtually the same. As it will for any OAS flag changes.


Photo by Juan Manuel Herrera, courtesy of OAS/OEA website

An actual photo of the flag is shown to the right, since GFBF depicts it incorrectly. The colourful OAS seal is centred on the flag's royal blue field, and it does indeed depict a 'slice' of each of the 35 flags of the OAS member states, equitably arranged clockwise by alphabetical order in Spanish. From the photo of the OAS flag its construction becomes apparent. The single-layer field is made from one or more pieces of fabric. Two circular seals are custom-printed and then sewn together from opposite sides of the flag, sandwiching the material of the royal blue field between them. At any given time, the Organisation of American States probably needs to keep a few of its flags at its brick-and-mortar headquarters and at each of its buildings in member countries. Some of these will be meant to fly on poles outside the buildings, and some, no doubt made of finer fabrics and bordered with gold tasselling, will grace the meeting rooms that the buildings house. Extras of these 'fancy flags' will be carried with OAS representatives when they attend non-OAS international meetings and conferences. As a result, the OAS will only need to occasionally purchase limited runs of high-quality flags. Although the seals on the flags can be screen-printed onto standard white flag fabrics, the OAS can afford the added expense of having them printed using today's more advanced 'ink-jet-like' printers, which have multi-colour printing heads that can inject vibrant colours deep into flag fabrics, using heat and pressure. These advanced digital printers only require a flag design's vector graphics image file, nowadays the standard type of image file format for all flag manufacture, which any competent graphic designer can modify in a matter of hours, if not minutes. Thus any change to the OAS flag due to a change of its member countries can be easily, rapidly, and economically accommodated. GFBF shouts *"Fire!"* in a theatre that is not burning.

The OAS can trace its historic roots to the 1826 Congress of Panama and to the 1889-1890 First International Conference of American States, which was only the first of many later Pan-American Conferences (the Wikipedia link for which, incidentally, shows several flag logos). Bestowed with more formal names over the years, such as the Pan-American Union and a few others, the OAS was finally christened as the Organisation of American States in 1948, with 21 original signatories to its charter.

The seal of the Organisation of American States is a brilliant work of art that is evocative of a bird in flight, its tail suggested by a fan of flagpoles at the bottom of the seal, and its colourful feathers conjured by the various flags of its member countries. Birds being symbols of peace and freedom, the OAS seal is symbolic of those qualities as well. The features of many of the flags in the seal are not rendered realistically, but as amalgams that artfully make those flags recognisable as mere slices.

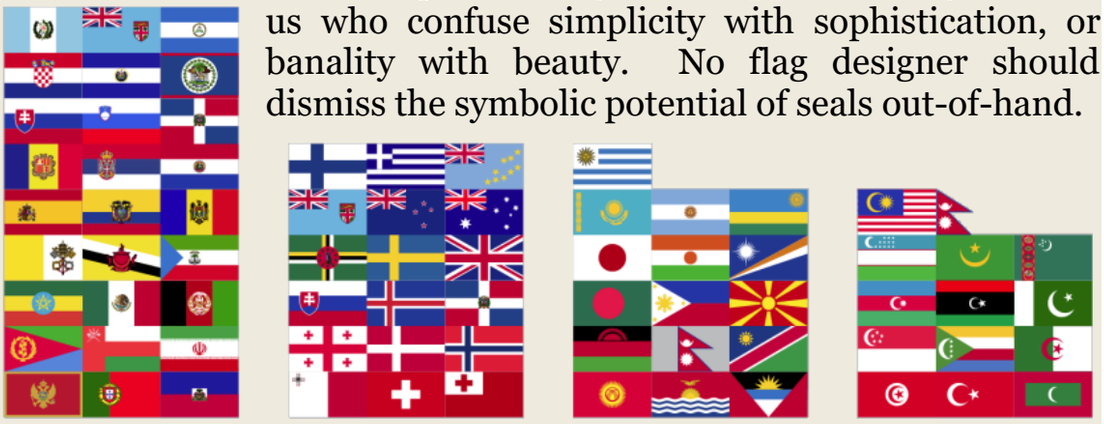
OAS documents reveal that the design of its seal dates to at least 1907, and that no matter the name of the OAS nor its number of member nation signatories at the time, its seal's design has remained constant, albeit with depictions of fewer or greater numbers of flags as appropriate. The goals and purposes of the OAS, as stated in its charter, are *"to achieve an order of peace and justice"* within its member nations, and *"to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence."* The nameless designer of the OAS seal could not have created anything that better symbolised all of the purposes listed above, as well as the dignity and equity with which it depicts all of the OAS member nations, and in fact the beautiful and multi-faceted symbolism of its design shames that of many of the seals and logos belonging to other international organisations. In summary, there could not be any better symbol of the OAS than its seal, nor could there be any better symbol of the OAS on its *flag* than its seal.

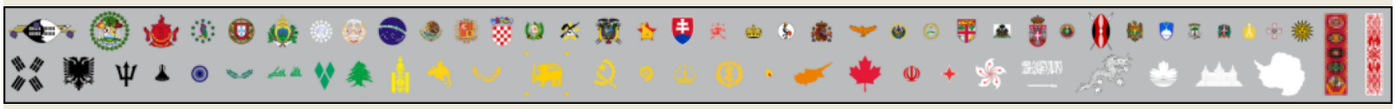
GFBF objects that seals are only *"designed for placement on paper to be read at close range"*, and that it is *"better to use some element from the seal as a [single] symbol"*. For clarity it should be noted that GFBF's dismissal of seals on flags is not limited to the official seals of cities, regions, provinces, states, tribes, organisations, and nations. Instead its blanket opposition extends to all complex, 'seal-like' symbols, including any heraldic coats of arms, whether they are European or the less rule-bound varieties such as the 'Americanised' forms discussed earlier in this denouncement. These can also be deeply symbolic of cities, regions, provinces, states, tribes, organisations, and nations, and they often appear on various depictions of shields, to which GFBF is also opposed. Finally, many seals, arms, shields, and logos include wording of some kind, whether as mottoes or inscriptions, or simply in the form of the name of the place or of the entity that the flag and its seal represents. GFBF asserts that *"words defeat the purpose"* of a flag, and elsewhere its author goes so far as to say that any flag that includes the name of the place that the flag represents has *"failed"*, notwithstanding that he and other pedants will often make arbitrary exceptions to this supposed principle, as the 2000 revision of GFBF has done for the flag of the USA state of California, which includes the prominent and somewhat rebellious words *"California Republic"*. GFBF has chosen to belittle the designs of fifteen flags, and the basis of its criticism for eleven of them has been that they all incorporate some form of a complex symbolic device, whether with or without wording. Apparently the author of GFBF is so confident in the validity of his 'anti-seals' premise that he is compelled to repeat it nearly a dozen times.

The symbolism of a seal-like device on a plastic medium such as a waving flag only differs from the symbolism of a seal on a piece of paper in the few additional moments that may be required for an observer's mind to assimilate it. If a seal has good symbolism on paper, it will also have good symbolism when it is depicted on a flag. Human eyes do not take in *anything* in an instant, including a seal on paper, but instead dart around until the mind to which they are attached can form a 'composite' perception of what is being seen, whether it is an object or some form of information. The speed at which the eyes and the mind perform that function is truly irrelevant. Viewing a waving flag is analogous to viewing the news summaries that typically scroll across the bottoms of video broadcasts, or of reading the LED adverts that scroll across billboards, or of sequentially taking in the concepts that populate this denouncement. The simple symbolism of the red disc on the white field of the Japanese flag may be understood more rapidly than the complex symbolism of the seal on the OAS flag, but *quicker* symbolism does not equate to *better* symbolism, nor does the small added time that it might take to assimilate the symbolism of the OAS flag amount to some sort of shortcoming in its design. Fast food is not always better than a home-cooked meal.

Readers can make their way through children's books far faster than they can come to the final pages of novels, but the rate of their reading does not speak to the quality of what they have read, in either of those types of literature. *Good Flag, Bad Flag* is a quick-and-easy read, but that does not make it a good guide to flag design symbolism.

Those who have visited the Flag Stories website as a result of its previous mentions by this document should be aware of its potential value to would-be flag designers. Although it only deals with various aspects of *national* flags, the information that it derives from them provides insights that are applicable to all sorts of flags, because the designs of national flags are a microcosm of all sorts of flag designs. Nicely complimenting Whitney Smith's handy 'mosaic' of the types of flag symbolism is Flag Stories chart 04, which reveals that the second-most-*used* type of national flag symbolism is that of seals, or in a broader sense that of any seal-like device or charge, including shields and coats of arms, the very things that GFBF vehemently pooh-poohs. It would seem that the world puts a high value on complex flag symbolism, notwithstanding that it may not be appreciated by those of us who confuse simplicity with sophistication, or banality with beauty. No flag designer should dismiss the symbolic potential of seals out-of-hand.





We will have other uses for the 26 charts on the Flag Stories website, which offer far more useful information about flag design than anything between the covers of GFBF. Downloadable PDF versions of the charts can be found here and here. Besides chart 04 as reproduced above, those especially relevant to flag symbolism include 23 and 08, respectively titled *"Most used flag elements"* and *"What do flag colours symbolise?"*.

GFBF's fifth 'principle' of flag design is *"be distinctive or be related"*, a poor choice of wording, given that 'distinctive' and 'related' are not 'one-or-the-other' antonyms. Flag designers should always strive to make their designs distinctive, even if their designs intentionally include qualities of other flag designs in order to imply a relationship. What GFBF is trying to say has been better expressed by Philippe Bondurand, when he notes that one of the qualities of a good flag *"...is that it must be unmistakable. If you desire your flag to look like another, do it on purpose...not by accident."*

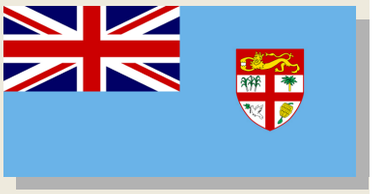
Yet grammatical syntax is the least of the shortcomings of the fifth section of GFBF. Although one understands why its author wanted to tease out a premise to tick off on his pinkie, it is only a flag design's symbolism that will make it 'distinctive', and it is

only a flag design's incorporation of some of the symbolism of another flag design that will make it 'related'. Pretending that section five of GFBF is somehow not germane to flag symbolism is just an excuse for its author to toss more of his made-up mud towards additional flags. The flag of the province of Manitoba, Canada, for example, has a Union Jack canton, and no other symbol could make it more 'related' to the flag of the United Kingdom, as well as to all of the colonial heritage that such a relationship implies, yet he faults the flag for having a shield in its fly, a circumstance that has more to do with how well the flag is 'related' to another than is immediately apparent, as will be seen further below. The shield is from the fabulous Manitoba coat of arms. GFBF's author claims that the flag's fly would be better with the shield's buffalo alone, one of the six instances in GFBF where he claims without evidence that his brand of laundry powder cleans 'better'. In this case one wonders how the shield, which is essentially an official logo of Manitoba, could be less symbolic of that province than a buffalo alone, since Manitoba is probably not the most well-known 'home where the buffalo roam'.

Fancier versions of Manitoba's flag render the buffalo and the outcropping that it stands upon with perhaps the same ten-to-twelve colours that are given to it in the Manitoba coat of arms, whilst others coax a realistic buffalo and outcropping from only two, as shown to the right. Shown beneath the Manitoba flag is the flag of the Province of Ontario, which like Manitoba uses the shield from its coat of arms to grace the fly of its flag. Shown beneath the Ontario flag is the flag that both Manitoba and Ontario have deliberately related the designs of their flags to, the Canadian Red Ensign, several variants of which served as the de facto national flag of Canada from 1868 through 1965 (all of them can be viewed by visiting the provided link). During the period in which the Red Ensign flew over Canada, it was also the only flag of Canada's thirteen provinces and territories, although most of them, like Manitoba and Ontario, did have their own individual and official coats of arms.

The parliamentary political manoeuvrings of 1965 that eventually gave Canada its current 'maple-leaf' flag were extremely contentious, and they were a reflection of the views of the broader Canadian public on the then-controversial subject of national flag change. The most vehement public opposition to the flag change initiative occurred in Manitoba and in Ontario, which together accounted for roughly forty percent of Canada's population, if one may still go by today's figures. The Canadian *majority* view on the issue was never determined, and the new flag was introduced by a parliamentary decree, not by a public vote. Although Manitoba and Ontario were not alone in their opposition to the new flag, of all of the thirteen provinces and territories they perhaps had the hardest time swallowing the pill. From the perspective of today, when the Canadian flag is almost universally loved by all Canadians (lucky, that), as well as by all of the world (luckier still), it can be hard to fathom the deep resentment that the new flag caused in Manitoba and in Ontario when it was first adopted. Nevertheless, 'flag' had become the subject du jour, so all of the provinces and territories soon adopted their own flags to replace Canada's old Red Ensign. Given that Manitoba and Ontario did not want to replace it in the first place, they essentially *kept* it, albeit after replacing its shield with their own. Thus their flags could not be more 'related', not only to one flag, but to two, not that the author of GFBF will give them credit for it. It is true that there have been rumblings in Manitoba and Ontario about changing their flags, not least because of the muck that the author of GFBF has raked,

but at least the reader now has some insights about the *purposes* that Manitoba and Ontario intended their flags to symbolically serve, and about how well the shields that they included in their flag designs helped to accomplish those purposes.



And so it is for countless other flag designs that include shields, seals, and coats of arms. Consider the flag of Fiji, for example. As was noted in the preface to this denouncement, the author of GFBF presumptuously injected himself into the failed 2015 initiative to change the flag of Fiji, which is shown to the right. As might be expected, he encouraged Fijians to discard the powerfully symbolic shield from the fly of their flag, which is derived from the Fiji coat of arms, and he told them that they also needed to be well-rid of the flag's Union Jack canton. From that blank slate, he said, Fijians should design a new flag for themselves, retaining only the current flag's field of *"Fiji blue"*, as he christened it, declaring its hue to be unique, apparently having never seen such things as turquoise, robin eggs, or a clear blue sky. Unfortunately for him, Fijians deeply love their flag, so they chose to ignore the ramblings of an American lack-wit. Readers who want to revisit the relevant links, but would rather not return to the preface to find them, can optionally go here and here.

We have not completed our look at the mindless campaign of GFBF's author to eliminate symbolic shields on all flags everywhere, but here we will digress to introduce yet another resource to aspiring flag designers, which will not surprise those readers who have already visited the link for the Fiji coat of arms. The website Symbols.com bills itself as *"the Web's largest resource for symbols, signs, and flags"*. In addition to checking out the site's regular search engine, flag designers should be sure to scroll down to the bottom-left of the site's homepage, where they will find a *"unique search feature to find a symbol based on its various graphical characteristics"*. Although finding and choosing symbols for a flag design is basically a research project, actually designing a flag is basically a graphic arts project, so resources that present symbols *graphically*, rather than just as textual descriptions, can be especially valuable.

As part and parcel of that graphic need, and appropriate to our recent look at certain Canadian flags, Canadian flag designers should have a look at another Books to Borrow resource entitled "*Symbols of Canada*". Flag designers in the lesser nation that is just to Canada's south should check out "*American Symbols: A Pictorial History*", as well as "*The United Symbolism of America: Deciphering Hidden Meanings in America's Most Familiar Art, Architecture, and Logos*". Mexican flag designers should peruse "*Signos, Símbolos y Presagios: Guía Ilustrada del Simbolismo Mágico y Espiritual*" (or for non-polyglots, "*Signs, Symbols and Omens: An Illustrated Guide to Magical* and Spiritual Symbolism"). French flag designers will only find an English language version of "Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past" at Books to Borrow, and will need to look elsewhere for "Royaumes de Mémoire: Repenser le Passé Français". Links to most of these Books to Borrow titles, and to others, have been conveniently gathered together here. For a curation of other useful flag-related Web links, visit here.

Returning to the previous thread, the lack of appreciation on the part of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* for the finer merits of symbolism in the flags that he disparages: The history and symbolism of flags not really being his forte, the author of GFBF gets his judgy joy from tossing darts at any and all flag designs that include seal-like charges, no matter how effective the symbolic meanings of those charges nor the intended purposes behind them. Insulting forty percent of Canada gives him no pause, so why, one wonders, has he never aimed any of his barbs at, say, Graham Bartram's

design for the flag of Tristan da Cunha, shown to the left, which fills its fly with a glorious coat of arms? Why has he not informed Bartram that the fly of his flag would be far 'better' with but a single symbolic element, such as a lone rock lobster?

Four of the actual flags and one of the proposed flags that Graham Bartram has designed

Flag of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports

Flag of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

Queen's Colour, Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Flag of the U.K. National Register of Historic Ships

A proposed Flag of Antarctica

Incidentally, in a compare-and-contrast, 'good vexillologist, bad vexillologist' exercise, Bartram would take all of the top marks. Practically the living antithesis of the author of GFBF, Bartram has authored genuine works of definitive flag scholarship, including the books "*British Flags and Emblems*" and "*Complete Flags Of The World*" (the latter with his co-author, the late Michael Faul), has designed more than half-a-dozen actual flags, including that of Tristan da Cunha and the others pictured above (his Antarctica flag will figure in our later look at geographical outlines in flag designs), has personally built and funded a "*World Flag Database*" of the flags of nations, sub-national regions and territories, heads-of-state, organizations, and many ensigns and military flags, has served as the Chief Vexillologist of the U.K. Flag Institute and as the Secretary-General for Congresses of the International Federation of Vexillological Associations (FIAV), and has provided the original initiative for, and served as the guiding Chairman of, "*The Commission's Report on the Guiding Principles Of Flag Design*", the modest and inoffensive 2014 flag design guide that is so clearly superior to GFBF that from 2016 onwards, as mentioned in the preface to this denouncement, the Wikipedia article entitled 'Vexillography' has only offered advice from *The Principles*, and not a word from *Good Flag, Bad Flag*. Bartram's name is conspicuously absent from GFBF's back-cover-listing of seventeen prominent vexillologists, all of whom may have had *opinions* about flag design, but few of whom ever *designed* one or more flags that have seen actual usage, somewhere in the world, as Bartram has. Yet as also noted in the preface, Bartram's opinions about flag design do not align with the strictures of the author of GFBF, who has made certain that the NAVA website lists GFBF at the top of its list of flag design resources, with *The Principles* at the bottom, notwithstanding that NAVA once referred to them as their 'official' flag design guidelines, albeit on a page that was well-buried on NAVA's website, and that has now been conveniently deleted.

Another flag that receives the disdain of the author of GFBF for including a seal-like device is that of the U.S. state of Vermont. The coat of arms on the Vermont flag is lovely, historic, and full of symbolism, but it defaces a blue field, and U.S. state flags with seal-like devices on their blue fields are one of the biggest pet peeves of the author of GFBF. He claims, for example, that the flag of Vermont is *"virtually indistinguishable from 20 other U.S. state flags, all with a seal on a blue field"*. Actually there are 24 such flags, but as we have often seen, the author of GFBF has an idiosyncratic tendency to round figures up or down to the number of digits on his hands and feet.

Regardless, the 24 flags in question have all been presented on the following page, along with those of three U.S. states that do not have blue fields, and those of two U.S. territories that do. All of them are indeed charged with 'seal-like' devices, in many

cases the deeply symbolic, 'Americanised' forms that Whitney Smith spoke about. Readers can judge for themselves whether they are *"virtually indistinguishable"* from each other, or whether such a statement is on par with Trump claiming to be the greatest U.S. President who ever lived. Are these flags truly the *"S.O.B.s"* that the author of GFBF calls them, or are he and Trump far more deserving of that honorific?

The author of GFBF does not bother to note that all of the U.S. states that use a similar format for their flag designs thereby illustrate that they are related, as states, to other states, which should actually score points for the flag of Vermont in the *"be distinctive or be related"* category, since it is unquestionably both. As a mental exercise, however, imagine that the flag of every U.S. state and territory had identical dimensions, had a field colour in the identical shade of blue, and had only one distinguishing feature: the name of the state or territory, written in the same font, at the same size, and in the same contrasting colour, centred on its blue field. If you were to live, work, or play in one of those states or territories, such that you had become accustomed to seeing the proper name of that state or territory on its flag, and one day you saw a flag waving with the name of a different state or territory on its field, would your whole reality come apart at its seams? Would you forget where you were actually living, working, or playing, and would you think yourself transported to that different state or territory? Even if the designs of all of the flags in the image above *were* utterly similar, which they certainly are not, what would it matter, as long as the designs had been chosen purposely, and if they had been accepted by those for whom they were intended?

There is absolutely nothing wrong with a flag design that presents a seal-like device, because such devices are capable of incorporating profound and abundant symbolism. If you are an aspiring flag designer, do not allow the obvious lies of the author of GFBF to prevent you from even *considering* the use of seal-like devices in your flag designs. The intended purposes of your designs should never include the appeasement of fools.

Three of the U.S. state and territory flags in the image towards the top of this page have designs that include the curiously underused feature of a border. Borders can be a purely decorative addition to a flag design, as in the red-bordered flag of the U.S. territory of Guam, but they can also be used to show a relationship to other flags, as well as providing ways in which the distinctiveness and symbolism of a flag design can be increased. The reader will recall that the author of GFBF has called the white field of the flag of the U.S. state of West Virginia *"boring"*, but the white provides excellent contrast for the generally darker colours of the state's coat of arms, and more to the point, the flag's wide blue border not only makes it visually distinctive but symbolically relates it to the flags of other U.S. states that have blue fields. Once again, here is a flag design that both 'distinctive' and 'related', yet the author of GFBF refuses to credit it for meeting his own stated criteria, and instead spins a way to *fault* it for meeting them,

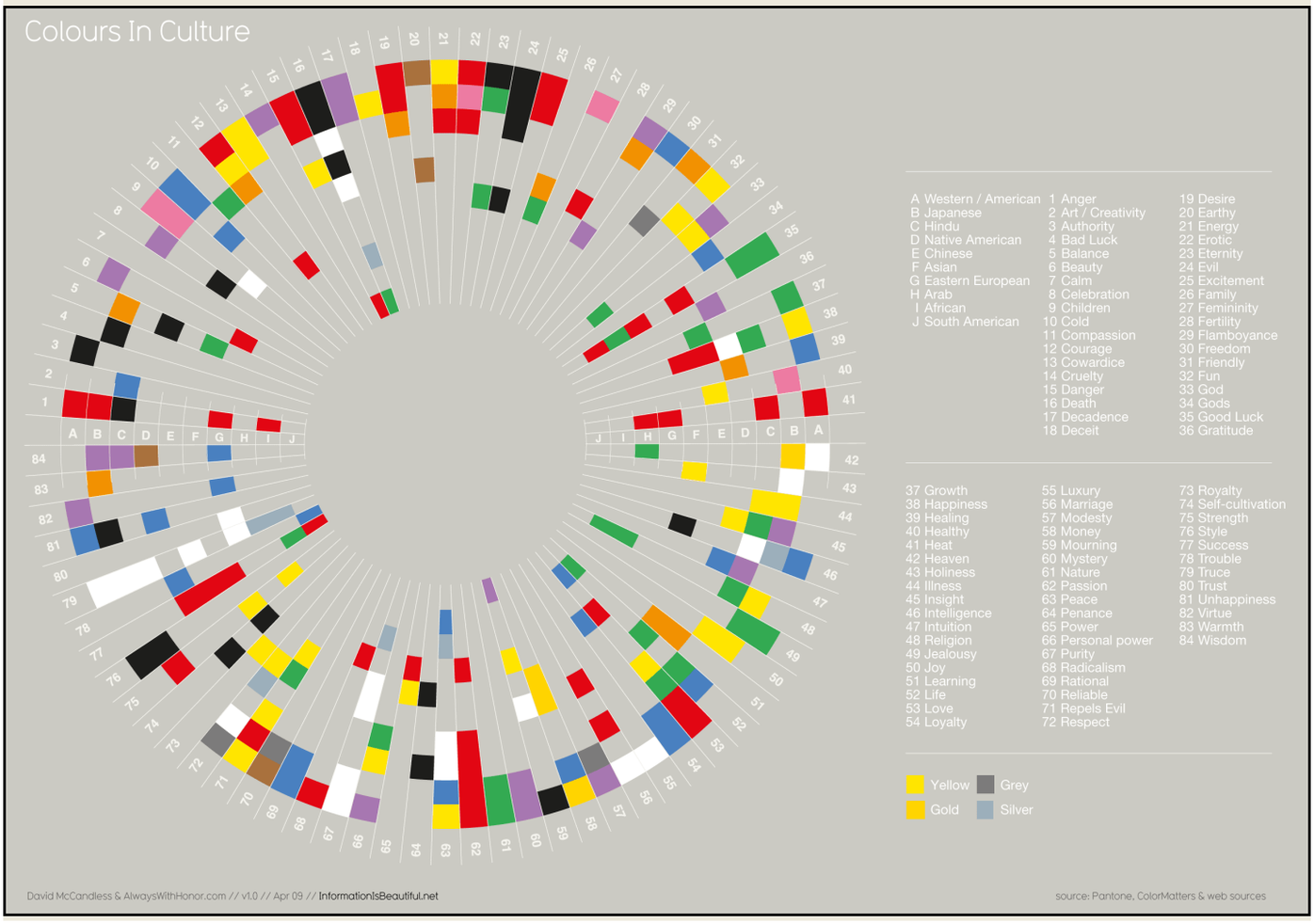
stating that the design *"...differs from other state flags only in its blue border."* Yes, just as opal only differs from rubble in its opalescence, or as Graham Bartram only differs from the author of GFBF in his intellect, integrity, and lack of pretentiousness. The casual hypocrisy that one often finds in GFBF's flag critiques is utterly astounding.

The third U.S. state flag design that incorporates a border is that of Wyoming. With its wide red outer border, its narrower white inner border, and its blue field, it has made itself visually distinctive whilst incorporating the official national colours of the U.S.A., thus relating itself to not only the other states, but to the nation in *which* it is a state. Borders in a flag design are a good place to put official or de facto national colours, but they can also incorporate the symbolism of distinctive patterns. The Navajo people use many uniquely traditional patterns in their sand paintings and in their woven textiles. Beautiful dot-painting motifs of Australian aboriginals could easily grace a flag border, and the distinctive Tukutuku patterns of New Zealand Māori serve as another example. The borders of flag designs can also accommodate cultural tattoo and carving patterns. Yet these only scratch the surface, because there are reckoned to be several thousand indigenous peoples in the world, and almost all of them have traditional art forms that a bit of research will easily reveal. One who designs a flag that is specifically *meant* for one of these indigenous peoples should carefully consider the symbolic potential of patterned borders. If one instead designs a flag that is intended to represent a larger group of people, amongst whom an indigenous population have been historically oppressed, one should probably be more circumspect. In Australia, for example, there have long been proposals for so called 'reconciliation' flag designs that incorporate such indigenous creations as the boomerang or 'Dreamtime' art motifs, but there is a fine line between 'honouring' an indigenous culture and coldly appropriating from it. The entire nation of Australia, for example, would probably not be pleased if their national flag abandoned all Aussie symbolism other than that of its indigenous minorities, and in any event, a piece of waving fabric is never going to significantly 'reconcile' persistent social problems. Issues such as systemic racism, historical land theft, and cultural repression cannot be redressed by a flag design. New Zealand, too, has had a strain of this poorly-conceived, reconciliation notion in its proposed flag designs, as exemplified by the many 'koru-based' designs in the 2015-2016 flag referendums. Still, a flag border can incorporate national or otherwise culturally-symbolic colours, as well as traditional patterns when appropriate, or culturally-innocuous patterns when more traditional patterns are ruled out. Simple geometry is not a good approach to take for an entire flag design, but it can be a virtue for borders. Consider how utterly brilliant a border of Islamic ornamentation might be. Also, borders on only two edges or three edges can still add distinction and symbolism.


A BORDER CAN MAKE A FLAG DESIGN VISUALLY DISTINCTIVE,
AND IT CAN ALSO ADD SYMBOLIC COLOURS AND PATTERNS

Again, the symbolism of a flag design can be increased if it includes culturally-symbolic colours, whether in its fields, its charges, or even in its plain or patterned borders. There are several types of culturally-symbolic colours. We have already touched on national colours, but there can also be 'official' colours for provinces, states, cities, companies, organisations, and so-on. We have mentioned that particular colours may have spiritual significance in certain cultures, such as green and black for Islam, or white, turquoise, yellow, and black for the Navajo Nation. There is also the political symbolism of the so-called 'pan-national' colours, which basically emerged from the widespread nationalistic fervour of the nineteenth century, and which remain pertinent even in the twenty-first. The most well-known are summarised in the chart to the left below, and the main nations with flags that make use of them appear in Flag Stories chart 09. Designers who want their flags to have a symbolic affinity for a particular pan-national sentiment are advised to incorporate appropriate colours from the chart.

Culturally-symbolic colours of the above types are arguably the most suited for flag design, although there are many colours for which culturally psychological or emotional symbolism can be associated, and they should be mentioned as well. Readers will find a list of the typical associations in Flag Stories charts 08 and 07, as well as in the extremely thorough circular grid that has been pictured at the bottom of this page, a review of which will reveal some of the pitfalls of relying on this type of symbolic colour alone, rather than on the stronger types listed earlier. There are no 'universal' colour meanings across different cultures, no matter what GFBF implies.



GFBF mentions 'colour' or 'colours' a few dozen times, mostly in a context of simplicity, but it gives short shrift to the potential *symbolism* of colour, saying only that *"Colours often carry meanings: red for blood or sacrifice, white for purity, blue for water or sky"*. In the U.S.A., where the author of GFBF lives, these are reasonable psychological associations, but they are obviously secondary to the symbolism of red-white-and-blue as the U.S.A. national colours. Moreover, as the chart on the previous page reveals, in other cultures red may have a stronger association with anger, erotic desire, or danger, white may have a stronger association with death and mourning, and blue may have a stronger association with money, trouble, or unhappiness. Thus it is usually a poor strategy to try to rely on colour alone to symbolise a particular meaning, emotion, or attitude. It is usually better, and easier, to choose colours that are simply culturally significant to those for whom the flag is being designed, whilst avoiding colours that may have negative cultural contexts, and to use other elements in the design to unambiguously convey intended meanings, emotions, or attitudes. All colours have value, and pretty much any of them can be used in a flag design, but colour is often a 'weak' force in flag symbolism, and not always a 'strong' force, as GFBF implies it to be.

The next section of this denouncement will have a great deal more to say about colour, although not so much about its potential symbolism, but about why designers should not automatically reject such things as abundant colours or even graduated colours. Having touched in *this* section on using culturally-symbolic colours in flag designs, not only in the fields of those designs but possibly also in their borders, we might do well at this point to remind would-be flag designers of Whitney Smith's 'eight categories of flag symbols', as depicted earlier in this section, which are, once again, celestial and terrestrial objects, flora and fauna, humans, artefacts, abstract forms, and inscriptions. Aspiring flag designers can mine any or all of these categories for symbols to add to their designs. Hopefully the previous discussions of this section have persuaded them that realistic depictions of graphic symbols will in many cases be preferable to stylised or abstract versions, as opposed to what the 2020 revision of GFBF claims, which is: *"Stylized or silhouette symbols often succeed better than realistic depictions."* Designers with open minds should of course consider both kinds. What we have not yet discussed is the fact that many of these types of symbols will be non-reversible. That is, they will only appear in their 'correct' orientation on the obverse side of the flag. These sorts of symbols can include celestial and terrestrial objects, certain artefacts and abstract forms, and of course inscriptions. To these we have also added geographical outlines. Because a later section of the denouncement will discuss all of these non-reversible symbol types at length, here we will touch on them only briefly.

To be fair, *Good Flag, Bad Flag* does not explicitly condemn non-reversible symbols in flag design, saying only that, *"Ideally the design will be reversible or at least recognizable from either side."* Elsewhere, however, the author of GFBF pontificates: *"Words are not reversible—this forces double–or triple–thickness fabric"*, when of course words and other inscriptions 'force' no such things. For example, the flag of the U.S. state of California, which is one of the flags to which the 2020 revision of GFBF has granted a curious 'exception' to its rules, is inscribed *"California Republic"* on its obverse, but its typical manufacture simply allows the inscription to appear backwards on its reverse. Elsewhere than within the pages of his pamphlet, the author of GFBF has often used non-reversible content as a criterion for condemning flag designs, as he did for one of the finalist designs in the 2020 flag contest that was held for the U.S. state of Mississippi. The design incorporated a partial geographical outline of the state, so the author of GFBF helped to kill its chances with his media quip that the outline would only seem correct on the flag's obverse *"as seen from the centre of the earth."*

The Confederate Battle Flag had appeared in the canton of Mississippi's old flag, but it is nowadays an icon of racial hatred, so it was forbidden from being included in the new flag's design. The legislative body that was in charge of the flag contest also mandated that the new flag would include the inscription *"In God We Trust"*. Otherwise the formal rules of the flag contest simply parroted *Good Flag, Bad Flag,* save for its admonition against 'lettering'. The author of GFBF spit the dummy over Mississippi's impudent defilement of one of the sacred tenets of his pamphlet, to the extent that after a new flag was chosen he whinged about its inclusion of an inscription. The discerning reader may wonder why it is that the inscription on the flag of the U.S. state of California is acceptable to the author of GFBF, whilst the inscription on the flag of the U.S. state of Mississippi is not. Readers may also wonder why GFBF has never disparaged the non-reversible geographical outline on Graham Bartram's proposed flag of Antarctica, although those who have linked to *"When Vexillologists are Vexations"* from the first paragraph of the preface to this denouncement should have a fair idea.

There is no doubt that non-reversible flag defacements such as geographical outlines, inscriptions, and constellations can be powerful flag design symbols. For example, stylised depictions of the Crux constellation, commonly known as the Southern Cross, have long been a favourite defacement on southern hemisphere flags. As noted earlier, those on the flags of New Zealand and of Australia are symbolic logos that are well-loved by their respective citizens. They have been so for more than a century, yet in all that time, no Kiwi or Aussie has complained about the incorrect appearance of Crux on the reverse sides of their respective flags. Oddly enough, the author of GFBF also seems to be little-bothered by the inclusion of non-reversible constellations on flags. He ladles nothing but praise, for example, on the flag of the U.S. state of Alaska, for its abstract, non-reversible depiction of the constellation Ursa Major and of the star Polaris, also known respectively as the Big Dipper and the North Star. Two of the stars in the Big Dipper can be used to to locate the North Star, in much the same way that two of the stars in the Southern Cross can be used to locate the South Celestial Pole. The citizens of Alaska deeply love their flag and its brilliant 'far-north' symbolism, but it is odd that the author of GFBF likes it as well. Given his snipe at the non-reversible feature on the previously-mentioned Mississippi flag candidate, the expectation would be that he would also look down his nose at Alaska's flag, perhaps with a comment like, *"Constellations will only seem correct on a flag's reverse as seen on a celestial globe."* Readers who are looking for consistency will never find it in *Good Flag, Bad Flag*.

When a geographical outline appears on a flag, it unequivocally symbolises a particular locality, and it also symbolises that locality *equitably*, without controversially favouring any particular group that may exist within its borders. These are actually the astute observations of one of the sons of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, who was only a teen when he produced the formal 2001 paper, *"Maps on Flags"*. His 18-page paper is recommended reading for any aspiring flag designer. Few if any of the hundreds of flags that it catalogues are produced with reverse sides that are geographically correct, yet the owners of such flags are no more bothered by that situation than Kiwis, Aussies, and Alaskans are bothered by their flags' incorrect reverse-side constellations.

And lastly when a flag displays an inscription, whether it be a single letter, a solitary word, a phrase, a sentence, a slogan, a place-name, or any other sort of written content, it is simply making use of language, the most powerful form of symbolism in existence, not only the symbolism in which all humans think, but even that in which they dream. Moreover, the owners of flags that include inscriptions are usually just as accepting of them as the owners of flags that include constellations and geographical outlines.

Given that the only form of non-reversible content that GFBF explicitly condemns is 'lettering', telling flag designers that they should *"Never use writing of any kind"* and that *"Lettering is nearly impossible to read from a distance, hard to sew, and difficult to reduce to lapel-pin size",* inscriptions will be given particularly attention in this section of the denouncement, and readers are asked to consider this section's defence of inscriptions to essentially be a defence of *all* forms of non-reversible flag symbolism.

We can quickly address the most specious of GFBF's comments regarding inscriptions, by repeating previous observations that there is no more need to be able to read words on a flag from all distances than to be able to read a book from a block away, that the appearance of a flag when it is shrunk to the size of emoji or lapel-pins, even if it includes lettering, is not a legitimate consideration, and that the only 21st-century flag manufacturers who may have difficulty sewing inscriptions onto flags will be those who have managed to remain unaware of computer-controlled embroidery machines. Although not mentioned in GFBF, another rationale that one sometimes encounters for keeping inscriptions off-limits in flag designs is that they are language-specific. That is, they cannot be understood by those for whom the language in which they are written is unknown. Big eye-roll. Until some sort of science or sorcery introduces a universal language and/or a universal language translator, the nations of our world will continue to have dominant official languages, and none of the inscribed flags within those nations will be obliged to be readable by persons of nations for whom the flags are not intended, nor even to be readable by those for whom the flags *are* intended, if those persons are not conversant, nor for that matter in special cases where the inscriptions are purposefully written in arcane languages such as Latin, as, for example, pithy mottoes often are. In any event, all that one ever need do is to inquire, and thereafter the inscription in question will cease to be a mysterious unknown spell.

Having addressed all of the tedious objections above, we can more thoroughly explain why non-reversible inscriptions will only be a flag design issue in the minds of dunces. To start, readers are asked to take a few moments to picture, in their minds' eyes, a few of the flags with which they are familiar, waving from flagpoles. The chances are good that they will have only pictured flags from their obverse sides. We are culturally biased to think of them in that way, not only because it is their obverse sides that we see when they are pictured in books and in other written media, but because even their appearances in films, videos, and still photographs have usually been 'staged' that way. Yet because wind direction is a fickle thing, we have actually seen the reverse sides of waving flags just as often as we have seen their obverse sides. What this means is that when we *do* see the reverse sides of familiar flags, even those with content that is as blatantly incorrect as reversed lettering, we take little or no notice of that situation, and in effect we *psychologically* see only the flag's obverse. Citizens of the U.S. state of California, for example, are not confused by their flag's inscription when they see it in reverse, as shown to the right. Part of this is due to the often subconscious human ability to read words backwards almost as easily as when they are presented forwards, but mainly it is down to the fact that once we know what an inscription says, we cannot *stop* knowing what it says, not only when we see it backwards but even when it is hidden in a flag's folds. And the more meaningful the inscription, the less relevant its reverse.

For example, there are few Islamic flags that do not include written praise for Allah, and often only on their obverse sides. The principles of GFBF being universal, surely its 'fatwa' against lettering should trump Islamic reverence, just as it did for the

reverence of Mississippi citizens who wanted their flag to proclaim *"In God We Trust"*. Then again, the author of GFBF probably has an outstanding decree against himself in Turkmenistan already, so perhaps he is wise to not blithely accrue even more of them. Best to leave it at: *"Words defeat the purpose: why not just write 'U.S.A.' on a flag?"* Yes, why not? Surely such a flag would serve the purposes of countless Yankee yobbos.

Speaking of whom, much of the candid media coverage of the 2021 U.S. Capitol attack is additionally illustrative of the points being made here, in that the video and still images thereof often showed the reverse sides of the flags that so many Trumpians were waving, yet the *obverse* sides of those flags were still obvious and instantly recognisable, even when they were comprised of nothing *but* words and inscriptions.

Incidentally, that loathsome attack provided an additional valuable lesson about flags. Almost as ubiquitous amongst the rioters' flags were those that included photo-realistic depictions of Trump, either as himself or with his orange head grafted onto muscular torsos, such as that of Sylvester Stallone's machine-gun-wielding "Rambo" character. All of those flags were every bit as 'mass-produced' as those that only had inscriptions, and such flags continue to be mass produced, providing a boon to flag manufacturers, or at least to those for whom profit is more important than propriety. Search Amazon, for example, for 'Trump flags', and see for yourself that flags with photo-realistic images and colours are obviously neither particularly difficult nor especially expensive to mass-produce, notwithstanding anything that GFBF may say to the contrary. Flag designs that include photo-realistic symbolism should *not* be summarily forbidden.

Also not truly deserving of the intense snubs that they have been subjected to are the former flag of the city of Pocatello, in the U.S. state of Idaho, and the current flag of the city of Milwaukee, in the U.S. state of Wisconsin. Neither of these flags have been specifically slighted by GFBF, although its author has elsewhere derided both of them, because each of their designs makes liberal use of prominent inscriptions and of numerous symbolic defacements, which are anathema to the tenets of his pamphlet. The former flag of Pocatello has *appeared* in GFBF since 2006, though, in the bonkers TEST YOURSELF quiz on its final page, which encourages readers to decide whether seventeen unlabelled flags have either 'good' or 'bad' designs, the presumption being that the flag design precepts listed in GFBF are all that will be required for such a task. In keeping with the utter lack of flag scholarship that GFBF essentially champions, one needn't know the flag's owners, nor the purposes that they intended their flag to serve, nor anything at all about their flag's history or its symbolism. The 2020 GFBF blurbs: *"It can be tempting to use these principles to denigrate poorly designed flags."* The purpose of the quiz, apparently, is to give GFBF's readers some practice doing just that. The author of GFBF has provided no 'answer key' for his quiz, an omission that does not speak well of him, since several of the flags that the quiz presents cannot even be clearly sorted according to GFBF criteria, leading one to suspect that what he really wants the players of his quiz to do is to guess the answers that *he* would give, a slightly clever but also a slightly diabolical psychological ploy. Later the author of this denouncement will list her own answers for the pointless quiz, but for now only her answer for the former Pocatello flag, followed by a few words on the Milwaukee flag.

From the most complete account of the saga of the former flag of the city of Pocatello, Idaho, one learns that the flag had its origins in 1999-2000, when a city pride/municipal clean-up campaign was carried out under the auspices of the Pocatello Chamber of Commerce. As a result of that campaign, the Chamber trademarked the slogan “Proud to Be Pocatello”, and the slogan was incorporated into the Chamber's new official and copyrighted logo, which is depicted to the left above. The logo's abstract snow-capped peaks are redolent of Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains, and their colour obviously harkens to the lyrics of one of America's best-known songs, *“America the Beautiful”*, which praises that nation's “purple mountain majesties”. The remaining colours of the flag were chosen to *"...reflect those favoured in the art of Native Americans of the region."* Just about as unambiguous as possible in its proclamation of city pride, the logo was unquestionably a good one. In concert with the Chamber's turn-of-the-century city clean-up initiative, it soon graced signs all over Pocatello, but as the actual designer of the logo has attested in media interviews, it was never intended it to serve as both a logo and a flag.

The city of Pocatello did not have an official flag, but in the spirit of celebrating the spruce-up it obtained permission to put the Chamber's copyrighted logo onto a flag, which was raised at the Pocatello City Hall in 2001, and also briefly at the city's wastewater treatment plant. Whether it was more widely used is open to question, but in any event it never became the official flag of Pocatello, nor even that of its chamber of commerce, the name of which is right on the flag, possibly as a legal requirement, in the same way that the flag had to include the logo's copyright and trademark notations.

The author of GFBF was probably unaware of the flag in 2001, when he first published his rag, and he did not include it in the first iteration of his quiz. He was certainly aware of the flag in 2003, however, when he orchestrated NAVA's infamous American city flag designs survey. Although the flag was not Pocatello's official flag, it was obliviously treated as such by the survey. The survey participants gave the flag extremely low marks, citing such things as, you guessed it, not only its inscriptions but its copyright and trademark notations, not the loveliest things to put on a flag, but perfectly proper things to include in a logo, which is all that it was ever intended to be.

In the 2006 revision of GFBF, its author plugged the non-flag of Pocatello into his quiz. In subsequent years Roman Mars repeatedly savaged the flag in various media. This in turn brought other unwelcome attention to the flag, such that eventually Pocatello's pride had been so injured that it held a flag contest, slavishly kowtowing to all of the precepts of GFBF, and in 2017 it unveiled its first official city flag, shown left. Naturally the author of GFBF was chuffed, so the 2020 revision of GFBF now includes Pocatello's new city flag on its quiz page.

One can only hope that a majority of the citizens of Pocatello are happy with their new flag, since it was forced upon them by a process in which they were given no vote, neither on any of the various flag contest candidates nor on the design of the final flag. One suspects that the hundreds of persons from around the world who submitted flag designs are *not* happy. The word 'contest' has always been defined as a competition for a prize or for a title. When a person expends the time and effort to enter a flag contest, they do so in the hope that they will be named the creator of the winning design. Pocatello's flag contest participants were cheated out of that possibility, because the flag committee presumptuously combined the features of several of the submitted flag

design candidates into a final flag, making the declaration of a clear winner impossible. In flag contests that have been structured as GFBF suggest they be, the altering of submitted designs by a flag contest committee has not been an unusual occurrence. The author of GFBF obviously finds nothing wrong with this, having served on at least one such contest committee where he arrogantly altered submitted designs himself.

When GFBF says, *"Don't allow a committee to design a flag...empower individuals to design flags..."*, it sounds egalitarian, but when it adds, *"...and use a committee to select among them",* its democratic façade falls away to reveal the true elitist leanings of its author. No flag of a population can be democratically chosen by a process that is not population-wide. Of course the reason that the author of GFBF favours a more autocratic process is that when a small committee has been vested with the exclusive power to both select the flag candidates and to choose the winner, they will generally be easily persuaded to follow the advice of so-called flag design experts such as himself. It is impossible for the biased attitudes of a small committee to be truly representative of the wishes of entire populations. Committees should of course have the authority to weed out obscene flag designs, or those that for other reasons will be unsuitable for the specific purposes that the winning flag must serve, but otherwise their only function should be to structure the means by which the acceptable candidates will be presented to the full populace for a selection of finalist designs and for a vote on a winner.

There are many flags of American cities that have had the same sorts of stories as the former flag of Pocatello, and that have thus been criticised by the author of GFBF or by his cronies. The flag of the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as shown to the left, is one of them, but thus far the citizens of Milwaukee have kept their own counsel, and have refreshingly met all of the criticisms with an attitude that might best be typified with: *"Yeah, nah, we like our flag, sod off."* The word 'Milwaukee', like any word, is simply a symbol, in this case a symbol of a particular city. As symbols in flag designs, inscribed place-names are just as impartial as geographical outlines, and they are even less ambiguous. These are symbolic strengths, not weaknesses. For example, the inclusion of the inscription "Proud to be Pocatello" arguably made that city's former and unofficial flag far less mysteriously symbolic, both of the city and of its pride, than the stylised sun, peaks, and river on its new one. Do not other places have such things?

So the question becomes: Of what real concern are non-reversible flag design symbols in general, and of what real concern are non-reversible inscriptions in particular? Those who claim that flag designs should have no inscriptions, and that those that do are failures, never present logical, coherent, and convincing answers to the questions, *"**Why** should flags have no inscriptions, and **how** are they failures when they do?"* Roman Mars, for example, has often publicly maintained that the flag of San Francisco, that of his home city in the U.S. state of California, would be improved by the removal of its place-name and of its scrolled Spanish motto, leaving only its symbolic phoenix, rising from flames, but you will never hear him explain why or how such changes would make the flag more purposeful for, more acceptable to, or more symbolic of the city and of the people of San Francisco, because he cannot. All he can say is that such changes would be necessary for the flag to comply with the codified pedantry of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*. Incidentally, he opines that the flag's phoenix should be further stylised, which also defies all reason.

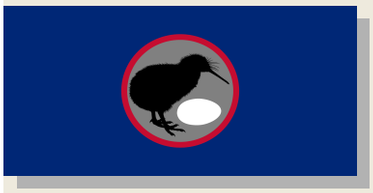
Before we leave the topic of symbolic inscriptions in flag designs:

CONSIDER the **COUNTLESS** **SYMBOLIC** **POSSIBILITIES** of **TYPEFACES**. Less accurately called fonts, typefaces represent only one of the many ways in which the symbolic value of inscriptions can be increased. The symbolic elegance of *calligraphy*, for example, can also be applied to flag inscriptions. We tend to think of flags as serious things, but sometimes they are designed for the purposes of simple novelty or amusement. Inscriptions can lend themselves to palindromes, malapropisms, and other forms of symbolic word-play. There is also the possibility of inscriptions that have been rendered as ambigrams, even of the type called bilateral, or mirror-image ambigrams, which would of course appear identical on both sides of a flag. The author of this denouncement fears that she would violate copyright law by illustrating any of the many types of ambigrams, and instead encourages her readers to visit this website. Software exists that can automatically generate certain kinds of ambigrams, but sadly not yet bilateral AMBIGRAMS, which graphic artists must therefore create manually.

The non-issue of non-reversible symbolic content in flag design provides a convenient segue for a quick look at the possible symbolic advantages of flag designs that have completely different reverse-side content. Sometimes these are flags that *do* require a double or even a triple-thickness construction, although that is far from being as prohibitive in terms of production difficulties and/or manufacturing costs as GFBF has made it out to be, and when properly made, multi-layered flags will wave as well as any. One can even make the argument that because every flag has two sides, one will be wasting a tremendous opportunity by placing symbolic defacements on the obverse side only. An excellent example of a two-sided flag is that of the U.S. state of Oregon.

Manufactured and waved for almost a century without any groundswell of objection from the citizens of Oregon, this flag is of course a thorn in the side of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag,* because as the flag of his home state it violates almost every rule in his pamphlet, and because all of his efforts to force it into compliance with his rules have been met with steadfast resistance by a majority of the people of Oregon, who not only love their flag for its beautiful colour scheme of complimentary blue-and-gold, but for its abundant symbolism, including its reverse-side depiction of a beaver on its dam, the beaver being the official animal of Oregon.

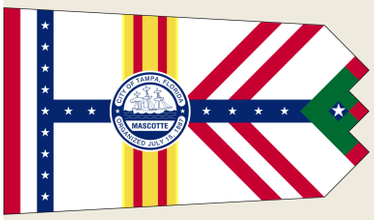
Many places have official flora and/or fauna, and the designs of the obverse sides of the flags of those places will often include such official mascots. Yet there are also many places that have flags that do not depict their official mascots. The designs of the flags of the nations of both New Zealand and Australia, for example, make no use of official or of otherwise symbolic plants or animals. Both of those nations have also had histories of vigorous flag debate. Should either of those nations eventually hold a contest for the purpose of selecting a new flag, one hopes that the guidelines for that contest will not forbid two-sided flag designs, but will instead acknowledge their symbolic potential.



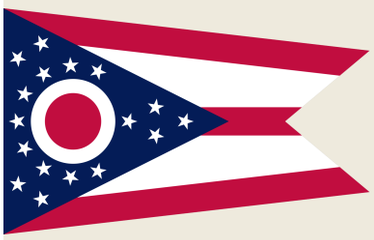
In addition to the symbolism of celestial and terrestrial objects, flora and fauna, humans, artefacts, abstract forms, culturally-symbolic colours, geographical outlines,

inscriptions, and the potential virtues of a different reverse, the aspiring flag designer can consider non-rectangular flag shapes, with special attention given to those under the heading of 'sub-national territories', because within those territories there may in turn be places, organisations, persons, or causes and so-on that may require their own flags, and by simply using the same distinctive flag shape as the territory to which they belong, those flags will be more symbolically related to that territory than they would otherwise be if they had used one of the more common, rectangular flag shapes. The city of Venice, Italy, for example, has a brilliantly unique flag, not merely because of its

ornate beauty but because its fly-end is comprised of six separate rectangular streamers that flutter independently in the wind. By using that same flag shape but with a different internal design, Venetian museums, theatres, businesses, and organisations of all types could give their flags a related cachet.



A flag shape with similar symbolic potential is that of the flag of the city of Tampa, in the U.S. state of Florida. This utterly distinctive flag is often the subject of vituperative criticism by simplicity-obsessed flag critics and by a minority of Tampa's citizens, yet for over 90 years it has served its purposes well.



One might also mention the distinctive shape of the flag of the U.S. state of Ohio. All other flags in Ohio, including those of all of its cities and counties, could instantly pay symbolic homage to “the Ohio Burgee”, simply by being designed in an identical shape. Thus by its shape alone, the flag of a lower place can be symbolically related to the flag of a higher place.

Readers who visit the link near the top of this page should not only twig that the unique, non-rectangular shapes of the flags of many places can provide a potential form of extra symbolism for the flags of smaller places within them, if flag designers will but make use of them, but also that any flag shape other than a rectangle will make a flag design visually distinctive. It follows that the use of such shapes should not be limited to cases where a non-rectangular flag of a higher place already exists.

When any flag with a distinctive shape has been embraced by those persons for whom the flag has been designed, thereafter that flag's shape alone will essentially be symbolic of those persons, in much the same manner as a trademark. For example, even readers who do *not* visit the link near the top of this page will probably recognise the unique flag shape shown to the left as being that of the flag of Nepal. The shape itself, then, is a powerful symbol of that proud sovereign country. Moreover, the flag of Nepal serves to illustrate another point, in that rectangular flag shapes are not actually as universally suitable as Western tradition (and GFBF) would have us think.

Speaking in an interview about the flag of Nepal, Graham Bartram noted that although the rectangular flag shapes of early European flags certainly provided the template that Western nations have generally followed to this day, the Eastern World has always had its own traditional flag shapes, which perhaps more often than not were triangular. Moreover, Bartram speculated that for a very windy place such as Nepal, a flag based on a triangular, or 'pennant' shape, might actually wave better than a rectangular flag.

One also suspects that a flag with a triangular shape will not fray as quickly as one with a rectangular shape, not that physical longevity should ever be a design consideration.

The flag shapes that have been represented in the link near the top of the previous page are by no means all that exist, nor are they all that can be invented, but one is always wise to take note of what has gone before, and of what one might still find suitable. The common flag shapes of history have been well-documented by Smith on pages 22 and 23 of *"Flags Through the Ages and Across the World"*, as well as by Znamierowski on page 25 of *"The World Encyclopaedia of Flags"*, but once again, these cannot comprehensively represent all of the possible flag shapes that may have symbolic value.

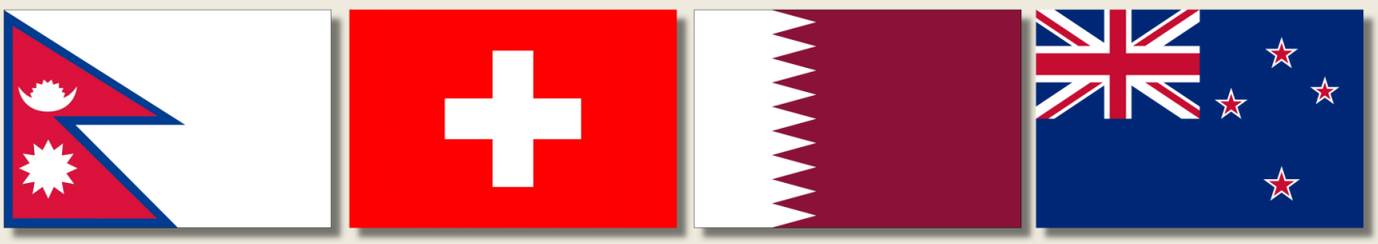
There are probably at least a few places in our world that have, or that at one time had, flags with 'cut-out' areas, meaning shapes within the borders of those flags that have been completely removed, no doubt with their edges hemmed to discourage fraying. There is no logical reason why the hemmed edges of a flag's cut-out areas should fray any faster than the hemmed edges of a flag's border, so it seems that the manufacture of such flags, however unconventional they might be, should at least be feasible. Moreover, if such flags were to be produced using today's fray-resistant fabrics, their cut-out areas might be rather elaborate, perhaps even on the order of the designs that can be seen in such art-forms as Mexican papel picado or Chinese paper cutting. At the least, such 'negative space' areas might offer symbolic opportunities that would not otherwise be possible, and obviously any flag with cut-outs would be utterly distinctive.

Notwithstanding all of the other possible flag shapes that a flag designer might choose, the most common will arguably be the rectangle, making some additional discussion appropriate, though not so much regarding symbolism, which for rectangles is limited. Whereas the prescribed dimensions for a non-rectangular flag may be rather complex, as they are for the flag of Nepal, those for a rectangular flag can be easily specified as a 'dimensional ratio', which is expressed as the ratio of the flag's height to its length. The dimensional ratios of flags are sometimes less accurately called 'aspect ratios', a term that is frowned upon in flag circles because the display aspect ratios of the screens of such things as televisions, monitors, mobile phones, and cinemas are expressed as ratios of length to height, not height to length. Flag dimensional ratios range widely, from 1:1 for the square flags of Switzerland and of the Vatican to 11:28 for the flag of Qatar, which has a length that is more than double its height. However, it is probably fair to say that the most common dimensional ratios are 2:3, where the flag's length is 1.5 times its height, and 1:2, where the flag's length is twice its height. Many other rectangular dimensional ratios, such as 3:5 and 5:8, are so near to 2:3 and 1:2 as to be difficult for the eye to distinguish, although there may be cases where the geometry of a rectangular flag's internal design will dictate the seemingly negligible difference.

When a flag is needed for a place, organisation, person, or cause that has never had a flag before, the flag designer may be able to consider rectangular flag shapes of any dimensional ratio, and perhaps even non-rectangular flag shapes. On the other hand, when a new flag is intended to replace a previous one, it may be best for the flag designer to give the new flag the same shape and dimensional ratio as the old, lest the new flag seem too radical a departure to those for whom it is intended, or lest its dimensions be inconvenient for other existing flags to be adapted to. One of the most ridiculous things about many of the designs that were submitted for the New Zealand flag referendums of 2015-2016, for example, was their use of a 2:3 dimensional ratio or its like, when the current flag of New Zealand and all of that nation's dozens of sub-national flags, including all of its regional, territorial, and city flags, all of its civil and

defence forces ensigns, and all of its various emergency services flags have always had a 1:2 dimensional ratio. For a nation or some other place or entity that has the well-established tradition of a particular dimensional ratio for its flags, a flag designer *might* be able to garner a bit of support for a new flag of *greater* length, but should expect little or no support for one of *shorter* length, tantamount to an emasculation, which is not the sort of symbolism that one should generally aim for in flag design.

Speaking of ridiculous, the Ausflag organisation has promoted various 2:3 flags for almost 40 years, although Australia has an even stronger tradition of 1:2 flags than New Zealand. Ausflag's faulty rationale, no doubt like that of many of the designers in the New Zealand referendums, probably has something to do with the United Nations. The UN dictates that all of the outdoor flags of its member nations be exactly six feet in length and four feet in height, or approximately 183 cm in length and 122 cm in height, so that when they are all waving in the wind on their individual flagpoles, their uniform dimensions will visually symbolise the equality with which the UN theoretically regards all of its member nations. Indoors, the flags of UN member nations simply revert to their native dimensional ratios. The specified lengths and heights for the outdoor flags equate to a dimensional ratio of 2:3. There is nothing inherently wrong with a national flag that is 2:3, as indeed many of them are, but *forcing* a national flag to be 2:3 when that will not be appropriate, or in the mistaken belief that 2:3 is somehow required by the UN, will be completely unnecessary, especially since it is not much of a mission to make a version of any national flag that will comply with the UN outdoor flags requirement. For example, the dual-pennant flag of Nepal can be superimposed onto a rectangular 2:3 background, the 1:1 square flag of Switzerland can be lengthened by 50%, the long 11:28 flag of Qatar can be shortened by 41%, and the 1:2 flag of New Zealand can be shortened by 25%, with its Union Jack canton graphically compressed laterally, and with its Crux logo re-centred in its newly-shortened fly area.



Before moving on from the topic of flag shapes, we should touch on one particular rectangular shape that is often mentioned in the context of flag design, yet one that is not really relevant, namely the 'golden rectangle', which is based on the 'golden ratio', sometimes called the 'golden mean', a mathematical constant found often in nature. The golden rectangle has a dimensional ratio (or aspect ratio) that is also sometimes intentionally used in architecture, painting, and other visual arts. There are those who say that of all possible rectangles, the golden rectangle is the most visually aesthetic. That is silly, and those who say that flags should be so-shaped are being sillier still. The dimensional ratio of the golden rectangle is nearly akin to that of the display aspect ratio of old, CRT-based television screens. If anything, modern-day cultures seem to prefer 'wide' aspect ratios, such as those of the 16:9 screens that are commonly used for computer monitors, with effective dimensional ratios that are approximated by New Zealand's 1:2 flag, or those of 2.35:1 and upwards cinema screens, for which the extra-long 11:28 dimensional ratio of Qatar's flag can serve as a reasonable analogue.

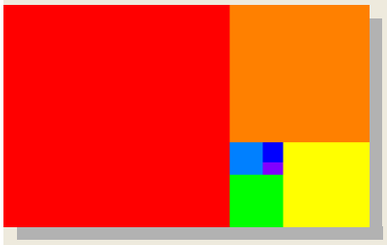
Golden rectangles are admittedly interesting, not least because if one removes a perfect square from one end of a golden rectangle, one is left with another golden rectangle, from which another perfect square can be removed, leaving another golden rectangle,

and so-on ad infinitum, but the dimensional ratio of a golden rectangle differs so little from other flag dimensional ratios, such as 2:3 or 5:8, as to be visually difficult for the human eye to distinguish, especially for a waving flag, the apparent length of which will not even remain visually constant as wind-caused ripples travel across its surface.

GOLDEN RECTANGLE (ABOUT 1:1.618, OR ABOUT 2:3.236, OR ABOUT 5:8.09)

2:3

5:8



If the golden rectangle shape were somehow ideal for a flag design, surely the flag of Togo would not be the only national flag to use it. It is *not* preferable to any other rectangular flag shape, except perhaps for the design of a mathematical, 'inside-joke' flag like the one shown to the left. Thus anyone who hypes its use in flag design is likely someone best ignored.

The denouncement has now come to the last, but certainly not the least, of its dozen categories of flag symbolism (or to the last of its 'baker's dozen', if different reverse-side content can be thought of as a thirteenth category), namely numerical signifiers. There is not one mention of numerical symbolism in all of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, notwithstanding that numerical signifiers provide one of the most common and powerful forms of symbolism that flag designers can make use of. When the author of GFBF praises the design of the flag of Liberia, for example, which practically shouts with its eleven alternating red-and-white stripes, how does he manage to overlook the fact that those stripes numerically symbolise something altogether different than the thirteen alternating red-and-white stripes on the U.S. flag? Yes, he acknowledges that the flag is *"similar yet distinctive",* but as this denouncement has noted, such a quality falls completely under the topic of flag symbolism, rather than amounting to some separate, 'fifth finger of flag design', not that anyone would realise that by reading GFBF. A flag design will only be 'related' to that of another flag if it uses borrowed symbolism, and it will only remain 'distinctive' when it alters that borrowed symbolism in ways that will be suited to its own distinct purposes. Flag design expert, what a joke.

Then again, perhaps one can sympathise with his dilemma. It would be difficult, after all, for him to reconcile his assertion that *"Usually a single primary symbol is best..."* with the inconvenient fact that a plethora of great flags make use of symbolic signifiers that number far more than one. For example, he has implied his approval of the complex design of the U.S. flag by depicting it on the front cover of GFBF, but it would be difficult for him to actually *explain* his approval, because that might require him to mention the powerful numerical symbolism that is signified by the fifty discrete symbols in the flag's canton. His denigrations of the flags of Turkmenistan and of the Organisation of American States are now revealed to be all the more spineless and petty, since the designs of both of those flags make clever use of numerical symbolism.

In the course of the symbol-selection 'homework' that would-be flag designers can do, they should always be wary of symbolic pitfalls, cases in which symbols that are completely benign within one culture can be utterly insulting within another. For example, some religions and certain cultures subscribe to the practice, more or less, of 'aniconism', the banning of graphical representations of a range of holy, sentient, and living entities that may include God, human beings both living or dead, animals or other creatures, including those that are long extinct or mythical, and even plant life,

with something as seemingly innocuous as the stylised maple leaf of the Canadian Flag being problematic. The practice may be most pronounced in Islam and Judaism, but it can also be seen in some forms of Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Bahá'í Faith, and even in Christianity, as well as within some African and Australian Aboriginal cultures.

Also, for the design of any *national* flag, all forms of humorous symbolism should be scrupulously avoided. Although a keen sense of humour can be as important a national trait as any, the purposes of national flags include their occasionally use as casket palls. Readers who think that this 'casket pall caveat' is patently obvious should consider the many humorous flag designs that were submitted, and often even earnestly so, during the New Zealand flag referendums. What *is* patently obvious is that the NZ flag referendum committee should have never presented any of those designs to the public. When their website displayed such flags, as well as many others that were obviously inappropriate, they not only invited the derision of the world press, they deserved it.

As previously mentioned, flag designers should also be ethically circumspect about appropriating indigenous symbolism. The mere existence of low-hanging fruit does not make it free for the picking by those to whom it does not belong, and such theft can rarely be justified by such euphemisms as 'reconciliation' or 'inclusion'. Symbols are not always legally protected by trademarks or copyrights, but that does not necessarily give licence to their use. In any event, blithely incorporating an ethical dilemma into a flag design will usually be a poor strategy for making that design as popular as possible.

Even the legal ownership of a symbol may not make its use acceptable in a flag design. Many Australians have suggested for decades that the Australian Indigenous Flag should replace the Union Jack in the canton of the Australian national flag. The Luritja Artist Harold Thomas created his brilliant flag in the early 1970s as a symbol of Indigenous rights, and he copyrighted its design. He has never been enthusiastic about its possible incorporation into the national flag. Over the years Thomas occasionally asserted his copyright to guard his creation from being used in other ways that he felt were inappropriate, and perhaps especially to prevent its callous use for commercial purposes by non-Indigenous corporate entities such as Google. In an eyebrow-raising development in early 2022, as the culmination of a three-year process, the Australian government purchased the rights to the design for something on the order of twenty million Australian dollars. Why the government thought the purchase expedient is open to question, but it is certain that the now-free use of the design will still not make its incorporation into the national flag appropriate.

This section of the denouncement began by identifying a number of freely-available symbolic resources, and it has come to its end by presenting what its author hopes has been a useful general discourse on the dozen-or-so categories of symbolism that may be applicable to flag design, with particular attention given to categories that aspiring flag designers might not otherwise intuitively consider. Because every facet of a flag's design can have an impact its symbolism, this section has also touched at least briefly on much of the subject matter of the five sections still to come. Due to its necessary broadness this section may have seemed at times to ramble, so it will conclude with an orderly summary of its underlying themes.

The only valid measure of a 'good' flag is its acceptance by those whom it represents. The key to the acceptance of historical flags, and therefore to their 'goodness', often had little to do with their designs. Some flags were simply forced upon the persons

whom they were meant to represent, and over time they accrued a patina of tradition and familiarity that made their designs *irrelevant* to their acceptance. Originally these were the only kinds of flags that there were. It did not matter if the designs of the flags were simple, complex, full of appropriate symbolism, or utterly devoid of it, although limited manufacturing techniques tended, more often than not, to keep them simple, so as to keep them easy to produce. The potentate, dictator, government, revolution, committee, or other authoritative entity or person simply mandated the design of the flag, simple or not, and it was accepted, if not immediately, then probably over time. In many cases flags were not even designed by actual persons. Instead their designs were totally automatic, the result of heraldic traditions, yet they were still accepted.

Thus the flags of history can usually teach us very little about modern-day flag design, because their acceptance often had little to *do* with their designs, whether their designs were highly symbolic or not. Even now, flags are sometimes being designed in authoritative ways, so that only the passage of time will prove them to be widely accepted or not, and therefore 'good' or not. When the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* points to the designs of simple historical flags as examples to follow, he is being wilfully dense, and when he says that committees should judge flag designs, he is being worthy of an epithet. His pamphlet is essentially a guide to designing flags in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, eras of nationalism and of overt or of thinly-veiled autocracy, when mass production, modern flag printing techniques, sewing machines, computer-controlled embroidery machines, and full-populace democratic voting did not even exist. The asinine tenets of GFBF mean that the **last** thing it will ever be good for is to *"...help designers create flags that will be effective, widely adopted, and loved."*

Someone, possibly even the author of GFBF himself, has been keeping track of a long list of the city flags that have emerged in GFBF's wake, as well as of *prospective* city flag change efforts, and the cumulative story that they tell is probably not the one that he has longed for. If one were to suggest that the reason that eighteen flag change initiatives have either been stalled or cancelled is down to simple lack of interest, he might play the 'fake news' card, or perhaps blame COVID-19, but he can hardly deny that the majority of post-GFBF city flags have mostly had complex designs. And it is nice to see that a few Ohio city flags have made use of the symbolic Ohio Burgee shape.

The premises of any modern and *useful* guide to flag design are that (1) full-populace, democratic flag design contests should replace autocratic flag selection committees as the chief mechanism by which new flags are chosen, that (2) flag designers will increase the likelihood of the selection of their flag designs in such contests, as well as the likelihood of the later acceptance of their flag designs by the persons for whom they are intended, when they make their flag designs as purpose-suited as possible, that (3) the chief means by which a flag design can best suit a flag's intended purposes is by a careful incorporation of strong, clear, and distinctive symbolism in its design, and that (4) the purposes of many flags will be far better suited by flag designs that incorporate not simple, but complex forms of symbolism, including abundant colour, details, realism, non-reversible content, and perhaps even an entirely different reverse side.

The process of designing a flag should always begin with a careful and complete assessment of all of the purposes that the flag will be expected to serve. Flag designers may even be wise to make an actual, physical list of those purposes. If they are fortunate, they will be designing a flag for entry into a well-run contest, with published guidelines that comprehensively specify all of the flag's intended purposes *for* them. As they contemplate potential symbols that can best suit their flag's intended purposes,

designers will do well to remember the broad categories from which possible flag symbols can be chosen, including celestial and terrestrial objects, flora and fauna, humans, artefacts, abstract forms, culturally-symbolic colours, geographical outlines, inscriptions, rectangular or non-rectangular flag shapes, and numerical signifiers. Only when they have accumulated a maximum number of *potential* symbols for their flag designs, and perhaps once again in the form of a physical list, should designers narrow them down to a selection of those that will likely be the most purpose-suited. And lastly, when all of the carefully-chosen ingredients for their recipe are ready to hand, flag designers can begin to bake. They can experiment with alterations of their recipe, with adjustments to its ingredients and to its portions. They can conduct taste tests amongst their families and friends to solicit feedback, or even to gather suggestions for all-new recipes. Ideally they will be allowed a period of six months to a year to play with their recipes, before they reach the contest submission deadline and present a selection of their finest cakes. That is by no means an exorbitant amount of time for the seeds of flag design ideas to fully germinate and to bear fruit, if the reader will forgive the mixed metaphors, and any really good flag contest will be structured with that understanding. There should be no frenzied rush to select a flag that will itself become a cherished symbol of those whom it represents, possibly for centuries.

To paraphrase something that Frederick Brownell once said, there is no copyright on the way that a flag design will be perceived. That is all well and good, but pithy adages are of little practical use to aspiring flag designers, who will be more keen to know the actual *methods* that they can use to design flags that will be perceived *positively*. Readers may recall that Brownell also said that a flag design should *"...find its way into the hearts and minds of the population at large, and became a unifying symbol."* They may also remember the similar sentiments of several other flag scholars, including Philippe Bondurand and Whitney Smith, who respectively said, *"The* first *quality of a flag...is that it must please those it represents"*, and, *"The essential idea is to create...something that makes people say, 'That's great!'."* Again, these statements and others like them express the true main goal of flag design.

The best road that modern-day flag designers can travel to *reach* that goal is the one that is paved with strong, clear, and abundant symbolism. Brian Cham was on to something when he quoted the late American film critic Roger Ebert, who once said, *"If you have to ask what it symbolizes, it didn't."* The brand-new flag design, on being seen for the very first time by those for whom it is intended, will not have the advantages of long-standing historical familiarity and tradition. It can rarely afford the luxury of ambiguous symbolism, like that presented by simple bicolours and tricolours. It may not get away with displaying stylised symbols, when their very stylisation might make them seem logo-like. It can fill its borders with an attractive arrangement of geometric shapes, but it cannot force those shapes to have specific symbolic meanings for a culture in which they have never previously held such meanings. It can invent altogether new symbols, but it cannot expect its viewers to see them as anything but mysteries. If it excludes every one of the traditional symbols of the culture that it is intended for, it will likely be thought obtuse. If it includes *only* one of the traditional symbols of the culture that it is intended for, it will have wasted an opportunity that another flag design may take full advantage of, leaving it outdone and utterly forgotten. It can, in short, restrict itself to the simplest forms of symbolism possible, but only at the risk of neglecting the strengths that more complex forms of symbolism often afford. Calls for a new flag are relatively rare. With luck, designers *may* produce one by taking the narrow, pothole-plagued path that GFBF has cobbled together, but their odds will be better if they travel the multi-lane motorway that this denouncement has mapped.

SIDEBAR TWO: *GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG HYPOCRISY*

In a sharply satirical song-and-dance number from the 1982 comedy film *"The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas"*, the late great character actor Charles Durning brilliantly summed up the shtick of every duplicitous politician that the world has ever produced. However, wearing a hat in two directions at the same time is not the exclusive ploy of politicians. It is every bit as impossible to definitively pin down what the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has actually preached within the pages of his pamphlet, let alone what he really believes about flag design himself. His positions are so arbitrary, nebulous, and inconsistent that he is worthy of a dedicated satirical sketch of his own. Instead he will only get this sidebar, at least for the moment.

All of the complex flags that the author of GFBF has called 'bad' are those that a clear majority of his cronies in the vexillological community will probably also deem bad. When flags with complex designs are deemed 'good' by a clear majority of his cronies in the vexillological community, he simply goes along with them and calls those flags *"exceptions"* to the rules of GFBF. Because he cannot explain either **why** or **how** they are exceptions to his rules, he does not attempt to do so. Instead he merely offers a few irrelevant comments about them, just as crooked politicians reply to simple questions with non-answers, falsehoods, deflections, and innuendo. Pictured below are four flag designs in the 2020 revision of GFBF that a majority of other vexillologists clearly like, and that the author of GFBF has accordingly characterised as exceptions to his rules, along with listings of exactly which of his rules that each flag violates:

According to the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*,
the designs of these flags represent "exceptions" to his rules

U.S. state of Colorado

-Displays a letter
-Letter is non-reversible
-Has more than 3 colours

U.S. state of Maryland

-Has more than 3 colours
-Has a design that no child or adult could possibly draw from memory

U.S. state of California

-Displays lettering
-Lettering is non-reversible
-Has more than 3 colours
-Has a symbolic bear that is rendered realistically
-Has a design that could probably not be drawn from memory

Nation of South Africa

-Has more than 3 colours
-Has a design that could probably not be drawn from memory

And here are his 'explanations' of why and how these flags are exceptions to his rules:

> *"Colorado's 'C' is a stunning graphic element. Maryland's complicated heraldic quarters produce a memorable and distinctive flag. California's design recalls a historic relic from 1846. All six colours on South Africa's 1994 design have deep symbolic meaning."*

The lessons being taught are apparently that a complex flag design will be 'good' if it:

- has a stunning graphic element
- has heraldic elements that are memorable and distinctive
- recalls something historic that was a relic in 1846, or
- has six colours that all have deep symbolic meaning

The author of this sidebar is not entirely certain why the 'C' in the Colorado flag amounts to a 'stunning' graphic element, but she is willing to concede the point, as long as the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* will agree that the graphic element that is depicted on the flag of Turkmenistan is unquestionably as stunning as Colorado's 'C', if not exponentially more so. One also trusts that the heraldic element of the 'buffalo shield' that graces the Manitoba coat of arms is 'memorable and distinctive' enough to make the flag of Manitoba as good as that of Maryland. Now that these things have been pointed out to the author of GFBF, his opinions of the flags of Turkmenistan and Manitoba will surely be revised.

All of the flags of the Beys of Tunis certainly qualify as 'historic relics', and one them waved in 1846, in the same year as the original 'bear flag' that the current design of the California flag is supposedly based upon. Also, there are apparently no fabric examples of either of these two relic flags still in existence, so they have *that* in common as well. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the California flag has a white field. The author of GFBF has made the astute observation that white fields on U.S. state flags are 'boring', as we have learned from his review of the flag of West Virginia, and in any event, background colours other than white will be 'more interesting', as we can gather from his review of the former flag of the French department of Loir-et-Cher. None of the flags of the Beys of Tunis ever had a 'white field shortcoming', so they are actually a leg up on the flag of California, but we needn't gild the lily. The flags of the Beys are obvious exceptions to GFBF's rules, and its author can henceforth only call them good.

One of the flags in GFBF that we have not yet mentioned is the national flag of the Commonwealth of Dominica, an actual sewn-up version of which has been depicted at the bottom of this page. Here is how the author of GFBF reviews the flag of Dominica:

> *"By using ALL six basic flag colours, this flag creates unnecessary cost and complexity. Who can see the parrot's red and black eye?"*

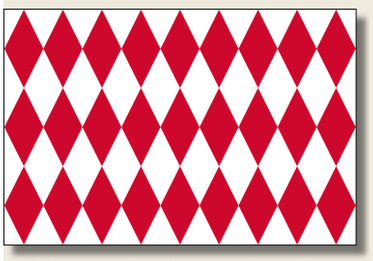
Elsewhere in GFBF he says that, *"The basic flag colours are red, blue, green, black, yellow, and white",* and that purple, grey, and orange are also sometimes used. The flag of Dominica uses red, green, black, yellow, and white, but it uses purple instead of blue, because much of the plumage of the sisserou parrot in its centred disc is purple. The sisserou only exists in Dominica, and as the national bird it is obviously symbolic. The flag uses a bit of orange for the parrot's beak and talons, and it uses brown, which is just darkened orange, for the branch on which the parrot is perched. According to reliable sources here, here, and here, each of the six main colours of the flag has a deep symbolic meaning. Readers who want to know the details can follow the links. If they do, they will learn that the flag's ring of stars is numerically symbolic of the country's ten parishes, and that the three coloured stripes that form its cross are numerically symbolic of the Christian Trinity. Thus the flag of Dominica is a symphony of symbolism. And *we* can see the parrot's red and black eye.

If readers will now visit the reliable sources here and here, they will learn that, in contrast to the colours in the flag of Dominica, and directly contradicting what the author of GFBF has said, the six colours in the flag of South Africa have never had any particular symbolic meanings. Moreover, the flag's creator, Frederick Brownell, never intended its colours to have any particular symbolic meanings, and South African authorities have even *discouraged* the assignment of particular meanings to them. Doesn't say much for the 'flag scholarship' of the author of GFBF, does it?

To summarise: According to the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, a flag design that uses six colours will be good if all of its colours are deeply symbolic. Therefore the flag of Dominica must be 'good', and the flag of South Africa must be 'bad'. Also, he says that a flag design with six colours will create unnecessary cost and complexity, but apparently this caveat will only apply when the colours of the flag are not deeply symbolic, so the flag of Dominica is still good, and the flag of South Africa is still bad. Moreover, if one wants to *equitably* apply the profound lessons of GFBF, one should revisit the flag of California to suggest that its boring white field colour be changed to a more interesting hue, and perhaps also to ask, *"Who can see the bear's red tongue?"*

Exposing additional GFBF hypocrisy is easy. For example, we can consider what it has to say about the flag of Indonesia: *"Except for its proportions, this flag is exactly the same as Monaco's (which had it first), but there is no connection between the two countries. Upside-down it is the same as Poland or as Cantabria, Spain!"* With that as our starting point, we can identify other relationships, although we will omit exclamation points. Upside-down, the flag of Monaco must *also* be the same as the flags of Poland and Cantabria, so by that criterion it is obviously every bit as 'bad' as the flag of Indonesia. We can deduce that the flags of Poland and Cantabria must be identical to each other, and that upside-down they will also be the same as the flags of Indonesia and Monaco, so by these tokens they are both bad as well. Thus by the logic of the author of GFBF, one is forced to conclude that all four of the flags are bad. One who bothers to do the research will learn that Monaco's bicolour has one of the 'automatic' flag designs that heraldic convention dictated in the mid-nineteenth century, whereas Indonesia's flag has a design that dates from the thirteenth, so ***who*** had the flag design ***first*** again? Regardless, nobody owns colours, and it is doubtful that a bicolour flag can be legally copyrighted. All four flags please their owners, so what is the real issue? If Monaco were truly upset about the situation, it could easily bestow official status on its already-existing alternative flag, which is arguably far more distinctive and attractive anyway.

The coat of arms of Monaco



Monaco's alternative flag

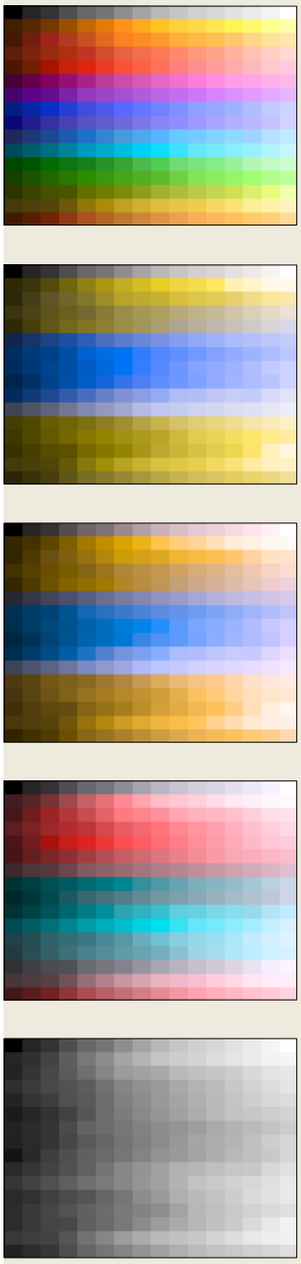
The Ballad of the Author of *GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG* (verse one)
Set to the tune of *"The Sidestep"*, from "*The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*"

Flag designers,
I can tell you:
I'm an expert, yessiree.
I assure you,
and I mean it,
GFBF's rules are plain as they can be.
So use one symbol,
limit colours,
and do not use let-ter-ing.
All the great flags,
they are simple,
save for all great flags that have complexity.

Oo, I found my fame by being two-faced.
What did I say? I don't know, but I was right.
Ya-hoo! The mugs and dupes believe what I say,
even when what I say is that day is night.

3. A good flag design does not need to have its colours limited to a maximum of two or three. There is no valid reason to restrict a flag's colours to three, nor even to twelve, nor must a flag's colours be selected from a limited palette, given that standard flag fabrics and flag printing inks are available in a broad spectrum of colours . . .

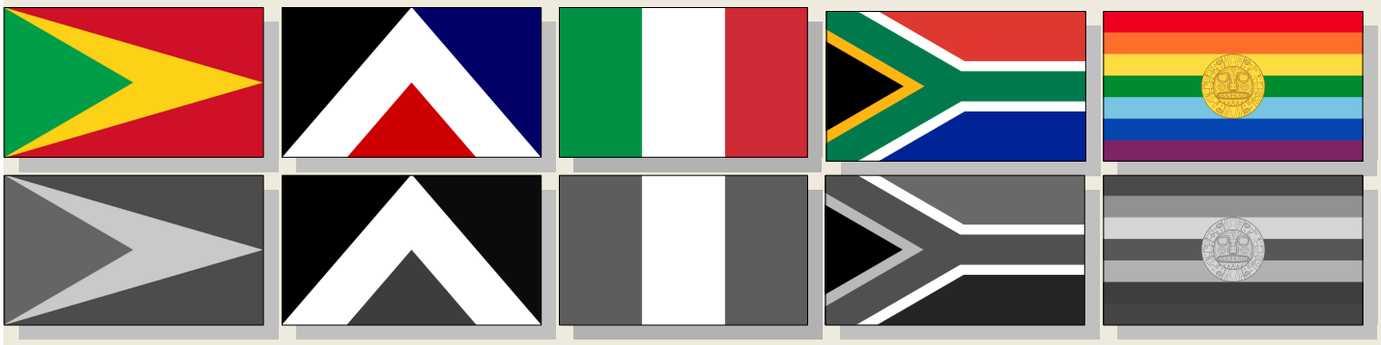
As one part of its rationale for limiting the number of colours in a flag design to three, *Good Flag, Bad Flag* says that *"More than four colours are hard to distinguish..."*. That is a statement from which absolutely nothing credible can be parsed. The normal human eye is capable of distinguishing between some ten million colours, although every normal human brain will perceive those colours somewhat differently. The flag designer contemplating colour choices will often simply choose colours that when adjacently placed have high contrast in terms of normal colour vision, although there may be cases where more subtle colour juxtapositions may be useful as well, which will be explored further on. No flag designer needs to have a scholarly knowledge of human colour perception, but a few basics are worthy of consideration.



Depicted to the left is a chart of 256 colours, most or all of which will be distinguishable to those who have normal colour vision. Below it are four charts that simulate how the same 256 colours may appear to those who experience various forms of colour vision deficiency, less accurately referred to as colour blindness. The second and third charts respectively simulate how colours may appear to those with the most severe forms of red and green deficiency, which in either case make reds and greens the most difficult colours to distinguish, but blues and yellows less so. Since most colour vision impairments manifest as some degree of difficulty in distinguishing between red and green, almost all nations incorporate various conventions of sizing, vertical and horizontal order, special tinting, or other provisions for traffic lights, so that they will provide extra clues about their colours for those affected. The fourth chart simulates the rarer severe blue deficiency, for which yellows and darker blues are difficult to distinguish, with reds and lighter blues less so, and the final chart simulates a very rare form of colour perception deficiency, monochromacy, in which the world is essentially perceived in greyscale, although of course in vastly more shades between black and white than the 256 possible shades of greyscale images. Greyscale will warrant a few extra words, because as the *second* part of its rationale for limiting the number of colours in a flag design to three, *Good Flag, Bad Flag* claims that *"A good flag should also reproduce well in greyscale."* This is a supposed bit of flag design wisdom that is often parroted, yet even the most cursory visual comparison between the top and bottom charts to the left should reveal the futility of trying to design a flag that has both high colour contrast and high greyscale contrast. Nevertheless, greyscale still allows a great deal of visual discrimination. Thus the colours of any flag will usually tend to be perceptibly different when rendered in greyscale, although those differences may be slight. The upshot is that flag designers should only be concerned with colour contrasts, and not at all with greyscale contrasts.

Probably the only exception would be for a case in which a flag is designed for an association of persons living with visual monochromacy, for whom a greyscale flag would be utterly symbolic. As the previous section of this denouncement has already explained, when one hears a supposed flag design expert say, as does the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, that flag designers should consider how the colours of their designs will appear when seen in greyscale, one is only hearing the words of a quack.

Perhaps a useful thing for flag designers to remember, however, is that nearly everyone in the world, no matter their possible visual impairments, can visually distinguish between blues, yellows, reds, blacks, and whites, although they may not in all cases perceive them as those particular colours. In terms of near-universal discrimination, then, these five colours can be considered to be the most equitable for use in flags.



Providing more examples of exceptions disproving rules, the flags of South Africa and of Cusco, Peru, as depicted at the top right of the image above, are those perhaps most often cited by simplicity advocates as not needing to adhere to a three-colour stricture. Even the finalised version of Whitney Smith's Guyana Flag, proudly displayed on the front cover of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* as being one of the 'good ones', incorporates five colours, as does yet another of those flags, that of the Central African Republic. Incidentally, Smith's *actual* design for the Guyana Flag is depicted at the top left in the image above. He was fortunate to be able to retain credit for the final adopted flag, since unnamed parties obviously made several changes to his original design, as flag selection committees have sometimes arrogantly done during flag contests, when they have been as autocratic and unethical as the author of GFBF prefers them to be.

As still a *third* part of its rationale for limiting the number of colours in a flag design to three, *Good Flag, Bad Flag* states that, *"Flag fabric comes in a relatively limited number of colours."* Actually a full spectrum of at least seventy-five colours of 'Pantone Matching System' (PMS) nylon flag fabrics are commercially available for the manufacture of sewn-together flags, as shown below. Pantone colour standards will be explained later in greater detail, in this section of the denouncement and in others.

Similar ranges of standard colours are available for all other fabrics that are used for making sewn, or appliquéd flags, including lustrous satin fabrics, but this is not to say that seventy-five colours is the limit. There are some manufacturers of appliquéd flags who lower their costs and maintain tighter product quality by dyeing their own fabrics, producing virtually perfect colour matches for any of the *hundreds* of PMS inks that can be used to manufacture flags by using screen-printing processes. PMS inks do not define flag colour limits either, because for custom digital 'ink-jet-like' printing or for dye-sublimation processes, the available colours number literally in the millions. This means that nowadays even high-resolution colour photos can be easily printed on flags.

TO BE CONTINUED . . .

The full content of this denouncement of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* will be presented in several stages as the remaining life and motivations of its author will allow. It would have been preferable to present the entire document all at once, but if the reader will forgive the analogy, the lies of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* amount to a pandemic, requiring an initial dose of a vaccine to be administered immediately. Booster doses will follow.

4. Good flag designs can include lettering, seals, and other complex and non-reversible content. The use of complex symbolic content such as words, names, mottoes, coats of arms, geographical outlines, constellations, seals, or other non-reversible features is often fully justified . . .

Writing is the supreme form of symbolism. We think, pray, and dream in the symbolic languages that we can speak, hear, read, and write. A picture is only worth a thousand words to those who can *think* of a thousand words when they look at it or remember it.

5. Efficient and economical manufacture is possible for virtually any flag, no matter its complexity. Twenty-first century flag production methods accommodate such complexities as abundant colour, intricate features, and non-reversible content with few difficulties or added costs . . .

6. The committees of flag change initiatives and of flag design contests should not judge designs. The finalists and the winning candidate of any flag design contest should only be chosen by a majority of those whom the flag will represent. In an era of voting by post or by Internet, ceding judgements to a small appointed committee or to a jury will only corrupt a selection process with subjective biasses . . .

See "*Mistakes and Lessons of the 2015/2016 New Zealand Flag Referendums*"

7. Finding fault with any flag equates to belittling those whom the flag symbolically represents. No guide to flag design proves anything by criticising existing flags save the pretensions of its author and of its publisher. All of the flags put down by GFBF can just as easily be praised . . .

See "*When Vexillologists are Vexations*"

AFTERWORD

"Three men make a tiger."

[1] expert /ˈɛkˌspɚt/ *noun*

plural **experts**

Britannica Dictionary definition of EXPERT

[count]

: a person who has special skill or knowledge relating to a particular subject

- a computer *expert*
- She was an acknowledged *expert* on/in child development.
- an *expert* at planning dinner parties

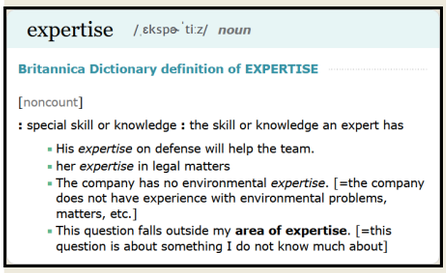
[2] expert /ˈɛkˌspɚt/ *adjective*

Britannica Dictionary definition of EXPERT

[more expert; most expert]

: having or showing special skill or knowledge because of what you have been taught or what you have experienced

- We received some *expert* advice.
- an *expert* poker player
- an *expert* opinion



expertise /ˌɛkspɚˈtiːz/ *noun*

Britannica Dictionary definition of EXPERTISE

[noncount]

: special skill or knowledge **:** the skill or knowledge an expert has

- His *expertise* on defense will help the team.
- her *expertise* in legal matters
- The company has no environmental *expertise*. [=the company does not have experience with environmental problems, matters, etc.]
- This question falls outside my **area of expertise**. [=this question is about something I do not know much about]

When did having five subjective opinions come to mean having expertise? Expertise is based on special knowledge or skill. Only the gullible, the stupid, or the deceitful will characterise a handful of tenuous opinions as expertise. Granted, persons who have special knowledge relating to the history, symbolism, and uses of flags can be called 'flag experts'. There is no question that the late American flag scholar Dr. Whitney Smith, for example, was a flag expert. The Scottish flag scholar Graham Bartram is a flag expert. But was Smith also a 'flag *design* expert'? Is Bartram?

In the early 1960s, Smith had the political acumen to anticipate Guyana's eventual independence from the U.K. He mailed a speculative flag design to Guyana, and in 1966 they used it for their national flag, giving him no credit. And why would they? Not completely keen on Smith's original design, they had slightly modified its colours and geometry. Smith complained and was eventually credited, but he had obviously *not* been proven a flag design expert.

Bartram has perhaps designed more officially adopted flags than any other flag scholar, living or dead, including a speculative flag of Antarctica that has become the de facto standard for that non-nation, relegating Smith's earlier speculative flag into a footnote, and fittingly, since in comparison to Bartram's it was an irredeemable orange eyesore. Bartram is a good and modest man, and one who has never called himself a flag design expert. And why would he? Most of his designs were simply commissions that were due to his practically official standing in the U.K. as a flag scholar and a heraldic artist. He had the knowledge and skill to properly fill his commissions, but doing so did not make him a flag design expert, capable of designing perfect flags for anyone, anywhere.

On extremely short notice, the South African heraldic scholar Frederick Brownell came up with a wildly colourful and completely non-symbolic flag design for Nelson Mandela to wave over his 1994 presidential inauguration, but neither he nor Mandela had any genuine confidence in the design until it proved a hit with the South African populace. That was just down to luck. It had nothing to do with so-called flag design expertise.

Go through the list of 'Prominent vexillographers' on Wikipedia's Vexillography page, and twig to the obscurity of most of the names of the 'one hit wonders' listed there. The Aussie Tony Burton is conspicuously missing, but he too only filled a commission. Regardless, a successful flag adoption or two does not make one a flag design expert. How could it, when nearly every flag that is flying on this planet was not chosen by majority vote, but was instead mandated into existence, or was designed automatically according to heraldic conventions, or in some cases just evolved into being over time?

Persons who have special knowledge or skill relating to flag manufacture can be called flag manufacturing experts. Their expertise comes from actually manufacturing flags. If there truly were persons who have special knowledge or skill relating to flag design, they would accordingly be flag design experts, but they would have to *obtain* their special knowledge or skill from actually designing flags, flags that various groups of persons would officially adopt to represent themselves. Flag design experts would also

need to be skilled enough to design flags for any group of persons, flags that those groups of persons would always be at least theoretically *willing* to officially adopt. The author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has never designed any flags, officially adopted or not, nor does he have a greater capacity for designing such flags than any other person on the street, who has never even heard of him or of his absurd little pamphlet. Neither does he nor any other person who exists have the skill to design flags that any group of persons would always be at least theoretically willing to officially adopt. Flag design experts simply do not exist. Even persons who have designed officially adopted flags do not become flag design experts, nor have the best of them ever called themselves so.

Great flags have been designed for centuries by royals, dictators, revolutionaries, heralds, government committees, and unsung individuals who never required guidance from anyone who claimed themselves to be, or who had been reputed by others to be, a flag design expert. It has only been in the first two decades of the twenty-first century that a small group of pretentious flag enthusiasts have managed to dupe a fair percentage of the world's population into believing that such expertise actually exists, and that it exists primarily amongst 'vexillologists', notwithstanding that the bar for obtaining that title is low enough to include those who just collect flags as a hobby. So if one does an Internet search for ‘flag design expert’, guess whose name soon appears.

In an article that the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* wrote in early 2001, he stated, *"One doesn’t need to be a flag expert to recognise a good flag design."* Fair enough, but surely the set of persons who can recognise a good flag without the benefit of flag expertise would also include persons who actually design flags, whom in fact one would expect to have an intuitive edge over the subset of those who have *not* designed them. If flag designers are every bit as capable of recognising good flag designs, even whilst they are designing them, what possible need could they have for the external guidance of any so-called flag design expert such as the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*? Accordingly one could argue that he not only admits that the *recognition* of good flag designs requires no flag design expertise, but that the *making* of good flag designs does not require it either, even if such expertise actually existed, and was not in fact a myth.

By his own admission then, his *Good Flag, Bad Flag* pamphlet, which was published mere weeks before he made his statement, was and is purposeless, as is by extension any other guide purporting to teach 'universal principles of good flag design'. All a flag designer needs is an ability to recognise a good flag design, and that does not require the fairy dust of flag expertise. Like the flag designers of centuries past, those of today merely need to use the judgements of their own minds, which besides some luck was all that Whitney Smith, Graham Bartram, Frederick Brownell, and every other successful flag designer that one can name has actually needed when they made their flag designs.

According to the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, the fabric of his pamphlet is woven from universal principles and from compiled wisdom, but in truth it is woven from air, and it is as imaginary as the cloth in the classic fairy tale “*The Emperor's New Clothes*”. Just as in that allegory, in which swindlers posing as weavers convince an emperor and his subjects that anyone who cannot see the cloth that they have pretended to weave is worthy of derision, the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, posing as a flag design expert, has convinced people across the world that great flags always have simple designs, in spite of evidence to the contrary that they can easily see with their own eyes, and that if they have not woven their flags with the fabric of his pamphlet, their flags are worthy of mockery, and by extension themselves. Because his lies have been so often repeated, they have given him the undeserved fame that he so long ago planned out for himself.

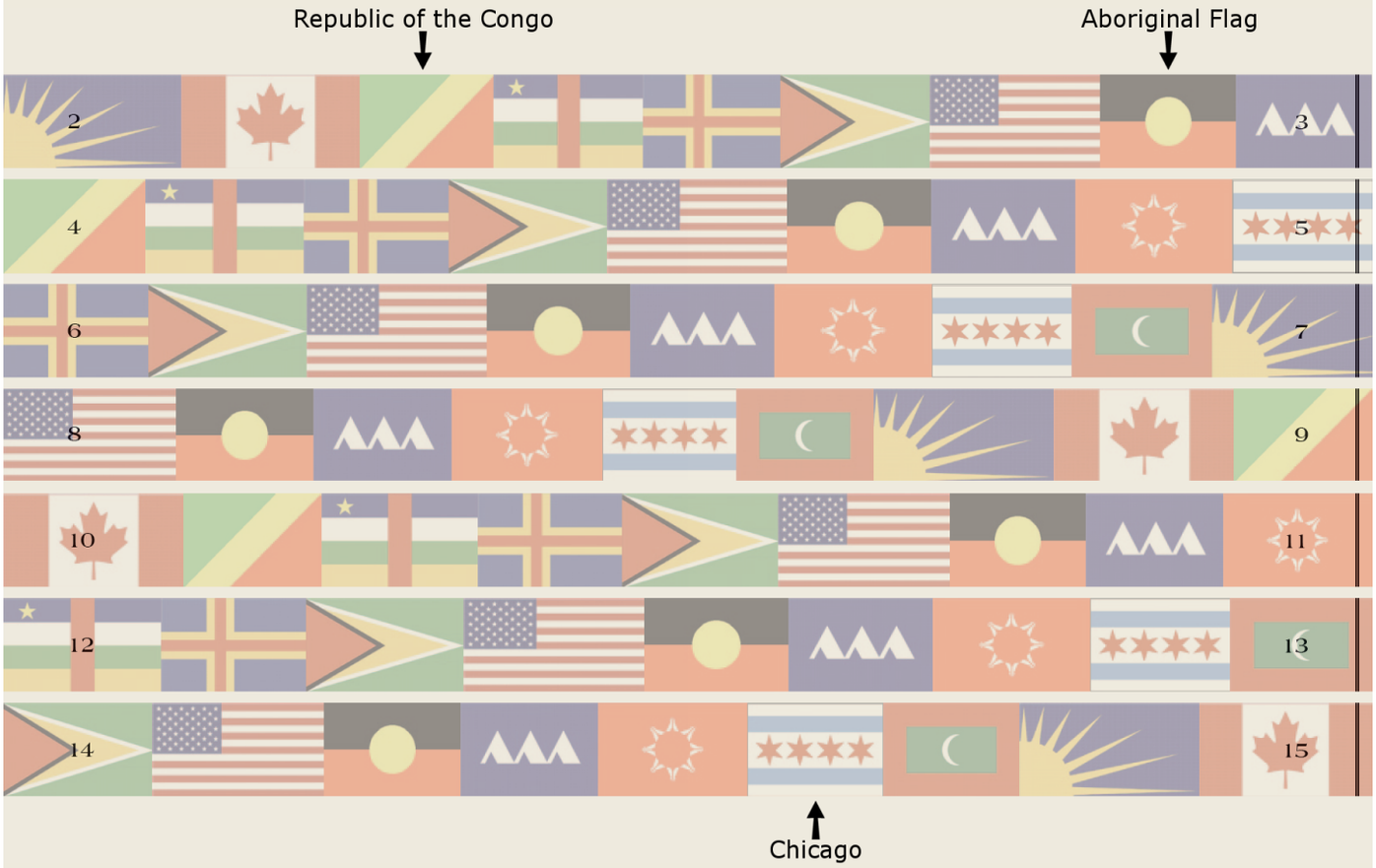
ADDENDUM ONE: *IDENTITIES OF ANCILLARY FLAGS* (in GFBF and in this denouncement)

From left-to-right and top-to-bottom, the front cover of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* displays designs for the following flags: Guyana, Yamagata Prefecture (Japan), Canada, Ireland Sunburst (largely historical), Oglala Sioux/Lakota (U.S. indigenous tribe), Central African Republic, Maldives, Åland Islands (Finland), and United States of America

From left-to-right and top-to-bottom, the front cover of this denouncement of GFBF displays designs for the following flags: Tibet, Tiwi Island (Australia), Taiwan Province (Island of Taiwan, governing nation disputed), Brazil, Sydney (Australia), American Samoa, British Columbia, Hela Province (variant, PNG), and Coquimbo region (Chile)

All of the flags on both covers have good designs, notwithstanding what the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* might say to the contrary. Readers, choose your truths wisely.
In both the 2006 and 2013 revisions of GFBF, the bottom edge of each pair of the pamphlet's interior pages displays a decorative strip of flag designs that has been

graphically 'faded'. The strip 'shifts' for each consecutive pair of pages, always displaying only nine of the ten sequential designs that it actually contains. Seven of the designs are for flags on GFBF's front cover. The other three are designs for the flags: Republic of the Congo, Aboriginal Flag (Australia), and Chicago (U.S. state of Illinois). The consecutive shifts of the strip are illustrated below. Every shift places a given design in a different relative location along the length of the strip. Each strip hides one of seven designs, but always leaves three designs visible: United States of America, Aboriginal Flag, and Yamagata Prefecture. It seems probable that the display of the USA flag in every strip was intentional, either on the part of the author of the pamphlet or on the part of its designer, with the Aboriginal Flag and Yamagata's being incidental.



In the 2020 revision of GFBF, the strip does not shift for the consecutive pairs of its interior pages. It is otherwise the same as the strip in the 2006 and 2013 revisions, with the exception that the Aboriginal Flag has been replaced with the flag of Jamaica, which also appears on GFBF's front cover. Flanked with four designs to each side, the design of the flag of the United States of America is saluted at the centre of the strip, corresponding to where a fold will be located in printed issues of the GFBF pamphlet.

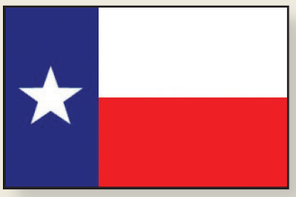
One suspects that the Aboriginal Flag was replaced because its copyright holder, Harold Thomas, was fed up with its presumptuous and wholly inappropriate fourteen-year use as a mere decoration by the white American author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, without even listing its name, much less explaining its deep symbolism to Australian Indigenous. Then too, the corporate entity that Thomas authorised long ago to licence all of the flag's commercial uses may have informed the publisher of GFBF, the North American Vexillological Association, which has sold printed copies of GFBF since 2006, that it owed fourteen years of unpaid license fees. One certainly hopes so.

(2024 note: In 2022 the Australian government bought the Aboriginal Flag copyright)

ADDENDUM TWO: *ANSWER KEY FOR THE GFBF* 'TEST YOURSELF' *FLAG QUIZ*

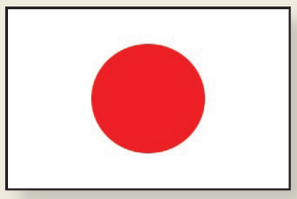
Depicted below are all of the flag designs that have appeared in the GFBF flag quiz. The top three appear in older GFBF revisions, and the rest appear in the 2020 revision. From left-to-right and from top-to-bottom, the designs are those of the following flags: Gruyère district (Switzerland), Nevada (U.S. state), Jura canton (Switzerland), Texas (U.S. state), Brunei, Comoros (historic), Jolly Rodger (stereotype and/or amalgam of pirate flag), Burundi National Unity (co-national flag of Burundi), Georgia (U.S. state, historic), Pocatello (U.S. state of Idaho, historic), Iowa (U.S. state), Japan, Pocatello (U.S. state of Idaho), Royal Prussia (historic), Arizona (U.S. state), Northern Samar (province of Philippines, correct field colour debatable), Washington, D.C., Quebec (Canadian province), Ensign of Luxembourg (civil ensign and air ensign), and Jamaica.



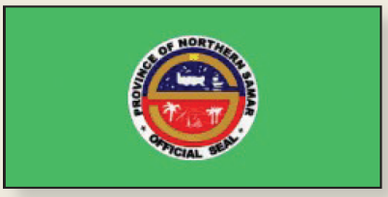





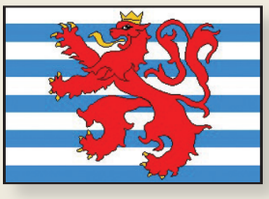













This is not a depiction of a white flag of surrender, but a space in which GFBF's author encourages his readers to draw their own flags, presumably by using coloured pencils or crayons, adding an additional childish touch to his already infantile 'quiz'. In printed versions of the GFBF pamphlet, the actual dimensions of this space approximate those of a wide postal stamp. Elsewhere GFBF's author, Roman Mars, and other so-called experts have provided evidence of their charlatanry by suggesting that flags should be designed in small spaces like this, so as to force them to be simple.

The essential conceit of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* is that any flag design can be judged by simply subjecting it to an arbitrary set of evaluative criteria, or more precisely that ***anyone*** is both qualified and allowed to judge ***any*** flag, simply by looking at it, with no real need to know who or what the flag represents, nor the flag's symbolic worth to whomever or to whatever it represents, nor any details of the flag's social or political history, nor even so much as the flag's name, simply by noting how well or how poorly its design accords with the five guidelines that are posited by *Good Flag, Bad Flag*.

. . . And also that such judgements, for certain types of individuals, can be heaps of fun. A note on the back cover of the 2020 revision of GFBF says, *"It can be tempting to use these principles to denigrate poorly designed flags."* In addition to its false premise that the 'principles' of GFBF can be used to *determine* whether a flag is poorly designed, the above sentence implies that the temptation to use GFBF to denigrate flags should be resisted, but its author has his tongue firmly in his cheek, because he does not *actually* discourage such denigration, and his scorn of fifteen flags within his pamphlet suggests by his example that such denigration should *not* be discouraged.

By ending his pamphlet with his insidious 'quiz', the author of GFBF masterfully moves the needle to full *encouragement* of flag denigration. He provides no information about any of the flags in the quiz, not even their names. Thus the quiz is the ultimate embodiment of the conceit that is described by the paragraph at the top of this page. Its obvious message is, *"C'mon, give **in** to the temptation ... go ahead and judge the flags of others ... use this handy quiz to get some **practice** at it ... it's fun, you'll see."*

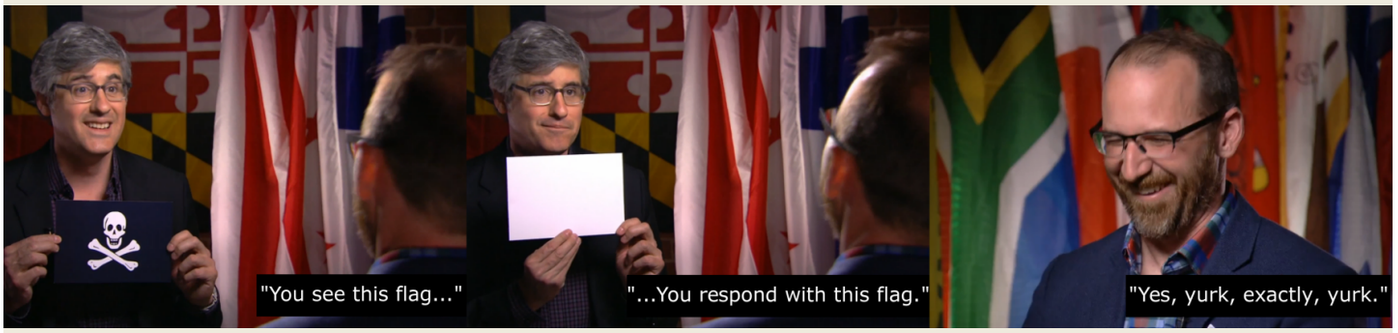
By the only criteria for judging a flag's design that are actually valid, meaning that (1) the design is acceptable to those for whom the flag is intended, and that (2) the design does not blatantly condone or symbolise human evils, the author of this addendum to her denouncement of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* will now give her 'answer key' to its quiz: All but four of the flags have good designs. The four that do *not* have good designs are: the historic flags of Georgia and Pocatello, the Jolly Rodger, and the flag of Japan.

The design of the historic flag of the U.S. state of Georgia included a small depiction of the Confederate Battle Flag, a symbol of racial hatred and repression. A clear majority of the citizens of Georgia rejected it on that basis, and they gave themselves a new flag.

The design of the historic flag of Pocatello was a perfectly good city logo that someone inappropriately slapped onto some flag fabric. It never waved widely, and the general citizenry were unaware of its brief existence until the manoeuvres of the author of GFBF brought it media attention, embarrassing Pocatello into holding a contest to select an *actual* city flag, which the 2020 GFBF has also included in its quiz. Because the new flag was not chosen by a public vote but by a committee, we cannot know if Pocatello's citizens have actually embraced it, but let us give it the benefit of the doubt.

The design of the Jolly Rodger is basically a stereotypical amalgam of some of the actual flags of high seas piracy that existed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although they have been trivialised in modern times, pirate flags in their *own* times were serious symbols of threat to ship-borne life and property, and the pirates who flew them were usually not above murder, rape, torture, arson, property destruction, and sundry mayhem. Pirates who were apprehended were often hanged, and their bodies were occasionally publicly gibbeted, so as to discourage others from ever considering entry into the 'profession'. In one of his media interviews, Roman Mars, who may be the most sycophantic of all of the cronies of the author of GFBF, has

opined that the Jolly Rodger has a good design: *"It's a great piece of design, because what it was meant to do was to scare people so much that they didn't fight."* That is a rather odd criterion for 'greatness', given that flags of terrorism try for the same effect.



Those readers who have seen the flag of ISIL have probably noticed that it looks a bit amateurish, with its white design seeming to have been hand-painted onto black cloth. That has been done intentionally, so as to have a certain kind of psychological effect. In reality, the flag is mass-produced by using standard screen printing methods. One wonders if many ISIL flags even have small tags that say, "Made in China". In any event, the intended message of the ISIL flag is *"Surrender or die"*, which is basically no different than the message intended by the ancestral flags of the modern Jolly Rodger. Possibly one day the flag of ISIL will be just as trivialised, and it will be used as a supposedly innocuous decoration for such things as costume-themed children's parties and the like, in much the same way that the Jolly Rodger is used now. Yet piracy is a real thing that is still very much with us. Today's pirates do not fly quaint 'skull-and-crossbones' flags, but their evils match those of the pirates of old. The genteel should be circumspect about what they obliviously trivialise, as should so-called flag scholars.

Elsewhere this denouncement has explained why Japan does not have a good flag. Readers who are open to that judgement can find additional supportive information here, here, here, here, and in many other places. Readers who did not previously accept that judgement are urged to reconsider it now. If ever there was a nation that should conduct a fully democratic contest to change its flag, it is Japan. New Zealand will always be the first to have tried, but Japan could well be the first to succeed.

One cannot judge a flag by simply looking at it. Readers who do not agree with any of the judgements of this 'answer key' are certainly entitled to their erroneous opinions.

The Ballad of the Author of *GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG* (verses two and three, with coda)
Set to the tune of "The Sidestep", from "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas"

Now, my good friends,
in my pamphlet,
there are five rules I've 'compiled',
but like Moses,
with his tablets,
I have only brought down wisdom from on-high,
And so, my good friends,
follow my rules,
for your flag and con-test, too.
If you'll only
do them my way,
then the credit's mine for everything you do.

Oo, I love the way the hoi polloi will
drink my patent medicine and pass it 'round,
'cause soon, they've been so snookered by my snake oil,
I can have those clods convinced that up is down.

You can tick off
my commandments
on the fingers of one hand.
Rules of others
are less strident,
but the five I've preached are best in all the land.
And so, my good friends,
follow my rules,
as you pick flags to de-ride,
and remember,
no exceptions,
all except for those my mates and I decide.

Oo, it's fun to flog the flags of others.
Use my rules to troll them on your so-cial net.
Lam-poon flags of your sisters and your brothers.
Toss the Golden Rule, *that* rule you should for-get.

Oo, I've hoodwinked suckers with my pamphlet...
Oo, they're too bamboozled to see through it...

See how easy-peasily I've led...them...on.

ADDENDUM THREE: *AN OPEN LETTER TO ROMAN MARS*

Mister Mars,

At the time of this writing, we are witnessing levels of national despotism that we naively thought the near-eighty years of arrangements and events since World War II had largely put paid to. At the 'Hitler' end of the continuum of world dictatorships, Putin may currently hold the place of ultimate dishonour, but there are at least as many other contenders for that spot as there are cards in a deck, and beyond those there are countless 'smaller' despots like Trump, who endlessly manoeuvre at the edges of the complacent democracies that they and their followers have so badly frayed. From them, the continuum extends all the way down to the little 'teapot' despots such as the author of "*Good Flag, Bad Flag"* and yourself. The demon-spawn, Putin-level despot, who uses his powers of position and of propaganda to murderously attempt to force a sovereign nation to come under his thumb, is different only in degree from the picayune, pretentious flag design despot such as you, who uses his prominence and his media access to attempt to force the designs of all flags, everywhere, into alignment with his personal aesthetic predilections, however ludicrous his predilections may be. Sir, you are no champion of good flag design, no praiseworthy, valiant 'vexillonnaire', as your pompous badge declares, but just another smug maligner of the flags of others.

Thus far your greatest disservice to flags has probably been your TED Talk of early 2015, in which you prostrated yourself at the feet of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag ("He's a flag expert, he's a totally awesome guy."),* and kowtowed to his preposterous 'five principles of flag design' as if under some hypnotic spell. Otherwise you simply mocked a selection of flags that *you* think are badly designed, praised a selection of flags that *you* think are well designed, and never once had the humility to acknowledge that flags that have never even represented you are neither *obligated* to please you nor obligated to *change* to please you. Oh, you were a good showman all right, keeping your audience tittering with a sprinkling of laugh-getters like 'shove it up your ass' and 'SOB flags', as well as all of that self-serving codswallop about you being on a 'mission' to avert the 'scourge of bad flags' that 'must be stopped', such that by the mid-point of your spiel, when you scorned the flag of San Francisco, you had your audience firmly in the palm of your hand. Because the flag of San Francisco is one that *does* represent you, as the flag of your own home city, you certainly had a vested right to criticise its design, but only if you had presented your criticisms honestly, as personal opinions. Instead you pretended that your barbs were in accordance with universal flag design principles, which are a myth. The existence of those mythical principles was of course the underlying subterfuge of your entire presentation, but your audience swallowed it, and to such a degree that perhaps their greatest bout of laughter and applause came, inexplicably, after your playback of the author of GFBF quipping: *"If you need to write the name of what you are representing on your flag, your symbolism has failed."*

Are you truly so dense as to believe that written place-names on flags are failures of symbolism, when written language is the most powerful and evocative form of symbolism that humanity has ever devised? One of your slides showed a selection of city flags, all of which were visually distinctive, and all but one of which clearly displayed a city name and/or a seal that included a city name, but you called them 'SOB' flags, ha-ha, and over your audience's chortling you said *"...and if you can't tell what city they go to, yeah, that's exactly the problem...",* a duplicity that even an 'alternative facts' lover like Trump would admire for the contradiction that it presents, since the 'problem' of recognising the city that a flag belongs to cannot be made easier

by removing the city's place-name. As you went on to mention, the Californian city of Anaheim did just that, following years of relentless derision by your sort, so now they have a shiny new flag that does *not* say 'Anaheim', and more power to them if they truly like it, but to infer that their new flag is *more* recognisably symbolic of their city than was their old flag is tantamount to claiming that the Sun has become the Moon. Save for those that are obscene, *all* forms of symbolism are valid in flag design, and frankly, only dolts say that *some* forms, such as lettering, are 'no-nos' that should be forbidden.

Lettering, seals, and shields are symbolic powerhouses that are absolutely ***not*** out of place on flags. On any waving flag, after but a few moments of observation, they will be every bit as discernible as any other forms of charges. The lie that the author of GFBF repeatedly tells, and that you and others repeatedly parrot, is that all flags with seal-like devices are visually identical, when the truth is just the opposite. Seals have an endless variety of sizes, shapes, colours, and compositions, and the backgrounds on which they are placed are likewise limitless in their patterns, shapes, and colours, facts that almost always make a flag that is charged with a seal *easy* to discern from others. Are there occasionally two flags with seals that are visually similar? Sure, but saying that all flags with seals are 'virtually indistinguishable' is made no more true by endless repetition than is claiming that Trump won the election, or that COVID-19 was a hoax, or that Putin's invasion of Ukraine has been a noble endeavour. Other than in some alternate, 'fiction is fact' universe, the hackneyed, 'seal-on-bedsheet/SOB' dig has all of the *real* humour of Bill Cosby's 'Spanish Fly' routine, or that of Chris Rock's ill-advised, Jada Pinkett Smith alopecia baldness joke during the 2022 Academy Awards fiasco.

I recently watched a translated video of Viktor Orbán's self-serving acceptance speech, following his win of Hungary's recent election. When he openly mocked Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and by extension the inexpressible suffering of all of the citizens of Ukraine, I could not help but think of the parallels to your witless 2015 TED Talk presentation. Are you incapable of understanding that insulting a flag equates to insulting its people?

I don't pretend to know you. You may have created countless, admirable things in your lifetime, but flags are definitely not amongst them. You have certainly made bank as a popular design critic, a role that you invented for yourself, but in that role you have merely critiqued things that *others* have created, including flags. Thus your position as a flag critic is always going to be a rung beneath that of even the lowest flag creator. Your flag collection hobby has not somehow morphed you into a flag design expert, and pretending that you are conveying wise and worthwhile guidelines from the poseur whom you have fawningly referred to as the person who 'wrote the book on flag design' is just an example of one pretentious fool deferring to another pretentious fool, the blind following the blind. Stop bending your knee to him. He and his sycophants have not ushered in a world of better flags, but only one with a surfeit of arrogant flag trolls.

Anne Onimous

15 May 2022

BACKPFEIFENGESICHT

ADDENDUM FOUR: *AN OPEN LETTER TO MARTIN JOUBERT*

Monsieur Joubert,

I will not give your censure the attention that I gave to that of Roman Mars, whose wider renown makes him a far more deleterious influence on flag design, and just as I did not pretend to fully know him, I will not pretend to fully know you, although one 'knows the tree by its fruit', as the saying goes, so I do know at least a bit about you, based on the 'fruit' that is your toadying 'expansion' of the fourteen-page compendium of falsehoods that is entitled "*Good Flag, Bad Flag*". Even so, in the larger scheme of things you are little more than another fly in the ointment, so my attention to you and to your open-source "*Modern Flag Design*" booklet will be commensurate.

According to the Internet, you are in your early 30s, your chief forte is graphic design, and you are steeped in a milieu of art and of art projects. Well done and good on ya, but at what point along your creative journey did you attain expertise in flag design? Did it follow your deep study of the subject, or because of a famous flag you designed, or was it sprinkled on you like fairy dust, as a result of your five-minute read of GFBF? One suspects that it was the latter, given that the conclusion of your booklet proclaims, *"Congratulations, you now know everything you should know about flag design..."*. How wondrously facile. If only expertise in all things could be so magically achieved.

Whatever the path that led you to become another sycophant of the author of GFBF, whose vile deceit is that one learns the principles of designing flags by maligning flags, your so-called 'expansion' of his pamphlet is little more than a verbatim parroting, albeit with your own, oh-so-clever barbs added here and there to effect an additional skewering of the perfectly good flag designs that it disparages. You have only avoided complete plagiarism by depicting well over another dozen complexly-designed flags, which you have insulted with new mockery, proving yourself to be just as much an expert on flag design as is the author of GFBF. Truly, *exactly* as much an expert. Topping it all off, your booklet is open-source, allowing other self-appointed experts to mock flags, so long as their mockery can be given the flimsiest veneer of a GFBF 'rule'.

Your booklet even manages, in certain ways, to actually out-do *Good Flag, Bad Flag*. Its critiques, for example, are peppered with twenty exclamation points, more than double the number used by the author of GFBF, serving to unquestionably validate your sage wisdom and cutting humour, just as they have done for him. Tell me, merely to satisfy my curiosity, do your spectacles fog up when your head is so far up his arse? Mate, for all I know you could be the greatest artist ever, but where flag design is concerned, you are just a gormless git, taking pride in a booklet that is nothing but an echo chamber of GFBF lies. Take it down from the Internet. Real parrots are far more intelligent than the human sort who mimic the fraud who wrote *Good Flag, Bad Flag*.

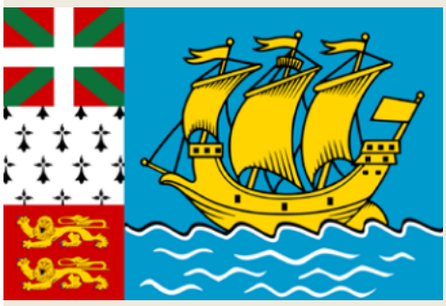
Anne Onimous

15 May 2022

THE NOSE KNOWS

ADDENDUM FIVE: *A BRIEF LOOK AT MARTIN JOUBERT'S ASININE BOOKLET*

Joubert is responsible for the abomination entitled *Modern Flag Design*, a booklet in which not only most of the so-called 'bad' flags in *Good Flag, Bad Flag* have been flogged anew, but in which more than a dozen other perfectly good flags have been given undeserved lashings. This addendum will defend a representative selection of the flags that Joubert's booklet has scorned. Each case will include the flag's name, the booklet's critique of the flag, and whatever defence of the flag that the author of this addendum thinks appropriate. One is tempted to assume that all of the critiques in the booklet have been written by Joubert, but because his booklet is open-source, it is possible that any number of the critiques have been written by nameless others, so the defences that this addendum offers will simply be addressed to a given flag's 'critic'. The three flags on this page are criticised in Joubert's booklet because they do not have simple designs. In service of the lie that simplicity is the foremost hallmark of good flag design, GFBF has already presented several flags that have complex designs, so calling even more such flags 'bad' can only serve to beat a dead horse that was never alive to begin with. One assumes, then, that the critics of the three flags below just wanted to show that they are as wise as the author of GFBF. They have succeeded. Moreover, they have inscribed their insipid commentaries in a booklet that, exactly like *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, contributes nothing of any worth to the topic of flag design.



Local flag of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon

"Attempting to recall the origin of most inhabitants of the islands, the flag of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, already very full, becomes unreadable - don't try to put flags within a flag." Critic: Flag designs are composed of symbols, but flags themselves are also symbols, good flags being good symbols, and great flags being great symbols. Nothing forbids the inclusion of images of symbolic flags in another flag's design. The local flag of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon is not 'unreadable', whatever meaning your non sequitur was intended to convey, nor is it unrecognisable. It is a completely distinctive, widely-used, and widely-loved flag that is abundantly meaningful to the people whom it represents, and in a wind it is utterly gorgeous.

Flag of Nyandarua County, Kenya

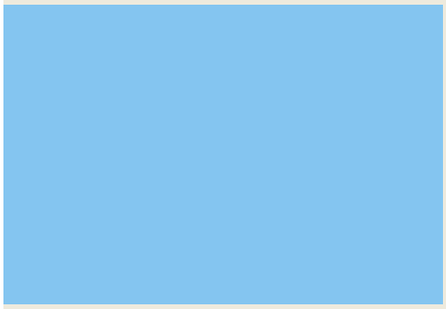
"The flag centres the county emblem on a green background. The corners have curved stripes of white, blue, and black which complicates the already overloaded design." Critic: A powerfully symbolic coat of arms will automatically convey its strong symbolism to a flag that it defaces, as illustrated by the flag of Nyandarua. There is also nothing wrong with its decorative stripes. Everything in a flag design, after all, is decorative. Complexity in a flag's design does not preclude its magnificence. All that is 'overloaded' is your sense of self-importance.

Flag of Liège Province, Belgium

"The Liège province is a great example of why you should not use a resized banner of arms as your flag. So many things are going on here, you can't understand a single one." Critic: So a *non*-resized banner of arms would be okay, then? Not certain of the point that you are trying to make there, probably too profound for me. In any event, the people of Liège might regret that the symbolism in the

design of their stunningly brilliant flag is not understood by 'you', but since *they* understand it, and since it was never meant to be understood by anyone else, it is unlikely that they would concur with your inference that it should also be understood by someone as witless as 'you'.

Joubert's booklet avers, without any actual explanation in its critiques, that the three flags shown on this page and on the next have failed to 'use meaningful symbolism'.



Flag of Cochabamba, Bolivia
"The flag of the department of Cochabamba is light blue. A solid–colour flag is too simple and is meaningless when depicted in greyscale." Critic: Thank you for astutely identifying the flag's colour. The second sentence of your critique is a nearly word-for-word repetition of two of the lies that are told in GFBF, both of which have already been thoroughly debunked on pages 35, 36, 63, and 64 of the denouncement to which this addendum has been attached. Since your critique has implied that the Bandera del departamento de Cochabamba is an example of bad *symbolism* in flag design, the remainder of this defence will be the rebuttal that your implication demands. Had you engaged in a bit of research, rather than simply being keen to demonstrate that the author of GFBF is not the only dull tool who can claim flag design expertise by ferreting out a solid-colour flag on the Internet, you might have twigged to the fact that some of the more recent depictions and actual photographs of the flag reveal its defacement by the official arms of the department, as shown to the left below, in a photo from a Web article dated in late 2021. This is not to say that the solid-colour version of the flag is not still perfectly acceptable and in wide use, as it obviously was in the late-2018 Wikipedia photo depicted to the right below, where it is nicely flanked by the flag of Bolivia and by the brilliantly colourful indigenous flag known as the Wiphala of the Qullasuyu. In either case it is the flag's celeste (sky blue) field colour that has always been its predominant feature. For more than 200 years, the Belgrano colours of white and celeste have been incorporated into many of the flags of Central and South America, intentionally indicating an interrelationship of the cultures that they represent, but it is the celestial blue of those flags, in particular, that has always been their primary symbol of independence and of peaceful harmony.

You might also have seen, had you bothered to look, that celeste jumps out all over the department of Cochabamba, in everything from sports uniforms and adverts to trim colours on store fronts and personal homes. It is loved, as is this highly symbolic flag.

Flag of Lagoa Formosa, Brazil

"Did you instantly think about Iceland or any Scandinavian country at the sight of this flag and its Nordic cross? Nice try, but Lagoa Formosa is a Brazilian municipality." Critic: No, I cannot say that I experienced the brain fart that you have described, but unlike you, apparently, I am aware of the fact that the terms 'Nordic cross' and 'Scandinavian cross' are simply convenient and *generic* terms that flag scholars apply to any depiction of a Christian Cross in a 'sideways' orientation on a flag, and that therefore the mere appearance of such a cross on a flag does not necessarily harken to Scandinavia, which in any event holds no monopoly on Christian symbolism. Anyone who bothers to survey some of the many flags that include crosses, Christian or otherwise, should realise at least two things about the more than three dozen of them that feature a Scandinavian cross, namely that (1) they are widespread throughout the world, and that (2) many of them include a charge at the intersection of their cross members, so as to thoroughly distinguish themselves from the unadorned crosses that appear in *actual* Scandinavian flags. The Scandinavian cross in the flag that you have depicted in your critique, for example, is overlaid with the Logoa Formosa coat of arms, so that only a dullard would call it Nordic. Also, only a double-dullard would mention Scandinavia and the flag of Lagoa Formosa in the same breath, because unless the government of Lagoa Formosa is not conscious of what their official flag looks like, it does not even *include* a Nordic cross. Wikipedia is a great resource, but like the booklet that you have blessed with your erudite critique, it is open-source, so it is always prone to errors. A more trustworthy source of flag information is the Flags of the World website, and even they are capable of making the odd mistake, now and then. In any event, the actual Bandeira de Lagoa Formosa, as shown to the left, is an example of great flag symbolism, not only with its nod to the dominant religion of its people, but with its powerfully symbolic coat of arms, the inscription on which reads: “Beautiful land of free people”.

Flag of Tenerife, Spain

"No one really knows why the Tenerife flag is the same as Scotland’s. According to some, it’s because several wealthy Scottish merchants settled there." Critic: Since your critique appears in the 'use good symbolism' section, one can only assume that you judge the flag of Scotland to have 'good' symbolism, whilst you judge the flag of Tenerife to have 'bad' symbolism, but if the two flags are 'the same', as you have claimed, one wonders how you make that distinction. One suspects that you were not in fact trying to say something astute about symbolism, but instead about sameness, so let's go with that. The diagonal cross (X), or 'saltire', as it is known in the flag world, is as much a symbol of Christianity as are upright or sideways crosses. If we return to the previously-mentioned survey of crosses on flags, we can find some five dozen flags that include saltires of one kind or another in their designs. When such a simple design is so widespread, it is bound to produce some similar results, but such similarities rarely provide legitimate cause for recrimination. There is no actual evidence, for example, that the flag of Tenerife was ever meant to be 'the same as Scotland's', notwithstanding your implication. Thus Tenerife owes neither Scotland nor you any apology. What is more, if we actually view the flags side-by-side, we will see that a good deal less 'sameness' exists in the two flags than you assert.

Scotland, as it turns out, officially specifies the exact shade of blue for its flag, which is Pantone 300. Tenerife has been less precise in the official specifications for their flag, and only states that its field colour, or 'campo', should be 'azul mar', meaning sea-blue, which some interpret to mean navy blue, basically a dark blue that approaches black, as in your own depiction of the flag. Pantone colours cannot be perfectly matched to the RGB colours of the screens of digital computing devices, but there are reasonable approximations. One of the better ways to obtain such an equivalent is to investigate how swatches of Pantone colours themselves are shown on various websites, and to copy their RGB colours. If we take the link specified above as our source, we will find

the Pantone 300 swatch that has been shown to the left. We can then reproduce the RGB colour of the Pantone Matching System swatch to depict the flag of Scotland, as shown to the right. If we then compare the resultant flag to Tenerife's, as you have shown it on the previous page of this addendum, and which for the sake of convenience is reproduced to the right below,

the difference in the field colours of the two flags becomes rather pronounced. Your depiction of the flag's field colour is a perfect match for that used by Wikipedia, where you obviously obtained your image of Tenerife's flag, but even if we depict it with the field colour shown to the left above, as derived from the flag's depiction on the Flags of the World website, it is not 'the same as Scotland's', except for those of us who may be unfortunate enough to have a visual impairment that causes all shades of blue to seem identical. To put it another way, Scotland does not have a copyright on all shades of blue, any more than others have copyrights on all shades of red, orange, yellow, green, indigo, violet, magenta, and so on. Your critique of the Tenerife flag, whether it is based on its symbolism or on its colour, is specious. Your skill at finding two simple flags that are visually similar may be unsurpassed, but it will never equate to skill in flag design, nor to any actual knowledge of the subject.

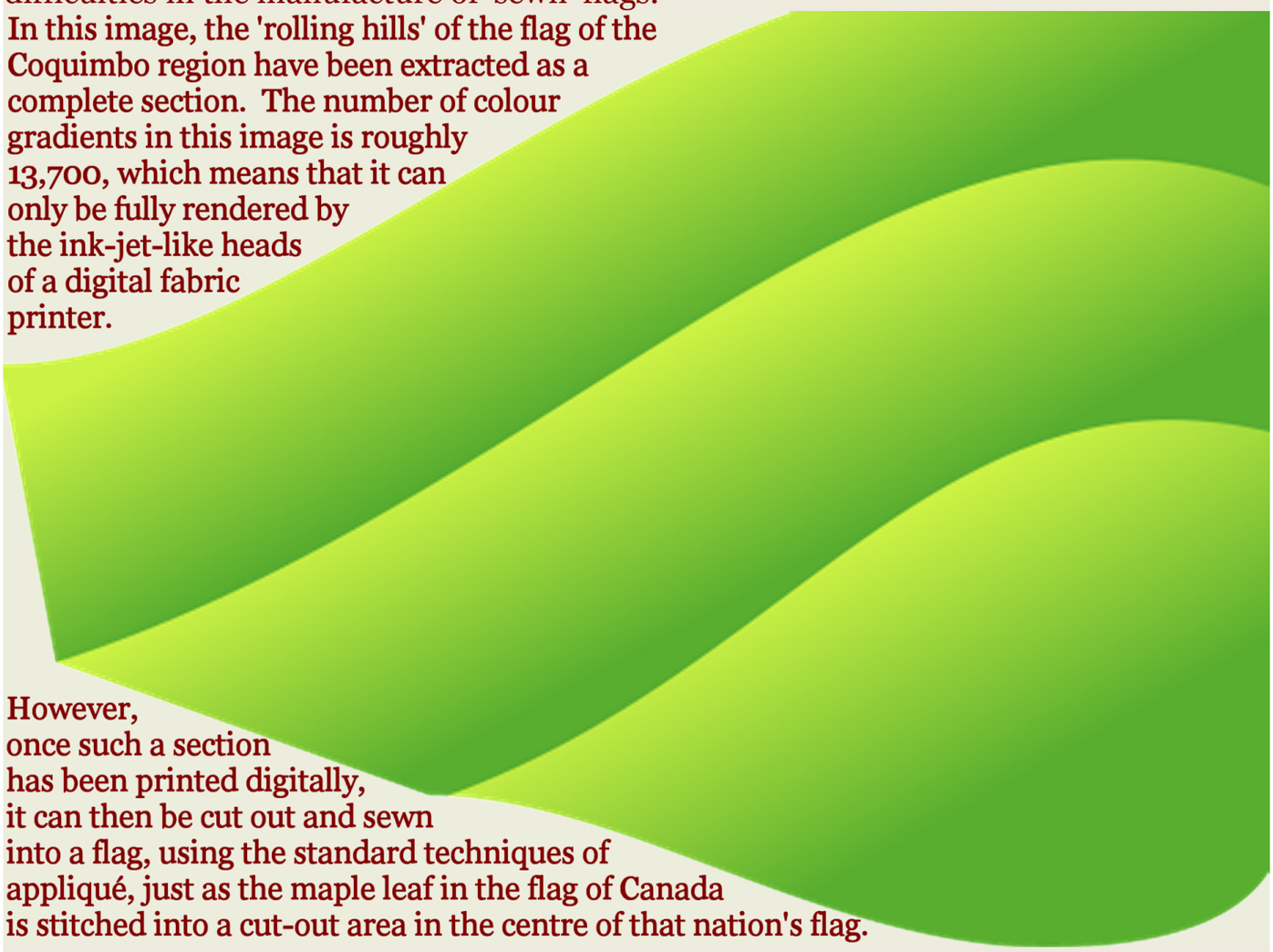
Having provided banal repeats and echoes of all of GFBF's invalid criticisms of flags that have complex designs, as well as its tenuous denigrations of flags that incorporate perfectly good symbolism, Joubert's booklet moves on to the ridiculous 'principle' that the colours in a flag's design should be limited to only two or three. Its critiques of flags that are therefore 'bad' number four, but this addendum will only rebut two of them, neglecting defences for the perfectly good former flag of Hela Province and for the perfectly good current flag of the British Indian Ocean Territory, because the whole exercise grows tedious. Suffice it to say that all of the 'critics' in Joubert's booklet are dim bulbs, and that none of their critiques are worthy of a complete parsing by this document's readers, nor by its author, so their final groups of offences will be ignored.

Flag of Coquimbo, Chile

"This flag adopted quite recently has a rather rare feature: gradient colour, which is impossible to sew, limiting production to printed flags only." Critic: Just like the con artist whose arse you have repeatedly kissed, you not only present yourself as an expert in flag design, but as an expert in sewing as well. This rebuttal is

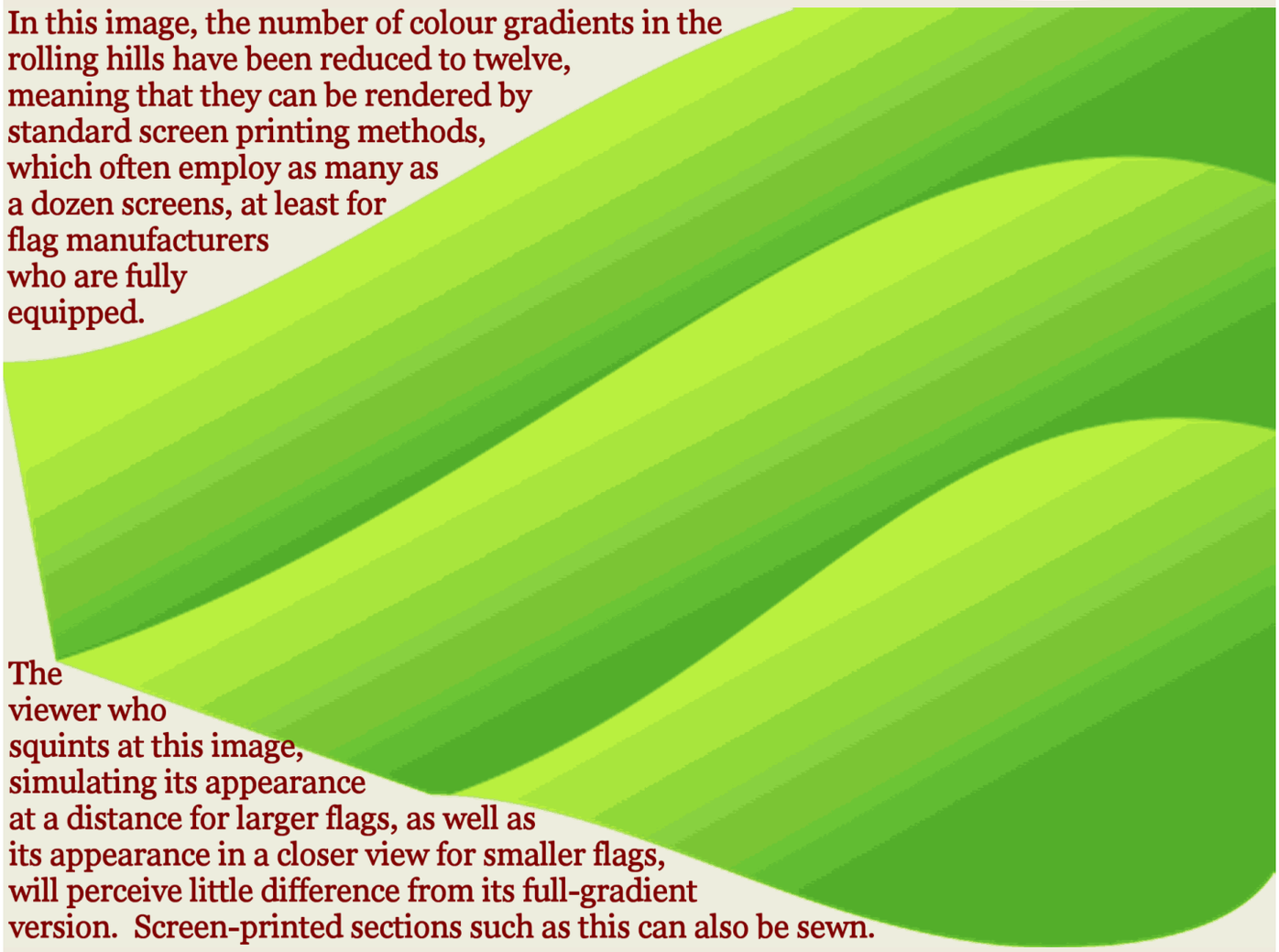
intended to discredit your claim that flag designs with gradient colours cause difficulties in the manufacture of 'sewn' flags.

In this image, the 'rolling hills' of the flag of the Coquimbo region have been extracted as a complete section. The number of colour gradients in this image is roughly 13,700, which means that it can only be fully rendered by the ink-jet-like heads of a digital fabric printer.



However, once such a section has been printed digitally, it can then be cut out and sewn into a flag, using the standard techniques of appliqué, just as the maple leaf in the flag of Canada is stitched into a cut-out area in the centre of that nation's flag.

In this image, the number of colour gradients in the rolling hills have been reduced to twelve, meaning that they can be rendered by standard screen printing methods, which often employ as many as a dozen screens, at least for flag manufacturers who are fully equipped.



The viewer who squints at this image, simulating its appearance at a distance for larger flags, as well as its appearance in a closer view for smaller flags, will perceive little difference from its full-gradient version. Screen-printed sections such as this can also be sewn.

A person with genuine talent in the operation of a sewing machine could actually produce the rolling hills section that is depicted at the bottom of the previous page, using strips of flag fabric in twelve slightly different shades of green. This is not to say that such a labour-intensive method of producing the section might ever be used, but only that it *could* be. If you are sceptical of that statement, stop to consider the skill that is required to sew up a Union Jack from perhaps two dozen or more separate red, white, and blue pieces of angled flag fabric.

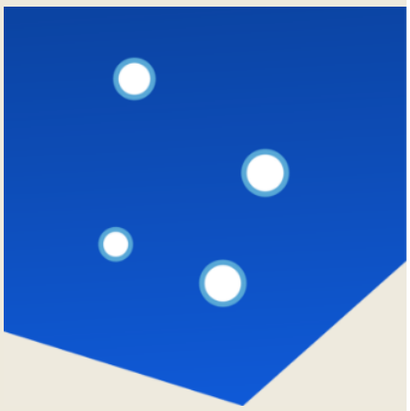
A decentralised government for the Coquimbo region of Chile was established in 1993. By around 1999, this governing body had employed a graphics arts firm to produce their official logo, as shown to the left. Since 1975, the region had flown an unofficial flag, which consisted of the region's armorial shield on a blue field, but in 2013, as part of a celebration of its twentieth anniversary, the regional government arranged a large public event to unveil a brand new Bandera de la Región de Coquimbo, the design of which was obviously based on their official logo.

The popular event received widespread media attention, generating many photos:

The images that have been reproduced above may be too small to illustrate one of the salient facts that can be derived from viewing the originals, namely that except for the small, hand-held versions of the flag that some of the dignitaries are holding, every one of the flags depicted has been stitched together, which utterly belies the assertion of the critic that flag designs with gradient colours are 'impossible to sew'. Even the huge flag in the image to the right above displays stitched seams, as do all of the 'fancy', fine-fabric flags with tasselled borders in the image to the left above, which were apparently presented to some or all of the mayors and other politicos who attended the ceremony. The other pertinent fact, derived not only from the photos but from media reports during and after the event, is that the flag was well-received by the people of the region, perhaps because they were already fond of the logo they had seen for over twelve years.

Notwithstanding that the gradient-coloured sun and rolling hills sections of the flags were probably produced digitally, they presented no difficulties to manufacturing sewn versions. Whenever a one-percenter like the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, who has probably never even sewn a button in all of his privileged life, claims that flags with certain designs are 'hard to sew', 'difficult to sew', or even 'impossible to sew', one should not just take him at his word.

Although the Southern Cross constellation is a common feature of many of the flags of the Southern Hemisphere, its treatment in this flag is unique, not so much because it is inverted, but because its stars have been rendered as white circles, rather than as 'pointed' versions. Possibly they make the Southern Cross more easily discernible from a distance than more conventional treatments. After all, when pointed stars on flags are viewed at a distance, they seem to visually resolve into dots anyway. At the time of this writing, incidentally, the FOTW website showed the Coquimbo flag's Southern Cross in an Australian style, illustrating that even FOTW's flag information cannot always be trusted to be accurate.



The people of the Coquimbo region are as wise about flag design as anyone else, but just as awareness of the flag of their region has increased, so too has its number of armchair critics, a situation that is symptomatic of the endless Internet deluge of low-life, puffed-up putzes who have come to regard their personal judgements of any given flag's aesthetics to be more valid than those of the people for whom the flag waves. When entire national flag enthusiasts organisations such as the North American Vexillological Association, as well as many other such organisations, wholeheartedly endorse rubbish like GFBF, the insidious central premise of which is that insulting the flags of others is perfectly acceptable, how could the boors *not* be expected to multiply?

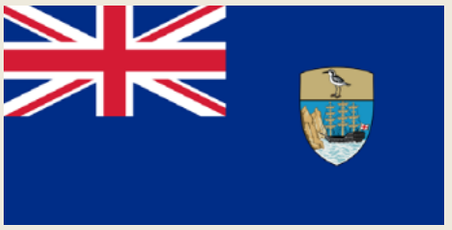
Flag of Tibet

"Also known as the" snow lion flag". The raised jewel symbolizes Tibet's reverence for the three Precious Gems: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. A beautiful flag, but too confusing." Critic: With this critique you have descended to unfathomable depths of dumbassery. Citizens of Tibet who possess so much as a photograph of this flag, let alone an actual version of it on fabric, are subject to arrest, imprisonment, torture, and even death. If this flag's design incorporated thousands of colours, or even if it were genuinely 'too confusing' for millions of pedants like you, Tibetans would still revere it as the primary symbol of all of their hopes and aspirations to be free from the oppression of China and of its despotic leader, Xi Jinping. From your comfortable abode in France or in some other relatively free nation, how do you summon the unmitigated gall to look down your nose at this flag? You're damned right, its 'beautiful'. It is also utterly distinctive, supremely symbolic, and as worthy of being loved by those whom it represents as the flags of any other people who walk this world. Insulting this flag is exactly the same as insulting the flag of Ukraine. Actually it is worse, because Ukraine's flag only recently transcended into a symbol of freedom from oppression, whereas the flag of Tibet has been such a symbol for more than a century,

and especially so for the last six decades or more, since the exile of the Dalai Lama. You will not hear him uttering haughty slurs against the flags that are your symbols, which you can freely take for granted. How do you reconcile the despicable hypocrisy of claiming that the flag of Tibet has too many colours, when two pages later you praise the flag of South Africa, which displays just as many? Every colour in the flag of Tibet has a symbolic meaning, but contrary to yet another lie that you have repeated, *none* of the colours in the flag of South Africa are symbolic, *nor were they ever intended to be*. Any bit of real flag scholarship would have informed you of all of this, but like the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, you are far more interested in inflating your ego, and in feigning flag design expertise, than in furthering truth.

As mentioned earlier, the author of this addendum will not bother with defences for the rest of the perfectly good flags that Joubert's *Modern Flag Design* booklet insults. Most of them are shown below. Readers should be able to defend them for themselves.

Wisconsin, U.S.A / Central Province, Sri Lanka
ReNaMo, Mozambique / New Hampshire, U.S.A
Saint Helena Island / Lower Normandy, France



Before ending this addendum, however, its author feels obligated to point out another way in which Joubert's booklet has blithely overstepped the boundaries of decency, possibly even more egregiously than it did with its spurious insults of the flag of Tibet.

Naval Ensign of Japan

"The Rising Sun Flag was used by feudal warlords in Japan and was adopted as the naval ensign of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Thanks to these colours you instantly think of Japan." You are praising a flag that is a blatant symbol of Japan's uncountable atrocities during WWII, which included institutionalised rape, torture, and genocide, just to name a few of its crimes against humanity. The Rising Sun flag is as abhorrent as Hitler's flags of Nazi Germany, and those who refuse to acknowledge that are either too corrupt or too stupid to waste more words on.

Summing up:
Joubert's booklet is no less rubbish than is GFBF, and those who pay six dollars for its printed version will have made a relatively dear purchase of an item that, like the mail-order catalogues of old, will only be truly useful as emergency paper for a long-drop.

ADDENDUM SIX: *GRAPHICS, THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM* (that GFBF does not even mention)

In the second section of the denouncement to which this addendum has been attached, it was observed that the process of finding and selecting symbols to incorporate in a flag design will essentially be a research project. The process of actually *designing* a flag, on the other hand, after most or all of its potential symbols have been gathered together, will essentially be a *graphics* project. Flag designers who are conversant with one or more computer graphics programs will have a tremendous advantage over those who may naively think that they can get by with ordinary manual drafting equipment, or even worse (far, far worse), with just a ruler, a compass, and some coloured pencils.

Yet that latter option is actually the only one that the author of "*Good Flag, Bad Flag*" has ever recommended to flag designers, revealing yet another facet of his charlatanry. To be specific, he has suggested that a flag should be designed on a small piece of paper that has the approximate dimensions of a wide postal stamp, or in his parlance, *"one inch by 1.5 inches"* (about 2.5 cm by 3.8 cm). He explains his suggestion by adding: *"Realistically, that's how people will be seeing it as it flaps from a flagpole 30 metres away."* Just to be clear, he does not offer this sage recommendation within the pages of his pamphlet, but in his other writings and in his occasional dog-and-pony shows. Other so-called flag design experts, including Roman Mars, who has become GFBF's sycophant-in-chief, have offered the same advice. Mars has gone so far as to provide a clarifying illustration on one of his websites, as shown to the left below, where he not only repeats the daft idea itself, but its obvious bias towards a 2:3 dimensional ratio.

Presumably one would enter such a design into a flag contest by submitting it in the form of a zoomed and cropped photograph. Of course, no properly run flag contest would accept such an entry. As the reader may know, the New Zealand Flag Referendums of 2015-2016 allowed them, but that unhappy endeavour cannot be characterised as having been 'properly run'.

Although a flag of practically any dimensions, waving thirty metres away, can certainly be visually occluded by a postal stamp held at a certain distance from an observer's eye, and although it is nice to know how a waving flag might appear from such a distance, the idea of forcing a flag design into simplicity by shackling it to a tiny design area has no merit, since **great flags are not limited to those that have simple designs**. There is nothing wrong with using paper and coloured pencils to experiment with flag design ideas in their nascent stages, and some flag designers prefer to work in that way. In the early days of personal computer systems, designers often did not need to go any further, as was the case for Frederick Brownell in 1994, when he designed the flag of South Africa. Yet the paper on which Brownell experimented was never stamp-sized.

Flags should not be designed on pieces of paper that are the size of wide postal stamps. They should instead be designed as postal stamps *themselves* are now designed, on the large screens of computer monitors. Moreover, flag designers should be free to include as much complexity in their designs as stamp designers are free to include in theirs. Readers are asked to consider some of the beautifully complex stamps that they have seen in their lifetimes. Would they characterise their experiences of viewing such stamps, to borrow a bit of hyperbole from the author of GFBF, as being 'overwhelmed'? Have they found the numerous colours that are often seen in such stamps 'hard to distinguish'? Have they ever felt that such stamps would have been 'better', had their designs been 'simple enough for a child to draw from memory'? Yes, stamps are flat,

and we do not observe them waving like flags, but on the other hand, every detail in a flag that is waving at a distance will be assimilated in the mind of an observer after only a few moments of the flag's waving. In effect, a distantly-waving flag will be 'flattened' by the 'mind's eye', making the viewing of a distantly-waving, complexly-designed flag essentially the same as viewing a flat, complexly-designed stamp, held at arm's length.

Having addressed the witless approach to graphics that the author of GFBF advocates, this addendum can focus on its more pleasant purposes. As implied by its first paragraph, its premise is that aspiring flag designers should use graphics software to design their flags. It is intended for those who have not yet scaled the learning curve of such software, and who are open to advice about how they might best choose at least one such learning curve to begin climbing. Their climb needn't be arduous, nor should it require more than a modest expense of time, because flag designers do not need to ascend to the levels of professional graphics designers. Moreover, their expense need not be monetary at all, because all that they will require is freely available. They only need to make an informed choice, and this addendum intends to help them make one. In flag design, as in many other endeavours, the best way to learn is by doing. Moreover, the best time to learn how to use a graphics program is long *before* a flag contest or some other event presents an *opportunity* to design a flag, so get going, you.

Computer graphics programs can create and process two basic categories of graphic images, both of which are relevant to flag design, and each of which can be saved in a number of different computer file formats. One of the two basic graphic image categories is called 'raster', which can also be called 'bitmap'. The other basic graphic image category is called 'vector'. Flag designers can work with raster images, with vector images, or with a combination of the two. Neither will be extensively explained here. Readers who are not already aware of the basic properties of raster and vector imaging are expected to inform themselves by means of Internet searches. Some of the best results for such searches may be provided by graphics software producers such as Adobe, who may sprinkle references to their own proprietary products within their explanations, as indeed Adobe does in its thorough and well-organised descriptions of raster files, of vector files, and of how they differ. Several other graphics-related terms have become fairly uniform across different graphics software programs, and many of these standard terms have been assembled into lists both here and here, where Adobe has accompanied each of the terms with a helpful visual explanation.

For the novice, ***raster*** imaging software may offer a quicker and easier learning curve, at least to the level of proficiency required for flag design. The menu of free software that is available is also longer, and the useful and enjoyable things that one can do with raster imaging software *besides* designing flags are innumerable. Anyone who wants to manipulate digital photographs and videos, for example, will find raster software the only way to go. Raster images can be stored and manipulated in file formats that retain a maximum amount of image detail, and which accordingly require larger file sizes. These are called lossless or 'uncompressed' file formats, and they should be used for every stage of designing a raster image flag, whether they are proprietary to the graphics software being used or they are one of several conventional lossless formats. When flag designs are presented on Web pages, however, they will generally need to be converted to more lossy or 'compressed' raster image file formats that have much smaller file sizes. Flag designers working with raster images will accordingly need to understand such things as anti-aliasing and pixel density, often improperly called resolution, as well as bit depth, which can also be called colour depth or colour count. Bit depth also applies to vector images. Explanations for these terms will follow later.

One of the advantages that ***vector*** image files will usually have over comparable raster image files is their smaller file sizes, making them more 'polite' about the space that they will need to use on storage drives, including the drives of website servers. The *chief* advantage of vector imaging software, however, is that the files it produces are ready, just as they are, to be transformed into actual flags by manufacturers, because the edges of such images will remain razor-sharp, no matter the sizes to which they are scaled. The novice flag designer may therefore prefer to pick a vector software learning curve, even though their climb is apt to be somewhat more difficult and lengthy than for a raster route. Vector software will not help them with ordinary photos and videos, but otherwise there will be no drawbacks to choosing vector. For the purposes of such things as Web page presentations and flag contest entries, almost all vector graphics programs can save or export vector image files as compressed, raster image files.

On the other hand, although vector imaging software can directly produce flag designs in the file formats that are required for manufacture, this is not really the disadvantage that it may seem for raster image files, which can always be *converted* to vector image files, albeit with somewhat more effort than is required by conversions in the vector-to-raster direction. Some flag manufacturers even offer a free service to convert raster image files into the vector image files that they will need for producing actual flags. The upshot is that raster software users need not be overly concerned about this issue.

There are an intimidating number of raster image file formats, but except for the uncompressed, proprietary image format of whatever raster image software is chosen, the two formats that will arguably be the most useful for flag designers are (1) the uncompressed Portable Network Graphic (PNG/.png) format and (2) the compressed Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG/.jpg) format, although the highly-compressed Graphics Interchange Format (GIF/.gif) may also have its occasional uses.

There are also a plethora of vector image file formats, but again, except for the proprietary image format of the chosen graphics software, there are really only a few vector image formats that are 'all that', or possibly even only two, when push comes to shove, which are (1) the Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG/.svg) format and (2) the Portable Document Format (PDF/.pdf).

Some readers may quibble that there is a third category of graphics image file formats, the variety of which are also numerous, namely 3D image file formats, but since 3D imaging is really just a specialised use of vector imaging, and sometimes even one of raster imaging, and since one will struggle to find a great deal of use for 3D imaging in flag design, this will be the only place where this addendum will address such a nitpick.

Graphics software noobs who are tempted to dive into the raster imaging pool may at first be intimidated by the long list of raster imaging software that is available. Those who think that they can simply 'cut through the clutter' by spending money on a high-end proprietary graphics software product may find to their chagrin that they are confronted with software that has fantastic capabilities, but one that is accordingly so bloated, cluttered, and user-unfriendly as to encourage them to not even *try* to learn how to use it for the relatively simple task of designing a flag. Thankfully, there are some well-known raster graphics software products that are not only more suited to the task of designing a flag than, say, Adobe Photoshop, but that are also free to use. An Internet search for 'best free raster graphics software' is bound to mention GIMP, which can be used on Windows, Apple, Linux, and even other systems, but although its use will not put a monthly Adobe charge on one's credit card, its learning curve is not a

particularly gentle one, because it essentially aims to be a Photoshop replacement, so it is accoutred with some of the same drawbacks as that product. Should one instead search the Internet for 'best free raster graphics software for *beginners*', one may discover some free products that are more suited to novices, but which may also be platform-limited, such as Paint.NET (Windows only). Your best approach may be to install several such free programs, to dabble with each of them, and to primarily settle on the one that seems to be most suited to the needs of flag design, although you may inevitably find your needs changing as you become more proficient, so you may have to 'jump ship' a few times to find a product that *really* suits most or all of your needs. Much more on that later *(in the non-abbreviated form of this addendum, found here)*.

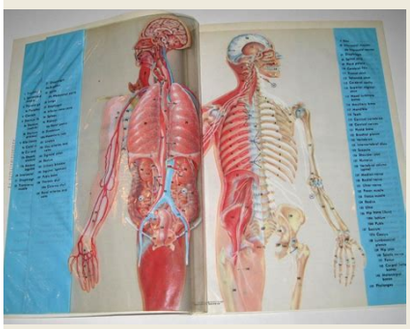
Graphics software novices who decide to work with vector imaging software will soon find that one of the most often recommended free alternatives to the pricey Adobe Illustrator is Inkscape, which like its raster counterpart GIMP can run on many system platforms, and which also like GIMP may not be the easiest software to master. Another free vector graphics editor that has a lot going for it is Libre Office Draw, which like Inkscape is available for multiple platforms. Several other free vector imaging editors are listed here and here. Free vector software that is tailored to beginners cannot always be downloaded for stand-alone installation, and must instead be used online, or largely so, as is apparently the case for Vectr. Whether vector editors are stand-alone or online-only, a basic familiarity with at least a few of them may offer some advantages. Certain programs are more robust than others in their abilities to open, save, or convert particular vector file formats, for example, so one might very well want to keep such programs around, just for those express purposes. Of course there is nothing to prevent one from owning and using both vector *and* raster graphics software programs, especially since both sorts are freely available, and there is something to be said for being able to work with both of the basic image file formats.

Searches on the Internet are bound to turn up reviews and Internet tutorials for most or all of the graphics software that you decide to consider. If you think that vector software will be your cup of tea, for example, you may want to check out this Wikimedia Commons Inkscape tutorial, as well as those that Inkscape itself offers, or perhaps Vectr's online tutorials, an expansion of which were being planned at the time of this writing, according to this Web page. If on the other hand you think that raster software will suit you best, GIMP offers a selection of tutorials, and Paint.NET is at least working on some. Whatever graphics software you contemplate, appropriate searches on YouTube may reward you with some very informative videos to watch.

In addition to all of the free graphics software with which one can actually design flags, there are also a handful of other flag-design-related resources that are free, that may be useful for flag designers, and that the author of this addendum would be remiss in failing to mention. For example, the online Scrontch's Flag Designer is worth a look, regardless of how elementary it is, if for no other reason than its ability to open and to save SVG files. Somewhat more sophisticated is the online Flag Maker, a resource that is provided by an actual flag manufacturer, and one that even includes a handful of automated tutorials. There are other flag manufacturers that offer similar, 'design your flag here' Web pages. There is also a free NASA graphics software product called G.Projector, which at first glance might seem to have little relevance to flag design, but which should perhaps not be dismissed without a review of this document, or this one. The use of G.Projector was instrumental, for example, in the design of the speculative New Zealand flag shown left.

Penultimately there is the online Flag Waver, which may be the most useful of all of the freebies in the grab bag of items listed here. Primarily the brainchild of a sharp young coder called Joshua Koo, Flag Waver solves one of the biggest problems in flag design, by giving flag designers, as well as viewers of flag designs, a fair idea of how a given flag will actually look when it is waving from a flagpole in a wind, or even when it is hanging limply in a lack of wind, which are things that they might otherwise be bad at visualising. Lastly there are utilities that are intended to ease the task of converting a raster graphics image into a vector graphics image. One of the best of them may be Potrace, which can also be integrated into Inkscape. Supposedly GIMP has raster-to-vector conversion capability as well. Whatever the vehicle, your kilometrage may vary.

Now, it is certainly not *impossible* to design a flag by using graphics software that is as elementary as, say, the built-in Paint app that is included in Windows systems, or the free Paintbrush app that is available for Macs, or even the Drawing app that is automatically included in many Linux distros. It is also not impossible to start a fire by rubbing two sticks together. What the simplest graphics programs generally lack are features that allow for extensive *revisions* of flag designs, not only at first but in future. To be specific, where graphics *editors* for flag design are concerned, the feature that separates the wheat from the chaff is the ability to design a flag in 'layers', which in vector imaging may also be called 'groups'. The layers and/or groups of any flag design can be either raster in nature, vector in nature, or a combination of the two, and they can be converted from one to the other. They can be 'resized', 'merged' or 'flattened', 'grouped' or 'ungrouped', 'arranged' upwards or downwards, made 'hidden' or 'visible', made fully or partially opaque, translucent, or transparent, 'mirrored', 'flipped', 'rotated', changed in colour, and separately manipulated in countless ways. The flag that is designed with utterly simple software is dunzo, and it will be difficult or impossible to revise, once it has been finished and saved, but one that is designed using graphics *editing* software that supports layers can be revised long *after* it is saved. Instead of producing one-off flag designs, *real* graphics editors can produce flag design *projects*, which can be returned to repeatedly until they reach ultimate refinement.



It is difficult to overstate the power of layers in designing flags. The concept of layers is second nature to seasoned graphics designers, but it may not be immediately grasped by novices, for whom an analogy may be helpful. Beginners are asked to consider certain booklets or book inserts that they have probably seen, sometime in their lives, which use illustrations on several pages of cellulose acetate, most often to reveal human anatomy or the anatomy of other creatures. Each page of acetate is transparent, other than for its particular full-colour illustration and accompanying notes. To reveal the wonders of human anatomy, for example, the top acetate page or layer will typically depict the skin, and by turning successive pages the underlying musculature, blood circulation, nervous system, internal organs, and so-on will be illustrated, right down to a first or basic layer that will show the skeleton.

The starting point for any flag that one designs by using a graphics editor will be its first layer, which can be thought of as the basic foundation of the design, or perhaps its 'skeleton', if we borrow from the analogy above. This 'background' layer will generally be called 'Layer 1' by default, but it can always be re-named more descriptively later on.

Layer 1 of the 'image', 'project', or 'document', as a given graphics editing program may refer to one's flag design, will be assigned a set of properties, either by default when the program opens, as is the case for Inkscape, or on each occasion when the user begins a 'New' design from the program's menu. Layer 1, like all subsequent layers, will always be depicted as a rectangle. This will not prevent the design of non-rectangular flags, as long as they can 'fit' within the rectangular area that Layer 1 has defined.

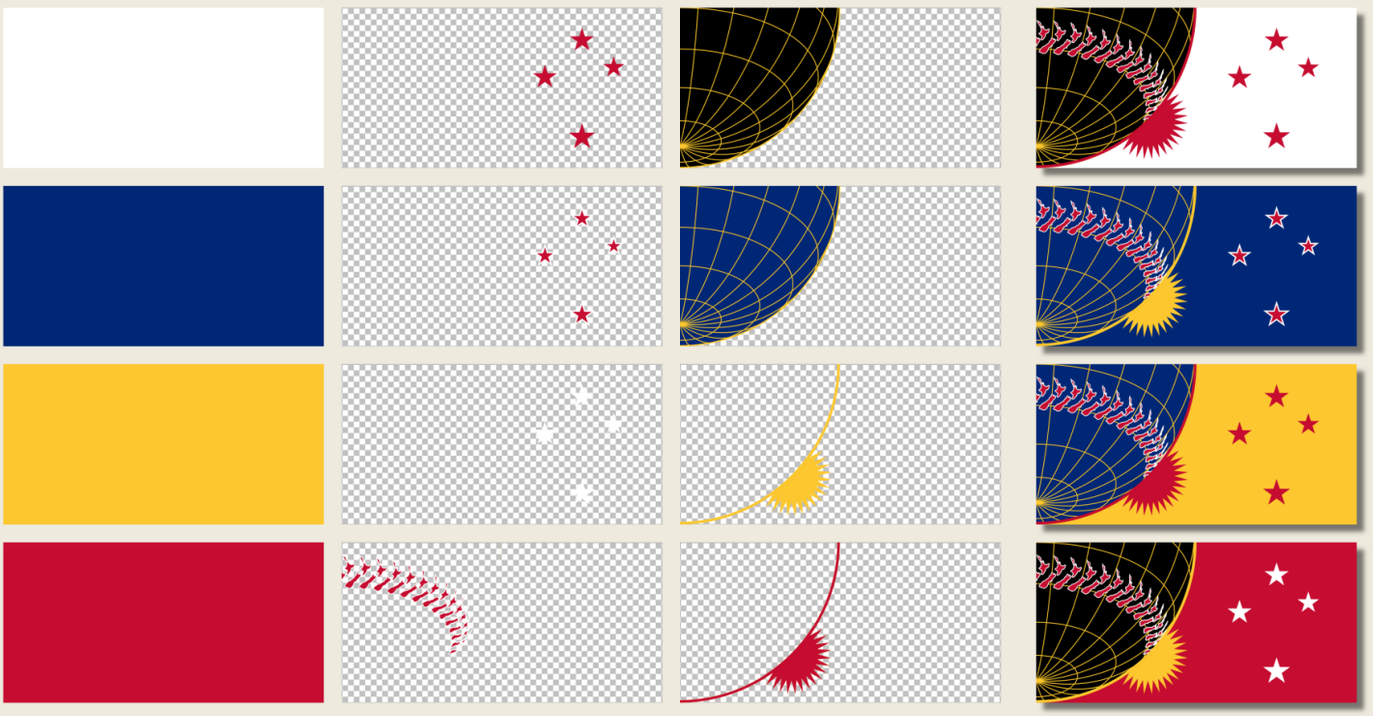
The most basic property of Layer 1 will be its vertical and horizontal dimensions, respectively corresponding to a flag's height and length. As all flag designers should know, a flag's 'dimensional ratio' is always expressed as the ratio of its height to its width. Thus the length of a 2:3 flag is 1.5 times its height, and the length of a 1:2 flag is twice its height. Designers who are interested in other possible flag dimensional ratios, which are sometimes less accurately called aspect ratios, will find two dozen of them shown in chart #15 on the Flag Stories website, the incredibly informative charts of which have all been made conveniently available as PDF files, here and here.

Because of a single powerful nation that has remained too dimwitted to adopt the metric system, most graphics editors will allow Layer 1 to be dimensioned in inches, but sensible flag designers will opt for centimetres, or perhaps even for pixels, if they are designing in raster. It has become something of a convention for flag contests to require the vertical dimension of submitted flag designs to be ten centimetres, which, for the possible benefit of the Imperial-system-handicapped, is the length of a '100s' cigarette. Thus the minimum vertical dimension of Layer 1 should be 10 cm, and the corresponding minimum horizontal dimension of Layer 1 should be calculated from the dimensional ratio of the flag that is being designed. For a 2:3 flag, for example, the minimum horizontal dimension of Layer 1 would be 15 cm, and for a 1:2 flag, it would be 20 cm. These are not *required* dimensions for Layer 1, because a flag that is designed in layers with larger dimensions can always be resized for submission to a contest, and also because larger dimensions may provide certain design benefits. For example, a 20 cm dimension will only be equally divisible by 2, 4, 5, or 10 cm, whereas a 60 cm dimension will be equally divisible by 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 20, or 30 cm. This will be less of an issue for purely vector designs, which can always be scaled upwards when needed without any image degradation. Purely raster designs, or those that may use a combination of raster and vector imaging whilst they are being worked on, may benefit in other ways from larger dimensional work areas, such as the essentially equal anti-aliasing that will be applied to the overall design when it is reduced to contest-submission size. Yet larger design layer dimensions will also require more system memory. Designers who do not want to be plagued by error messages such as 'insufficient memory to carry out the specified operation' are advised to keep their layer dimensions reasonable, lest they find themselves unable to save a carefully-crafted image layer without first closing every other image and extraneous program, or emptying their clipboard and their command history, or taking steps to increase the system memory that their graphics editor can use, or even all of the above.

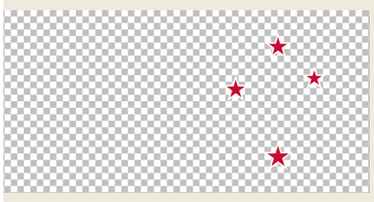
Amongst the other possible properties of Layer 1, whether is is a raster layer or a vector layer, will be its initial colour or its transparency, the latter being typically indicated by a chequerboard of white and grey, as illustrated by the image shown to the left. Transparency in the layer of a flag design image is analogous to the clear areas

of the acetate pages in the anatomy pamphlets and the book inserts mentioned earlier, although thankfully without any analogy to the spectacular flammability of acetate. There is no need for Layer 1 to have any initial colour, because it can be added later, but if the flag designer already knows the exact primary field colour of the flag that they will be designing, it can be specified when Layer 1 is created, and its initial label might even be changed from 'Layer 1' to something like 'Background Field'. As the layers of a flag design become more numerous, in fact, giving each of them a descriptive name will usually help to prevent confusion, as will giving the layered flag design file *itself* a name that will distinguish it from any ordinary, single-layer image file. Such flag design filenames as 'Layers for Design #1' or 'Design #1 Layer Cake' can pay big dividends, as when one needs to find a layered image file in a list of other files, images or otherwise.

To get a better idea of some of the advantages of layers, consider the illustration below. The twelve layers at the left side of the illustration can all be part of a single, flag design image file. By purposefully arranging the layers, and then merging or flattening those that have been made visible, all four of the single-layer flag design variants that are shown at the right side of the illustration, and many others, can be easily obtained.

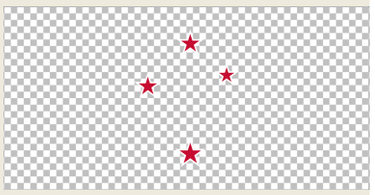


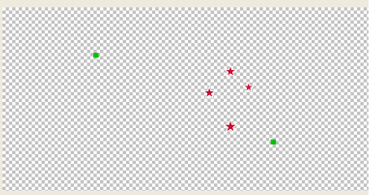
Each of the flag design variants can of course be resized, converted to any of a number of file formats, and then saved as a separate file. Also, each of the layers in what we might refer to as the original 'layer cake' can be individually copied and saved for use in other flag design image files. For example, one might want to make other uses of the layer that is depicted to the left below. However, if one were to select that layer and then simply 'Copy' it to the system clipboard, one might be disappointed in the appearance of the layer after a 'Paste' operation, as depicted to the right below. The



inherent or 'native' dimensions of an image that is part of an otherwise transparent layer are not those of the layer, but those of a rectangle bordering only the image. If we return to our anatomy booklet analogy, we can think of the binding of the acetate pages as their 'indexing' mechanism, the means by which they are all kept in proper visual alignment. If we were to pull two of the acetate pages out of the binding and re-order them, perhaps to depict the skeleton layer above the skin layer, we could still preserve correct layer indexing by lining up the binding edges of the two pages, which would re-index them. If on the other hand we were to use scissors to cut out a rectangle that tightly bordered

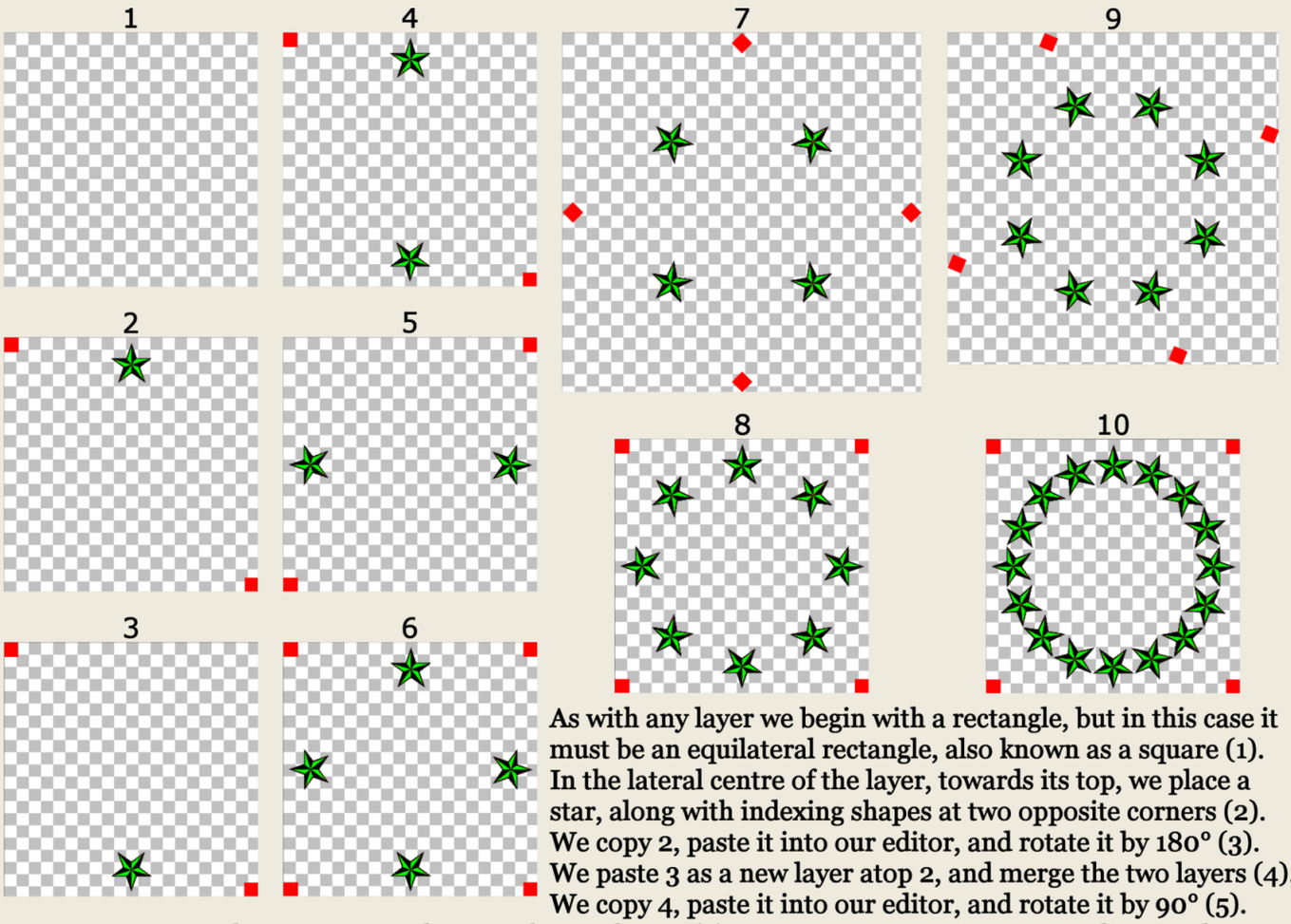
the image of the skeleton, we would forfeit that page's indexing mechanism, as we did for our copied graphics layer. However, there is an easy way to preserve the prior 'indexing' of a graphics image layer that includes transparency, when desired, by temporarily adding small shapes to the layer in at least two of the diagonal corners of its dimensional borders, as illustrated to the left. Thus the layer can be saved, and it can later be pasted as a new layer atop an image of the same dimensions. Once in place, its diagonal indexing shapes can be deleted.





There are far too many graphics layer 'tips and tricks' to fully catalogue in this brief addendum, but one of them is so useful that it cannot go unmentioned. Whatever the dimensions of a graphics layer, on its initial pasting atop another graphics layer it will be perfectly centred. Thus if we were to paste our non-indexed, 'copied' layer from the previous example as a new layer, it might appear as illustrated to the top right, just as we might desire. If instead we were to paste our 'indexed' layer as a new layer atop one of greater dimensions, it might appear as illustrated to the bottom right, as we might or might *not* desire.

Flag designers will often want to incorporate 'arrays' of various kinds in their designs. A circular array of stars, for example, is a feature of many flags. Some graphics editors will feature built-in methods for producing such arrays, and some will not. For the latter type of graphics editor all is not lost, if it can make use of the automatic centring properties of pasted layers. Suppose we are designing a flag for a nation of sixteen regions, for example, or another flag for which 'sixteen' will be numerically symbolic:

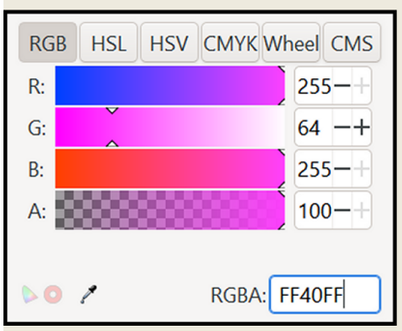


As with any layer we begin with a rectangle, but in this case it must be an equilateral rectangle, also known as a square (1). In the lateral centre of the layer, towards its top, we place a star, along with indexing shapes at two opposite corners (2). We copy 2, paste it into our editor, and rotate it by 180° (3). We paste 3 as a new layer atop 2, and merge the two layers (4). We copy 4, paste it into our editor, and rotate it by 90° (5). We paste 5 as a new layer atop 4, and merge the two layers (6). We copy 6, paste it into our editor, and rotate it by 45°, after which it may be informative to copy and paste it again to show its enlarged dimensions, or its 'canvas area' (7). We copy 7, paste it as a new layer atop 6, and merge the two layers (8). We copy 8, paste it, rotate it by 22.25°, copy and paste again to see its new area (9), paste 9 atop 8, and merge them into (10).

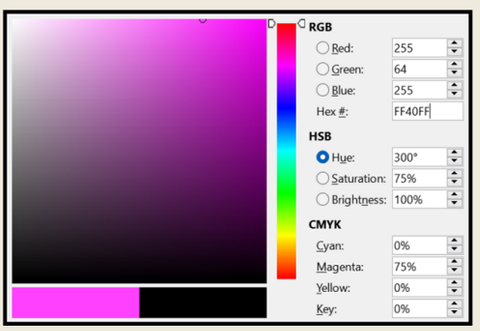
Raster and vector graphics editors have many common features, and one that flag designers will need to have a basic grasp of is the RGB colour model, so for the benefit of those who have not used a graphics editor before, this addendum will offer a primer. Here and there it may also dip a toe into colour theory, but it will not take a deep swim. The RGB colour model allows for 256 shades of red, 256 shades of green, and 256 shades of blue, meaning a possible combination of 256 x 256 x 256, or 16,777,216 individual colours (zero to 16,777,215), roughly eight million more than human vision can discriminate, so plenty. RGB colour is also called 24-bit colour, because 16,777,215 expressed as a base-2 or binary number (ones and zeroes) is a string of 24 ones. RGB colour is also called 16 million colours, which is easier than saying '16,777,216'. Each of the 16,777,216 RGB colours from zero to 16,777,215 can also be expressed as a base-16 or hexadecimal number ranging from #000000 to #FFFFFF (hex digits are zero-through-nine plus A-through-F). The preceding hash mark signals: "This is a coded 'hex notation' of a particular RGB colour." In hex, '00' equals zero and 'FF' equals 255, so when RGB colour is 'coded' using hex notation, the first two digits of the six-digit hex number specify one of 256 shades of red (from zero to 255), the middle two digits specify one of 256 shades of green, and the last two digits specify one of 256 shades of blue. Included in the RGB colour model are pure black, pure white, and 254 shades of grey betwixt them, which taken together comprise the 256 values of 'greyscale'. Of course, real life actually has more than 254 shades of grey between black and white, but you can't have everything. In hex notation #000000 is pure black and #FFFFFF is pure white. When all three of the pairs of two-digit hex values are the same, but they are neither 00 nor FF, they specify one of the 254 shades of grey that lie between black and white. For example, #282828, #7B7B7B, #A6A6A6, and #BEBEBE are hex notations for four different greys. If you fully grasp the relationships described in this paragraph, you will probably realise that when all three red, green, and blue decimal values are zero, they will specify pure black, when all three of their decimal values are 255, they will specify pure white, and when all three of their decimal values are the same, but lying somewhere between one and 254, they will specify one of the 254 shades of grey between black and white. Greyscale is thus an 8-bit model, because in base-2 binary, 255 is a string of eight ones, so greyscale is an 8-bit 'black-and-white' model, nested in the 24-bit RGB colour model. Some graphics editors will allow one to work not only with 24-bit colour, but with 16-bit colour, 8-bit colour, 4-bit colour, and even 1-bit colour (only pure black and pure white). All have advantages, but not for flag design, so stick with 24-bit RGB colour. To make matters more confusing, some graphics editors use a colour model called RGBA, where the 'A' is an 'alpha' channel that specifies how transparent or opaque an RGB colour is, whether respectively on a scale from zero to one, or from zero to 100%, or from zero to 255, or even from 00 to FF. Graphics editors that do not specify an alpha channel will generally provide other ways of varying the 'opacity' of RGB colours. Got all that? If not, no worries, it will all become clear when you pick colours in a graphics editor for use in an actual flag design.

SOME RGB COLOUR PICKER APPLETS FROM GRAPHICS EDITORS

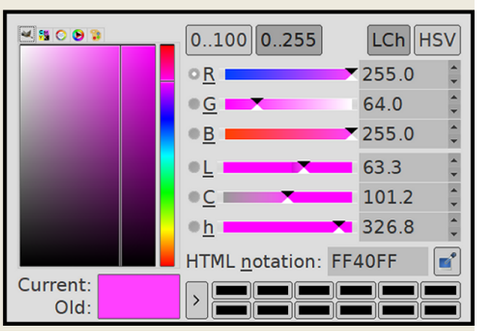
INKSCAPE



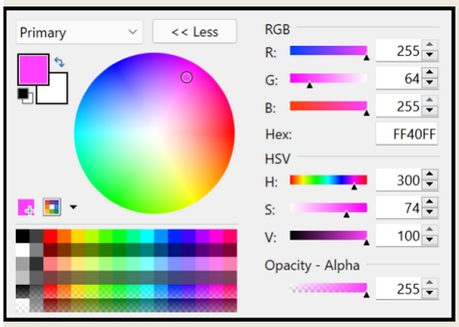
LIBRE OFFICE DRAW



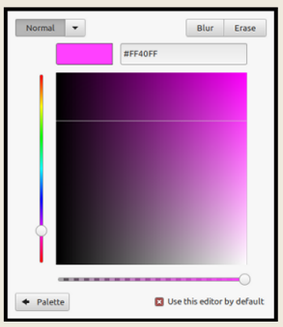
GIMP



PAINT.NET

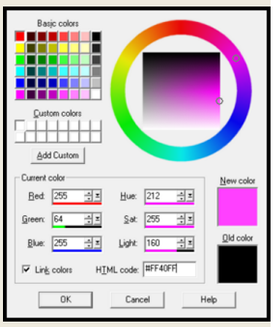


LINUX



WINDOWS

PSP 7



After examining the typical colour picker applets that have been illustrated above and on the previous page, the reader may safely assume that all such applets will have a box where a hex notation that specifies one of the 16,777,216 RGB colours can be entered, or where it will appear automatically, if the RGB colour has been selected by means of other provisions in the applet. The RGB hex notation box is always easy to locate, but it may not be labelled, and even if it is, its label may not be 'hex notation', but rather 'hex', 'hex #', 'hex triplet', 'RGBA', 'HTML code', 'HTML notation', or possibly even something else. When one manually enters RGB hex notation into such a box, usually no leading hash mark need be included, just as 'www' need not be included in the URL address box of an Internet browser. One only need enter the six digits of the RGB hex notation, and the graphics editor will understand one's intent. For an 'RGBA'-labelled box, an 'A' or alpha setting entry will be optional, so flag designers can safely ignore it. 'HTML'-type labels are a reflection of the fact that Web pages only know which colours to display due to RGB hex notations within their HyperText Markup Language coding.

As far as a flag designer is concerned, only the RGB colour model matters, so any other colour model or colour space that a graphics editor's colour picker applet may tempt one to muck with, such as HSL and HSV, CMYK, or CIE and LCh, will best be ignored. As far as a graphics editor is concerned, only a colour's RGB hex notation matters, and no matter how elaborate the human-machine-interface of a colour picker applet may be, everything but its hex notation box will just be for the benefit of us mouse clickers.

It follows that each of the exact colours that are used in a flag design will ultimately be defined by its RGB hex notation, which is really the most convenient way in which a flag colour *can* be defined, so it likewise follows that flag designers will be wise to keep some kind of written list of the RGB hex notations for all of the colours in their designs.

When you were a wee ankle-biter in kindergarten or in primary school, did you occasionally have, amongst your possessions, a small tin palette of water colours? Whether you did or you did not, such a concise and handy tin of colours is a fair analogy for the palette of colours that one must select for use in a flag design. Ultimately flag designers will need to know RGB hex notations for all of the colours in their palettes, so we will return to that, but first we should consider how they might best *choose* their palettes, which will basically boil down to one of three approaches.

First there is the approach that the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* suggests. According to him, a flag designer's palette should be far more limited than that of an ankle-biter's tin, comprising only two or three colours, or perhaps four at the most, since he claims that any more will be 'hard to distinguish', but whether the acceptable colours number two, three, or four, he says that they should be selected from “the standard colour set”.

He uses that precise term twice in his pamphlet, yet doubling zero still yields zero: There is no such thing as 'the standard colour set' of flag design. It seems unlikely that the author of GFBF is referring to the 16,777,216 possible colours of a digitally-printed flag, nor to the well over 1,300 possible ink colours that can grace a screen-printed flag, nor even to the 75-or-more flag fabric colours that are commercially available to serve as a starting-point for a screen-printed flag or for a sewn flag. So what is he on about? Perhaps we can decipher this clue: *"The basic flag colours are red, blue, green, black, yellow, and white. They can range from dark to light. Occasionally other colours are also used, such as purple, grey, and orange..."*. What a masterful way of saying absolutely nothing at all. A liberal interpretation of 'they can range from dark to light' would include each of the 256 possible shades of red, green, and blue, in which case we *would* be left with sixteen million colours. So once again, what the bloody hell could he possibly *mean* by his pulled-from-an-orifice, imaginary term, 'the standard colour set'?

The only logical conclusion is that he is referring to the rather tightly-standardised 'heraldic tinctures' of armorial bearings and of coats of arms. The idea that the colours of flag designs should be limited to heraldic tinctures is rooted in a pre-mid-twentieth century mindset, when anything to do with flags was generally considered to be a subcategory of the topic of heraldry. If one considers the actual hues of heraldic tinctures, one will observe that except for black and white they are essentially the six colours of Nature's spectral rainbow, meaning red, orange, yellow, green, light blue, and dark blue (Sir Isaac Newton basically only made his tortured split of dark blue into indigo and violet because of occult beliefs that he harboured about the number 'seven'). Given rather short shrift in the heraldic tinctures are 'non-spectral' colours that do *not* occur in Nature's rainbow, such as brown (orange darkened with black), pink (red lightened with white), and magenta (which like purple combines the reds of one end of the rainbow with blues from its other end). Grey is another non-spectral colour that often goes without mention, except when it is elevated by terms like 'silver' or 'cendrée'.

Limiting flag colours to the dozen-or-so that comprise traditional heraldic tinctures is a pointless approach. It is neither based in logic nor in necessity, and is merely another example of the basic GFBF credo of adhering to simplicity for simplicity's sake. To give credit where credit is due, European heraldic bearings have sometimes been a *source* for flag colours, although mostly in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and even now they can often provide other valuable forms of cultural symbolism that may be used within a flag design, such as shapes, patterns, official flora and fauna, and inscriptions. Heraldic rules of colour also include 'common sense' guidelines about adjacent colours ideally having good contrast, or of otherwise being separated by contrasting borders. Yet the purposes of flags *differ* from those of arms, and so do the ways in which their colours should be chosen to best *serve* their differing purposes. Flag design is only in the loosest sense allied with heraldry, because it is a completely separate visual art.

A second approach to choosing flag colours is one that a graphic designer might take. For the purposes of this addendum, 'graphic design' is also intended to mean graphic art and commercial art, which one can argue are more or less peas from the same pod. What students of graphic design are primarily taught about colour choices, in the two-to-four years of formal study that may pave their way towards becoming actual graphic designers, graphic artists, and commercial artists, as well as what they continue to learn about colour choices, once they have become employed under one of those titles, is how to suit their choices to the purposes of graphic design. Those purposes usually being commercial, they are highly unlikely to align with those of flags. Like heraldry, graphic design is a completely different form of visual art. It serves altogether different purposes than the visual art of flag design, as will colours chosen to *suit* its purposes.

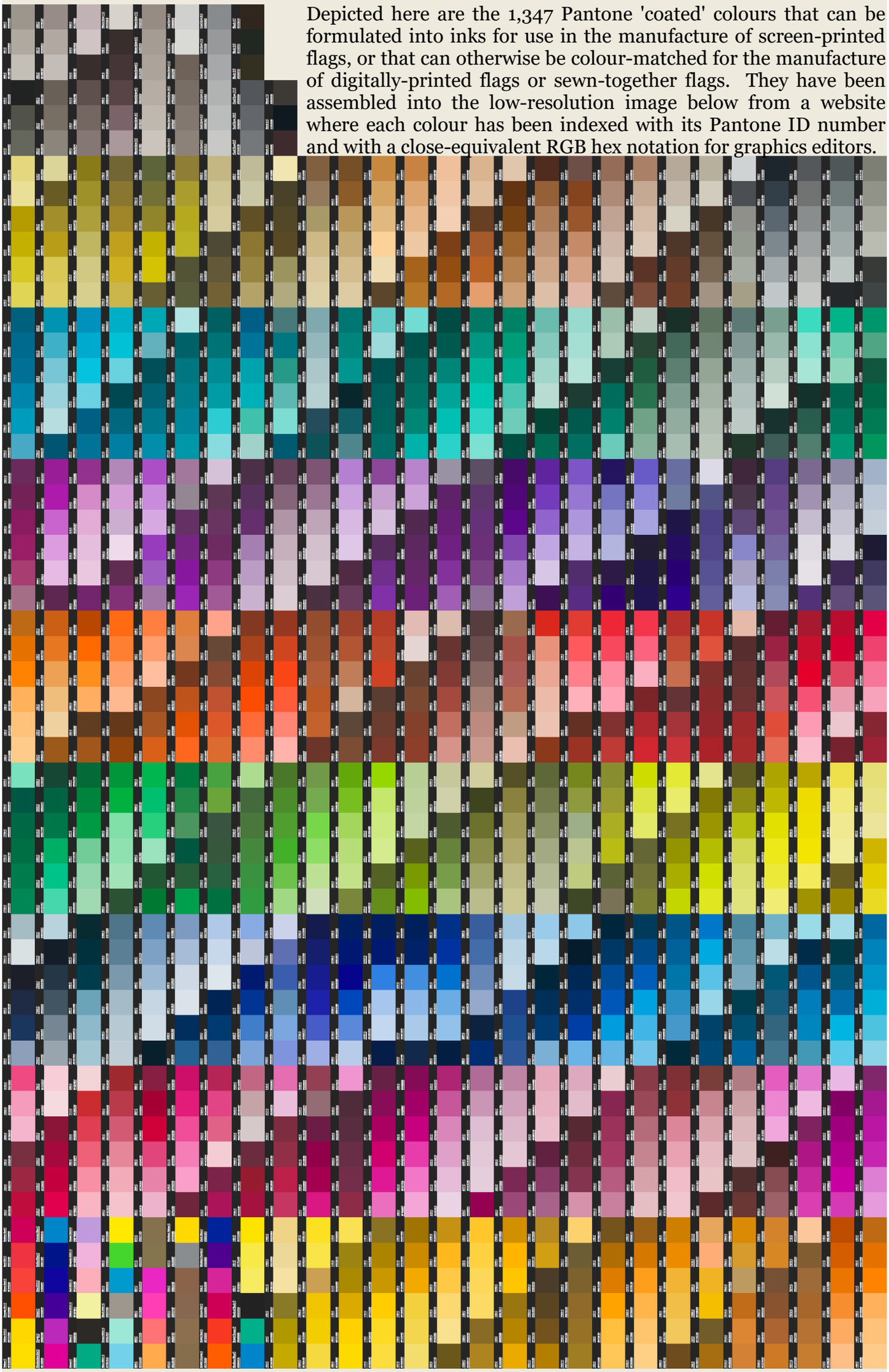
Nevertheless, both the colour theory and the colour *schemes* that are taught to graphic designers can be valuable for flag designers to have a basic grasp of as well, and it will do them no harm to view some 'basics of graphic design' YouTube videos like this one, this one, this one, and this one. Yet for the most part flag designers will not be concerned with the many clever ways in which the primary, secondary, and tertiary hues of a colour wheel can be combined to form aesthetically pleasing colour schemes.

The approach to flag colour that is championed by this addendum is the one that has been presented on pages 44-46 of the PDF entitled "*Good Flag, Bad Flag is Rubbish*", where it is thoroughly explained. Here the approach will only be briefly summarised: The best colours that can be chosen for use in a flag design will usually be those that are **culturally symbolic** to the persons whom the flag is intended to represent. These may include the precise 'official' colours of nations, provinces, states, cities, organisations, and so-on, including any official colours that have already been used for the flags of any or all of those entities, as well as colours that may be spiritually or politically significant within the culture for which a flag is being designed. The chief virtue of such colours is that their symbolism will be obvious, and thus inherently strong. Colours that are not *culturally* symbolic may still carry *emotional* meaning, but their symbolism will generally be of a weaker sort, because the meaning of a given colour can vary widely between different cultures, and even *within* a given culture.

Whatever *approach* that flag designers may elect to take when choosing the colours in their palettes, they will inevitably choose *specific* colours for their flags from the Pantone Colour Matching System (PMS), which has become the dominant standard of colour reproduction for almost all industries worldwide, including flag manufacture. To be clear, the Pantone people do not manufacture flag inks, nor inks of any kind. They make their money by selling books and booklets of standardised colour swatches, which are in turn used by various manufacturers to bring the colours of their products into world-wide conformance. There are supposedly about 15,000 different Pantone colours, but perhaps only 1,347 of them are particularly relevant to flag manufacture. These are the Pantone 'coated' colours, designated with a 'C' in their Pantone ID numbers. Almost all officially designated colours for flags will be Pantone 'C' colours, which appear 'brighter' than Pantone uncoated 'U' colours with the same ID number, and which will work well for most modern flag fabrics, perhaps most notably polyester.

In any event, flag manufacturers do not use flag colours that are chosen from GFBF's imaginary 'standard colour set'. Instead they will formulate the colours of the inks that they will use to match the Pantone colour values that are specified by the flag designer. For their graphics editors, flag designers will need to 'translate' Pantone colours into their 'close-as-possible', RGB hex notation equivalents. The Pantone people are aware of this need, so in addition to selling physical colour swatches they also sell a service called 'Pantone Connect', as typified by the image to the left. This service amounts to what could be considered the most 'official' way of converting a given Pantone colour into its equivalents in other colour systems, including RGB hex notation. Note that the conversions in the image are greyed out. Even for a single swatch, the Pantone people are not keen to give anything away for free.

Depicted here are the 1,347 Pantone 'coated' colours that can be formulated into inks for use in the manufacture of screen-printed flags, or that can otherwise be colour-matched for the manufacture of digitally-printed flags or sewn-together flags. They have been assembled into the low-resolution image below from a website where each colour has been indexed with its Pantone ID number and with a close-equivalent RGB hex notation for graphics editors.



The Pantone people want to sell *physical* colour swatches, and they consider both their swatches and their swatch numbering system to be their intellectual property, so their website does not display the 1,347 *digital* colour swatches that are depicted on the previous page. Fortunately for flag designers this has not prevented *other* websites from depicting digital Pantone colour swatches, along with reasonably-close, RGB hex notation equivalents. One of the best of these websites is hex-to-rgb.com, from which the image on the previous page was derived. The persons behind hex-to-rgb.com may have assembled their information from a one-time use of the Pantone Connect service, or they may have laboriously pieced their data together by other means, as many other websites seem to have done, although with varying degrees of success and usefulness. If flag designers rely on any of these other websites instead of on the one that has been noted here, they should be wary of Pantone swatch ID numbers that do not include a 'C', a 'U', or any other designator. Sometimes the 'C' is just assumed, as it probably has been for all of the Pantone colour swatches that have been depicted on this actual flag manufacturer's website, which incidentally only depicts 929 colours, and which also does not list any RGB hex notation equivalents. Assumptions are best avoided whenever possible. One should also closely examine the swatches on such websites to verify that their colours are completely uniform, which can be tested on some Web browsers by simply 'zooming' in. Website images are sometimes 'compressed' to decrease their file sizes, which can often result in colour variances and inaccuracies.

Armed with all of this information, how might a flag designer go about assembling a symbolic colour palette of Pantone colour swatches, along with their Pantone ID numbers and their close-equivalent RGB hex notations? As an example, consider the colours that might be assembled for some kind of Australian flag design. Perhaps we could begin by doing a Web search for 'official Australian colours', the results of which would tell us that they are green and gold, with the respective Pantone values of 348 C and 116 C. Some of our search results might also list RGB and/or RGB hex notation values, but if we compare them with those that are given on the hex-to-rgb.com website, we will probably find minor differences. Best to stick with a single source, which in our case would yield RGB hex notations of #00843D and #FFCD00, respectively. For other symbolic palette colours we might research the official colours of some existing Australian flags. For example, the official red and blue colours that are in the Australian national flag (quite the handy website, that one), are respectively 185 C and 280 C, with RGB hex notation values of #E4002B and #012169. The white colour that is in the national flag is considered to be Pantone 'safe', with the RGB hex notation of #FFFFFF. Continuing our research, we might find that the official 'red ochre' colour in Australia's Northern Territory flag is 159 C, and that its RGB hex notation value is #CB6015. The NT flag also features the colour black, as do many other Australian flags. Although Pantone provides a few 'shades' of near-black, none of them are listed as being official for the NT flag, so we can safely assume that its black is Pantone safe, just like its white, and that is has the RGB hex notation of #000000.

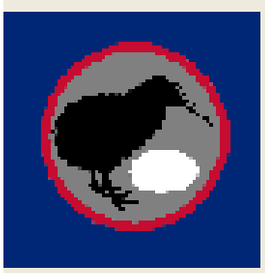
A POSSIBLE SYMBOLIC COLOUR PALETTE FOR AN AUSTRALIAN FLAG DESIGN

348 C	116 C	185 C	280 C	SAFE	159 C	SAFE
#00843D	#FFCD00	#E4002B	#012169	#FFFFFF	#CB6015	#000000

Amongst the advantages of assembling an *image* of colour palette, like the one that has been shown on the previous page, is that it can be called up and used in a graphics editor to let a flag designer figuratively dip the editor's 'brush' into its various colours. More precisely, its various colours can be conveniently selected by the editor's colour picker tool, which is typically represented by an eye-dropper icon. One caveat is that the colour palette should be saved as an uncompressed image file in the native format of the graphics editor, or failing that as an uncompressed PNG file, and *not* as a JPEG.

Having given the novice flag designer a leg up on colour issues, this addendum needs to cover a few specifics for the benefit of those designers who will be using a raster imaging graphics editor, beginning with a look at a couple of terms that were previously mentioned yet left undefined, namely 'pixel density' and 'anti-aliasing'.

All raster images are composed of pixels, which are tiny squares of uniform colour. Pixel density is an expression of the number of pixels that can fit within a given unit of measure. For raster images, pixel density can be expressed as either pixels-per-centimetre (PPcm) or pixels-per-inch (PPI). The image above left is actually an amalgam of two images, with the top image having a pixel density of 10 PPcm, and with the bottom image having a pixel density of 100 PPcm. At the normal viewing size of this addendum, little if any difference will be perceived in the two images. The same image amalgam has been reproduced at a larger scale to the right, and now the two images display a pronounced difference in visual quality, allowing us to realise that the image is an X-ray of a bird, in this case one of the five species of the New Zealand kiwi. Female kiwis lay incredibly huge eggs in proportion to their body sizes, and the X-ray reveals this as few other images would be able to do. Although the bottom image in the amalgam now looks sharp, if we continue to enlarge it we will reach a point where it, too, will appear somewhat blocky, or 'pixelated', as in the enlarged excerpt from the bottom image that has been shown to the right. Along the edges of the excerpt, the pixels are not sharply stair-stepped. Instead they are blended with other pixels of varying colour in what is called anti-aliasing, the effect of which is to give the edges of raster images a visual smoothing. Good raster image editors are capable of using anti-aliasing in a number of ways. For example, some raster editors allow image resizing to be a 'smart' process, with additional anti-aliasing applied to make the image appear as smooth as possible at its new size. Alternatively, the pixels in an image *themselves* can be resized, in which case no new anti-aliasing will be applied (pixel resizing was the method used for all of the variously-sized images on this page). Anti-aliasing can not only come into play when resizing images, but when creating text and other objects, when making selections, when selecting or changing colours, and in many other ways that will really only become clear to a user with their use of an editor.



What we are leading up to is what might be thought of as an 'ideal' pixel density for flag designs that are created using raster image editors. From what we have seen, an original or 'native' pixel density of 10 PPcm, as in the design left, will not be good enough, but one of 100 PPcm, as in the design right, might.

It is an unfortunate fact that many raster image graphics programs, especially older ones, will have a 'default' pixel density setting of 72 PPI upon their initial installation. The reason is down to a bit of computer arcana. In the 1980s, Apple had a fledgling computer monitor with a display density of 72 PPI, as well as a dot-matrix printer with a print resolution of 72 DPI. By limiting raster images to a pixel density of 72 PPI, an image on the monitor would always be at its native dimensions, and a print of the image would also always be at its native dimensions. All of this was a big selling point that was referred to as 'WYSIWYG' (wiz'-ee-wig), or 'what you see is what you get'. Thus 72 PPI became an early pixel density standard, and one that is sadly still with us. A pixel density of 72 PPI is equivalent to one of just over 28 PPcm, which frankly is just not much better than 10 PPcm for a flag design. Again, should the default pixel density of raster graphics editors be 100 PPcm/254 PPI? Although opinions vary, the general consensus is that raster images look best at their original or 'native' sizes when their pixel densities range from 220 to 300 PPI, or about 87 to 118 PPcm. As far as large, high-quality digital raster images go, pixel densities far *above* 118 PPcm may certainly be appropriate, but as far as raster images of flag designs go, anything above a pixel density of about 300 PPI/118 PPcm will essentially be a waste, or at least when the native heights of those flag designs are only ten centimetres, which as the reader may recall was the previously-recommended height for finished flag design layers. Also, although modern printers can produce prints of 600 dots-per-inch (DPI) or even 1200 DPI and higher, it is generally agreed that most prints gain little or nothing by being printed at resolutions above 300 DPI. This does not mean that raster images should perfectly follow suit, with pixel densities of 300 PPI, because few if any human eyes can see a difference in the print of a 254 PPI raster image versus the print of a 300 PPI raster image, as long as both raster images are printed in their native dimensions. Also, for a given set of native dimensions, the file size of a raster image will increase with its pixel density, so 100 PPcm has a bit of an advantage over 118 PPcm there, too, and most certainly over even higher densities. Also, if a flag design has a pixel density of 100 PPcm and a height of 10 cm, it will have a height of 1000 pixels, a good and easily-remembered number that is exactly divisible in many ways. If the 10 cm design height is only intended for finished designs and/or contest submission, and the designer prefers, say, a 30 cm height for unfinished designs, a 100 PPcm pixel density will equate to a height of 3000 pixels, which will be exactly divisible in even more ways. So yes, 100 PPcm/254 PPI is a good default pixel density for raster image flag designs.

To wrap up our discussion regarding raster imaging, we should say a few more words about bit depth, which as previously noted will also be relevant for vector imaging. Consider the raster image to the left, which depicts a Kodak multiracial 'Shirley card' of the 1990s. The image has been embedded on this page in its actual dimensions of 10 cm by 10 cm, with a pixel density of 100 PPcm. It follows that the dimensions of the image are 1000 by 1000 pixels (one million total), along the lines that were discussed in the previous paragraph. The image has been rendered in 24-bit RGB colour, as you might expect. In all respects it is sharp, clear and colourful.

In each of the images in the strip of images further below, a one-square-centimetre section of the Shirley card raster image on the previous page has been extracted and then enlarged by a factor of exactly 4.75. The enlargement has been effected using a graphics editor that allows pixel resizing, so that each of the images is still 100 pixels square, just as when they were originally only one cm square. Thus each image has a total of 10,000 pixels. The leftmost raster image still seems reasonably sharp at its 4.75 enlargement. It retains the 24-bit colour depth of the original image, although it actually only displays 697 pixel colours out of a possible 16,777,216. The second raster image has been given an 8-bit colour depth, and although it displays 255 colours out of a possible 256, it has slightly sacrificed some of the sharpness of the first image. The third raster image has been given a 4-bit colour depth, and although it uses all sixteen of its possible pixel colours, it has very poor quality. The fourth raster image, included just to complete the discussion, has been given a 1-bit colour depth. It has been processed so that its pure black or white pixels can be perceived as shades of grey by the human eye, much like half-tone images in old newspapers. It represents a true 'black-and-white' image, although we also apply that term colloquially to monochrome 'B&W' photos and films, and sometimes even less accurately to greyscale raster images.

As noted earlier, the larger the pixel density of a raster image, the larger its file size. The file size of a raster image will *also* be larger with increases in bit depth. This might lead one to think that raster flag designs with 8-bit colour may be preferable to those using 24-bit RGB colour. After all, the second image above is only slight degraded, so under certain circumstances there might be something to be said for this approach. However, if we remember that there are 1,347 possible RGB Pantone C flag colours, reducing them to the nearest 256 may no longer seem so attractive. The file sizes of 24-bit raster images are not all that cumbersome anyway, as long as their dimensions are kept reasonable, and as long as their pixel densities remain at 100 PPcm. So those are the recommendations of this addendum for designers who chose raster imaging.

This addendum is an abbreviated version of the "Graphics for Flag Design" PDF, which is only one of the many flag design resources that can be found at https://flagoptions.com/resources/ or at https://flagalternatives.com/resources/. Up to and including the above paragraph, the non-abbreviated version is identical. From that point onwards, it only differs from this abbreviated version in that it recommends some specific graphics editors that are freely available, easy to use, and capable of producing high-quality flag designs in both raster and vector file formats. The author of this addendum hopes that it has in some way encouraged its readers. We learn by doing, and there is far more to learn about flag design from actually designing flags than from swallowing the tripe in the pamphlet Good Flag, Bad Flag.

ADDENDUM SEVEN: *THE REST OF THE RUBBISH*

Besides the pamphlet *"Good Flag, Bad Flag"* there are four other formally-published works, as depicted above, that either in part or in whole claim to present the principles of good flag design. Like *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, they actually present only rubbish.

The grand*mother* of them all is ***"A Flag for New Milford"***, a 106-page booklet from 1996 that was authored by the late Romanian-American vexillologist Peter J. Orenski, who in his finer hours co-authored the seminal work, *"Native American Flags"*, and who founded a company that specialised in providing flags for Native American tribes. To the extent that Orenski's booklet chronicles the efforts that he made to obtain an official municipal flag for his adopted U.S.A. home city of New Milford, Connecticut, it is innocuous, but within its pages he also embedded his ridiculous personal flag design philosophy, which can best be summed up, in his own, reality-disconnected words, as: *"Simplicity – The most important attribute of a good flag, bar none."* Adding insult to injury, Orenski championed an insipid flag design rating system that would automatically penalise flag designs that did not meet his aesthetic standards, and that if applied to all of the flags of the world would eliminate many of the greatest that have ever been seen. Frankly, **his booklet is basically the sole source** for the utterly imaginary 'five principles of flag design' that *Good Flag, Bad Flag* chunders up, notwithstanding the claims of its author that it is a 'distillation' of the 'wisdom' of seventeen vexillologists, and not a rehash of the witless rantings of just one of them, and in spite of the fact that vexillologists, no matter how scholarly, do not instinctively become experts in the art of flag design, except perhaps in their own puffed-up minds.

Orenski's book became an obscure footnote in 2001, when the author of GFBF first published his fatuous rag, and until late in 2015, GFBF was practically the one-and-**only** guide to flag design that the few persons who actually cared about such things could even turn to, other than 2014's modest, four-page PDF, "*The Guiding Principles of Flag Design*", which was helmed and authored by the Scottish flag scholar Graham Bartram, and which did not denigrate any flag, nor even contain a single instance of the word 'bad', so it never really caught on, having had none of the nasty cachet that continues to make GFBF so popular with flag trolls. Probably primarily due to the fact that one of its five contributors was the author of GFBF, it did contain three instances of the word 'simple', as well as one instance of the word 'simplicity', in the phrase *"Simplicity is important in creating a [flag] design..."*, but at least Bartram did not allow it to claim that simplicity is the *most* important consideration when creating a flag design. Although since 2014 it has remained the 'official' flag design guide of both the U.K. Flag Institute and the North American Vexillological Association, the latter

has downplayed it into obscurity, whilst constantly trumpeting *Good Flag, Bad Flag*. The Web page where NAVA once formally embraced *"The Principles"*, calling them *"...official policy statements of...the North American Vexillological Association"*, has long since been conveniently deleted, along with the words *"...there are no bad flags, only flags to be studied..."*. The U.K. Flag Institute, meanwhile, have continued to be ethical, promoting only *The Principles*, and refraining from any mention of the infinitely less worthy offering *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, anywhere on their website. Bartram has actually designed several successful flags, yet he has never touted himself as a flag design expert, whereas the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has never designed a flag at all, except perhaps one with a big initial of his surname, yet he has assumed the mantle of 'flag design expert' for over two decades, accepting wide acclaim, and sometimes even payment, for 'his services', whilst constantly oozing false modesty.

JOINT COMMISSION ON VEXILLOGRAPHIC PRINCIPLES

of The Flag Institute and North American Vexillological Association

NOT RUBBISH

THE COMMISSION'S REPORT ON

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FLAG DESIGN

1st October 2014

These principles have been adopted by The Flag Institute and North American Vexillological Association | Association nord-américaine de vexillologie, based on the recommendations of a Joint Commission convened by Charles Ashburner (Chief Executive, The Flag Institute) and Hugh Brady (President, NAVA). The members of the Joint Commission were:

Graham M.P. Bartram (Chairman)

CENSORED

Jason Saber

Charles A. Spain

Philip S. Tibbetts

AND HERE IS WHY

Introduction

This report attempts to lay out for the public benefit some basic guidelines to help those developing new flags for their communities and organizations, or suggesting refinements to existing ones. Flags perform a very powerful function and this best practice advice is intended to help with optimising the ability of flags to fulfil this function.

The principles contained within it are only guidelines, as for each "don't do this" there is almost certainly a flag which does just that and yet works. An obvious example would be item 3.1 "fewer colours", yet who would deny that both the flag of South Africa and the Gay Pride Flag work well, despite having six colours each.

An important part of a flag is its aesthetic appeal, but as the the 18th century Scottish philosopher, David Hume, wrote, "Beauty in things exists merely in the mind which contemplates them." Different cultures will prefer different aesthetics, so a general set of principles, such as this report, cannot hope to cover what will and will not work aesthetically. What it can do is advise on design elements that tend to work well, and warn of those that do not work.

So do what you feel works for your flag - as Franklin K. Lane, US Secretary of the Interior 1913-20, said, "For you are the makers of the Flag, and it is well that you glory in the making."

NAVA's website: www.nava.org • The Flag Institute's website: www.flaginstitute.org

In early 2015, a single politician set New Zealand on a course towards considering a new national flag, an effort that, had it not been so dismally organised and carried out, might well have given Kiwis something to replace their colonially anachronistic banner. Because the affair was not scheduled to be concluded until early in 2016, there was plenty of time for a couple of self-appointed flag design experts to publish their vanity projects, proclaiming to the world that they knew all about flag design, but not, you understand, with their works to be accompanied by submission of even a single actual flag design in New Zealand's contest, although said contest was fully open to the world.

The Australian vexillologist Tony Burton's 129-page booklet, published in late 2015, is ***"Vexillogistics"***. It has a subtitle as well, but given that the work is not in any sense 'practical', the author of this addendum refuses to utter it. It is bad enough to have to say 'Vexillogistics', an invention of the booklet's author that he no doubt hoped would catch on, but that never will. He also floats 'vexillence'. The author of this addendum opines that he should be referred to as a vexillologit. His booklet's introduction salutes as 'experts', in the same brief paragraph, the late Dr. Whitney Smith, who founded organised vexillology and who authored the best book ever written about flags, as well as dozens more of them, along with endless scholarly papers that advanced vexillology as a legitimate social science, and the author of the pamphlet *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, who . . . authored the pamphlet *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, so the warning signs are there from the start, and all hope vanishes when the intro states that the booklet's aim is to 'amplify' GFBF. To say that the booklet is *"...chiefly colour illustrations..."* is a kind way of putting it. Readers who resolve to attempt its pages in their given order will find themselves wading through plate after plate of nothing but pretty flag images, grouped according to common denominators that range from colour schemes and Islamic inscriptions to stars and crosses and circles and triangles oh my, all of which can be better assimilated on Wikipedia or on its media site Wikimedia Commons, and none of which offer anything in the way of the 'practical', although the 'illustrated' part is fair enough. Along the way, readers will be treated to brief digressions such as the author's holiday snaps, his illustration on how to construct the 'Golden Rectangle' (that enduring favourite of the so-called flag design expert), his rant about how flags fray, his rant about manufacturing costs, his insults of about a dozen existing flags that are perfectly acceptable to those whom they represent, his brief articles informing readers of what they already know about flags, the pseudo-profound phrase 'more is less', the pseudo-profound phrase 'less is more' (that one twice), the similarly-sage statement that *"...simple geometrics are the foundation of good flag design"*, another one about blue flags being *"invisible against sky and at sea"*, another one about using 'less fading colours', whatever that means, yet another one about white flags soon getting 'dingy', yet another one about how grey should never be used (just because), and one about 'ease of manufacture' being very, very important, as important today, he says, as it was during Australia's 1901 flag contest, when flags were made up of woollen bunting, in a limited assortment of colours, and when they had to be sewn up on rare sewing machines, at a time when durable modern flag fabrics and advanced inks did not exist, and when screen printing methods were practically unknown in the Western world.

He goes on, for reasons that are probably unfathomable even to him, to toss M.C. Escher, origami, and holography into the mix. He repeatedly implies that the highest function of a flag is as a simple 'signal'. He repeated implies that flag designs should be governed by heraldic rules. And in the end, for anyone willing to carry on to page 112, there is his one-page list of do's and dont's, tortured into two, that basically just says 'keep it simple'. In his afterword, Burton pats himself on his back for supplying 'oh, so much missed' for readers who just skipped to the end of his booklet before binning it.

Burton has elsewhere written that *"Vexillologists have higher standards"*. Than whom, he does not explicitly say, and regarding what, he does not explicitly say, but his message is clear enough. In 1993 the Australian flag-change organisation Ausflag held a speculative Australian flag design contest with AUD $4,000 cash prizes. Two entries tied for third place. According to Ausflag it was *"...totally unbeknown to the judges that the two entries were by the same designer."* Tony Burton. One of his two cash prizes was for the flag design that is depicted to the left. The Australian Aboriginal Flag, designed by the Luritja artist Harold Thomas in 1970, is shown to the right. In describing 'Burton's' design, Ausflag mentions that it is 'based' on the Aboriginal Flag as designed by Harold Thomas, which is a euphemism on the order of referring to genocide as ethnic cleansing. Ausflag has standards as high as Burton's, apparently. Burton's big claim to fame is that in 1994, on the heels of his Ausflag prizes, he won a contract to design a flag for Australia's South Sea Islanders, which is shown to the left below. Credit where it is due, for his South Sea Islanders flag, but never for his simplicity-and-geometry-obsessed, impractical flag design booklet, nor for his non-existent higher standards. Burton is a GFBF-sycophant, with nothing valuable to impart about flag design.

Also in late 2015, the Russian-Irish vexillologist Stan Zamyatin published his 50-page booklet ***"Flagging Ireland"***, with the subtitle ***"Irish Guide to Flag Design"***. Its author spends only about fifteen pages pretending to have flag design expertise, so in that sense his booklet is only about thirty percent rubbish. The other seventy percent is actually rather enjoyable, full of colour and a number of interesting facts and figures. There is an early slip, though, when Zamyatin implies that flags with dimensional ratios of 3:5 are purposefully trying to be Golden Rectangles, simply because when superimposed they are an approximate match, as they are in his illustration of a Golden Rectangle superimposed upon the land version of the Union Jack. Because the word 'approximate' is not quantitative, it can of course be as broad as one wishes, but if one superimposes the Golden Rectangle on all of the national flags of the world, one will find a *perfect* match only in the flag of Togo, and even then, only if the flag has been correctly manufactured according to the original, late-1950s specifications of its artistically-minded designer. By Zamyatin's own reckoning, roughly half of the world's national flags have a dimensional ratio of 2:3, and a large percentage of the remainder have a dimensional ratio of 1:2. This means, of course, that if one superimposes a rectangle with the dimensions of a 2:3 flag upon all of the other flags of the world, one will find a perfect match for roughly half of the flags of the world, and that if one performs the same exercise using a superimposed rectangle with the dimensions of a 1:2 flag, one will likewise find a large percentage of perfect matches. Of the three rectangles, then, which is far and away the least relevant in the world of flags?

One can superimpose any rectangle, whether that of a door, window, bed, bedsheet, desktop, book, photograph, painting, paper sheet, envelope, mobile screen, television screen, cinema screen, and so-on, on all of the other rectangles in the world, and find a number of 'approximate' matches, and probably even some perfect ones, but in what way would that make the superimposed rectangle significant? The Golden Rectangle is in no way physically, mentally, spiritually, or even magically more significant in human existence than is any other rectangle. Whenever a vexillologist pulls a Golden Rectangle out of their pocket, superimposes it on any given flag, finds an approximate match, and implies that the match is significant, one knows immediately, or at least one *should* know immediately, that the vexillologist is a poseur or a nutter, and that in either case, whatever *else* they may have to say about flags should probably be ignored.

Thus when one arrives at the stapled fold in the centre of Zamyatin's booklet, and finds there a photo of the beaming face of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, the greatest con-artist that the world of flags has ever produced, and who is characterised by Zamyatin's glowing tribute as *"one of the leading flag experts in the world"*, one should not be altogether surprised, and when Zamyatin yields the floor to the con-artist for a few opening remarks, one should certainly know precisely what to expect:

> *"The basic principles of flag design, which follow here, derive from the observations and wisdom of dozens of vexillologists and vexillographers (flag designers), validated by empirical testing through large-scale public surveys. They reflect universal principles which apply to all graphic design, as well as the unique challenges posed by the many uses and functions of a flag."*

Vexillologists range from genuine flag scholars, such as Graham Bartram, to casual flag collectors. Like anyone else, they will all have opinions on a wide range of topics, but if one puts 'dozens' of them into a room and asks them to list the basic principles of flag design, they will be as unlikely as any other group of dozens of persons to agree on what the basic principles truly are, or on how many of them there are, or on how they should be prioritised. If one were to put Graham Bartram and the author of GFBF into a room, and ask only they to elucidate the basic principles of flag design, one would at best get the pronounced tonal differences between *"The Principles of Flag Design"* and *"Good Flag, Bad Flag"*. If one were to instead ignore what they have both written on the subject, and simply ask them to speak their minds, one might find that their views are diametrically opposed, given that Bartram has been quoted as saying: *"You should have a flag that you're happy with... At the end of the day it's not the design, it's what people invest in it."* There are no such things as 'universal principles' of flag design.

The gathered opinions of approximately 500 persons who share an interest in flags, and who therefore share certain biasses, do not constitute a large-scale public survey, particularly when their opinions are only 'validated' through the use of a pseudo-scientific 'scale', invented by the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* and/or one of his sons, nor can their gathered opinions be generalised to those of any national or multi-national populations, much less be elevated to the status of 'universal principles'. Moreover, the art of graphic design is not equatable with the art of flag design, given that the underlying principles of the former are typically tailored to the achievement of commercial purposes, whereas the underlying principles of the latter are typically tailored to the achievement of celebrating and even sanctifying whatever history, traditional, emotional, political, and spiritual values, aesthetic tastes, and aspirations are present in the population for whom a flag may be designed.

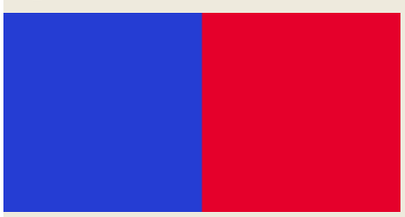
In their introductory lectures, students of psychology are sometimes introduced to the topic of 'quantitative descriptors versus qualitative descriptors', the former being capable of empirical validation, and thus also being the chief requirement of any legitimate scientific endeavour, and the latter being the bread and butter of politicians, advertisers, and other liars. Opinions, for example, are not quantitative, and therefore they cannot be validated with 'empirical testing'. Moreover, since opinions are wholly qualitative, they can easily be given either positive or negative 'spin', and because both spins remain qualitative, neither can be proven. For example, a personal or official policy of conservative spending can be characterised as being either frugal or stingy. The person who refrains from rushing in to a burning building can be called either cautious or cowardly. The virgin olive oil can be called either ninety-five percent pure or five percent contaminated. The hearing can be characterised as a search for truth or a witch-hunt. The novel can be called engrossing or confusing, the music cheerful or

maudlin, the film inventive or contrived, and so-on ad infinitum. All of us make judgements, and sometimes they can even be quantitatively proven correct. All of us also make qualitative judgements, all of the time, and we probably could not survive without them. But we should all strive to be aware of when we are hearing fiction, rather than facts. The quotation by the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* is the former, as is his pamphlet, as are fifteen pages in the booklet *Flagging Ireland*.

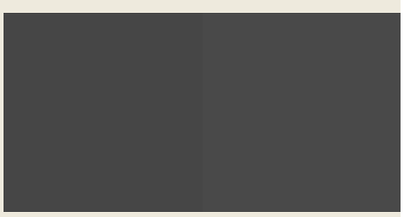
To the extent that those fifteen pages completely echo *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, little more need be said than has already been thoroughly said in the denouncement to which this addendum is attached. However, Zamyatin takes one topic to previously unrivalled levels of stupidity, and that is greyscale. He claims that the contrast between two colours can be best judged, not by simply *looking* at those two colours, side-by-side, but by looking at them when they have been converted to their greyscale equivalents. The author of this denouncement has repeatedly cautioned that those who say that a flag design should look good in greyscale, as Zamyatin also does, are spouting bunkum, as good a barometer of their charlatanry as when they mention the Golden Rectangle, but never before has anyone come up with something like Zamyatin's 'Greyscale Test'.

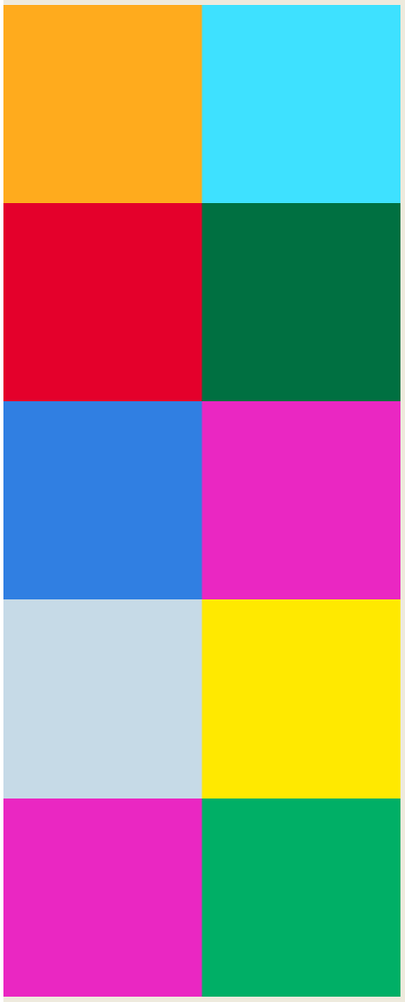
The author of this addendum would like to begin by observing what a pity it is that greyscale has only existed since the advent of computer graphics, leaving all those who existed prior to that time with an inability to adequately judge colour contrasts. With that out of the way, one can safely assume that the greyscale Zamyatin is referring to is the one that is embedded within the RGB colour model, the model that provides 16,777,216 discrete colours, and almost assuredly the one that is governing the colours that readers can see in this document, as well on the computing device with which they are viewing it, if indeed they are viewing it in that way, and not in some printed form. Greyscale consists of pure black, pure white, and 254 shades of grey between them. Because there are only 256 greyscale values or 'shades', it follows that there is one value of greyscale for every 65,536 RGB colours. Because any mid-level shade of greyscale is extremely difficult to distinguish from the shades to either side of it, as

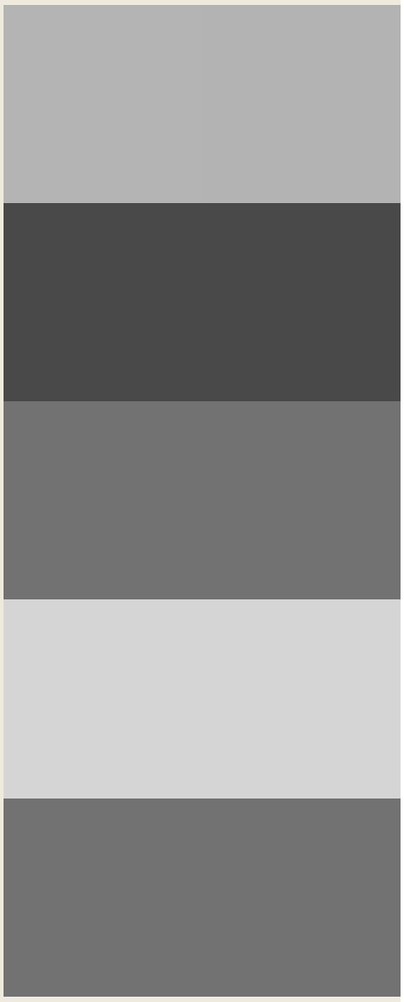
illustrated by the image to the left, which displays three adjacent greyscale shades, side-by-side, we could also say that there are 196,608 RGB colours with greyscale equivalents that are basically visually identical. These roughly two hundred thousand *different,* discrete colours are spread across the full spectrum of the RGB colour model, which of course means that there will always be good contrast between many them in their native states, yet no contrast, or virtually no contrast, between them at all, when they are rendered in their greyscale equivalents. But yes, the author of this addendum is being facetious. There are only 1,347 Pantone C colours to which flag inks can be matched, which means that there are roughly only five Pantone C colours that will have identical greyscale values, and maybe only fifteen or so that will have virtually indistinguishable greyscale values. Since these fifteen or so colours will still be spread out across the Pantone C colour spectrum, however, there will still be good contrast between some of them in their native states, and no contrast, or virtually no contrast, between them at all, when they are rendered in their greyscale equivalents. What all of this means is that there will be situations such as those that



are illustrated here, left and right, and on the following page, with two side-by-side colours shown to the left, and with their two greyscale equivalents depicted to the right.







It takes a fair bit of effort to suss out close cases like these, or even the many others that would be close enough to more than make the point, and the author of this addendum has better things to do. There should be no need to illustrate the obviously-existing reverse case, in which two colours that have poor contrast in their native states will contrast well in their greyscale equivalents. There will always be persons who have visual impairments that will make certain colours difficult for them to discriminate, but it is not the duty of a flag designer to choose flag colours that all people can equally perceive. The best that any flag designer can do is to choose colours that will be symbolically meaningful to those for whom the flag is intended, and to use common sense regarding contrasts in their arrangement. What *no* flag designer needs to do is to embrace the idea that greyscale is important in flag design. Nor do they need to design their flag in a small graphic area or on a small piece of paper. Nor do they need to consider how their flag design will look as a lapel pin. Nor do they need flag design advice from anywhere, other than from what rests atop their own shoulders, the very same source that has proven adequate for others for centuries.

Zamyatin's fifteen-page parroting of the fourteen pages of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* is tediously predictable, right down to its ending, in which he promotes the selection-panel-based, authoritarian flag contest model that has already proved completely unworkable in New Zealand and in Fiji. The committees of flag change initiatives and flag contests should not judge submitted designs. The finalists and winning candidate of any such contest should only be chosen by a majority of those whom the flag will represent. In an era of voting by post or by Internet, ceding judgements to a committee or to an appointed 'jury' will only corrupt a selection process with subjective biasses.

Martin Joubert's ***"Modern Flag Design"*** booklet has already been critiqued in the fifth addendum to the same denouncement to which this addendum has been attached, so no more will be said about it here.

The author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* claims that the 'principles' in his pamphlet reflect 'wisdom'. That word is a qualitative descriptor, a positive 'spin' that is as empirically unprovable as its opposite. It is the same spin that Orenski, Burton, Zamyatin, and Joubert have put on the content of their own publications. All of them are wise in their own eyes, preaching that great flags always have simple designs, when great flags with complex designs are waving across the world. Their flag design expertise is imaginary. Their pretension is limitless. Their narcissism is clear to all who have the eyes to see it. Not one of them will ever hold a candle to Graham Bartram or to Dr. Whitney Smith.

ADDENDUM EIGHT: *A MORE POLITE EVISCERATION OF "GOOD FLAG, BAD FLAG"*

For each annual meeting of the North American Vexillological Association, attending members may submit a flag-related paper, along with a corresponding presentation. At the discretion of the NAVA executive board, the member who provides the best paper and presentation receives the Captain William Driver Award. For the 2007 meeting, the award went to Perry Dane, a Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School. Dane's paper, *"Flags in Context: A Discussion of Design, Genre, and Aesthetics"*, was later published in *"Raven"*, NAVA's annual journal of vexillology. A suitable subtitle for Dane's paper might well have been "*A Kid-Gloves Critique of Good Flag, Bad Flag*".

GFBF had been available on the NAVA website since 2001, as a downloadable PDF file, but in 2006, its author paid for the bulk printing of a newly-copyrighted paper version, which would soon be sent by post to each NAVA member, and which would also soon be sold online by NAVA, and later by Amazon. Thus the pamphlet enjoyed increased attention from both flag enthusiasts and the general public alike, providing its author with precisely what he had paid for, and with precisely what he has recently paid for once again, with a new bulk printing of the 2020 version of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*.

Along with a wider awareness of GFBF after 2006, there also came a wider scrutiny, but apparently only Dane was willing to outline all of his misgivings in an actual paper. His may be the only formal criticism of GFBF that any NAVA member has ever written. At 38 pages, it may also be the longest scholarly work about flag design that any NAVA member has ever written. Accordingly one would expect Dane's paper to be included amongst the other works that are listed on NAVA's 'Guidance on Flag Design' webpage, particularly since it received a NAVA award, but no. After all, it would not do for GFBF, which tops the list on that webpage, to be undermined by a voice of reason from within NAVA's own ranks. Thus Dane's paper languishes in relative obscurity, whilst the author of GFBF continues to tick off his halfwitted opinions, which he grandiosely calls 'universal principles of flag design', on the fingers of one of his hands.

Besides its annual journal, NAVA publishes a quarterly magazine entitled *"Vexillum"*, issues of which become available to the general public, two years after initial release. In mid-2022, Issue No. 10 became available. Published for the second quarter of 2020, that issue includes the 'recollections' of the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag* regarding the history of his pamphlet. Within those two utterly self-serving pages he briefly mentions Dane's paper, but he does so in such a way that anything other than a very close reading will make Dane seem to be endorsing GFBF, rather than criticising it.

In truth Dane's paper systematically refutes virtually every daft idea that GFBF posits. The author of the denouncement to which this addendum has been attached cannot agree with all that Dane says, but on balance she finds much-welcomed and almost complete validation in the pages of his paper. She hopes that readers will follow the provided link to Dane's critique of GFBF, so that they can evaluate it for themselves. Hopefully those readers will not treat the insights in the paper as NAVA did, by acknowledging them to be award-worthy, only to later sweep them under a rug.

NAVA's 2023 annual meeting, tentatively scheduled for 6-8 October, will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which is practically on Dane's doorstep. His 2007 critique of GFBF was far too gentle, so one hopes that he will revise it in October with much less leniency. There are indications in Dane's CV that he is probably a person of faith. The author of this addendum would like to remind him that even Christ once used a whip.

(2024 note: Dane neither attended the meeting nor authored a more stringent critique)

ADDENDUM NINE: *YET ANOTHER PERSON'S VIEWS ON GFBF AND ON ITS AUTHOR*

Scot M. Guenter, Ph.D. is one of the most highly respected flag scholars and cultural historians in the world. The author of the denouncement to which this addendum has been appended is therefore delighted to report that Dr. Guenter's published views regarding the activities of the author of GFBF are pleasantly in accord with her own. Like the work of Perry Dane, which was described in the addendum that immediately precedes this one, Dr. Guenter's work thoroughly refutes the attitudes behind GFBF, but unlike Perry Dane, Scot Guenter has taken the gloves off.

Dr. Guenter's original 19-page essay, *"Historical shifts and emergent paradigms: Tradition, ideology, sources of power and influence in flag studies"*, can be read at either this location or at this one. A slightly annotated version is also available here. Its introductory abstract states that it is an 'overview of the evolution of flag studies', which is a description that does not really do justice to the piercing critique of GFBF and of its author that it becomes from its thirteenth page onwards, in a section entitled 'Vexillon[n]aires'. The points that Dr. Guenter makes in that section are in such agreement with those that have been made in this diatribe and in its companion piece, *"When Vexillologists are Vexations"*, that readers may suspect the author of those two works to have 'borrowed' some of her ideas from Dr. Guenter, but that is not the case. Although Dr. Guenter's work predates her own, she did not even become aware of it until early in 2023, several months after it had first become publicly available, and roughly a year after the first version of this diatribe appeared as a PDF on her websites.

Dr. Guenter's formal paper accompanied the identically-titled presentation that he gave at ICV27, the 27th International Congress of Vexillology, which was organised by the Flag Institute and held in London in 2017.

Photo source: the Flag Institute via Twitter (X)

Dr. Guenter gave his presentation on the second day of the Congress. One of the presentations on its first day was given by the author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, which in contrast to Dr. Guenter's scholarly presentation was yet another in a long line of self-serving chronicles about the influence of GFBF on flag design efforts. According to the recollections of an actual attendee of the Congress, each man sat stoically through the other's presentation, but Dr. Guenter's was best characterised as a 'rather obvious

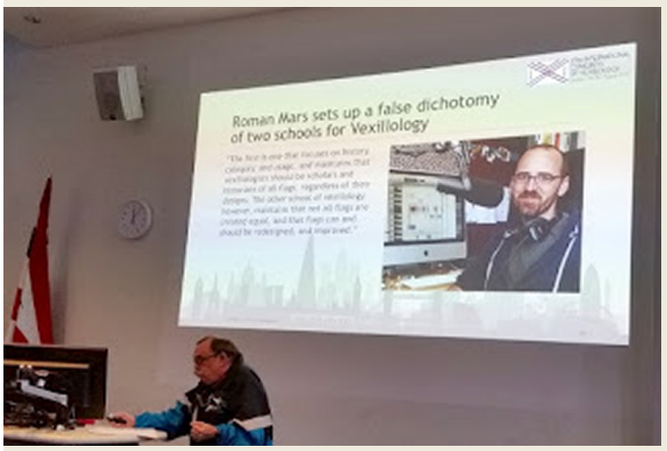


Photo source: The Voice of Vexillology, Flags & Heraldry

attack' on the author of GFBF, as well as on his most notable sycophant, Roman Mars. As it bloody well should have been. It is high time for the genteel diffidence with which the peers of GFBF's author have regarded his well over two decades of perfidy to cease. Readers should of course evaluate the merits of Dr. Guenter's paper on their own, as well as parallels between the points he makes and those of the author of this diatribe, but the extracts below are nevertheless appropriate.

"A challenge to this distinguishing between vexillography and vexillology for the sake of academic boundaries comes in a movement in the United States that calls such beliefs outdated and elitist. In some ways, it might harken back historically to Peter Orenski's experiment in New Milford. 'Given a jury trained in the principles of good flag design,' he hypothesised at one point, 'any municipality can organise an open flag contest and select a vexillographically acceptable flag.' As he himself admitted upon further reflection, this is not academically sound but rather an exercise in the logical fallacy of circular reasoning. Orenski promoted a faction he liked to call 'vexillology-in-action': the active intervention in a community's uses of flags, invited or not, to get them to replace aesthetically displeasing flags with ones that better conform to the advocates' definition of beauty... Studying this behaviour is vexillology, performing it is not."

"Ted Kaye disagrees. As Roman Mars explains, from his group's perspective, there are two schools of thought in vexillology: 'The first is one that focuses on history, category, and usage, and maintains that vexillologists should be scholars and historians of all flags, regardless of their designs. The other school of vexillology, however, maintains that not all flags are created equal, and that flags can and should be redesigned, and improved.' The designer sets up a dichotomy: one group would follow the Fundamental Principles of Whitney Smith in this regard, the others would follow Ted Kaye. Calling themselves 'vexillon[n]aires', this latter group wants to claim authority not to study the culture around flags, but to change it, and to change the flags themselves. They falsely suggest that when they do so they are being impartial and objective. No, they are imposing their beliefs and values and affecting the flag culture of the group they study. They see such meddling to be their calling, their mission as vexillologists; Whitney Smith understood that this meddling pollutes their ability as social scientists to study the culture around the flag. However, they are not as much interested in understanding any particular flag in its socio-historical context as in promoting their own designs, or having the power to oversee the process of how others might change the flag's design."

"In a world where you appoint yourself the authority on how a flag should conform to your guidelines, it is easy to disregard or even mock symbols or elements that might have meaning or significance to those in the group that created the flag or claim it as a representation of their identity. The general audience, in contemporary American culture, loves the opportunity to feel they are superior to someone else..."

"Mars has reached many people and got them thinking about flags, which is to the good. However, the vast majority now think, according to his presentation and how it has subsequently been disseminated and reported, that the North American

Vexillological Association goes around rating flags on which is the most beautiful, which ugliest, and that is what vexillology is about and why it exists. And many calling themselves vexillologists now spend hours and hours online arguing how to make existing flags prettier, or designing new flags for collective communities who didn't request any help, then offering their new design to the communities and presenting themselves as experts. Vexillology should be studying how flags are part of these cultures, not telling people in those societies they are wrong and we know a better way they need to follow. That is ethnocentric, blatantly, and self-promoting in a non-scholarly way."

"When Ted Kaye reported on the current state of [Fiji's 2015] new flag selection process at ICV26 in Sydney, he showed an image on the screen that still sticks in my mind: It showed him, a foreign white man, a retired white banker, in Fiji to explain the correct way to do something to a group of smaller, dark-skinned individuals from that society; he was above them, looking down, and they were all looking up to him for answers. I was thinking about the levels of deconstruction that image would attract at a conference on Post-Colonial Studies, if participants were told he had come from a privileged-class American background to tell those islanders living in a former colony how to make a new flag to represent themselves. And so it is not surprising to discover that members of the political opposition did seize upon such an approach to his visit to Fiji. Professor Wadan Narsey, writing in the Fiji Times: 'American Ted Kaye, a vexillologist (flag expert), volunteered to help the flag committee using his 'universal principles' of simplicity and a few colours only. Ha ha ha. So already we can forget our unique Fijian values and symbols'."

"In a paper at the last NAVA meeting, John Hartvigsen asserted, 'The flag of the National Socialist German Workers Party, which was later adopted as the flag of the German Third Reich, despite being almost universally despised and discredited today, is arguably the best-designed, most powerful and dramatic flag of the Twentieth Century'. Yes, it passes all the tests of Good Flag, Bad Flag to be a very good flag, but it is hated and despised by so many around the planet: this is the power of culture and history, and why they must be highly valued in vexillology."

"In a time when alternate facts are being disseminated at an increasing rate, when ignorance runs rampant, and major elected leaders of my home nation, a powerful country, openly dissemble, insult, excoriate reading, and even deny science, we need more attention to scholarship, not less. Vexillology should not abandon academic approaches, it should embrace them."

The eloquence with which Dr. Guenter has exposed the ugliness of 'vexillonnairism' and its legacy, as well as the dubious attitudes of its chief architect and his followers, may be difficult for future critical thinkers to match, but they need to make the attempt, and they need to do so openly, publicly, and repeatedly, in every flag-related forum at their disposal, until *Good Flag, Bad Flag* has been so thoroughly discredited that its influence will irrevocably die, and preferably long before its author does.

But Dr. Guenter is wrong about something: NAVA *does* go around rating flags. In fact it has conducted yet another flag design rating survey since his paper was published. Actually NAVA has been the chief enabler of GFBF's author since 2001, apparently insensitive to the vulgarity of his vexillonnairism, or simply willing to turn a blind eye to it as long as it keeps NAVA in the news, with new membership dues rolling in. NAVA is no longer a true vexillological organisation. Perhaps the FIAV should expel it.