

# *Quo Vadimus*

*An Essay on the State and Future of Vexillology*

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## ***Dedication***

*An meine geliebte Tante Susanne Machanek  
die mich aus der Wüste rettete;  
and for Sam and Betsy Serman,  
who patiently watered my American roots.*

## ***Acknowledgments***

*A bow of thanks to my friends and colleagues, without whom this work would have been done much faster ... and would have consisted of a miserable few pages at most. To **Friedrich and Christa Nekolar**, who listened to my flag litanies and answered patiently and knowledgeably whatever flag questions came to mind while touring Tuscany. To **Roberto Breschi**, who reached into his Latin-grammar bag for the classic locutions in the essay, and who led me through the thicket of Italian flag practices, while pretending to understand my Italian without laughing aloud. To **Michael Faul**, ever-willing to place his vast erudition at the service of a history-challenged author. To **Phillip Nelson**, who patiently reviewed every bit of this essay and corrected many a wrong notion, while contributing excellent thoughts. To **Rob Raesaide**, without whose generous assistance the cyber-survey portion of this work would have been still-born. To **Philippe Rault**, whose “vexillologie engagée” inspired many a page and to **Sophie Rault** for her wonderful proofreading. To **Scot Guenter** and **John Purcell**, who reviewed the entire essay and supplied their wisdom, background, and perspective. To **Grace Rogers Cooper** and **Donald Healy** and **Dave Martucci**, who were never too busy to advise and counsel when the going got rough. To **Emil Dreyer** and **Arnold Rabbow**, who filled in some vital blank spots in my vexi-education. So don’t blame me – these are the people really responsible for whatever value you may find herein.*

*Most of all, however, I am indebted to the many denizens of the cyber-vexillopolis, on whose kindness and knowledge I relied to gather the data shown in Part 3. You were never too busy to answer questions from a stranger and to guide him through the flag habitat of your country. And so this essay is also dedicated to all and every one of you – may we long enjoy and cherish our strange passion for flags!*

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## PART 1 – Vexillology Poised Between Past and Future

### Introduction

Imagine a first Manual of Vexillology published at some point in this new century. And imagine the next generation of flag passionates reading it. What will the Manual say about the four decades from 1960 to 2000? Years that witnessed the birth of a new organized science? Or years when a band of flag-happy enthusiasts lived out their passion but failed to give it the wings of future?

Ah, but *will there be* a Manual of Vexillology? Will anyone remember those four heady decades when a unique constellation of founding fathers sparked a burst of energy that elevated the study of flags from quaint and isolated activity to a world-circling field of serious, systematic analysis? Or will vexillology have been, in the words of Michael Faul, “a one-generation phenomenon”? Thoroughly vexing questions all.

Wrote Smith in a 1971 editorial to *The Flag Bulletin* : “Ten years ago vexillology did not exist. The term was not in use, no association of persons interested in flags existed, no meetings between such individuals were held, and there were no other bonds of communication ... between them ... *The Flag Bulletin* [was] the first publication in the world dedicated exclusively to vexillology ...”<sup>1</sup> In the 30 years following this editorial most dictionaries have bowed to vexillology’s sway, we let a thousand vexilliferous flowers bloom, countless flag aficionados joined up, new publications emerged, good fellowship joined good scholarship at meetings around the planet, and bonds of communication have become stronger than ever.

And yet. And yet fundamental questions remain. Not so much questions about the path already traveled. Rather, important questions about the road ahead. With vexillology poised between past and future, we stop to ask, *Quo vadimus?*

**Part 1** of this essay undertakes a serious task in a high-risk manner. The serious task consists of *narrating* the accomplishments and difficulties of vexillology over the years 1960-2000 and of *analyzing* the lessons offered by this unprecedented four-decade-long

journey. The high-risk manner was pointed out by Professor Russell Martin:<sup>2</sup> Mixing in virtually on the same page description and analysis, narrative and methodical inquiry. A daring balancing act indeed. Yet I hope to bridge this narrative/analysis trap and derive answers to that urgent *Quo vadimus?* with which flag lovers gaze into the new century. The primary objective of this section is to provide factual underpinnings for the vexillology-as-science analysis in **Part 2**

**Part 2** asks, *Is Vexillology a Science?* This critical question is intimately connected with the previous discussion. If vexillology is *no* science, then many of the claims of the past forty years have been so much posturing and pretense. But if vexillology *does* meet scientific standards, then it must also meet certain requirements – and these requirements provide both milestones and framework for the future.

In candor, as a chemist trained in the principles and practice of the physical sciences, I have long regarded as suspect the notion that collecting, describing, and tracing the history of flags – however methodically and precisely done – confer on vexillology the “mantle” of science. In my view these activities do nothing of the kind. They constitute necessary *first steps* in scientific work, of course. But are they sufficient? Not in any definition or practice of science I know of. Given this mindset, you will perhaps be surprised by the conclusions forced on me by a serious analysis of vexillology-as-science in section **2.3** and by the historical data gathered in section **3.1.2**.

**Part 3** does penance of sorts. Having in the preceding sections ruffled the fringes of Vexor – that high-tempered hurler of bolts, not of lightning but of bunting – I drew this penance: Conduct a global scientific study in vexillology, using the four core principles of *deductive science*<sup>3</sup> – hypothesis, data collection, recognition of patterns, testable predictions. What connection between this study and the essay? Quoth Vexor, “Science is about connections. You’re the scientist, you figure out the connections.” Surprisingly, one can discover connections.

After tutoring from NAVA members and FOTW<sup>4</sup> insiders Phillip Nelson, Rick Wyatt, and Edward Mooney and with the assistance of FOTW Director Rob Raeside, I completed a two-months worldwide survey of vexillophiles in 47 nations and sub-national units. Starting hypotheses along with resulting data, patterns, analysis, and predictions are all given in this section.

Now to the subjective part. I confess a bias toward *rational*

*pragmatism*.<sup>5</sup> That is, I find it useful to resolve differences or confront choices by asking: What *function* does an idea or proposal fulfil, and how does it fulfil it? Is the idea practical? Who benefits from it? What good or harm could it do? Is it needed?

**Examples:** **(A)** Section 1.2.2 examines *FLAV*<sup>7</sup>, its virtues and flaws. Should it be adapted to meet the challenges of the Information Age? We will find rational pragmatism offering useful direction. **(B)** Section 2.2.2.5 looks at *vexillology-as-business* and asks, What function does it perform and how does it perform it? Is it practical? Who benefits from it? What good or harm does it do?

To friends who would argue that rational pragmatism is a cold and bloodless way of dealing with the emotion inherent in flags; to Bards who warn that *The man that hath no music in himself, / Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds, / Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;*<sup>8</sup> – to friends and Bards alike I reply, “Fair point. But will romantic idealism provide solutions for the problems facing vexillology in the next few decades?” I don’t make light of alternatives. I stress that merely disagreeing with a pragmatic approach is not enough, for we need *concrete* proposals to deal with the practical problems affecting the future of vexillology.

And most of all we need to act. I admit to a bias for *action* over debate and for practical experience over theory. For this is a basic principle of science: When theory conflicts with facts or experience, discard the theory and *act* to midwife a new theory. The section 2.2.2.3, *Vexillology-as-action*, illustrates why *action* – timely, focused, coordinated – is direly needed if vexillology is to survive and flourish into the next generation.

One last *caveat lector*: I’ve had a pair of unavoidable companions throughout this essay. One, a dyspeptic fellow named *Malevexor*, kept playing devil’s advocate and generally stirring things up whenever my attention drifted. The other was the lovely apparition of *Vicienne*, who communicated in barely audible but insistent whispers. Neither would be denied a voice, much less silenced, and I apologize in advance for their intrusions.

## **Part 1 – Four Decades of vexillology**

### **1.0 – Vexillology emerges as an organized discipline – 1960-2000**

To gaze at the past forty years of vexillology from the perch of the new century must surely be a wondrous sight to those who were present at the creation. To Whitney Smith and Gary Grahl who started – on a shoestring, a wish, and a hunch – *The Flag Bulletin* in October 1961 and the Flag Research Center in February 1962, to Klaes Sierksma in the Netherlands, to Aldo Ziggio who transplanted the seeds to Italy, to Emil Dreyer in Switzerland, and to many others. If a seer had told these founding fathers of organized vexillology – gathering in Muiderberg, the Netherlands, on 4-5 September 1965 – that on the cusp of the new millennium, a mere 35 years away, there would be over 50 national and sub-national vexillological organizations on six continents, a steady stream of regular publications, annual national conferences, biennial international gatherings, an electronic 8400-page “picture book” with 15,300 flag illustrations, hundreds of messages about flags being exchanged worldwide almost instantaneously every day – surely the founders in Muiderberg would have, as sober-minded professionals, laughed until they cried.

A historically faithful survey of what was accomplished from 1960 to 2000 is daunting, and I will not attempt it for two reasons: It is clearly beyond my competence and it lies outside the goals I’ve set for this essay. Rather, I will concentrate in the next few sections on signal accomplishments during these years as well as on the main difficulties encountered along the way. Forward.

## 1.1 Signal Accomplishments

### 1.1.1 Vexipublications

It is probably safe to say there are over 40 publications dedicated to vexillology at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their quality and regularity varies widely. Because I am most familiar with those published in English, German, French, and Italian, the following comments apply primarily to them.

The most notable feature of current vexipubs is the very fact of their existence. We sometimes overlook this aspect, but should not. It is a near-miracle that so much energy, talent, passion, and resources have poured year after year into an area of research mostly ignored by the scholarly world, that so many enthusiasts have spent countless hours away from their families, friends, personal pursuits to record and preserve the world's flag patrimony. Most of this effort was expended at negligible personal gain and for little glory outside a narrow circle of vexillophiles. A salute, then, to the editors of these flag newsletters and journals for fulfilling a unique task of preserving and transmitting knowledge. They are *Kulturträger* of the first rank, in the best Western humanist tradition, and in the teeth of a postmodern culture transfixed by the cult of globalization – motto: *One Market Under God*<sup>9</sup> – of a culture devoted to transmuting livestock into hamburgers and mass-marketing pasteurized goods and information.

*Malevexor: If you get any more florid and excited you'll hyperventilate. What's so unique about publishing a newsletter every few months? Lots of organizations do it. Plus, newsletters are penny-ante stuff. Walk into any well-stocked news stand: Plenty of slick full-color magazines on any subject from aardvark-feeding to zymurgic advice – gee, nothing on flags, wonder why?*

*Vicienne: The unique part, Evil One, is that – aside from your making up the aardvark-feeding part, all these critters need are ants and termites -- just about all vexos are amateurs, they do it in their spare time, without a paid staff, without gain or advertizing income, securing their information after painstaking research and preserving an aspect of world culture that would otherwise ...*

... and, sorry to interrupt, Vicienne, my error. I should **not** have written “newsletters.” The best of the vexipubs are really journals ranging between 16 and 45 pages. What do they accomplish? Why will they be star witnesses when we discuss vexillology-as-science in **Part 2**? Herewith some hints and highlights:

- Nothing about flags is unimportant to *The Flag Bulletin* issued by the Flag Research Center. Now in its 42<sup>nd</sup> year of regular bimonthly publication, it is simply the world repository of information about flags, scrupulously edited and researched. Ecumenical and scholarly in style and content, it has attracted over the years work from the best and brightest flag researchers from around the globe. Its memorable issues are legion. While this is not a place to list or discuss them, it *is* the place to bookmark two roles the *Bulletin* has played uniquely well since 1961: Combining scholarly research with sweeping socio-historical perspective as in Ron Hassner’s classic *The Evolution of the Sacred Flag and the Modern Nation-State*; <sup>10</sup> and devoting whatever space is necessary to single-topic issues that otherwise never would have received exposure to the world’s vexillati. <sup>11</sup>
- The oldest, most widely read and regularly issued publication belonging to a membership-based organization is *NAVA News*, <sup>12</sup> now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year. Primarily newsletter-ish in style and format, it nonetheless contains, after 1987, <sup>12A</sup> a number of serious, thoughtful vexillological studies – mainly about North American flags but with plenty of input from about the world. Under David Martucci the newsletter has matured into a journal, adding a strong international viewpoint and deeply researched full-color centerfolds.
- NAVA’s proudest vexillological accomplishment is doubtless *Raven*, a yearly Journal of Vexillology, first published in 1994 under the visionary presidency of Scot Guenter. Every bit as serious-minded as *The Flag Bulletin*, it shares with the latter a willingness and ability to concentrate on single-theme issues that constitute classics in the field. Donald Healy’s work on Native American tribal flags in *Raven* 3/4, for example, was a luminous contribution to American cultural heritage and enjoyed an extraordinary success. Volume 7, a *Festschrift* dedicated to Whitney Smith, is the fifth volume benefitting from Ted’s Kaye professional editorial talent, is a compilation of Driver award-

winning papers given at NAVA annual meetings. Raven 9/10, also under Kaye's editorship, is dedicated to some 150 American City Flags and constitutes an extraordinary effort quarterbacked by John Purcell.

- *Vexilla Helvetica* has been issued almost annually since 1969 as a bilingual (German and French) publication by the 88-member Swiss Society of Vexillology (SSV), whose primary attention is devoted to the flags of Switzerland. Some of SSV's extraordinary contributions have been the publication of Louis Mühlemann's flag book in 1991, the flag catalogue of Fribourg by Sabine Sille,<sup>12B</sup> the entire 17th century Lucerne flag book, flags of Swiss regiments in foreign services, Swiss military, regional, political or local flags both historic and contemporary. In addition to its primary focus, the SSV has a strong record of publishing on non-Swiss flags, for example French, Finnish, Portuguese, German and Austrian military flags, Prussian flags, Spanish maritime flags, Slovak flags, as well as an extensive bibliography on hundreds of flag books from around the world.<sup>28</sup>
- *Vexilla Italica*, a CISV<sup>13</sup> biannual now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year under the direction of founder Aldo Ziggio, is another example of outstanding care devoted to accurate research and editing. Focused primarily on Italian flag topics, recent issues have been illuminated by Roberto Breschi's graphics of regional and provincial flags and graced by his whimsical *Vexata Quæstio*<sup>13A</sup> feature. Original documents for provincial and flags are frequently quoted, providing basic references. Without this journal and the dedicated team of vexillophiles that undergirds it, the story of Italian vexillology would be painfully incomplete.
- Following the untimely death of William Crampton in 1997, Michael Faul has taken *Flagmaster*<sup>14</sup> from newsletter to an attractive and diverse journal that many regard as exemplary in its class. Nowadays it sparkles with the full-color graphics of Bertram Graham and the genial whimsy of Chumley the Vexigorilla. It benefits immeasurably from Faul's dedication to scholarship, careful editing, and on-schedule publication. Remarkably, and so far uniquely, Faul added a regular *The Future of Flags* feature to the journal, devoting it to the interests of junior members and encouraging them to contribute.
- "The Voice of Vexillology in Canada" is the logo of *Flagscan*,<sup>15</sup>

which, along with its several supplements in French and English (e.g., *Flagsam*, *Pavillonnérie*), rely on Kevin Harrington's original voice, his careful research and whimsical curiosity about all things flag-related.

- Antipodal vexillology from under the Southern Cross is promoted by *Crux Australis*, the journal of the Flag Society of Australia, established in 1984. Drawing on the erudition of editor Tony Burton, a premier flag designer of our generation, the research of Ralph Bartlett, and the excellent graphics by Ralph Kelly, *Crux Australis* has provided an admirable (and rare) example of *vexillologie engagée*, vexillology actively concerned with social issues. Its detailed illustrated reporting on the great “Australian flag search” is a collector's item and a lasting socio-historical contribution.
- German vexillology, its voice painfully stilled by events in the past century, made a dramatic comeback in 1995 with the formal establishment of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Flaggenkunde* and its publication, *Der Flaggenkurier*. Propelled by an energetic mix of young and seasoned vexillologists, the Germans proceeded to make major contributions from the very first to the latest issues of *Der Flaggenkurier* – from Günther's in-depth survey of (formerly) East Germany's city flags <sup>16</sup> to the seminal survey of German national flags since the Middle Ages by Martin and Dreyhaupt. <sup>17</sup> This focus on German flag heritage has been constantly supplemented with first-rate coverage of international topics, for example, the histories of Norwegian and Dutch municipal flags. <sup>18, 19</sup>
- Starting in 1994 Gunnar Staack and Erich Dieter Linder embraced the brave new world of computer-aided vexillology with their biannual *Flag Data Bank*, a journal accented by Staack's and Mario Fabretto's flawless designs and exceptional graphics software knowledge. Since July 1999, in Nos. 10-13, the journal has been a haven for municipal vexillology, to which it has made seminal contributions. <sup>29</sup>
- Those who believe that vexillology and its acolytes also have an *active* role to play in society – safeguarding the symbols of minority cultures or fending off encroaching *logochonnerie*, <sup>20</sup> for example – will find a never-dull harbor in *Ar Banniel*, <sup>21</sup> the quarterly edited by Philippe Rault and published in French (with

Breton accents) since 1996. Though some have remonstrated to its tone,<sup>22</sup> the bulletin performs a vital task: The preservation of Brittany's flag patrimony. As Smith pointed out,<sup>23</sup> this type of scholarly sub-national organization is the only (last?) hope for researching, recording, and presenting to the world the symbolism of minority cultures. If not Le Brun and Kervella and Raullet and Rault – who? If not in *Ar Banniel* – where?

- Another promising recent voice in French, *Vexillacta*, a quarterly edited since September 1998 by historian Léon Nyssen under the banner of his Vexillological Information Centre in Verviers, Belgium. It made major contributions with a rigorous system for color designation in vexillology,<sup>24</sup> a detailed a flag-classification scheme,<sup>25</sup> and a regularly updated vexillological glossary.<sup>26</sup>

These summaries by no means constitute an exhaustive list. They are merely prologue to **Part 2** and unforgivably gloss over such quintessential voices as *Vexilla Nostra*, published, irregularly at times, since 1966 by the Dutch Society for Vexillology;<sup>27</sup> *Vexilologie*, published by the Vexilologický klub of Prague, Czech Republic, since 1971; *Vexilla Belgica*; the *SAVA Newsletter and SAVA Journal*;<sup>30</sup> or *Das Flaggenkabinett*, Jiří Tenora's newsletter regarded by many as a masterpiece of scholarly dedication to analyzing and documenting original sources of flag regulations and specifications.<sup>31</sup> I apologize for short-changing them and others, but the primary point was made and we need to move on.

### 1.1.2 FIAV

Thank goodness for French: Without the language of Marquis de Lafayette we might jaw-lock trying to say IFVA (in English) or IFVG (in German) to designate the organization born on Sunday, 5 September 1965, in Klaes Sirksma's living room in Muiderberg. By the grace of French, however, we ended up with the eminently pronounceable FIAV (FEE.av).<sup>32</sup> We also ended up with an organization that has proven its worth for 35 years, primarily, I think, because of two key decisions made by its founding vexifathers:<sup>33</sup> FIAV was purposely designed to be an umbrella federation linking associations and institutions *rather than individuals*; each organization would have its own membership, publications and regular meetings.<sup>34, 35</sup> Second, "it was decided that the core purpose of the new international organization would be to provide a forum every two years for member associations and institutions to meet and discuss mutual problems."<sup>34</sup> The principle of a federation of entities rather than individuals along with FIAV's narrow, clearly defined purpose have been the foundation for its success – the flip side of which will be discussed in section 1.2.2. Other working aspects of FIAV -- its charter, flag, continuous record of biannual meetings – have all been carefully documented<sup>34, 35, 36</sup> and no harm will come from omitting them here. Clearly this is a well-established and functioning enterprise with a steadily growing worldwide membership, with an impressive trail of scholarly proceedings that preserve the papers given at FIAV meetings. In these respects FIAV is the equal of any typical scientific organization – an important point for the discussion in **Part 2**.

### 1.1.3 Vexillological societies

Pride of place for being the first organized vexillological association goes to the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Vlaggenkunde (NVVV),<sup>27</sup> founded on 19 March 1966 in The Hague. As we've seen, the first vexillological *institution* was the Flag Research Center, established in February 1962; unlike associations, the FRC has *subscribers*, not members. Since then at least 40 additional associations and institutions have blossomed on the six continents symbolized by the two loops and four ends of the halyard in FIAV's flag. Among the latest welcome members admitted at ICV-19 in York, England, were the Vexillological Society of Japan, the Vexillological Association of Texas (VAST), Flags of the World (FOTW), and the Confederate States Vexillological Association (CSVA).

The largest national associations at the end of 2000 are The Flag Institute (FI) in the UK and NAVA in North America, each with some 450 members, many from outside the UK or North America. FRC's roster overshadows them both by a factor of at least three, including a substantial corps of international subscribers. More typically, membership levels for national associations range between 60 and 70 within 3-5 years of founding, and most have a strong international contingent.

It is this globe-spanning fraternity of flag associations and institutions – recently braced by the brave new world of cybervexillology, as we see next – that forms the proudest historic accomplishment of organized vexillology in the past four decades. Spurred by energetic vexipubs, energized by yearly national meetings, reinforced every two years by international get-togethers, the vexi-fraternity in the past four decades has gone from strength to strength. Its hefty reservoir of intellectual energy and structural integrity is a good match for overcoming the difficulties that lie in wait. Will we muster the discipline to do it?

## 1.1.4 – Cybervexillology

### 1.1.4.1 – Flags of the World (FOTW)

A few far-sighted souls – William Crampton in England, Giuseppe Bottasini in Italy, Gunnar Staack, Erich Dieter Linder, and Harald Müller in Germany, Scot Guenter, Jon Radel, and Annie Platoff, in the United States, Mark Sensen in The Netherlands, and others – instinctively understood the promise of the World Wide Web for developing and popularizing flag culture.

#### Voices

**Giuseppe Bottasini:** *I created FOTW because I dreamed of having available a large, full-color flag book, always up-to-date and containing those local or non-official flags that books normally don't show. I was particularly fascinated by new flags that appeared fleetingly on television or in newspapers ... The Internet seemed to me the right path for fulfilling my vexillological dream: a means for exchanging flag information in real time with people all over the world. ("Why I created FOTW"<sup>38</sup>)*

**Scot Guenter** (former NAVA President): *I propose the establishment of a special committee of volunteers to discuss the creation of a guide to flag sources already available on the Internet and to explore the possibilities of a 'vexillological bulletin board' accessible via Internet ...*<sup>39</sup>

The cyber-tsunami foreseen by these voices has now hit shore – from wholesalers to retailers to the relative backwater of the flag industry.<sup>40, 41</sup> If you participate in some aspect of the flag business (as I do), you ignore the Internet at your own peril. If you are a flag aficionado and do not surf the cyberwaves, you are denying yourself an exquisite pleasure as well as missing a motherload of new, timely information. This boosterish picture has a reverse side, of course, as section 1.2.4 details. But for now let us enjoy this brave new world.

What Nelson called the “cybervex community”<sup>42</sup> is sparked by **FOTW**, the early-90's brainchild of Giuseppe Bottasini, currently directed by Rob Raeside. FOTW dwarfs in scale any project ever

undertaken in vexillology. Consider the following data, current as of February 2003. FOTW has:

- more than 18,000 pages of information and over 32,000 images of flags; compare this with December 2000 data: 8,400 pages and 15,300 images – an astonishing record of growth;
- monthly postings of 1,000-1,600 new images, with new postings announced by Raeside weekly;
- Organizational statistics: Countries represented by staff: more than 22; 1 e-mail group; 15 mirror websites in 8 countries; 1 webmaster; 1 assistant webmaster; 1 graphics specialist; 1 listmaster; 1 assistant listmaster; 1 apprentice listmaster; 30 editors; 500-plus members; countless contributors from everywhere in the world;
- Website statistics: approximately 4 million page requests per month; <sup>63</sup> an average of 1,330 message-board postings per month;
- Seven have already worked up and posted over 1000 flag pages, of whom three editors posted *over 2000 pages*. <sup>44</sup> Note the pick-up in tempo since December 2000.

It all adds up to a commitment of astounding scale, a vexillological enterprise of unparalleled scope. It makes little difference whether you personally favor or ignore it – FOTW has become the primary engine powering contemporary vexillology. Cybervex – FOTW along with the many vexillological sites <sup>47</sup>, “is the mass-market arm of vexillology,” as Philip Nelson has been affirming for some time. <sup>45</sup>

By virtue of its Internet range, its digital speed, its numerous, active, and dedicated corps of “insiders,” it is a safe wager that FOTW will dramatically impact the next generation of flag enthusiasts, providing a lasting, readily accessible trove of flag information. I have worked with several key FOTWers while researching this essay, and their energy, intelligence, and willingness to help have left – as you may gather – a profound, lasting impression.

### Voices

*Ed Mooney: Many kids are doing research on flags at my high school ... Many students said they discovered ... ‘the most comprehensive and exhaustive site,’ and a*

*boy called the 'largest and really neat' site in the world of flags – FOTW ... I see it every day when a student asks me about flags ... It is so COOL to see an FOTW page printed out, in the hands of a student walking by me at lunch ... In the hands of a student I don't know!*

Since FOTW is the vanguard of things to come, it would help to take a few moments and learn how it works. Fire up your computer, reach the Internet and:

**a. Register** – A one-time activity. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/> and click on the appropriate links to supply information about yourself and to select a password. This is a safety feature provided by E-groups to screen out less-than-desirable types. E-groups will verify your registration by e-mail; reply back to them to complete the registration.

**b. Select FOTW as a group**<sup>47</sup> – Having verified your registration, you can now subscribe to FOTW. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/> click on the 'subscribe' link and select the choices you are most comfortable with.<sup>48</sup> You are now a member, ready to roll on the FOTW cyberway. You can choose to contribute images, redraw images to FOTW format, participate in message-board discussions, become an editor, vote in Florida, or just plain vexiferret through websites without any obligation whatever.

Would you like to make a contribution? Simply post it on the FOTW message board. From there it goes to Director Rob Raeside, who stores it by country or topic and e-mails it to the editor responsible for that geographic area. Every month Rob sends out 600-800 pages to his editors – and no, that's not a typo: between six and eight *hundred* pages, some 90% of which are actual messages, the rest mailer information.<sup>49</sup> The editors then process Rob's input and may take from a few weeks to a few months to post your flag image and any accompanying text on FOTW. Having posted your image, the editor informs Raeside.

#### 1.1.4.2 – NAVA’s website

Organizations and individuals interested in flags have staked out a host of Internet addresses. A reference to the various sites resides on NAVA’s website <[www.NAVA.org](http://www.NAVA.org)>, started by Don Healy and Jon Radel, improved by Annie Platoff under Charles Spain’s presidency, and brought to a professional-class level by Richard Gideon, webmaster from 1999-2001, and by Jon Radel after that. No doubt this story has counterparts across the flag world. Nelson’s survey shows that there are 17 cyber-vexi-sites, some quite active and up-to-date.<sup>47</sup>

NAVA’s site average monthly ‘hit rate’ in 2000-2001 was over 55,000 hits a month, in some peak months as many as 85,000

#### Voices

*Dale Coots, (Annin & Co.) A well-designed ... site is dynamic and always changing ... [it] should be updated as frequently as possible to keep your customers coming back for more visits, more information ...*<sup>40</sup>

NAVA’s was the first flag-association website to make a special effort to reach youngsters, the next generations, the future. New features were constantly added to promote vexillology.

It appears that NAVA’s website touches *over half a million* flag enthusiasts every year. Compare that with the 2,500 or so people receiving NAVA’s paper publications every year. Consider also that new material can be posted on the website within 12-24 hours, whereas it might take two to four *months* to publish and distribute one quarterly issue of *NAVA News* and a whole *year* to issue *Raven*. Consider finally that a website can be updated and corrected in days while it may take years to update a paper publication.

**Summarizing:** From literally *nothing* in 1960 organized vexillology today is a strapping enterprise, with fundamental accomplishments in research and a widespread and loyal organizational base. Few disciplines, whether in the physical or social sciences, can boast a comparable four-decade record. As with most human endeavors, several difficulties remain and these will be analyzed in the next section. But they should never obscure the fact that today’s generation of flag enthusiasts inherit a formidable intellectual bounty from the creators of organized vexillology. It is in

many ways a still-fragile gift, an unfinished song, and of that its trustees must be mindful.

Mindful, but wide-eyed to the reality that a discipline conceived in the pre-Information Age is now enveloped and challenged by new technology. Wide-eyed also to growing expectations and to ever-insistent questions we will consider next: How do we change? What does the future hold? *Quo vadimus?*

## 1.2 -- Difficulties and challenges

*'The time has come, ' the Walrus said,  
'To talk of many things:  
Of shoes – and ships – and sealing-wax –  
Of cabbages – and kings –  
And why the sea is boiling hot –  
And whether pigs have wings.'* <sup>50</sup>

*Caveat lector:* This is not a section for the faint of heart. Seas are not yet boiling hot, nor have pigs grown wings. But Father Time has. Forty years later, vexillology has reached the level of maturity where some adult conversation is in order.

To begin with, it is surprising how little constructive and thoughtful criticism vexillologists engage in, as a group. The rare broadside aimed at NAVA's shortcomings? Stirrings of debate about individual articles? Yes <sup>51</sup> and yes. <sup>52</sup> Thoughtful, principled criticism? Concrete, practical proposals for improvement with specific action plans? No and no. <sup>53</sup> One wonders why ...

*Malevexor:* *You're being too kind. When you folks are not busy drawing pretty colored pictures, hoarding colored cloth, or scouring bookshops for vexi-tidbits to mouse away, you're busy sniping or pulling the blanket to your own side of the bed. Am I the only one torn between retching and screaming as I watch some of the infantilistic goings-on at some FIAV plenary sessions?*

*No, Mal, you're not the only one. We'll get to all those points in good time. But not by raving. Stifle for now, let's review some facts.*

### 1.2.1 – Vexipublications

Difficult to admit, but Malevexor does has a point (of sorts): For the most part our vexipubs are still moored in the hunting-and-gathering stage: Hunting down flag information and gathering it in a descriptive article.

There is nothing wrong with a hunting-and-gathering stage; in fact, it is indispensable for the development of any scientific endeavor of the Francis Bacon or inductive type, as elaborated in **Part 2**.<sup>87</sup> What *is* wrong – well, perhaps not *wrong*, but surely at least *worrisome* – is that after 40 years of flag hunting-and-gathering, *this is still primarily what we do* – across the entire spectrum of vexipubs. With little rhyme and only occasional reason we gather and hunt, then hunt and gather some more. Rarely do we stop to fathom the broader view, let alone to speculate about the socio-cultural and political implications of our findings.

We cannot remain hunter-gatherers forever. More precisely, we cannot so remain if we aim to claim the aura of science. *We need to progress from cataloguing flags – however accurately and systematically – to analyzing results, developing hypotheses about the role of flags in various societies, gathering relevant data to prove those hypotheses experimentally, and ultimately arriving at an overarching theory or paradigm or scheme that fits vexillology within the breadth of human experience.* Paralleling the development of homo sapiens, we need to move from hunting and gathering to the age of agriculture, settle down on some fertile farmland, and learn all about crop rotation. Is this some rash demand, some unreasonable intuition? I don't think so. Let's listen:

#### Voices

*Scot Guenter – ... it is important for vexillology as a discipline to move beyond classification and categorization of flags to also include input from the social sciences and relevant theories from the arts and humanities.*<sup>54</sup>

*If the function or role of the monarchy shifts in Great Britain, will that affect the significance of flags in that society's civil religion? Is anyone aware of the dynamics of changing significances or uses of national flags in societies where the*

*monarchy is constrained or abolished?... Has flag veneration grown, declined, or remained fairly constant as the roles of the monarchy have abated politically in the Scandinavian nations in the past century ...? If the monarchy were discontinued in England, what repercussions would this have on flag culture in Canada?* <sup>55</sup>

*Because vexillology is a social science concerned with the meaning embodied in a banner and how that meaning is demonstrated and communicated in different cultural situations, it offers a cornucopia of opportunities to intersect with research and interest in a wide range of scholarly disciplines. Such disciplines ... are history, literature, political science ... religion, psychology, sociology, anthropology ...* <sup>56</sup>

*... also raise questions about probing the intersection between vexillology and women's studies ... Are there any notable distinctions ... in flag use between matriarchal and patriarchal societies? More specifically, in the cultures of the United States and Canada, how has the evolution of flag use been tied in particular ways to gender roles, and can connections be made between those changing roles and flag etiquette and ritual? ... Are there any practices or influences in vexillology itself that might lead one to question whether it has masculine/feminine values or prejudices?* <sup>56</sup>

*... take the opportunity to bring vexillology into discussions, demonstrating to others how and why the study of flags can enhance our understanding of other peoples and cultures, and by doing so, also enhance our understanding of ourselves.* <sup>57</sup>

As clarion calls go, these wake-up summonses to scientific, interdisciplinary inquiry in vexillology could hardly be clearer. They were made in 1993. What happened since? Not much. In the main, we have been spending our time ahunting and agathering, agathering and ahunting in the comfortable ways of old. Why? Rational pragmatism suggests several explanations:

- Cross-disciplinary work is doubly time-intensive: It involves careful study of not just flags but of source materials in other, non-related fields.
- Few vexillologists are conversant with top-level thinking and thinkers in anthropology or art history, for example. Thinkers

in those fields, in turn, as Guenter pointed out, <sup>58</sup> are talking primarily to an educated elite in their own disciplines.  
Strangers crossing in the night.

- Researching vexillological topics across various disciplines requires formal training in these disciplines; such training requires substantial commitments of time and money, usually made in the expectation of financial gains and professional prestige; for now vexillology does not offer either, and so the practical benefits from engaging in such work are meager.
- Just because one poses interdisciplinary questions about potential relationships, as Guenter does, is no guarantee that such relationships exist or that they can be readily uncovered.

Practically and realistically, then, it will require a major conceptual shift – from simple fact-gathering to fact-gathering *in support of some hypothesis or paradigm* – for vexillology to emerge from its current stage and march into the shiny city on the hill contemplated by Scot Guenter.

### 1.2.2 – FIAV

As described in section 1.1.2, FIAV was set up in the pre-Internet age with a specific focus – to act as an umbrella organization for qualifying national and sub-national vexillological groups and to organize biennial meetings. It was also set up to link flag organizations rather than individuals. When some now call it a “toothless” association, it serves to remember that it was never envisioned as an activist enterprise. It was organized to provide a reference point for national and sub-national vexiorgs and was charged with arranging international meetings every two years. In this regard, it has carried out its charter duties well. Is that enough in the Internet Age? Will it suffice in the coming Evernet and Omninet ages? <sup>59</sup>

Probably not. For anyone who has attended a few FIAV business meetings, the shortcomings of the association are evident.

#### Voices

**Gunnar Staack** (*Flag Data Bank* editor): *By means of ICV's international meetings, FIAV's founders did at the time awaken interest in vexillology, which led to the founding of many national flag associations. However, today I regard FIAV only as an advertisement for individual vexiorgs or even persons who want to point out their international standing. Its influence on the development of vexillology is no longer noticeable. Since FIAV does not have its own funds, there is little published information, there are no publications (not even a website), and there is no support for vexillological research. In any case, the status of members is disingenuous, as I do not find it proper that, despite statutory provisions, individuals are accepted as full members. I could cite many examples.* <sup>59A</sup>

**Name withheld on request** *The long arguments and points of order and interpretations of the Constitution are a waste of time and effort ... I agree FIAV [plenary] meetings are not just a pain, they are a long dull ache in the gluteus maximus.*

Possibly the longest, dullest, maximal such gluteal sensation in recent memory occurred at the 16<sup>th</sup> FIAV meeting in Warsaw, Poland, in 1995. Perhaps it is the one Malevexor remembers so vividly, for it showcased most of FIAV's kinks and foibles:

- A chauvinistic undercurrent, never far from the surface in the best of times, that periodically threatens to poison the well. In Warsaw, the spectacle of the Old and the New worlds, Europe and America, tugging at the common blanket of vexillology was, by all accounts, painful to watch in its irrationality. How quickly we forgot that our fraternity's primary focus is FLAGS, writ large, not settling personal scores under the guise of procedural infighting.
- A legalistic structure – far exceeding any pragmatic requirements, given FIAV's modest charter – that can be used (or misused) to waste time and inflame passions.
- A systemic flaw that allots to well-nigh invisible members (e.g., Sri Lanka, TWMF<sup>60</sup>) the exact same voice in procedural matters as to vexillological powerhouses and mainline contributors (e.g., FRC, FI, NAVA).

These are not just past blemishes mercifully overtaken by events. It would be foolhardy to dismiss the likelihood that we will soon again witness procedural one-upmanship, empty-suit grandstanding by phantom groups, chauvinistic angling for advantage and all their kith & kin. Shame on us whenever we allow weeds to deface our rose garden!

If FIAV intends being a player in the future course of vexillology – not merely a meetings facilitator – it must snap out of its near-anachronistic posture, update its mission statement, recognize that in the Information Age change is the only constant, uncertainty the only sure bet, and adapt to a few realities:

- FIAV needs a website – FIAV must have a voice in cyberspace to speak to its more than 50 members. For that it will need funds. For funds it will have to turn to its members.<sup>64</sup> This is not a novel idea. Crampton, Poels, and Sensen gave excellent reasons why FIAV needs a website back in 1997.<sup>61</sup> Or will FIAV rate a website as soon as Mars rates a flag?<sup>62</sup>
- FIAV needs an executive body or “Security Council” *à la* United Nations. Such a body would have one representative from each continent where vexillology has taken root. That makes six. The largest-membership entities (FI, NAVA, FRC) must also be represented to bring a much-needed balance to

decision-making. Importantly, such an executive body would enable FIAV for the first time to practice decision-making on anything other than its current glacial biennial pace – a pace totally out-of-step with “Internet time” and the Information Age.

### 1.2.3 – Vexillological entities

#### 1.2.3.1 – NAVA’s Challenges

*Voices – Charles Spain, Jr. (former NAVA president):  
If NAVA is more than a mere club for flag collectors,  
then NAVA must scientifically study and report on the  
commercial, political, and religious aspects of  
vexillology, but not actively advance or promote any  
particular view on such matters.*<sup>65</sup>

The first alarming notion, as one overviews NAVA’s history, is membership levels. In 1987 then-President Doreen Braverman reported NAVA membership at 320, with no change since 1981;<sup>66</sup> in 1992 the count stood at 344;<sup>67</sup> at the end of 2000, boosted by a vigorous website and a few successful membership drives, the scrolls shows 450 members. Let’s take a beat. In 20 years, bolstered by a 33-year record of meritorious activity, out of a North American pool of over 312 million people, aided by a state-of-the-art website attracting over 55,000 visits per month, NAVA only managed a net gain of 123 flag aficionados. A NAVA problem? Probably not when considering this: FOTW, despite its 2-5 million hits per month<sup>63</sup> – has *only some 500 members*. What does this suggest? A couple of thoughts:

- As the Swan of Avon might say, the fault, dear Reader, is not in ourselves, *but in our flags that we are underlings*. Which is to say: the study of flags is not a parade item. We may carry them proudly, we may tear up when they flutter to music and song – but few of us will ever *actively* study their history, symbolism, and social impact. It is perhaps time to admit that *flags are overwhelmingly an emotional expression of group identity*. Therefore, as subjects of rational discourse and scholarly endeavor, flags will rarely claim center stage. And so the task of vexillology evermore will be left to us – we few, we happy few, we band of vexibrothers.<sup>68</sup>

- Though chartered as a binational association, a careful review of *NAVA News* items from 1967 to 1987 shows hardly any stories featuring Canadian vexillology. The fact that for the first twenty years there are hardly any serious articles in *American* vexillology is a different subject, for now beside the point. It was left to James Croft to start a vigorous effort at the end of 1987, spotlighting Canadian civic vexillology.

#### 1.2.4 – The Internet, the Web, FOTW

##### Voices

**Tim Berners-Lee**, the Web's primary developer – *Explore the Internet and you will find cables and computers. Explore the Web and you will find information.*<sup>69</sup>

**David Eisenberg** (Bell Labs) – *Unlike the telephone network, the Internet was the ultimate stupid network, because all the intelligence and the power resided at the end points, not in the middle.*<sup>69</sup>

**David Pogue** – *Whoever coined the term 'surfing the Internet' clearly has an impoverished sense of adventure; it would be hard to image an activity less like surfing than sitting motionless in a chair waiting for Web pages to download.*<sup>70</sup>

**John Markoff** – *The last seven years of the Web have brought new social challenges, including new threats to privacy and intellectual property law. Whether music, child pornography or hate speech, the flow of information across geographic, legal and cultural boundaries is now virtually unstoppable.*<sup>69</sup>

**Seth Schiesel** – *What do the telephone, radio and television have in common? They are old media and certainly less sexy than the Web. But unlike the Web, they also work as they are supposed to, almost every time.*<sup>73</sup>

**Dave Barry** – *How to buy and set up a computer. Step 1: Get Valium.*<sup>74</sup>

The relationship between the Web and vexillology is fairly complex. To gain even a minimum of clarity, its multifaceted connections require an orderly analysis. Hence this section is divided

into four parts: (1) Negative aspects of the Web that do not specifically target cybervexillology; (2) Web flaws that *do* affect cybervexillology; (3) FOTW weaknesses that affect cybervexillology, and (4) Shortcomings in vexillology itself that affect cybervexillology (cybervex).<sup>75</sup>

#### 1.2.4.1 – A basic Web deficiency

Any analysis of cybervexillology must acknowledge Nelson's paper,<sup>53</sup> which is informed by untold hours spent sifting through FOTW submissions.

The Web as we know it today was created only in 1991, though its roots go back to the late 1960s. In 1993 there were roughly 50 websites; in February 2003, the search engine **www.google.com** listed nearly 3.1 *billion*. Hence the Web's primary negative: A space without boundaries wherein rules "perfect" democracy – with that added whiff of anarchy about which the ancient Greeks warned us some 2,500 years ago. A medium where "we can present thousands of images, but have almost no context for many of them,"<sup>80</sup> a medium where ideas and images must be generated in packets absorbable in 10 seconds.<sup>53</sup> Ten seconds to make your point or the user clicks to another link. Ten seconds to elaborate on wisdom, courage, moderation, justice. Click. Ten seconds to cover faith, hope, charity. Click. Ten seconds for beauty. Click. Truth? Sorry ... Click. Click. Welcome to the Age of Aquarius.<sup>71</sup> Have a nice day.

#### 1.2.4.2 – Web negatives affecting cybervexillology

At its core, vexillology is a scholarly discipline, requiring fair-mindedness, research and writing, a passion for accuracy, and a commitment to pursuing truth. Given the click-click dynamics of the Internet, these notions are difficult to cultivate. Web culture evolved without ever feeling a need for them. As a result, the founders and editors of cybervex – ever-mindful of the ten-second-attention-span barrier – have always faced the delicate task of transplanting an activity from paper to cyberspace without diminishing its scholarly value while. On the whole, and with increasing success, FOTW along with several sites of associations and individuals are managing the delicate transplant well.

On behalf of the cybervex community, FOTW also has fairly successfully kept at bay one other nasty byproduct of the Web ethos: an indifference to intellectual and artistic property rights. Information anarchists are surfing cyberspace at will. In this respect we are perhaps fortunate that flags are not parade items and hence flag-image theft is relatively rare. FOTW’s editorial policy<sup>76</sup> spells out the limits between private and commercial use of its rich, tempting trove of images and, as far as it is known, that policy has been honored.

FOTW appears to have been less successful in overcoming the Web’s resistance to structure and control, which is at once its novelty and its virus. The Web ethos sanctifies total freedom of expression for noble and ignoble alike. A trip through the Louvre, a bedroom, a bomb-making manual, take your choice. As Nelson writes, “the quality of [cybervex] sites is variable – ranging from very good to totally erroneous.”<sup>53</sup> Total freedom can beget total junk.

Finally, the Web currently imposes on the cybervex corps limitations of color and language. Both subjects have been highlighted by Nelson,<sup>53</sup> hence we can be (untypically) brief. As to colors: Given the age and table manners of the Web toddler, the 216 colors now available for transmitting GIF images are quite adequate. We haven’t yet reached a level of consumer sophistication where the market demands more hues – that is *not* what is holding up progress. More accurately, FOTW could “use some 100 million colors if [it] wished. FOTW did set color guidelines (initially because older monitors could only display fewer colors), and these have become the color palette that we now use on FOTW.”<sup>77,80</sup> As to language: With English in its current “*über alles*” imperialistic mode, little wonder that software

makers relegate translation programs to the back burners. Let them speak and write in English! However, with many non-English cybervex sites now operating,<sup>82</sup> time cannot be far off when it will be *de rigueur* for the cybervex community to converse without fear of *Missverständnis*, *malentendu*, or *malentendido*.

### 1.2.4.3 – FOTW negatives that affect cybervexillology

FOTW was born of the Web and became, inexorably, a creature of the Web.

#### Voices

**Giuseppe Bottasini:** “*From the first, I made a rule that everything on FOTW would be free: No one has ever paid for viewing FOTW pages, even on CD-ROM, no one has ever been paid for his or her contributions to FOTW, and we have never accepted advertisements on our pages. This rule has motivated people to donate their work generously to FOTW, giving everyone the possibility to make known to the world their own modest or extensive vexillological research.*”<sup>38</sup>

Who could fault this daring vision, or the extraordinary success it has had? Yet who would ignore the eternal wisdom that nothing in life is really free? Relying on the kindness of strangers is a decidedly risky business plan. Not to put too fine a point on it: The idea that “everything on FOTW will be free” is a shell game. A shell game with the best and purest of motives, but a shell game nonetheless. At its root are two false premises: (1) people’s time and labor have no value and hence can be given away free-of-charge, and (2) the operation of a website costs nothing and hence one can offer free website service. Shuffle these false premises around and you come up with “everything is free.”

That’s the good news. The bad news is that by shuffling false premises one creates the delusional expectation among users that they are entitled to free information, free flag information in our case. And when reality finally hits, when the bills for shuffling false premises come due, then you have three main options: (a) Start charging for services – and watch the users, by then long addicted to freeloading, run for the cyberhills, or (b) Find sponsors who will pay to advertise on your website – and forego the “we have never accepted advertising” portion of the credo, or (c) Shut down – and end of story.

How might all this affect cybervexillology, as the title of this section implies? Quite simply, because FOTW is a fragile edifice built on idealistic, unreal economic assumptions and is essentially unable to support itself, its precious contents would scatter to a hundred winds and little-known websites – much as flag collections and flag-book libraries do today after the owner passes – when the bill collector comes calling.

And then there is the problem of leadership. Having witnessed the work of FOTW Director Rob Raeside and some of his editors, and having had a few months to reflect on it, I concluded that what Rob does is akin to magic.<sup>84</sup> How anyone can juggle 600-800 pages of information a month, inspire fierce loyalty among 30 independent-minded editors, follow a near-perfect schedule of weekly updates, contribute 466 pages of original flag research – all in *addition* to his geologist's profession, an active family and community life ... well, that borders magic.

But what if FOTW is headed by a non-magician at some point in the future? Someone without first-rate people skills, some control freak who chooses to crack the whip, set up rigorous structures and unreasonable routines? It requires a certain magic to motivate week after week a group of hard-working, dedicated people who labor without pay for the love of flags and for the passion of a job well done. What happens when the magic stops?

#### 1.2.4.4 – How vexillology hampers cybervexillology

There is an old computer acronym that Smith modified to VGIVGO, “vexi-garbage in, vexi-garbage out.”<sup>72</sup> It warns that cybervexillology is only as good as its sources. Whereas publications have a few weeks or even months to verify a story, the pace in cyberspace is far quicker and the decision-making cycle greatly foreshortened. With some 600-800 pages being added every month on FOTW alone, the reliability of printed sources is key. In fact Bottasini quite consciously set up FOTW as “one-half book and one-half newspaper: As a book it has to report only information that is verified and certain; as a newspaper it can also report news not yet completely verified. I think of FOTW as a research project — based on verified data but able to experiment with ideas that are new and even wrong.”<sup>38</sup> Whenever vexillology fails its duty to report accurately, cybervex likely will fail also. Cybervexillology is not the gatekeeper of last resort, mainstream vexillology is.

A second negative vexillology brings to the Web is its deep roots in the hunting-and-gathering age – the primary pursuits of vexillologists continue to be hunting and gathering flag data. Little attention is devoted to placing flags within their social context and even less attention to linking vexillology to other disciplines.

No surprise, then, to find cybervex – about seven years old vs organized vexillology’s 35 – still in thrall to “pretty colored pictures.” In fact, given the poor example set in this regard by mainline vexillology, one could say that cybervexillology is far outstripping expectations. Unlike organized vexillology, however, cybervex never claimed to be a science and hence should not be held to scientific standards. These standards form the springboard for **Part 2**, in which we consider whether it is justified to claim that vexillology is a science.

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## PART 2 – Vexillology and Science

### Voices

*Science is built up of facts, as a house is built of stones; but an accumulation of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house.* **Jules Henri Poincaré**

*The men of experiment are like the ant, they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes the middle course: it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own.* **Francis Bacon**

*Humanity needs practical men, who get the most out of their work, and, without forgetting the general good, safeguard their own interests. But humanity also needs dreamers, for whom the disinterested development of an enterprise is so captivating that it becomes impossible for them to devote their care to their own material profit.* **Marie Curie**

*You see, my physics students don't understand it ... That is because I don't understand it. Nobody does.* **Richard Feynman** on quantum mechanics

*Science can purify religion from error and superstition. Religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes.* **Pope John Paul II**

*The value the world sets upon motives is often grossly unjust and inaccurate. Consider, for example, two of them: mere insatiable curiosity and the desire to do good. The latter is put high above the former, and yet it is the former that moves one of the most useful men the human race has yet produced: the scientific investigator. What actually urges him on is not some brummagem<sup>85</sup> idea of Service, but a boundless, almost pathological thirst to penetrate the unknown, to uncover the secret, to find out what has not been found out before. His prototype is not the liberator releasing slaves, the good Samaritan lifting up the fallen, but a dog sniffing tremendously at an infinite series of rat-holes.* **H.L. Mencken**

*"The scientific method," Thomas Henry Huxley once wrote, "is nothing but the normal working of the human mind." That is to say, when the mind is working; that is to say further, when it is engaged in correcting its mistakes.* **Neil Postman**

*Science is wonderfully equipped to answer the question “How?” but it gets terribly confused when you ask the question “Why?”* **Erwin Chargaff**

*The proper or immediate object of science is the acquirement, or communication, of truth.* **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Are “we happy few, we band of vexibrothers” stonemasons – or are we just busy stockpiling heaps of stone? Are we ants, spiders, bees? Dreamers clearing the veil of the unknown? Dogs sniffing at an infinity of rat holes? In the manner of tyro novelists, I’ll suggest an answer: ‘Potentially, provided.’ To elaborate: Vexillology has the potential to become a science, provided we learn – in the imagery of Poincaré – to grow into stonemasons, not remain merely collectors of pretty stones or shapers of fancy stone piles. *It is time we vexillologists start masoning a home.*

## **2.1 – The scientific method**

### **2.1.1 – Definition of science and scientific method**

It is said that by eliminating all the things science *is not*, one will be left with what science actually *is*. Let’s start eliminating:

- Science does not depend on revealed truth, nor is it a guide to absolute truths – that is the domain of dogma and religion;
- Science does not depend on an artist’s unique vision (Picasso’s *Guernica*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Beethoven’s third symphony) nor on visions of any other kind – that is the bailiwick of art, artists, mystics, and saints;
- Science does not depend on multiple explanations of events, past or future – that is the province of the humanities (history, philosophy, literature);
- Science is not concerned with promoting or defending a particular *Weltanschauung* or world view – that is the turf of ideology and propaganda;

- Science is not concerned with what cannot be observed, categorized, and verified in nature or in human society – that is the pride of metaphysics, which deals with matters outside the physical and social world. Thus, syllogistic mind games of the type

- All vexillologists are human beings;
- Aristotle was a human being;
- Therefore, Aristotle was a vexillologist

and similar sophistry have nothing to do with science.

- Science is not concerned with questions of moral right and wrong – that is left to ethics.

Everything else either is science or has the potential to become science, right? Wrong. Take beer cans, for example. Beer cans exist, can be observed, categorized, their existence independently verified, form the subject of innumerable websites; they don't appeal to some revealed truth. Yet beer-can collecting does not constitute science, any more than collecting flags does. Something is missing, and that something is the *scientific method*.

The scientific method, as distilled by Professor Hazen,<sup>86</sup> involves: (1) collecting data through observations and experiments; (2) recognizing patterns in those data; (3) formulating hypotheses and theories to systematize those patterns; and (4) predicting testable observations. Though this is a somewhat idealized version of the scientific method,<sup>87</sup> it is useful. It allows to affirm without fear of contradiction that any human activity involving *all* of steps 1-4 above is a science. *Any* human activity? Yes. The method can turn even beer-can collecting into a science, as a simple thought experiment demonstrates.<sup>88</sup>

## 2.1.2 – Types of Science

### 2.1.2.1 – Some problems with science

Where in the grand realm of science does vexillology fit – if it fits at all? First, a few problematic aspects of science.

#### Voices

**Sir Arthur Eddington** (explaining the uncertainty principle): *Something unknown is doing we don't know what.*<sup>78</sup>

**Richard Feynman** (leading particle physicist): *I think I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics.*<sup>81</sup>

**Robert Kunzig** (science writer): *The more we learn about subatomic particles ... the more the universe seems to be made of nothing at all.*<sup>89</sup>

For some time, natural sciences – also called exact or physical sciences – have enjoyed presenting themselves as *orderly*, especially with regard to social sciences. Yet ever since Heisenberg upset the ‘order’ of particle physics with his uncertainty principle in 1927; ever since all matter was recognized some 75 years ago to have particle-wave duality; ever since basic atomic particles, such as the electron, can be described no more accurately than as a ‘probability cloud’; ever since particle physicists started to postulate that subatomic particles can form spontaneously *ex nihilo* and vanish back into nothingness – ever since these seismic conceptual shifts of the past century, the ‘orderly’ conceit of exact sciences seems a disturbing anachronism.

Also, scientists have long indulged in arrogant value judgments regarding the relative merits of various disciplines. While such arrogance arguably marks much of post-Enlightenment philosophy – and surely is present in other fields such as medicine or the arts and humanities – it particularly dishonors science because it undermines our touchstone of impartial, value-free inquiry.

To understand why social sciences were for the longest time – certainly through much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – subsumed under the physical sciences, one need look no further than scientific arrogance. All scientific endeavor is based on the irrational, unproven, deeply held *faith* that there are regularities and patterns to the physical universe, and that these patterns can be accessed and discerned by the

human brain as currently wired.<sup>90</sup> We are categorizing beings, our DNA appears coded for it.

Take for example this quote from Brian Greene, one of the brightest lights in contemporary theoretical physics: “Imagine that what we call *the* universe is actually only one tiny part of a vastly larger cosmological expanse, one of an enormous number of island universes scattered across a grand cosmological archipelago.”<sup>91</sup> If you would like to delve into the most elegant and intelligible treatment of string theory I’ve come across, this is the book for it.

Thus the instinctive reaction in the house of organized science whenever a new discipline knocks at the door is to assume a self-righteous posture and feign amnesia about its own lapses and shortfalls. Provided vexillology practices scientific methodology with some regularity, it can face the inevitable, arrogant posturing by established sciences with the benign indifference and good-natured humoring it deserves.

#### **2.1.2.2 – A basic history & taxonomy of science**

In the beginning was the word of Ptolemy and Aristotle, and the earth was center to perfect heavens, logic and reason were sheriff to truth, and all was well. Then, according to one Pope, “God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.”<sup>92</sup> Actually, light dates back to 1561-1626 when God let Francis Bacon be, and he upset Aristotle by asserting the primacy of senses and observations for exploring “Nature and Nature’s laws.” And Bacon begat Copernicus, whose sun-centered hypothesis upturned the Ptolemaic system. And Copernicus begat Galileo, who revealed the imperfections of the universe – moon mountains, ugly sun spots, and a really, really messy Milky Way. And Galileo begat Newton, who for some 250 years restored the illusion of an orderly and predictable universe. Until Einstein made it relative, Planck quantified it, and Heisenberg filled it with uncertainty.

With the beginnings of modern science, or “natural philosophy” as it was called in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we see the development of physics and chemistry and biology and the earth sciences, which became known as *natural* or *physical sciences*. These were applied to solving practical problems with technology, increasingly harnessing nature and nature’s laws and yielding some of humanity’s greatest wonders. The youngest of physical sciences is information science, which gave rise to computer science.

While the physical sciences were developing rapidly over the past four centuries, they obscured an important development dating back to Plato and Aristotle: political science, ur-mother to the *social or behavioral sciences*. Despite roadblocks to their smooth development, these important tools for studying human behavior in its social and cultural aspects became established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the social sciences. Economics, cultural and social anthropology, linguistics, political science, sociology, comparative religion, social psychology and others, today represent important facets of science and actively employ the scientific method within their fields of study.

Steady advances in both natural and social sciences over the past century have blurred the frontiers between them. A modern chemist without a knowledge of physics or biology is an anachronism. Likewise a social anthropologist unaware of the latest development in geology. Today's scientist is generally a specialist in a tiny subsection of a scientific discipline, but also a *multi-disciplinary scholar*, reaching across several fields of study to secure information and insights. Principally for this reason Scot Guenter and a few others have long argued that cross-disciplinary studies are an essential objective for anyone planning scientific work in vexillology.

## 2.2 – Vexillology

*“The biggest flags, the oldest flags, ...  
Oriflamme of old St. Denis,  
red flags, bled flags, flags of Texas,  
May flags, gay flags, flags obsess us.*

*Flags forgotten, flags discarded,  
captured flags, flags bombarded,  
flags of Austurias, flag injurious,  
banners armorial, flags pictorial,  
flags for burning, flags for peace,  
civic flags from Perth to Nice.”*

**Kevin Harrington, *Vexillaria*** <sup>93</sup>

### 2.2.1 – Overview & Definitions

Harrington in his joyful *Vexillaria* captures the exuberance and sway of what Emil Dreyer recently called “*furor vexillologicus*” <sup>94</sup> – the inspired frenzy of the poets, prophets, and acolytes of vexillology. At its simplest, this “furor” is a child-like delight in the variety, color, movement, and ineffable emotion of flags. At its most complex, it is a lifetime of dedication to the scholarly study of every aspect of flag culture – from history to materials to design to specifications to socio-cultural and political aspects. In a word, *everything* known or knowable about flags. Is it possible to work some order into this vast flagland? <sup>97</sup>

In defining vexillology, it is again useful specify areas that will be of *no concern*, namely, the exclusive preoccupation with a single flag. That kind of focus can be a fetish, a cult, an obsession, or it can be an expression of patriotic fervor, or symbol for a political movement. Whatever the case, it is not part of this essay, which focuses on flags, plural.

Next, it may be useful to define a **vexillophile**, or lover of flags, as someone who *primarily* derives pleasure from flags, from their variety, color, movement and ineffable emotion. Vexillophiles are vexe-epicureans, in a grand tradition that goes back to the heyday of Greek civilization. When a vexillophile makes the *study of flags* an important component of his or her enjoyment of flags, then we behold

the vexillologist.

But that still begs some questions: What *is* vexillology? Can it be subdivided into concrete activities? How do such activities interact? It may be a useful analogy, perhaps, to compare vexillology with a typical carriage wheel, featuring with a central hub, from which radiate a number of spokes. As in the actual carriage wheel, a hub is useless without spokes, and the spokes fail without the hub.

## 2.2.2 – Types of Vexillology

### 2.2.2.1 – Vexillology-as-study

*Scot Guenter: KEEP STUDYING THOSE FLAGS!!!*<sup>95</sup>

The systematic study of flags is the core of vexillology, its hub. Whether done occasionally or as a life-long avocation, whenever a person studies flags with the explicit intention of searching out a truth about them, he or she acts as a vexillologist. **Vexillology-as-study** implies – at a minimum – a *rigorous, impartial* mindset and methodology, as distinguished from the **vexillology-as-action** (below), which may do equally rigorous work, but is actively engaged in promoting a specific agenda or point of view; or as distinguished from **vexillology-as-hobby** (below), which can be impartial but is rarely rigorous. The practitioners could be described respectively as **vexillologists**, **vexillonaires**,<sup>26</sup> and **vexihobbyists**.

Only vexillology-as-study (V-S) is capable of truly scientific work, that is, work performed according to the canons of the scientific method. Why? Because only V-S, by definition, involves research that is at once accurate *and* dispassionate *and* recorded in some fashion – these being necessary elements of scientific work. For V-S to become a science, it must use the canons of the scientific method. This is an important point: scientific work requires accurate, dispassionate, chronicled inquiry that conforms to the scientific method. Inaccuracy is a hallmark of the amateur; emotion that of the propagandist; unrecorded information the trait of the hobbyist.

A science must be capable of being taught. In this respect, vexillology-as-study is still in its infancy: teaching about flags at the university level is rare. In North America this was done successfully only once – a course titled “Vexillology and Nationalism” taught by Prof. Scot Guenter at San Jose State University in the spring of 2000.

Fourteen or so humanities and liberal studies majors took the course to fulfill their senior-seminar requirement, giving Guenter and the course high ratings.

The most successful experience was achieved by Prof. Aníbal Gotelli in Argentina. He decided in 1991 – as part of his Official Protocol courses at the Instituto Nacional de la Administración Pública – “to take Vexillology out of its cenacle and to expand its knowledge to all my students.”<sup>98</sup> Two years later he could report in *NAVA News* that a second Argentine institution had included vexillology in its academic programs. In December 2000 Gotelli wrote “some 5,235 students have undertaken Protocol studies in which vexillology is one of the fields of study. This is to say that 5,235 people have studied basic vexillology and learned the basic vexillological techniques, principles and mechanisms of identifying and studying flags. In addition, our institution organizes two seminars per year dedicated to teaching vexillology. They are day-long seminars that offer participants an understanding of vexillology throughout the year.”<sup>99</sup>

Prof. Gotelli’s future plans are equally ambitious. He writes, “The interest that I have been able to awaken towards vexillology allows me to advance even further: I will ask FIAV to carry out an International Vexillology Conference in Argentina, to be organized by the CIDEF Foundation.”<sup>99</sup> Many people could come together at an International Vexillology Conference in Buenos Aires. Not only colleagues, specialists and friends who are members of FIAV, but also many Argentines who have recently developed an interest in the study of flags. It would also be a great contribution for teaching vexillology in primary schools. ... with the opening of the Vexillology Exposition in each school, there will be a conference on vexillology designed for children. Lastly, I am happy to report that I have ordered the organization of an Applied Arts School in the city of Buenos Aires where heraldry and vexillology will be taught. Vexillology students in Argentina begin their studies from age 18. Starting in March 2001, however, when the vexillology in schools program begins, students as young as age 10 will be taught.”<sup>99</sup>

What are some secrets of Prof. Gotelli’s success?

“A vexillology specialist who wants to begin teaching should undertake the same activities that I carried out successfully:

**First**, include a vexillology unit as part of the curriculum of another area of study. In these cases, always clarify for your students

that vexillology is not an auxiliary discipline but, on the contrary, a separate and autonomous discipline.

**Second**, as your students' interest increases, you can organize day-long seminars, during which all aspects of vexillology are taught.

**Third**, organize vexillology exhibits so that the subject can reach the largest possible audience.

**Fourth**, it is important always to have the most up-to-date programs of study. Specialists who want to teach vexillology must be in permanent communication with all vexillological institutions who are members of FIAV.”<sup>99</sup>

#### 2.2.2.2 – Vexillology-as-hobby (vexi-hobbyism)

*“Hoist and fly, and fimbriations,  
provincial flags, flags of nations,  
flags on ties, flags on cards,  
all flags striped and multi-starred,  
flags on cups, flags of race,  
cups on flags, flags in space.”* <sup>93</sup>

*What kind of relationship is there – or should there be –  
between vexillology as a hobby and as a scholarly  
discipline?* <sup>100</sup>

Vexillology-as-hobby is the most common spoke radiating from the hub of vexillology. Just about any vexillologist will (happily) show you some kind of flag-related paraphernalia. <sup>100A</sup>

According to a survey by Harry Oswald, NAVA members alone account for collections totaling more than 60,000 flags of various sizes and 20,000 flag books. That’s an average of some 138 flags and 46 books per member. As hobbyists, collectors are under no obligation to document or inventory a collection or to write about vexillological topics, but can maintain a keen interest in the study of flags. They have been among the most faithful supporters of NAVA in terms of meeting attendance, financial backing, and general enthusiasm.

However, a rational pragmatist looking at vexi-hobbyism must also ask, Can it have a negative influence on vexillology? In my view, perhaps the main negative is the so-called “collector mentality” – an inward-oriented, self-absorbed mindset, which tends to reduce our interaction with the world and hence diminish the impact we could have on it.

Instead of actively contributing to the publication of new books, we collect them. Rather than actively promoting knowledge about flags, we collect them. In place of teaching the next generation, we hoard flag trinkum-trankum. The passive self-absorption with collecting, practiced by an estimated 90% of vexillophiles, is no virtue – it is arguably *inimical* to the active, thoughtful development of vexillology along a scientific path.

### 2.2.2.3 – Vexillology-as-action or *Vexillologie engagée* <sup>102</sup>

#### Voices

*Nicholas Artimovich* (past NAVA president): *I would like to suggest a new form of flag activism. NAVA and the various local flag groups around the continent should consider pursuing activities that advance the cause of vexillology. ... Vexillologists should set goals for themselves and their organizations that will lead to concrete accomplishments and specific activities.* <sup>117</sup>

Engaging the world around us through vexillology is a subject about which I get a little carried away, I'm afraid. I am increasingly convinced that the future of vexillology depends in great measure on the ability of the current band of vexillologists to engage the world. We need our field of study to be noticed, to be recognized as a contributor to modern scientific dialogue, and to influence the way people think about their flag environment. An activist agenda? Certainly. I have already confessed to a bias for action over deliberation.

A quintessential trait of Science is its outstanding record in affecting our physical world, primarily through technological breakthroughs that arise from science. A prime goal of scientists and technologists is to understand and control our environment. This section examines how vexillologists have attempted to affect our vexi-environment, doing so *without regard for personal gain*. We focus first on a prominent example of socio-cultural vexillological activism in Europe, then on several examples of vexillographic engagements in the United States, at both State and municipal levels. The two sections that follow – **vexillology-as-merchandising** and **vexillology-as-business** – will analyze for-profit vexillological pursuits and their implications.

Doubtless the most forthright examples of *vexillologie engagée* in the service of a socio-cultural cause are the charter and activities of the Breton Society of Vexillological (SBV in French), as recently highlighted by Faul. <sup>103</sup> From their society's inception the Bretons proclaimed their activist goals: (1) to compile the flags of Breton cities, regions, associations, institutions, past and present, to inform the public about them, and to safeguard this cultural patrimony; (2) to propose to municipalities and institutions the creation of

vexillographically acceptable flags; (3) to fight logomania.<sup>104</sup>

*Voices – Dr. Philippe Rault* (SBV vice president): [The mission of Breton vexillologists is to] *fight with all our strength against logomania, veritable cancer of our country.*<sup>105</sup>

*Yoran Delacour* (sales manager, Coop Breizh) *Allow people to regain their roots, not to bend to the fashion of logos, to reaffirm the history of our country.*<sup>106</sup>

As befits *vexillonnaires*, the Bretons are without peer in securing media attention, which they reproduce in their newsletter *Ar Banniel*. They benefit from first-rate flag designers such as Bernard Le Brun and Philippe Rault. Though some have expressed doubts about this approach,<sup>22</sup> new flags for cities like Quimper, Dinard, Le Juch, as well as new regional banners in Bigouden, Retz, and Poher, all bear witness to SBV's fecundity, passion, and the near-irresistible commitment to improving the flag culture and environment of Brittany.

There have been many other vexillological action fronts around the world in the past few decades. The oft-told story of the Canadian Maple Leaf flag, Smith's design of the Guyana flag, the triumphant tale of Fred Brownell and his new South Africa's banner, the ongoing struggle for a new Australian national flag. These and several others have been well-enough documented, allowing us to focus next on *vexillologie engagée* in the United States.

Of the several attempts to improve US State flags, none was more ambitious or undertaken at a younger age than James Croft's venture in 1973-74 to bring vexillographic light to Montana, where he was a student at the University of Montana in Missoula.<sup>108</sup> With Whitney Smith as *consigliere*, Croft devised a full-blown campaign. In January 1973 he convinced a state representative to introduce a resolution proposing an open contest to redesign the Montana flag. After engaging the media with TV and radio spots and placing newspaper stories, Jim attempted to secure the support of the Montana Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). As a result, the resolution passed the House of Representatives by an overwhelming margin. Unhappily, it was defeated in the conservative senate, as many members wanted to retain the old flag and had not been educated about its deficiencies.

Bloodied but unbowed, Croft returned in the Fall of 1973,

lobbied some 30 state senators, and in January 1974 introduced a Senate bill for a new Montana flag of his own design. After a full debate, at which Jim was an observer, the bill was defeated. Looking back, he says, “I would have a House\_Senate Committee study if a new flag should be designed. By educating the members, I believe it would come out of committee to adopt a new design. A resolution could then have been passed to have a contest. By doing so, it shows there is a problem that must be addressed.”<sup>108</sup>

Even after these many years, one is impressed by Croft’s professionalism at the very dawn of organized vexillology. Impressed also by his fearlessness in singlehandedly taking on the legislature of a state in which he was, for all purposes, a stranger. The coda to this splendid effort? In 1981, long after Jim had graduated from college and returned to Massachusetts, the Montana legislature finally decided to follow his advice, but in the typical blundering way bureaucrats approach vexillography: They voted to add the word MONTANA to the otherwise nondescript flag, thus ensuring that half the time their banner reads ANATNOM. You can lead a horse to vexillographic water, but you can’t make it drink. Which is true in spades for the burlesque example from Massachusetts that closes of this section.

Other NAVA members also have done battle at state level: Lee Herold and William Becker braved the legislature of Minnesota in 1989 and again in 2001-02; Dave Martucci took on the state machinery of Maine in 1990 and 1995; Whitney Smith removed the pine tree from the flag of Massachusetts; “NAVA’s Betsy Ross,” Florence Hutchison, undid some design awkwardness in Illinois; and James Ferrigan rearranged word positioning in the Nevada flag.<sup>109</sup>

The most ambitious regional project undertaken in the United States was conceived in July 1995 and shepherded to a successful conclusion on 15 May 1998 by James Babcock in Hampton Roads, Virginia, where modern America began in 1607. Nowadays Hampton Roads encompasses 16 cities with some 1.5 million residents. Babcock envisioned that a regional flag “can help raise consciousness and pride, create recognition and establish identity ... for attracting the new businesses, tourists, research grants ...”<sup>110</sup> He reached out to the local Chamber of Commerce, business and political leaders, and high school teachers; the latter engaged more than 10,000 Hampton Roads students in a year-long flag design contest along well-established vexillographic principles. A unique feature of this exemplary enterprise was a region-wide final vote on three finalist designs chosen by a 13-member panel, which had been carefully trained in basic

vexillography. As a result, over 250 Hampton Roads flags have been sold in the past three years to businesses and individuals in the region, which employ the flag image in a wide variety of forms. Such are the rewards of good vexillography joined with careful planning, wide local participation, fair rules, and a democratically selected final design. <sup>111</sup>

- Several important contributions to civic flags in their own communities were made by Nathan Bliss in Bayport, Minnesota; Dave Martucci in Washington, Maine; James Croft in Northampton, Mass.; <sup>112</sup> Waverly Coggsdale in Southampton County, Virginia; and the author in New Milford, Conn. <sup>113</sup>
- NAVA members from the Portland Flag Association organized a campaign in 2001-2002 to correct inadequacies in the 1969 flag design of Portland, Oregon. These vexillonaires successfully carried out an ambitious flag change in a major US city, as described by Mason Kaye. <sup>114</sup>

Why this survey of vexillology-as-action? Because at least three important lessons can be drawn from it, lessons that speak to our common future. First, only a discipline that systematically seeks to affect its environment can truly claim to be a science. Second, a wealth of activist flag experience has accumulated over the past four decades. And this: *It is time to use that experience in an organized fashion.*

### Voices

**John Purcell** (former NAVA president): *I am proposing ... that NAVA create an institute for the improvement of vexillography ... the North American Office of Flag Design. ... The function of this Office, as I envision it, would be to offer advice from an informed point of view to any organization—governmental, commercial, or private—that is planning to adopt a flag, without being overtly judgmental about the final design adopted. The Office could be staffed by volunteer vexillologists who would be called upon because of their special expertise and availability for a particular need. Volunteers could declare their willingness to work locally, regionally, or nationally, and a brochure could be prepared for dissemination*

*that would outline the role of such persons with respect to their participation in the design process, how they would proceed, their qualifications, and whether or not remuneration would be expected ... a code of ethics should desirably be formulated and agreed upon by all participants. The Office could then publicize its existence and begin its work.*<sup>115</sup>

#### **2.2.2.4 – Vexillology-as-merchandising**

This is another spoke radiating from the hub of vexillology. Its hallmark is also the accurate study of flags – history, use, materials of construction, specifications of color, size, design – but flag study intimately connected with a *for-profit venture*. Vexi-merchandising deals in actual products (flags, original flag posters, lapel flags, flag watches, etc.), as opposed to selling primarily *information and knowledge* about flags, which is the subject of the next section. Unlike pure hobbyists, however, vexi-merchandisers run *real* businesses that provide most of their income and also run substantial real-life financial risks. Rather than a pastime or hobby, this is a serious commitment, whose outcome determines one’s very livelihood.

In preparing this section I polled a few American vexi-merchandisers, asking, “On a scale of 1-10 what role does vexillology play in your business.” James Ferrigan, Richard Gideon, and Tom Martin<sup>116</sup> hesitated only briefly before answering “10.” In fact, they could not imagine staying in business without the aid of vexillology. All three said that accurately reproducing historical flags was a critical part of their business.

Lee Herold, who runs Herold Flags in Rochester, Minnesota, said, “Vexillology is highly involved in my business. It enables me to sell not just a product but to sell value, thus ensuring a higher level of loyalty from my customers and getting them more excited about the product.”<sup>116</sup> Lee sells products and provides free flag-knowledge, and he views the combination as a keen edge in the retail flag business. Which was, when I polled myself, precisely how I felt about my company’s line of Ambassador Flag products.<sup>116</sup>

One of the remarkable findings from these discussions with my merchandising friends was their agreement that the current major American flag manufacturers have a below-average interest in vexillology and hardly employ it to promote their business. That was

not always so, as Dettra's William Spangler and Annin's Randy Beard, Sr. proved in NAVA's formative years, for their unstinting support was key to NAVA's initial development and success. At the turn of the millennium – and especially after September 11, 2001 – flag manufacturers care minimally about vexillology, focusing in the main on pushing product out the door. Which is, Herold comments, “to the detriment of everyone involved.”

### 2.2.2.5 – Vexillology-as-business (V-B)

Only two men in the history of vexillology have attempted the Olympian challenge of making a living *primarily* by purveying accurate, fully researched vexillological information: William Crampton for some 20 years in England, and Whitney Smith for over 35 years from Winchester, Mass., in the United States. Both have found that the task requires supreme skills and enormous dedication. Of principal interest here, however, are answers to pragmatic questions such as: What function does vexillology-as-business perform? Is it practical? Who benefits from it? What harm does it do?

I can speak from personal business experience about the function of V-B. Before the Internet age, rapid access to accurate flag information was vital for my small company to compete in the world market. We are able to charge a premium for Ambassador Flag products because, in addition to being technically accomplished, they feature accurate flag designs. If I had to research the information myself, it would take away significant time from designing new products and servicing customers. Judging from the client rosters of the Flag Research Center (FRC) or the Flag Institute (FI), some of the world's largest corporations and institutions have arrived at the same conclusion. The function of V-B, then, is to provide the most accurate flag information possible, in the greatest historical depth, at the speed required by the digital marketplace. This is no task for amateurs or part-timers.

Is V-B practical? In the sense that it provides practical and useful data – of course. In the sense that it makes a good career choice – no. To secure a living by providing precise, definitive flag knowledge in the current (or future) business environment – infected by the virus of hyper-change, the expectation of free information, and the curse of mini-attention spans – is a daunting challenge. Few parents or counselors would want to recommend it as a career. It is indeed possible that Faul's dark premonition may come true not for vexillology as a whole but rather for V-B. We well may be witnessing

the last generation practicing it.

Who benefits from V-B? In a word, Vexillology. It is no accident that the two largest flag organizations by far sprang up around the two men who practiced V-B full-time. They were the spark plugs of organized vexillology. It is likewise no accident that the best-selling classic flag books were authored by full-time practitioners of vexillology-as-business. Authoritative information, well packaged for the mass market, sells. By entering the mass market through these works, flag imagery and narrative become formative influences in the lives of young people, thus attracting the next generation of vexillologists. In a literal sense V-B is the vital component in the process of vexillological re-generation.

What possible harm does V-B do? There are those who suggest that when the devil of filthy lucre infiltrates an activity that relies – as vexillology mostly does – on free and open information exchange between practitioners, it distorts and demeans that activity. There certainly is truth to that view, particularly in fields where large profits can be generated by exploiting unique information or artifacts. Don Healy noted a strong such undercurrent in paleontology,<sup>99</sup> and surely other examples could be cited. It can be argued based on historical data that flag information will gravitate toward V-B to the detriment of national flag organizations. A careful review of the first 20 years of flag-related articles in *NAVA News* shown hardly an article based on the many papers given at annual conferences for those first 20 years. Equally telling, until Michael Faul took over as editor of *Flagmaster* in the U.K., much the same situation prevailed there.

Finally, there is the argument that when you have competing business interests, you unavoidably have personality clashes and the latter diminish vexillology by detracting from its focus on flags. The tumultuous 1995 FIAV plenary meeting in Warsaw is oft cited as the high point of such clashes and as a low point in fellowship. Doubtless there is truth to that argument also, but such personality clashes also are a steady fixture of academia where commercial interests are normally absent.

### 2.3 – Vexillology and Science

*Malevexor – Are you finally getting somewhere with this 'science' thing or you plan just to bore me to death? This is the longest anyone has taken to make a point since Politburo speeches. You dragged me through 40 years of vexihistory, gagged me with quirky neologisms, sagged me under factoids from Socrates onward – hey, it's time to tell me something I don't know.*

Fair points all.

### 2.3.1 – Is Vexillology a Science?

Restricting the discussion to **vexillology-as-study**, let us consider a *short* answer, a *long* answer, and a *moot* answer to the question heading this section. The short answer is “No.” No, because for the past 40 years vexillologists have largely been content gathering facts about flags; necessary, to be sure, but not sufficient for Science. No, because hardly a handful of examples where scientific methodology was fully applied come to mind; absent consistent scientific method, absent Science. No, because vexillology still lacks a scientific *paradigm* – an overarching pattern or model, a prevailing system of expectations about the world of flags – on which to center the idealized scientific cycle of observation, synthesis, hypothesis, and prediction. And no, because vexillology meets only the vaguest of the standard definitions for science (namely, “systematic knowledge in general”).<sup>119</sup>

The longer answer is “We don’t know yet.” We don’t know yet because vexillologists have gathered facts in an organized fashion *only* for some 40 years. Viewed against comparable fact-gathering periods in the natural or social sciences, 40 years are merely a down payment, many more years being required to build a solid foundation. We don’t know yet because no one has seriously attempted to apply scientific methodology to vexillology in a consistent manner. Paraphrasing Chesterton’s remark on the Christian ideal,<sup>120</sup> no one has tried the scientific method in vexillology and found it wanting; they found the method difficult and left it untried. And we don’t know yet because an overarching model, built around the socio-cultural impact of flags, is not yet available.

#### Voices

**Michael Faul** (editor of *Flagmaster*): *In Barcelona [at FIAV-14 in 1991] I made the point that there had been two interests in the past, stamp collecting and antiquarianism. Stamp collecting became philately, but never went beyond the hobby stage (though there are philatelists who would dispute that). Antiquarianism developed into the full \_scale science of archaeology. Vexillology is at present still a hobby. It may become a science.*<sup>121</sup>

**Emil Dreyer** (editor of *Vexilla Helvetica*): *Mere collecting of flag information and mere spreading of this information in publications does not fulfil the requirements of a science. In this sense most vexillologists are not scientists. But there are a few, who analyze the information, who draw conclusions, set up a hypothesis, who recognize certain patterns or laws about flags in general. I would say, that these people come very near to being a scientist. Vexillology is like medicine: it is not an exact science, a science yes, but an art too, you need a certain feeling and attitude ...* <sup>122</sup>

**Phillip Nelson** (FOTW editor): *And this is a particular problem: There are no major theoreticians in vexillology. The pattern is always the same – document to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  degree. As a result, vexillology becomes a historically based discipline, with some instances of sociological impact, all of which fit within the framework of the documentation model. This type of vexillology becomes practical when documenting material for films, recreations, etc., as Ferrigan, Smith and Gideon must do. But beyond this, the practical applications are yet to be seen.* <sup>122</sup>

Now for the moot answer. The confusion over vexillology's "science" credentials harks back to a certain over-eagerness on the part of the discipline's founding fathers. As early as September 1965 in the Dutch town of Muiderberg, they "discussed the future development of our nascent 'science of vexillology.'" <sup>35</sup> They apparently assumed that by declaring vexillology a science it would *ipso facto* become one. Science by fiat. Had the founders simply defined vexillology as "the systematic study of flags", or said "the goal of vexillology is understanding all aspects of flags, as completely and accurately as possible" this whole section would be moot. But in the 1960s the word "science" was bathed in the same glamor as "Internet" is today, and the it gave the nascent discipline instant status. As Emil Dreyer noted, "to consider ourselves scientists is good, too, for our self\_esteem and compels us to work as 'scientifically' as possible, i.e., as accurately, unbiased, methodically as possible."

Two subsequent actions made matters muddier still: (1) NAVA's name was specifically selected "to emphasize the scientific character of the intended society"; <sup>123</sup> and (2) NAVA's articles of

incorporation define the cardinal purpose for which NAVA was organized as “a nonprofit corporation whose purpose shall be the promotion of vexillology as the scientific study of flags ...”<sup>124</sup> Others were more careful to draw finer distinctions. Gunnar Staack notes, for example, that the articles of incorporation of the German Vexillological Association state (in translation): “The purpose of the Association is the research, support, and fostering of vexillology and related sciences.”<sup>118</sup>

In 1985, then-president Grace Rogers Cooper remarked: “I believe the meaning intended [for “scientific study of flags”] was ‘systematic and exact,’ the third meaning given by Webster in the New World Dictionary.”<sup>125</sup> Would that the founders had had Cooper’s instinct. Would that they had defined vexillology along the lines of “systematic, accurate, impartial study of flags *in the manner of science*.” As it is, we are left to explain, some 33 years later, why vexillology has not lived up to its early “science” designation – a designation based on faith in the future of vexillology rather than on accurate data available in 1967.<sup>126</sup>

Yet, as the next two sections suggest, vexillology has the clear potential to be a science, provided we change our mindset and some of our ingrained work habits, and provided we are willing to invest the effort. Perhaps the vexi-founders were onto something after all.

### 2.3.2 – Can Vexillology be a science?

To this question the short answer is “Probably.” There is no long answer – the short one is troublesome enough. Two basic difficulties and a series of unknowns stand in the way of any clear-cut answer.

The first difficulty derives from the fallibility of models and paradigms. It is reasonably facile to outline a scientific protocol, to propose hypotheses involving flags and society and to design experiments for proving or disproving these hypotheses. It is also relatively painless to incorporate such proven hypotheses into a general model, or paradigm. In other words, as **Part 3** will show, it is within our reach to wrap vexillology in the trappings of Science and propose individual models. Unfortunately, as Sterman points out, “all models are wrong ...[they] are limited, simplified representations of the real world. They differ from reality in ways large and small, infinite in number.”<sup>127</sup> Therein lies the first difficulty.

The second difficulty has to do with a fundamental duality, a

basic dilemma at the core of vexillology itself. Dreyer pointed to it when he wrote, *Vexillology is like medicine: it is not an exact science, a science yes, but an art too, you need a certain feeling and attitude ...*<sup>122</sup> To accent the duality I would add that vexillology shares a bed with musicology. Both can be analyzed in painstaking detail yet both seem ultimately elusive. I would wager that the musicologist-to-musician ratio traces that of vexillologist-to-vexillophile. Like music, flags are ultimately wrapped in emotion, in “a certain feeling, an attitude” that defies scientific analysis and mocks at the cage of reason. Where Newton built his cosmology on the paradigm of gravity, vexillologists would recognize *emotion* as the gravitational force of vexillology. It is the overarching paradigm, embracing arguably every case in which flags are created and used. Why aren’t more people attracted to the methodical, scholarly study of flags? For the same reason that people would rather sing and sway and give ear to classical music than dissect a Bach fugue or track harmony and key changes in the development section of the sonata-allegro first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21 (1800).

In his article *Flags and ‘Good Causes’: A Functional Dilemma*, Arnold Rabbow neatly identified this duality over 20 years ago, writing “... the very nature of flags is emotional, is aimed at arousing senses and emotions. Good causes [environment, peace, disarmament, fight against illiteracy, etc.], however, are stimulated not so much by emotions ... but by reason.”<sup>128</sup> At core, flags are distilled, fluttering emotion whereas vexillology is primarily a “good cause,” an intellectual pursuit. Hence the dilemma.

Then there are the unknowns. Can vexillology sustain an ongoing search for new ideas that can be developed into testable hypotheses? No one knows, because no one has seriously tried. Does the world of flags offer enough phenomena that can be observed and recorded without bias and then subjected to experimentation? No one knows for sure, no one has ever tried. Are current flag researchers ready and capable to undertake a greater measure of scientific vexillology, expand into a multi-disciplinary environment? No one can answer, for we have yet to try. Will future generations of vexillologists be likely to undertake the same?

Let us take a reality check regarding both the above difficulties. As far the difficulty of flawed models is concerned, the reality is that flawed models are no shame and uncertainty is no disadvantage – this is precisely the medium in which science operates and advances. In fact, it is the central paradox of science that its tenets

and models *must be* falsifiable – capable of being proven wrong – to be truly scientific. <sup>129</sup> Ptolemy’s geocentric model had a good 1,350-year run before being falsified by Copernicus’ heliocentric idea, the latter’s circular planetary orbits were falsified by Kepler’s elliptical ones, after which Einstein pitched the whole universe into a relativistic cocked hat. Experimental errors, uncertainty principles, the chaotic nature of many systems, limitations of space and time – all these are the daily bread of science.

Take physics. From Aristotle’s inspired guesswork, to Newton’s orderly Principia, <sup>130</sup> to Einstein’s warped space-time dimensions, to the probabilistic uncertainty of quantum mechanics, to the 10-dimensional goulash of the latest (string) Theory of Everything – the history of physics is one long road marked by the wrecks of falsified models. Einstein assured us that light travels through space vacuum at 180,000 miles (300,000 km) per second – then we discover how to make it stand as still as the period following this sentence. <sup>131</sup> Then again, light may have once traveled faster than Einstein thought. <sup>132</sup> Science is rarely static. Upper-case “t” Truth and infallible models are the domains of religion. Science, being a *direction* rather than a place, a *method* rather than a doctrine, deals *only* in falsifiable models and testable truths. And when new discoveries condemn one established wisdom, a different truth takes its place, and then another, and yet another, in a never-ending journey of testing, discovery, and renewal. *Quaero ergo sum* – I search, therefore I am. What Silver said about Science applies equally to vexillology: “... science demands absolute open-mindedness, and those who claim infallibility for science are betraying it.” <sup>129</sup>

### 2.3.3 – Toward scientific vexillology

This is the last section of a long journey. Vexillology's light-*'o-love* have long since gone to other pleasures. For the true-*'o-love*, a few road markers from the voyage about to end. *What do we know for certain?* We know that in the past 40 years vexillology has become an organized discipline on six continents. We know that we have a continuous record of accurate, methodical, impartial research carefully chronicled in some 40 specialized publications. We know that we have over 65 vexillological associations worldwide.<sup>64</sup> We know that we have held international, national, and sub-national meetings since 1965, at which professional papers have documented flag-culture riches the world round. Does that sound familiar to a scientist? It surely does: The dawn of modern science in the 1660s – the Royal Society of London (1662), the *Académie des Sciences* of Paris (1666), and all the Committees of Correspondence that systematized and globalized the scientific ferment of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

We also know for certain that vexillological research has produced a gold mine of flag data and – in a handful of cases – has yielded true scientific work, that is, work involving hypothesis, data collection, theory formulation, testable predictions. Finally, we know that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is meaningless to distinguish between natural “exact” sciences and social sciences – the only meaningful questions is, “Does a discipline routinely employ the scientific method?”

So what needs yet to be done in vexillology?

#### Voices

*Emil Dreyer: I am convinced, though, that you won't let us down with just telling us that we are not scientists, but you will tell us how to improve our work, so to finally reach our goal: real Science.*<sup>153</sup>

Precisely. The primary goal of this essay is to encourage us to shift focus away from *pure* data-gathering and toward **(1)** Placing flags within their historic, social, political, and cultural contexts (*an absolute minimum*); for FOTW in particular, it means insisting that contributors indicate sources and basic data about flags (symbolism, specifications, reliability of sources, etc.) *as a condition of posting* on the website; **(2)** Making a habit of asking *How?* and *Why?* – not merely *What?* *When?* and *Who?* **(3)** Developing hypotheses about

flags and their use; **(4)** Researching data to support the hypotheses; **(5)** Designing experiments or real-life surveys to supplement the research; **(6)** Proposing theories to explain the research, experiments, surveys; **(7)** Making predictions about flags and their use in order to test or disprove a particular theory, for science is a tool for predicting future experiences from those of the past; **(8)** Being unafraid to start the whole process over again when one theory collapses and a new one must take its place. This is science's unending cycle of change and renewal – or perhaps the karmic wheel of Buddhism.

### Voices

**William Trinkle** (former NAVA vice president): ... *the ultimate value of vexillology is not a recitation of facts – dates, ratios, colors, heraldic description, etc. – but rather an understanding of humanity through an understanding of flags and their roles. Flags as human symbols are mirrors of the identities of humanity.*<sup>134</sup>

**Charles Spain, Jr.:** *National and state flags are inherently 'political' ... it is impossible to engage in a serious discussion about vexillology, if that debate is limited to a mere recitation of cold, bloodless 'facts.'*<sup>65</sup>

**Roberto Breschi** (Italian vexillologist and author): ... *it is this 'cold' aspect of vexillology that does not appeal to me. My love of flags resides entirely in the 'warm' part, in the emotion produced by the chromatic spectacle of a town square filled with a thousand flags, all the same yet all different, with a thousand hues of blue, red, or green. What matter if the yellow is a bit too strong? Or the proportions of the flag are 2:3 or 3:5 ? ... I am fascinated by the history it represents, the blood, the fear, the passions, the good and evil.*<sup>135</sup>

**Whitney Smith** – *To comprehend a flag ultimately requires only modest attention to its shape, colors, emblems, and composition. Which social forces created it and why; what is it said to stand for and what its usage tells us about its real symbolism; what ceremonies and traditions surround it; what coercive measures exist to enforce respect for it; how many have been inspired by it and how many have died for it – these and similar issues define the essence of any flag for the real vexillologist.*<sup>136</sup>

*Scot Guenter: I guess what I would try to stress in this section is a point Whitney [Smith] has made more than once – that the ultimate aim of studying flags so carefully is to better help us understand people. If vexillology is to be a SOCIAL science, its goal is to better understand the complexities of human interactions and behaviors.*

And Guenter adds, “ The types of questions vexillologists need to start asking more readily and thoughtfully, then, should arise based on some of these assumptions: 1) The meaning of any flag is not inherent but conferred, and that meaning is subject to flux. We need also to be able to distinguish between creators' intentions, legal declarations, and actual reader responses when discussing something as abstract as ‘meaning;’ 2) Power is not equally distributed in any society, and every action is, on some level, political – either reinforcing a status quo or challenging it in some way; 3) Too often meanings, activities, and rituals we take for granted as ‘natural’ are cultural and historical creations that deserve scrutiny and analysis.

Based on these assumptions, flags should be studied as cultural artifacts that individuals, groups, and institutions employ in an ongoing social construction of reality. HOW specific individuals, particular groups, and influential institutions attempt to use flags to champion their particular ideology, perceptions, or *Weltanschauung* needs to be questioned. WHAT are those ideologies anyway, and WHY are flags used to reinforce them? HOW successful are these activities, and HOW do power shifts over time affect these processes?

Perhaps most interesting of all, and the least understood or explored area – when different cultural groups come into contact, HOW are flags used in the process of interacting, and in what might be seen as a struggle for dominance, HOW are flags a factor in which group secures power? Media became so profoundly influential for cultural change in the 20th century that analyses of the influence and role of flags in the media cry out for consideration as well. There's really so much that could be done beyond classification and description, and these questions are being asked in other disciplines. Vexillologists need to actively find and read the Culture Studies works that overlap with our interests and start importing some paradigms and techniques of analysis.”<sup>137</sup>

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## **PART 3 – Scientific Vexillology**

### **3.1 – Scientific tradition in Vexillology**

#### **3.1.1 – Introduction**

As this is the first vexillological study deliberately employing the canons of scientific methodology, let us briefly review the methodology and acquire a common reference point (see also section 2.1.1).

The *inductive* method is commonly defined by the following activities: **(1)** collecting data through observations and experiments; **(2)** recognizing patterns in those data; **(3)** formulating hypotheses and theories to systematize those patterns; and **(4)** predicting testable observations.

A frequent variant of this traditional method is the *deductive* method, for which the order of activities is slightly altered: hypothesis, data collection, recognition of patterns, testable predictions. The vexillological study described in section 3.2 follows the canons of this deductive method.

Closely related to the last method is the *hypothetico-deductive* method, which starts with a hypothesis, uses deductive logic to examine its consequences, and compares the logically derived consequences with observed facts.

### 3.1.2 – Past scientific vexillological studies

#### 3.1.2.1 – Collecting data on flags

This fundamental aspect is included only for the sake of completeness. No science exists in the absence of a factual data base. Hence it comes as no surprise that even a casual reading of the vexipubs cited in section 1.1.1 demonstrates that collecting, assembling, and recording facts about flags in an accurate, disciplined, and impartial manner has hallmarked vexillology not just for the past century, but can be traced to manuscripts dating some 250 years earlier.<sup>138, 139</sup> The peerless *Flaggenbuch* by Ottfried Neubecker crowns the scholarly assembly of flag specifications in the first half of the last century, while Armand's du Payrat's extraordinary update of the *Album des pavillons nationaux et des marques distinctives* closes the century in the same grand scholarly style.

#### 3.1.2.2 – National & sub-national flag data

Systematic gathering of extensive flag information about specific national or sub-national entities came into full bloom in the modern era of vexillology, that is, in the past four decades. Below, a few examples taken in no particular order, and supplementing those already mentioned in section 1.1.1, showcase the sweep of modern vexillology:

- **Arnold Rabbow's** "Typology of Westphalian Village Flags";<sup>140</sup>
- **Klaes Sierksma's** "Provincial and Municipal flags in the Netherlands";<sup>141</sup>
- **Aldo Ziggio's** classic "The Flags of Italy"<sup>142</sup> and his vexillological voyage through China and its neighbors;<sup>183</sup>
- **Pascal Vagnat's** "French Municipal Flags";<sup>143</sup>
- **Donald Healy's** seminal work on Native American flags;<sup>144</sup>
- **Pascal Gross'** website devoted to the flags of Switzerland;<sup>145</sup>
- **Günter Mattern's** "The Colors of Alsace and her Cities";<sup>146</sup>
- **Tony Burton's** (with John Devitt) "Under the Sign of the Southern Cross"<sup>147</sup> and with **Ralph Kelly**, "Flags of the Sun"<sup>148</sup>, Yugoslavia: Flagging Enthusiasm<sup>149</sup>
- **Léon Nyssen's** vexillological glossary in *Vexillacta* and the definition of a precise system for characterizing flag colors;<sup>150</sup>
- **Mario Fabretto's** Survey of computer-aided flag

design<sup>151</sup> and definition of the concept of accuracy in vexillo-logy;<sup>152</sup>

• **Gunnar Staack**'s worldwide catalogue of flag images and his flag-identification software.<sup>153</sup>

### 3.1.2.3 – Data Classification (taxonomy)

In science, once sufficient facts are collected to offer significant perspective on a particular phenomenon, the next activity is data classification. The most basic vexillological taxonomy – classification of flags by nationality – can be traced to tables inserted in naval books as far back as 1669 and 1686, or to Hesman's *Flaggeboek* of 1700, or to the eight tables (238 flags) in that majestic Enlightenment work of 1769, the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné*.<sup>138, 139</sup> Research in the past four decades, however, has been considerably more nuanced and ambitious. Examples:

- **John Purcell**'s taxonomy of U. S. municipal flags;<sup>154</sup>
- **Lucien Philippe**'s study of the “French Tricolor and Its Influence on Flags Throughout the World”;<sup>154</sup>
- **Donald Healy**'s evolutionary vexillography, tracing the family tree of the Dutch tricolor and its influence on flags from New York to Africa.<sup>155</sup>
- **John Gámez**'s “The Evolution of the U.S. National Air Insignia: 1861-Present”;<sup>156</sup>
- **Michael Faul**'s study of House Flags;<sup>182</sup>
- **Howard Madaus**' US Flag in the American West;<sup>157</sup>
- **James Ferrigan**'s of the evolution of the Nevada flag.<sup>155</sup>
- **James Croft**'s taxonomy of Canadian civic flags;<sup>158</sup>
- **Gunnar Staack**'s prodigious taxonomies, from data bases for flag-design patterns (*FDB* 5, 13), to a color taxonomy of national flags (*FDB* 8), to taxonomies of flags with four and five horizontal stripes (*FDB* 8 and 10), and taxonomies of Slovak, Belgian, and Czech flags (*FDB* 11, 12, and 13);<sup>159</sup>
- **Léon Nyssen**'s taxonomy of flags and flag colors;<sup>160</sup>
- **Mason Kaye**'s taxonomy of horizontal and vertical tribars, and map-flags;<sup>161</sup>
- **Erich Dieter**'s taxonomy of Bavarian city flags;<sup>162</sup>
- **Andriy Grechylo**'s taxonomy of Ukrainian municipal flags;<sup>163</sup>
- **Jičí Tenora**'s shorthand for describing national flags;<sup>164</sup>
- **Ĵeljko Heimer**'s taxonomy of Croatian municipal flags;<sup>165</sup>
- **Peter Edwards**' “Toward a Burgee Taxonomy”;<sup>166</sup>

- **Tony Burton**'s heraldic typology of world flags. <sup>167</sup>

These examples are descriptive rather than exhaustive. They illustrate the resolute engagement between vexillologists and the basic principles of the scientific method. Taken together with the research shown in section 3.1.2.2, they form a reliable launching pad for devising hypo-theses and verifying their accuracy by further investigation.

### 3.1.2.4 – A case of faux-scientific methodology

Before dealing with a few instances when the full palette of scientific methodology was used, it is instructive to analyze a case of faux-science. A certain vexillographer – whom Dreyer good-humoredly identified as “... a guy – I forgot his name right now – who designed a flag for a little village somewhere in America, Miltown, Milford, Mailford or something ...” <sup>168</sup> – has derived some attention from a well-documented contest he organized to design a flag for his home town. <sup>113</sup> Although his documentation is thorough and his enthusiasm beyond dispute, the vexillographer – let us call him *Homo Vexilii Novae Milfordensis*, or HVNM for short – reveals an unfortunate weakness for exaggerated claims that do not weather well under close scrutiny.

For example, the putative hypothesis for HVNM's flag-design experiment was, *Given a jury trained in the principles of good flag design, any municipality can organize an open flag contest and select a vexillographically acceptable flag.* Based on this hypothesis, a jury of persons untutored in the niceties of vexillography was selected, trained in the basics of good flag design, and allowed to grade entries on a simple 1-10 scale. The experiment was a success in the sense that the jury chose a reasonably pleasing flag. On the strength of this experience and a couple more like it in Virginia, HVNM has claimed “the first scientific experiment in vexillography.”

Alas, this claim does not survive closer scrutiny, primarily because the hypothesis itself is hobbled by circular reasoning. If you convince a jury to apply principles of good flag design to grading contest entries, *of course* the resulting choices will be in accord with good flag-design principles. It is not scientific work, it is self-fulfilling prophecy. It may have been a dedicated, carefully thought-out, well-organized endeavor, but it had little to do with the scientific method. Worse, there is no guarantee that the American experiment translates – either well or at all – to different cultures, where, as we will see

shortly, totally different historic and socio-cultural conditions prevail.

The only legitimate lesson from the experiences in “Miltown, Milford, Mailford “ and Virginia was drawn by Lee Herold, who concluded that absent a carefully organized effort and a well-trained jury, the prospect for improving the municipal flag culture in America is minimal.<sup>169</sup>

### 3.1.2.5 – Examples of fully scientific methodology

This section illustrates examples of vexillological work containing *all* the requisite stages of scientific work, including testable predictions about the future.

- In 1971 George Pasch, in an article entitled “Why There Are Only Six Colors in Flags,” used the inductive method to prove his hypothesis: (1) **Data Collection**: An analysis of colors used in flags and coats of arms; (2) **Pattern recognition**: Heraldic and flag data showed that “almost all existing flags and coats of arms can be made using only six colors – red, blue, green, yellow, black, and white.” (3) **Theory to explain pattern**: A psycho-physiological theory of basic colors; (4) **Predicting testable observations**: Neither heraldry nor vexillology will employ any colors beyond the basic six.<sup>170</sup> Pasch’s predictions have withstood the test of three decades, during which a great number of flags have appeared in the world, reasonably well.<sup>171</sup>

- In 1980 Arnold Rabbow published the article “Flags and ‘Good Causes’: A Functional Dilemma”<sup>128</sup> as already briefly mentioned in section 2.3.2. He focused on the inherent *emotional* nature of flags, contrasting it with the *rational* nature of most “good causes” such as equality of the sexes, peace, female emancipation, and so on. The inevitable conflict between emotion- and reason-based symbols leads Rabbow to conclude “... the outlook on flags for good causes is somewhat gloomy. They are stuck in a functional dilemma.” The past 20 years have proven him right. Parsing Rabbow’s article with the *hypothetico-deductive* method, we notice: (1) **Hypothesis**: The intrinsic nature of flags is primarily emotional while the impulse behind good causes is chiefly rational; (2) **Logical Consequence**: Flags for good causes, when they exist at all, will have limited appeal; (3) **Observed facts**: Peace Flag,

Ecology Flag, Racial Cooperation Flag find little use; (4)  
**Testable Prediction:** Future flags for good causes will find equally little use. Indeed, twenty years later the prediction has been borne out, at least for the “good cause” flags Rabbow proposed in 1980: Disarmament, Protection of the Environment, Fight Against Illiteracy, Racial Equality, Equality of the sexes, and Female Emancipation. <sup>128</sup>

- In 1989 Scot Guenter postulated three phases for interpreting flag desecration in America. He then fit all observed flag-desecration court rulings, starting at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1989, into the three phases. Finally, he predicted a fourth phase: “the sanctification of the [American flag] through an amendment to our fundamental law code, our Constitution.” <sup>172</sup> While such an amendment has been passed by the US House of Representatives in 1998, it has yet to gain US Senate approval by the required two-thirds majority. However, it is already known that a clear majority of legislatures in at least 46 states would ratify such an amendment once it passes the Senate and is submitted to the States.
- A number of the taxonomies and studies of evolutionary vexillology detailed in section **3.1.2.3** could readily be analyzed in light of the inductive method and shown to offer testable predictions.

These few illustrative examples, spread over the entire course of modern vexillology, show that *rigorous scientific methodology can be and has been successfully used in the study of flags.*

### 3.1.2.6 – Multi-disciplinary studies

While the scientific method offers a ready-made path for enriching the study of flags, another source for spotlighting the scientific stature of vexillology can be unlocked, as already noted in section 1.2.1, through cross-disciplinary work. A few examples:

- In his sweeping socio-historical classic *The American Flag, 1777-1924*, **Scot Guenter** traces the evolution of customs, rituals, and uses associated with the US flag in light of the thesis that commitment to a national flag is culturally determined. <sup>173</sup>
- **Robert Goldstein** followed the American flag-desecration controversy in painstaking detail. <sup>174</sup>
- **Rosalind Urbach Moss** analyzed the use of the American flag by the civil rights movement in the United States between approximately 1959-1974. <sup>175</sup>
- **Ron Hassner** produced an extraordinary account of “The Evolution of the Sacred Flag and the Modern Nation-State.” He finds that “The triple combination – the battlefield, the miracle, and the flag – runs like a golden thread through European history.” Hassner relies on the writings of the great sociologist Max Weber “To understand how flags slowly change from magical objects to the abstract representations encountered today.” He uses the seminal work of Emile Durkheim on totemic religions to “explain how flags ... came to represent both society and the religious forces which drive that society.” <sup>176</sup>
- **Carolyn Marvin** and **David Ingle** also use Durkheim’s work to argue in a major work that “violent blood sacrifice makes enduring groups cohere”, that “The sacrificial system that binds American citizens has a sacred flag at its center”, and also that “In American civil religion, the flag is the ritual instrument of group cohesion.” <sup>177</sup>

## 3.2 – A scientific vexillological study using the Internet

### 3.2.1 – Introduction and Objectives

The survey is a primary scientific research tool, complementing literature searches, field interviews, and laboratory experiments. One of the earliest vexillological surveys was conducted by regular mail in the mid-1960s by John Purcell and Ken Huff, working independently at first, who were the first to attempt a thoroughgoing vexillographic survey of US cities of 100,000 inhabitants or larger.<sup>178</sup> Purcell rededicated himself to the task in 2001 in Volumes 9/10 of *Raven* – the culmination of an effort that spans some 150 cities across the United States. A cyber-survey of U.S. State Canadian provincial flags was carried out by Kaye in 2001.<sup>221</sup>

A well-designed survey aimed at a representative group of people provides critical information for developing hypotheses and testing theories that address social issues. Flags do not exist in nature. They are without exception a social construct and their symbolism and use are intimately connected with the beliefs and practices of the specific society in which they evolve. As Smith pointed out, “most symbols, even when sanctioned by tradition, are intrinsically arbitrary ... meanings assigned to symbols may subsequently be altered, forgotten, or elaborated upon.”<sup>179</sup> It was therefore important for this worldwide vexillological study to survey real people in real time, as opposed to relying on possibly dated materials or on the opinions of other authors.

Even as recently as five years ago, a study of this scope would have been near-impossible to carry out. Reaching representative samples of people around the globe without spending a fortune was not feasible before the Information Age, and particularly before the widespread use of the Internet. Even with the Internet, the task of selecting and contacting suitable individuals would have been daunting without the critical aid of FOTW, whose structure and goals were described in section 1.1.4.1. In the event, the kind cooperation of FOTW Director Rob Raeside and the skills of TME Co.’s webmaster Richard Gideon, made it possible to gather within two months some 157 responses from flag enthusiasts in 47 national and sub-national entities at a negligible cost, beyond the baseline expense of maintaining an Internet connection.

The objective of the survey was to determine current practices

regarding national-flag and civic-flag use by *private individuals* in various countries. Specifically excluded were questions about the use of national and civic flags by government or official entities.

### 3.2.2 – Theoretical basis for the survey

#### 3.2.2.1 – Background and Practical Considerations

After reading Guenter account of his year-long stay in Singapore, <sup>180</sup> the author noticed a great similarity between Guenter’s description of flag use in Singapore and the author’s experiences in communist Romania, Poland, and Soviet Union. Was it possible that strongly centralized regimes – whether authoritarian, monarchic, totalitarian or some hybrid of the three – use state symbols in characteristic ways? Would focusing on the use of national flags – by far the most ubiquitous and versatile of national symbols – allow to discern a pattern? Would that pattern be different in countries with a strong democratic tradition? More specifically, what is the effect of the political structure of a nation on the use of national flags by *private individuals*? How does the political structure affect the process by which *municipal* flags are designed and used by private citizens?

Starting with these general ideas and following the formal canons of *deductive* science, one had to deal with the practical problems of contacting people in strongly centralized regimes – let us call them *statist* or *state-run* political systems, as opposed to either *federal* or *democratic* systems. Furthermore, given the reticence or outright fear governing the behavior of individuals in state-run political systems, what would be their response rate to a survey, and how reliable would their answers be? It is well-known that statist regimes tend to control the flow of information as assiduously as they control the use of state symbols. For all these reasons, one would expect a low response rate from people living under such regimes.

Another practical aspect was the cost of defining the target audience and the cost of distributing the survey to it. Because low flag awareness is a worldwide phenomenon, a suitably large audience would have to be selected to ensure **(a)** a sufficient number of respondents with adequate flag knowledge for giving trustworthy answers to survey questions, and **(b)** a *representative response* – where “representative response” is defined as the *response volume at which little new information is added by additional respondents*. Assuming a conservative overall response rate of 0.1%, a representative response in the range of 5-10 respondents per country,

and a target of 40-50 countries, simple arithmetic shows that one would need to mail some 315,000 letters at a cost of about \$268,000.<sup>181</sup> In addition, the cost of acquiring 315,000 mailing label, at a typical \$45 per 1000 labels, adds another \$14,000, for a total estimated project cost of \$282,000, excluding the labor for tabulating results.

Confronted with such expenses, it was natural to consider using the Internet to lower mailing costs. Nonetheless, it is estimated that a commercial service providing access to the required base of potential respondents would have cost in the \$15,000-20,000 range. Beyond this expense, significant in itself, lay the difficulty that one could not be certain of the level of flag awareness and knowledge of individuals chosen at random by a commercial Internet mailing service.

For all these reasons, the author decided to contact FOTW, asking for permission to diffuse the survey for a limited time on its home page. With its enormous amount of information and monthly audience – currently 18,000 pages, 32,000 images of flags, 2-5 million hits per month – FOTW provided not only immediate access to a target flag-interested audience, but also provided such access at a reasonable cost. It is therefore critical to realize that FOTW, particularly the prompt and generous cooperation of Director Raeside, made this survey possible.

### 3.2.2.2 – Assumptions and working hypotheses

Starting from the *assumptions* that strongly centralized (statist) political systems will be inclined to control and regulate (a) the timing and manner of private use of state symbols, such as flags, to officially designated occasions; and (b) the creation and use of municipal symbols, the following *working hypotheses* were set up for verification by searching published literature, interviewing, and conducting a cyber-vexillological field study (E-mails and cyber-survey):

- state-controlled political systems (dictatorships & authoritarian states) will limit the use of national flags by private individuals to official parades or designated holidays; spontaneous use of the national flag by ordinary citizens will take place primarily during public events such as sporting competitions in which the national team competes. In contrast, democratic regimes will not regulate private use of the national flag and many more forms of spontaneous flag use by citizens will occur;

- under statist systems there will be no open contest for designing and adopting municipal flags; rather designs will be created by a small group of individuals and will be subject to scrutiny and approval by regional or national authorities; in contrast, democracies will select their municipal flags in an unregulated manner.

These assumptions and hypotheses were distilled into a series of queries that became part of the cyber-questionnaire described in the following section.

### **3.2.3 – Overall Structure and Methodology**

After discussions with Edward Mooney and Phil Nelson, two experienced FOTW editors, the author developed the survey form and language shown below. TME Co.'s webmaster and website designer Richard Gideon then took over, formatting the survey for use on the Internet and inserting it on a special non-commercial page of TME Co.'s website:

## FLAG SURVEY

Your name  
Your country  
Your E-mail address

1. How do private citizens in your country use the national flag?
  - A. on national holidays only or mainly
  - B. on special occasions (e.g. winning a world championship in soccer)  
*(please specify the occasion in the COMMENTS box)*
  - C. both A and B
  - D. other *(please specify in the COMMENTS box)*
  
2. How would you describe the frequency with which the national flag is exhibited by private citizens in your country?
  - A. frequent
  - B. moderate
  - C. rare
  
3. Are there any prohibitions (legal, political, protocol, zoning laws) against private citizens flying the national flag in your country?  
*Please describe the specific prohibition(s).*
  
4. How are flags for cities, towns, etc. designed in your country?
  - A. in a competition open to all persons
  - B. the design is provided by
    - I. the national government
    - II. provincial or regional government
    - III. city or town government
    - IV. two or more of the above *(please specify which is more usual)*
  - C. both A and B – *please specify which is more common*
  - D. in a closed competition *(only residents, only professional designers, etc.) – please specify the type of closed competition*
  
5. Please indicate if I may quote your input and credit you by name in an article I'm preparing for *The Flag Bulletin* in 2001.

Yes  
No

FOTW Director Rob Raeside agreed, after hearing the purpose and scope of the project, to feature the survey on FOTW's home page for a period three months, from August through October 2000. It is estimated that in this period some 1.9 million visitors saw FOTW's home page. Of these, 157 respondents from 47 countries returned the survey in an acceptable form.<sup>184</sup> The above numbers do not include the approximately 37 responses from the United States, which were not tabulated in order to exclude any "patriotic bias", conscious or not, that the author might bring to analyzing results from other countries. Responses were received by E-mail at a rate of about 3-4 per day. When a response warranted follow-up, E-mails with additional questions and clarifications were sent to a number of selected respondents. Selection criteria for the latter ranged from resolving unclear or apparently contradictory answers in the initial response, to follow-up questions for individuals who showed a wide range of familiarity with their countries' flag use. Typical follow-up questions, *shown in italics in footnotes 185-217*, were:

- How do you account for the frequency of flag use in your country? What social, historical, political reasons might explain it?
- Why do you think municipal flags are designed in the manner you described for your country (open or closed contests, by regional or national authorities, etc.)?
- What would be the legal status of a municipal flag designed in an open contest?
- Who controls or specifies municipal flag symbolism in your country?

It is important to point out that the results shown in **Table I** below and the comments recorded in footnotes 185-217 are "raw" data. They have not been "massaged", manipulated, or altered. In the normal manner of scientific inquiry, we started with theoretically plausible hypotheses, ran an experiment in the form of a worldwide cyber-survey, and faithfully recorded *all* data. As always in such honest inquiries into nature or society, there is no "safety net" – that is, just because one originates a hypothesis and runs an experiment *does not mean that the data will validate the hypothesis*. Scientific inquiry offers no such guarantee or "safety net." One can be reasonably certain that the experiment will tell us something about the world, but it may *not* tell us what we thought was probable or what we thought we knew.

New hypotheses may have to be postulated to explain the “raw” data, and new experiments devised to verify the new postulates.

### 3.2.4 – Survey results

**TABLE I (\*)**  
**Cybersurvey Results, August-October 2000**

<u>Country</u>	<u>Number of Flag use Frequency</u>					<u>Municipal design</u>	
	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Freq.</u>	<u>Mod.</u>	<u>Rare</u>	<u>Open</u>	<u>Regulated</u>	<u>Ref. No.</u>
Argentina	3		3		3	3	185
Australia	15	2	6	7	5	14	186
Austria	2		1	1	--	--	187
Belgium	3		2	1		2	187A
Bosnia	1			1		1	
Brazil	4		2	2	2	2	188
Bulgaria	1			1		1	188A
Canada	21	7	13	1	12	17	189
China (PRC)	1		1		1		190
China (H K)	2		1	1	1	1	206
Colombia	2	1	1		1	1	
Costa Rica	1	1				1	
Croatia	2	1	1				191
Czech Rep.	2		2			2	192
Denmark	1	1			--	--	193
Domin. Rep.	1	1				1	
Finland	2	1	1		1	1	194
France	6		3	3	4	4	195
Germany	8		3	5		8	196
Greece	3		2	1		3	197
Hungary	1		1			1	
India	3	2		1	1	2	198
Indonesia	1		1			1	199
Iraq	1		1			1	200
Ireland	1			1		1	201
Israel	2	1	1			2	202
Italy	3	1	1	2		2	203
Japan	1			1		1	

Country	Number of	Flag use Frequency			Municipal design		Ref. No.
	Respondents	Freq.	Mod.	Rare	Open	Regulated	
Malaysia	1		1			1	
Mexico	6	1	5		3	2	204
Netherlands	5	4	1		2	4	205
New Zealand	2			2		2	206
Norway	4	3	1		1	3	207
Pakistan	2	2	1		2	2	
Philippines	1		1			1	
Portugal	2	1	1			2	208
Puerto Rico	5	3	2		2	4	209
Spain	6	1	4	1		6	210
St.Kitts-Navis	1		1		1		211
Sweden	5	3	2		2	3	212
Switzerland	3	3			1	2	213
Taiwan	3		2		1	1	14
U. K.	14		4	10		12	215
UK, N. Ireland	1	1				1	
UK, Wales	1			1		1	216
Venezuela	2		2		1	1	217
Yugoslavia	1	1				1	

(\*) When entries “don’t add up” – for instance, Canada had 21 respondents, yet the “open/regulated” column adds up to 39 (12 + 17) – it is because several respondents chose both the “open” and “regulated” options.

### 3.2.5 – Analysis and discussion of results

#### 3.2.5.1 – Reliability of data

A fundamental question shadowing any survey is the quality and credibility of acquired data, in particular the issue of “representative response.” In our case that means, “How many people have to be surveyed in a particular country to obtain a meaningful consensus about the flag culture in that country?” Fortunately, it appears that by working with FOTW’s audience – and excluding as a matter of principle single-source, unconfirmed information – the answer is simply “two or more.” The *two* answers each from Croatia, Israel, New Zealand, and Portugal, for example, form a reasonably consistent picture regarding flag environments in those countries, at least for the main purposes of the present survey. On the other hand, a large number of responses, e.g., Canada, Australia, UK – while offering more colorful information and some “vexitainment” – do not necessarily add much understanding to the core questions posed by the survey, namely (1) How does a state-controlled political system affect the flag use by ordinary citizens? and (2) How does such a system

affect the manner in which municipal flags are chosen?

More information is always better than less, but limitations of time, imagination, and money impose restrictions on how much data can be reasonably gathered for any particular project, especially a non-income-producing one. Overall, FOTW proved an unexpectedly fine-mesh filter for culling those individuals most cognizant and interested in the flag environment of their countries, so that a reasonably high degree of confidence could be built from as few as two respondents. The Internet also made it possible to obtain follow-up information quickly and inexpensively.

### 3.2.5.2 – “State-control” hypotheses vs. Survey data

Does a centralized, state-controlled regime codify the manner in which private citizens display the national flag? The data are largely silent on this point because:

- As foreseen, statist rule is inimical to the free flow of information, and the Internet is seen by such political systems as a threat and source of instability. Hence mainland China was silent. Russia and the ex-Soviet republics were silent. Cuba was silent. Singapore was silent. All of Africa was silent, though political, economic, and social instability on that continent were doubtless contributing factors.
- Answers came, in the main, from democratic states, ranging from republics to constitutional monarchies.

Though the starting hypothesis has good support from historical, literature, and personal-experience data, the Internet cyber-survey was inadequate for proving or disproving the hypothesis. *The most clearly statist regimes were silent in cyberspace.* But the data in **Table II** show some meaningful distinctions in the rate citizens use the national flag in their private lives, *as separate from* public demonstrations, sports events, and government-imposed holidays.

**TABLE II**

**Private use of national flag**

<u>Frequent</u>	<u>Rare</u>	<u>Moderate</u>
Canada <sup>189</sup>	Austria <sup>187</sup>	All others
Croatia <sup>191</sup>	Germany <sup>196</sup>	
Denmark <sup>193</sup>	UK <sup>215</sup>	
Netherlands <sup>205</sup>		
Norway <sup>207</sup>		
Sweden <sup>212</sup>		
Switzerland <sup>213</sup>		

Why the differences? Some answers are suggested by the respondents themselves, as indicated by footnote references alongside each country. To these, a few speculations regarding factors contributing to frequent private use of national flags:

- a long history of struggle for national independence, as in the case of the Netherlands and Switzerland;
- specific struggles for national survival when the flag became a rallying point, as in Denmark; or national re-emergence such as Croatia's.
- an effort to establish and maintain a national identity, as in Canada;

This area presents excellent opportunities for informative essays by residents of the above countries, since any speculations by foreigners is bound to be superficial at best. The same is true of countries where flag usage was rare. Why do Norwegians and Swedes use the flag as a matter-of-course accessory in many of their private joyful or mournful occasions? Did the Austrian flag ever really belong to all Austrians, before apparently being co-opted by the left? Will it be returned to the people, as appears to be the case in Sweden? Did the imperial monarchies of Austria, France, and Spain affect flag usage by the public, compared with the monarchies of Scandinavian countries? Does the manner in which a nation-state comes about affect the use of national symbols, along an analysis first suggested by Zelinsky? <sup>219</sup> Does the loss of empire, such as the Austro-Hungarian, Spanish, or British empires, affect public flag use in those countries?

Turning to the second starting hypothesis – namely, that state-run regimes will prevent the involvement of private citizens in

choosing municipal flags – what do the data show? Let us begin with **Table III**.

**TABLE III**

**How are municipal flags designed?**

**KEY**

**O** = Open contests, no government interference  
**C** = Closed contests, no significant input from the public.  
 Decisions made primarily by local authorities (town, city, province, region, etc.) or by the national government.  
**O/C** = Both Open and Closed contests, with open contests predominant.  
**C/O** = Both Closed and Open contests, with closed contests predominant.  
***Bold italics*** = states that officially control the use of armorial bearings  
*Italics* = states with heraldic tradition but with no formal control over armorial bearings

<u><b>O</b></u>	<u><b>O/C</b></u>	<u><b>C/O</b></u>	<u><b>C</b></u>
	Argentina	<b><i>Australia</i></b>	<i>Austria</i>
	Brazil	<b><i>Canada</i></b>	<b><i>Belgium</i></b>
	Colombia	<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>
	Hong Kong	<i>Finland</i>	<b><i>Denmark</i></b>
	Mexico	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
	Taiwan	<i>India</i>	<i>Greece</i>
	Venezuela	<b><i>Netherlands</i></b>	<i>Israel</i>
		<b><i>Norway</i></b>	<i>Italy</i>
		<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>
		<i>Puerto Rico</i>	<i>Portugal</i>

The clearest point is that *none* of the nations surveyed has a completely open system for choosing municipal flags. Informal systems seem to pervade in South America, Hong Kong and Taiwan, though for the last two the reliability of the respondents would have to be reinforced before accepting the data as accurate.

But how does the information in **Table III** relate to the hypothesis that state-run systems affect the selection of municipal flags? It does not, because of the basic flaw already pinpointed above: autocratic regimes either suppress the Internet, or the few people who

manage to use it are reluctant to express an opinion that may be monitored by the authorities. Conclusion: *The cyber-survey experiment was unable to verify or falsify the “State-control” hypotheses.* It was most likely a case of “Good question, wrong experiment.”

### 3.2.5.3 – “Heraldic tradition” hypotheses vs. Survey data

While the data are silent on the “state-control” hypothesis, they do point out a related question. *Are countries with a strong heraldic tradition likely to exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:*

- a largely closed system for selecting municipal flags;
- little or no use of municipal flags by civilians;
- a large presence of heraldic symbols on flags;
- a lower status for flags relative to coats-of-arms?

The preliminary answer from the data concerning one or more of the above points is YES. And this led to the idea that perhaps the proper way to have formulated the original hypotheses for this cyber-survey would have been in terms of *heraldic tradition* rather than in terms of state-controlled regimes. Not because the latter is a flawed hypothesis, but because the Internet is a flawed medium for testing the hypothesis.

Today only European monarchies, Ireland, Switzerland, South Africa and Zimbabwe formally control the use of armorial bearings (arms, coat-of-arms). Let us recast the original hypotheses by substituting *control of armorial bearings* – either by the monarchy or the state – for the notion of state-controlled political regimes:

**(1)** controlling the use of armorial bearings will also limit the use of national flags by private individuals to official parades or designated holidays; spontaneous use of the national flag by ordinary citizens will take place primarily during public events such as sporting competitions in which the national team competes. In contrast, in countries where the arms are not controlled, the private use of the national flag will also be unregulated and many more forms of spontaneous flag use by citizens will occur;

**(2)** controlling the use of armorial bearings will lead to a mostly closed process for designing and adopting municipal flags; designs will be created by a small group of individuals and will be subject to scrutiny and

approval by regional or national authorities; in contrast, where arms are not controlled, the selection of municipal flags will be largely unregulated.

The advantage of this reformulation is that the hypotheses can be tested with data derived from the cyber-survey. Do the data support the first hypothesis for Scandinavian monarchies or for Switzerland? From **Table II** we see that they do not. *The hypothesis is false.*

Do the data support the second hypothesis? *Are countries that control the use of armorial bearings the same countries that also show mostly closed or totally closed processes for selecting municipal flags?* Here the data are unequivocal, revealing a **direct correlation between formal control of the use of arms and control of the selection process for municipal flags**. All European monarchies that responded to the survey, and also Switzerland Canada and Australia – shown in **bold italics** – manifest that correlation: they all have “C/O” or “C” ratings in **Table III**, meaning that they all have a mostly or totally closed process for selecting municipal flags. From this evidence three questions emerge:

(1) Do countries of strong heraldic tradition, but currently *without a formal* “controlling legal authority” for the use of arms, also evidence mostly or fully closed systems for adopting municipal flags?

(2) Is the relationship between heraldic tradition and municipal flags accidental, or does it have some rational historical basis?

(3) Does the hypothesis “The strength of heraldic tradition in a country is inversely related to the openness of municipal flag selection” have any *testable* predictive value? In other words, can one test the prediction that in countries such as Ireland, South Africa, Japan, etc., – or in a semi-autonomous nation like Scotland – where heraldic tradition has been strong, the selection of municipal flags is restricted to a small group of experts, rather than being open to public participation?

The Data in **Table III** show the answer to the first question to be **yes**: *countries with significant heraldic traditions – shown in italics in the Table – have mostly or fully closed processes for selecting municipal flags*. While most of these countries do not have an

officially recognized heraldic authority – such as the Canadian Heraldic Authority, or the Czech Republic’s heraldic commission, or Puerto Rico’s Institute of Culture – there are several cases of either official regulations, as in Croatia (Regulations About the Procedure for Approving Coats-of-Arms and Flags for Local Bodies), or unofficial heraldic bodies, as in Italy (Collegio Araldico), Portugal (Portuguese Heraldry Institute), Germany (State Archives), Spain (Colegio Heráldico de España y de las Indias). *The available evidence therefore strongly suggests that heraldic tradition has a forceful effect on closing the civic-flag selection process to public participation – a clearly elitist, undemocratic influence.*

A second important question is: *Is the relationship between heraldry and municipal flags accidental?* All too often Sterman’s warning about business models<sup>220</sup> applies to scientific correlations. Just because someone discovers a direct relationship between, say, the frequency of the sequence 69 in Parisian telephone numbers and Norwegians who wear brown socks on skiing trips does not mean the relationship has any meaning or usefulness. We must therefore ask by way of “reality check”: *Is there a reason why heraldic tradition should affect the selection process of civic flags?*

A credible case can be made for answering, yes, there is a historically derived reason. The use of heraldic arms has been associated, from its beginning in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the higher feudal castes. To bear arms in later medieval times was always a sign of gentility, a visible mark of the gentleman. Guilds adopted arms to add stature to their profession. This desire to spotlight nobility or class distinction or special skill has characterized the use of arms by individuals, corporations, institutions, and association ever since. *Whereas heraldic arms accent class distinctions and are therefore **elitist and anti-democratic**, public participation in civic vexillography is profoundly **democratic and egalitarian**.* Consequently, a sharp conflict between the two is inevitable – just as the data in **Table III** reflect.

A brief historical perspective reinforces this view. Heraldry has had over eight centuries to leave its seal of class distinction on the consciousness of peoples worldwide. The colonizing reach of British, French, Austro-Hungarian, Spanish and other empires spread the anti-democratic spirit of heraldic arms to every corner of the world. Add to that the past century’s totalitarian Nazi and communist catastrophes, whose lockstep mentality further deprived people of personal initiative, and it becomes evident why meaningful public involvement

in civic vexillography has been smothered around the globe. While there are other contributing factors – such as an indifference to flags in general and to municipal flags in particular – *the elitist sway of heraldic tradition appears to be a key element in explaining the limited participation of individual citizens in the vexillographic life of their communities.*

Finally, a fully scientific hypothesis must make testable predictions. On the strength of the data in **Table III**, which reveal an inverse relationship between heraldic tradition and public participation in civic flag selection – the stronger the heraldic tradition, the weaker the public participation – *it is predicted that the selection process for municipal flags in Scotland, Ireland, Slovakia, Japan, Zimbabwe, and South Africa will prove to be mostly or totally closed off to private citizens.* The author appeals to vexillologists in those countries for data that would support or falsify this prediction.

**Summarizing:** we have *shown conclusively why vexillology is a science within the formal and rigorous definition of that term.* We have proven that vexillologists have produced accurate, scholarly work in every facet of the scientific method, from collecting data through careful observations and research, to recognizing patterns in the data, to formulating hypotheses about the patterns, to predicting testable flag practices based on those hypotheses.

Why is it important to key on the scientific nature of vexillology? Because the tenets of the scientific method offer rich, time-tested veins of research possibilities, and because the resulting findings can be presented within a paradigm of long standing and widespread recognition.

A worldwide cyber-survey of vexillophiles yielded data that support – according to formal scientific canons – a new hypothesis about the relationship between heraldic tradition and the design process of municipal flags. The hypothesis makes testable predictions about countries for which survey data is currently unavailable.

## SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

The essay reviews the intellectual and practical foundation of vexillology – the methodical study of flags – and provides rigorous support for the argument that *vexillology is a science in its formative stages*. To prove the worldwide reach of vexillology and the research value of the Internet, the essay undertakes a first-of-a-kind vexillological cyber-survey, employing formal canons of deductive scientific methodology.

Created practically *ex nihilo* around 1960, organized vexillology today is a strapping enterprise with fundamental accomplishments in research, a vigorous publications record, and a diverse and loyal organizational base. Few disciplines, whether in the physical or social sciences, can boast a comparable four-decade record. Today's generation of flag enthusiasts inherit a formidable intellectual bounty from the creators of organized vexillology. At the same time, our discipline, conceived in the pre-Information Age, is increasingly enveloped by cyberspace and challenged by its technology.

Coupled with technological challenges, 21<sup>st</sup>-century vexillologists must accomplish a major shift in both mindset and practice – away from the traditional preoccupation with data-gathering and toward **(1)** placing flags within their historic, social, political, and cultural contexts; **(2)** habitually asking *How?* and *Why?* – not merely *What?* or *When?* as we study the social forces, ceremonies, and traditions that shape the history of flags; **(3)** developing hypotheses about flags and their use within their respective societies; **(4)** researching data to support such hypotheses and designing experiments to supplement the research; **(5)** proposing theories to explain the data obtained from research and experiments; **(6)** hazarding predictions about flags and their use in order to test a particular theory. In other words, with vexillology poised between past and future, we must continually validate its scientific credentials.

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## FOOTNOTES

1. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 38; see also *NAVA News*, Vol. 10, No. 3., July-September 1977

2. Russell E. Martin, e-mailed communication, 16 September 2000.

3. Somewhat different from those of the more classic (but in practice less common) *inductive*

*science*, and quite different from the often hushed-up *serendipitous or contingent science*, see Section 2. <sup>87</sup>

4. Flags of the World website, see  
<<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/index2.html>>

5. As distinct from *pure* or *radical* pragmatism, used by the American philosopher William James to give equal worth to every experience. Pragmatism is a 20<sup>th</sup> century, primarily American philosophy that stressing that the merit of a policy derives foremost from its workability, practicality, and usefulness. <sup>6</sup> The debt pragmatism owes to the late-18<sup>th</sup>-century English tradition of Utilitarianism is beyond dispute.

And also as distinct from the *radical empiricism* of American philosopher-mathematical-logician W.V. Quine (1908-2000), <sup>6A</sup> who, along with other logical positivists, held that the world can be understood only through empirical or practical or direct experience of it – hence all statements of truth must be based on observable data.

*Rational* empiricism, on the other hand, holds that all absolute statements, including this one, are wrong; that TRUTH, Truth, or truth are all directions or *journeys*, rather than fixed, definitive places or destinations; and that searching for truth in every scholarly endeavor, whether scientific or humanistic – “we historians are in the truth business,” as Historian Raul Hilberg memorably put it – is a never-ending quest where the only certainty is that there is none – even that being uncertain because undemonstrable. Hence the rational-empiricist motto: QUAERIMUS ERGO SUMUS – We search, therefore we are (thanks to Roberto Breschi for help with the Latin).

6. Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropædia, 15<sup>th</sup> edition, Vol. 9, p. 662.

6A. *The New York Times*, 29 December 2000, p. C11.

7. Fédération internationale des associations vexillologiques, the umbrella organization for national and sub-national vexillological groups. As of December 2002 it includes over 45 organizations.

8. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act V, scene 1, line 83.
9. Full title: *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism and the End of Economic Democracy*, by Thomas Frank, Doubleday, 2000.
10. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 191.
11. *Ibid.*, No. 168.
12. North American Vexillological Association (NAVA), created in 1967, and counting about 450 members as of December 2002. The first issue of *NAVA News* appeared in October 1967 and consisted of a one-page letter from Whitney Smith.
- 12A. It is likely, if not provable, that the bugle call for this intellectual awakening was Smith's blunt, constructive 1987 assessment of NAVA's first 20 years.<sup>51</sup> He reserved this assessment for NAVA's publications (primarily *NAVA News* at the time): "Perhaps the most striking difference between NAVA and other members of [FIAV] is to be found in their publications." Comparing NAVA to the Belgian vexillological society, he notes that with only 24 members the Belgians managed to produce "articles and documentation of substance" plus an annual journal of 100+ pages filled with scholarly vexillological articles on a variety of topics. It should make a fascinating study in comparative socio-cultural vexillology, well beyond the scope of this essay, to inquire why it took North Americans over 20 years to develop a strong intellectual and scholarly foundation in vexillology, while some Europeans (the Swiss, Dutch, Finns, Spanish, British, and Belgians already by 1987; more recently the *Flag Data Bank*, *Der Flaggenkurrier*, *Vexillacta*) developed the knack for serious vexillological research in a far shorter time.
- 12B. "Without question," writes Dr. Whitney Smith in a letter dated 2 January 2001, "these publications are the most ambitious in the world of vexillology with regard to the quality of presentation ... Few countries are so fortunate to have the history of their flags so well documented as in these volumes from the Swiss Society of Vexillology."
13. Centro Italiano Studi Vessillologici.
- 13A.. Latin: vexed question, i.e., a much-debated or contested question.
14. Quarterly journal of The Flag Institute, founded in 1971 by the late William Crampton, a pioneer in the use of computer flag graphics and a visionary in the potential of the Internet for vexillology.
15. Quarterly of the Canadian Flag Association, published continuously since 1985.

16. Erwin Günther, *Der Flaggenkurrier*, Nos. 1-5, May 1995- November 1997.
17. Norman Martin and Rüdiger Dreyhaupt, *ibid.*, Nos. 9-11, June 1999- June 2000.
18. Jan Oskar Engene, *ibid.*, No. 2, January 1996, dealing the flags of Hordaland, one of Norway's 19 departments (*fylker*).
19. Hans von Heijningen, *ibid.*, No. 3, May 1996.
20. Derisive French blend-word, a neologism derived from logo and *cochonnerie* (pigswill), denoting the mindless use of logos on flags.
21. *The Flag*, bulletin of the Kevarzhe vannielouriezh vreizh (Société bretonne de vexillologie).
22. *Vexillacta* No. 7, March 2000, p. 20 and the response in *Ar Banniel*, No. 12, Summer 2000, p. 13.
23. Whitney Smith, private communication.
24. *Vexillacta*, No.4, June 1999, p. 15 ff.
25. *Ibid.*, No. 5, September 1999, p. 9.
26. For instance “*vexillonnaire*” *ibid.*, No. 8, June 2000, p. 19 – a word first used in *Ar Banniel* No. 17, Spring 2002, p. 12 ff.. It is a portmanteau word derived from *vexillologue* and “*révolutionnaire*,” created to identify the *vexillologue engagé* – that is, the opposite of what Philippe Rault called the “*vexillologue contemplatif*”, who practices (what Roberto Breschi named) “*la vessillologia sedentaria*.” The best-known American vexillonnaires are Ted and Mason Kaye, vexillology's first father-son team.
27. Nederlandse Vereniging voor Vlaggenkunde (NVVV), despite its small size, produces outstanding contributions in the Dutch-language *Vexilla Nostra*. Their Website is: <<http://home.wxs.nl/~marksens/nvvv/>> In addition, The Vlaggen Documentatie Centrum Nederland (VDCN) recently published a three-volume work on Dutch civic flags by Derk Willem Visser. Many thanks to Jarig Bakker for this information.
28. With thanks to Dr. Emil Dreyer for the specific information.
29. To contact Gunnar Staack: <[flagdatabk@aol.com](mailto:flagdatabk@aol.com)> Fabretto's unique gifts are on display in *Flag Data Bank*, Nos. 1, 5, 6, 7. See also sections **3.1.2.2** and **3.1.2.3**.
30. Which recently undertook to publish Professor Hugh H Smith's extensive

survey *South African Military Colours 1664 to 26 May 1994* (Published by the Southern African Vexillological Association, PO Box, 836, Pinegowrie, 2123 South Africa).

31. And often translating these documents from Slavic or vowel-challenged languages into French or German or English, a *tour de force* few others could undertake. In fact, Tenora's systematic dedication to presenting original sources is unique in contemporary vexillology – which is at once a tribute to Ji̇ci and a failing of flag study as currently practiced.

32. Fédération internationale des associations vexillologiques

33. There was one founding veximother present at creation, Klaes' wife Berber Sierksma.<sup>34</sup>

34. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 193 (specifically, p. 90 for the reference immediately above only).

35. *NAVA News*, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 4.

36. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 29 and Vol. V, No. 4.

37. Whitney Smith, *Flag Data Bank*, No. 2, p.3.

38. <<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/fotwboti.html>> For the chronological history of FOTW, see <<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/fotwhist.html>>

39. *NAVA News*, Vol. 27, No. 3, May/June 1994, p. 1.

40. Dale Coats, *NIFDA Journal*, Vol.10 , No. 2.

41. Tom Reed, *The New York Times*, 14 September 2000, p. A27.

42. *NAVA News*, Vol. 32, No. 6, November/December 1999.

43. Data from Rob Raeside, 6 February 2003.

44. Data as of 8 February 2003 from <<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/edistaff.html>> shows the top 7 FOTW page editors (in parenthesis, data as it was on 8 December 2000): Pascal Gross 2,876 (1,134), Dov Gutterman 2,782 (1,455) pages; Jarig Bakker 2,701(487), Santiago Dotor 1,779 (638), Ivan Sache 1,505 (342), Antonio Martins 1,481 (862), Phil Nelson 1,171 (1,232).

45. Phillip Nelson, personal e-mail communications, 9 December 2000, and 5 February 2003.

46. Both numbers include repeat customers, that is, they allow for the fact

that many of the same people may log on or receive newsletters and the journal.

47. Nelson's survey shows there are 17 cyber-vexi-sites – some quite active and up-to-date – for flagoholics *not* affiliated with FOTW, e.g., **Nordvex** (Scandinavian list); **Lusovex** (Portuguese); **Hisvavex** (Spanish); **BeNeVex** (Belgium/Netherlands); **Flaggenkunde** (German), **Francovex** (French), **Vexicro** (Croatian), **Vexilllogia** (Spanish), **Vexillum** (mostly English).<sup>45</sup>

48. According to the indefatigable Nelson, you have the choice of receiving *individual* E-mails, or a *digest* generated one or more times a day, depending on volume, or viewing messages at the E-group's website. Note that a digest *does not* include image attachments, just the text. If you want images, you need to select "individual" E-mails. The subscription service will also ask you to specify whether you wish to receive messages in *HTML* mail or in *plain text*. Because many recipients have no HTML readers, "plain text" is the preferred option for FOTW.

49. Information e-mailed by Rob Raeside on 9 December 2000.

49A. Phillip Nelson, E-mail dated 21 January 2001.

50. Lewis Carroll, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 4, *The Walrus and the Carpenter*, stanza 11.

51. Whitney Smith, *NAVA at Twenty*, letter written to NAVA Members, May 5, 1987

52. Luc Baronian, *Flagscan*, No. 59, Fall/Autumne 2000, pp. 6-9.

53. A rare exception (proving the rule) of thoughtful criticism: *The Cybervexillology Problem*, by Phillip Nelson, *NAVA News*, Vol. 32, No. 6, pp. 2-3.

54. *NAVA News*, Vol.. 26, No. 6, p. 2.

55. *Ibid.*, Vol.. 26, No. 1, p. 2.

56. *Ibid.*, Vol.. 25, No. 2, p. 1.

57. *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, No. 1, p.1.

58. Scot Guenter, E-mail dated 11 December 2000.

59. Thomas Friedman defines the Evernet Age as " what comes after the Internet age ... when you will be able to be online everywhere, all the time, not just from your PC." *The New York Times*, 22 September 2000, p. A27. George Johnson, *ibid.*, 31 December 2000, Section 4, p.4, defines Omninet Age as the time when "you will be able to flip open a laptop anywhere in the world and be connected to an all-engulfing atmosphere of information."

- 59A. E-mail dated 4 January 2001.
60. Tumbling Waters Museum of Flags, Montgomery, Alabama.
61. Not a novel idea, as Nelson pointed out (E-mail, 12 December 2000). In fact, over three years ago *Flag Data Bank* (Vol. 6, No. 3, May 1997) sounded the alarm with “ Why we need a FIAV Website.”
62. Uh, actually there already is a flag for Mars, points out FOTW Director Rob Raeside, see  
<<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mars.html>>
63. Derived after discussions and e-mails with Rob Raeside and NAVA Member Rick Wyatt; the latter runs the largest mirror site for FOTW. Based on a review he did in late-January 2003, Raeside writes (e-mail, 4 February 2003): “I think it’s pretty safe to say that across the board [all its mirror sites], FOTW is ‘enjoying’ between 2 and 5 million hits a month.”
64. Phillip Nelson, E-mail dated 11 December 2000. See  
<[http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/vex\\_.html](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/vex_.html)> for a list of vexillological organizations and institutions. For a list of FIAV members see  
<[http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/vex\\_.html#fiav](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/vex_.html#fiav)>
65. *NAVA News*, Vol.. 27, No. 1, p. 7
66. *Ibid.*, Vol.. 20, No. 5
67. *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, No. 6, p. 5.
68. *King Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. 3, line 60. The first reference in that paragraph, with apologies to the Bard, is to *Julius Caesar*, Act 1, Sc. 2, line 134.
69. *The New York Times*, 11 December 2000, pp. C1, C3.
70. *Ibid.*, 21 December 2000, page G1
71. The age of Aquarius officially began on January 23 1997 at 17:35 GMT. It means the end of one era, the Age of Pisces, and the beginning of another. Some feel it heralds the coming of the "end of times" as written in the Book of Revelations. Others feel it is the dawning of the new world order. Whatever it means, it is still mysterious and opinions still differ widely in the astrology community. In other words, nobody understands what it means, much like quantum mechanics.
72. *Flag Data Bank*, No. 2, p. 3.
73. *Ibid.*, 11 December 2000, p. C5.
74. *Dave Barry In Cyberspace*, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York 19976, p. 39.

75. For the rest of the essay I will borrow Nelson's term "cybervex" (ref. 53).

76. Ref. 4, see under Disclaimer and Copyright link.

77. See <<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/fotwcols.html>> for FOTW's color guide.

78. Brian L. Silver, *The Ascent of Science*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 389. The quote is from Sir Arthur Eddington.

79. We ignore for the moment the fact that FOTW has received next-to-zero support from either FIAV or its members in setting uniform research guidelines.

80. Rob Raeside, E-mail dated 18 December 2000.

81. Brian L. Silver, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

82. Raeside (Ref. 80) adds: "Individuals on FOTW have established Nordvex, Hispanovex, etc., partly to permit discussion in some other languages. Relevant components do get summarized for the English speakers."

83. E-mail dated 17 December 2000. And Nelson specifies: "[Bottasini] set up FOTW with English ... as it was, at the time, the *lingua franca* of the Internet ...

84. Though Rob claims that, as veximagician acts go, he is "far more amazed at the work pace of the editors" who "are all busier than I am with the website." (E-mail dated 18 December 2000).

85. The OED defines brummagem as 'counterfeit', from a local, vulgar form of the name of Birmingham, England, hence an article of Birmingham manufacture.

86. Robert M. Hazen, *The Great Principles of Science*, The Teaching Company, Part I, p. 7.

87. Both idealized *and* incomplete, in fact. Mainly in the 16-19<sup>th</sup> centuries did such *inductive* paths (start with data-gathering then develop hypotheses) hold much sway. Far more prevalent in practice is the *deductive method* (\*), in which the logic sequence is: hypothesis, data collection, recognition of patters, testable predictions. The root cause of a great number of hypotheses is nothing more (or less) than the mysterious brain process called *intuition*, about which very little is scientific.

Though few practicing scientists will admit it, *serendipity and contingency* are the true lubricants of the scientific method. Science may be pulled by the engine of reason, but it glides along tracks of serendipity. Ask Alexander

Fleming about penicillin, Charles Goodyear about vulcanized rubber, William Perkin about aniline dyes – or the next scientist you meet at a party, after a few glasses of wine.

(\*) And its cousin the *hypothetico-deductive method*: take a hypothesis, use deductive logic to examine its consequences, and compare them with observed facts. This sort of “reality check” blows away false syllogisms like the one that made a vexillologist of Aristotle.

88. (A) Collect beer cans from several districts of a major industrial city; (B) Categorize the cans according to the six basic qualities recognized by beer-can collectors: 1. Uniqueness – different, attractive, novel, appealing; 2. Quality – condition, shape; 3. Rarity – how many available; 4. Area of interest, i.e., brewery, label, sports, animals, state, country, etc.; 5. Type of Can – cone top, flat top, straight steel or steel can, alum.; current or obsolete; 6. How opened – air-sealed, top opened, bottom opened, full, empty; (data courtesy of Jim Tabaska, beer-can collector, <[www.angelfire.com/wi/beercans](http://www.angelfire.com/wi/beercans)>); (C) Note also frequency of each type, condition of can, etc. (D) Formulate working hypotheses around ideas such as: size of beer can vs. alcoholism in a particular district; relationship between the number of crushed and damaged cans and violence in the district; ratio of glass to metal beer containers as indication of environmental awareness, level of education in the district. (E) Check hypotheses vs. data; (F) modify hypotheses or originate other hypotheses that will relate to data; (G) Collect additional data to verify or falsify new hypotheses.

89. *Discover*, July 2000, p. 64.

90. *String theory*, the currently fashionable “Theory of Everything”, which attempts to unify all particles and forces of nature and would require us to think in 10 dimensions, compared to the “normal” three spacial dimensions of daily life. Proving its validity would require experiments lasting far longer than our minds can even grasp. Far from simplifying our understanding of the universe, science has merely provided the means for exercising some tenuous control over it, while revealing a complexity far beyond our current ability to fathom.

Take for example this quote from Greene, one of the brightest lights in contemporary theoretical physics: “Imagine that what we call *the* universe is actually only one tiny part of a vastly larger cosmological expanse, one of an enormous number of island universes scattered across a grand cosmological archipelago”<sup>90</sup> and try to guess whether we are dealing here with science? poetry ? faith?

91. Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1999, p. 366. If you would like to delve into the most elegant and intelligible treatment of string theory I’ve come across, this is the book for it.

92. Alexander Pope, *Epitaph intended for Sir Isaac Newton*, the previous line reads: "Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:"

93. *Raven, A Journal of Vexillology*, NAVA, Vol. 1, pp. 28-29

94. E-mail dated 24 December 2000, Christmas Eve ...

95. Motto of his 'Notes from the President' series in *NAVA News*, e.g., Vol. 26, no.3, p.1.

96. *Vexillacta*, No. 8, p.19. Since Nyssen doesn't define "scientific", let us assume it means "in a rigorous/precise, dispassionate/impartial manner."

97. In 1983 then-editor Elsie Blechta briefly analyzed various kinds of vexillology, asking "what does it really mean?" *NAVA News*, Vol. 16, No. 5, p.2.

98. *NAVA News*, Vol. 26, No. 3, p.3.

99. E-mail attachment from Prof. Gotelli, dated 2 January 2001. CIDECA = The Interdisciplinary Center of Cultural Studies, in the English translation of the Argentine name.

100. Whitney Smith, *NAVA News*, Vol. 26, No.6, p. 4

100A. "Let's be honest," writes Gunnar Staack from Germany, "vexillology, as it is understood by 90\_95 % of vexillological association members worldwide, is in fact a hobby. They collect books, table flags, old "original" flags, flag stamps and T\_shirts." E-mails dated 29 December 2000 and 4 January 2001.

101. Private telephone communication, 28 December 2000.

102. Following Jean Paul Sartre's example of *philosophie engagée*. The principle of *homme engagé* – the citizen or man of letters actively engaged in promoting ideas and ideals – and the ideal of *humanitas* that requires one to be an active participant in life, rather than sedentary and isolated, have firm roots in Western culture, from Plato to 19<sup>th</sup>-century humanism to the modernism of Jean-Paul Sartre and Foucault. Buddhism also, as Andrew Sterman pointed out, has found its activist voice in Master Thich Nhat Hanh. (E-mail dated 9 August 2000).

103. Michael Faul, *Ar Banniel*, No. 13, p. 19.

104. *Ar Banniel*, No. 6, p. 22.

105. *Ibid.*, No. 3, p. 33.

106. Located in Spézet, Brittany, Coop Breizh is the foremost publisher of

books on Brittany and its heritage and a faithful supporter of SBV by word and deed. It was instrumental, for example, in publishing Philippe Rault's seminal *Breton Flags From 1188 to Present*, Divi Kervella's classic *Emblems and Symbols of Bretons and Celts*, and Jean-Pierre Le Mat's pocket treatise on Breton history *The Hundred Lives of the Ermine* (all in French).

107. Philippe protested (E-mail dated 29 December 2000) that he doesn't do everything, but relies on a strong support team of apostles, comprising Alain Raullet, Divi Kervella, Michel Bolloré, Bernard Parage, and Raphaël Vinet.

108. Personal communication, 20 December 2000, and E-mail 4 January 2001. *The Flag Bulletin* had a note about this undertaking in FB XIII:1 p. 20; *ibid.*, No. 90 pp. 84\_88 has an article about the 1981 effort to put the word "Montana" on the flag.

109. For Ferrigan's Nevada flag story, see *Raven*, Vol. 1, p. 65.

110. *The Virginian Pilot*, 8 April 1998.

111. A full-color *Hampton Roads Regional Flag Project Commemorative Booklet* is available from <<http://www.shire.net/hrflag>>

112. *NAVA News*, Vol. 21, No. 6, pp. 6-7.

113. "A Flag for New Milford," *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 168.

114. *NAVA News*, Vol. 35, No. 3, p. 14. Because this campaign carried many lessons for future vexillology-in-action, Kay's article is here reproduced, by permission, in all its essential details: Portland Gets a New Flag Thanks to NAVA Members, by Mason Kaye

On September 4, 2002, Portland's city council voted unanimously to adopt the new flag for Portland proposed a week earlier by the Portland Flag Association, led by NAVA member Harry Oswald.

Portland, Oregon has had several flags in the past. The most recent was adopted in 1969 and created by graphic designer Douglas Lynch. It consisted of light blue offset crossed bars representing the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers where Portland is located, on a green background representing Portland's forested surroundings. A four-pointed star, symbolizing the city, was formed by the intersection of the bars. The blue bars were bordered by white-gold-white fimbriations, the gold representing wheat and commerce. The canton of the flag was dark blue, bearing the city seal. The seal was not originally part of Lynch's design, but the city commissioners had added it to the flag at the last minute, reflecting their own conservative tastes. Art commission members strongly opposed the city seal as an element of the flag, but to no avail.

The new flag changes four components of the 1969 flag. First, the blue stripes doubled in width, making them much more significant compared to their fimbriations. The four-pointed star became nine times larger, converting it from a minor blur to a major graphic element. The city seal was removed. The canton's dark blue background changed to the green of the rest of the flag's field.

Doug Lynch, 89, recently joined NAVA. He is the long-time dean of graphic arts in Portland, and former chair of the Portland Art Commission. He joined the Portland Flag Association two years ago, and after sharing his experience of designing the city's flag in 1969, PFA members encouraged him to push for a revised design. He welcomed the opportunity to address some weaknesses and political compromises embodied in his 1969 design.

On August 28, 2002, Doug Lynch, Mike Hale, Ted Kaye, and I all testified before the city council. Doug recounted the story of the previous flag's design, Mike spoke of the cost savings to the city of the simpler version, Ted supported the new design in terms of the five basic principles from *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, and I gave the historical background of Portland's previous flags. Each commissioner was excited about the new design. Mayor Vera Katz asked that a real flag be ready the next week for the vote on the ordinance. Mike's company, Elmer's Flag & Banner, quickly manufactured one to Doug's new specifications.

The Mayor's chief of staff, Sam Adams, had already tested the design with all of the commissioners. Doug Lynch and Sam Adams live across the street from one another in Northwest Portland, and worked together to develop the new flag ordinance.

A week later, NAVA member John Hood picked up the new flag from Elmer's and mounted it on the pole in the city council's chambers. Mayor Katz asked that the old flag go into the city archives, before calling for the vote which amended the City Code and made Portland's new flag official. PFA members applauded as her gavel marked the council's unanimous approval.

I hope to deliver a paper on the complete history of Portland's flags in 2003 at 20 ICV next year in Stockholm. I have appreciated the opportunity to achieve the status of "vexillonnaire" as well as researcher and reporter on the flags of my city...

115. From a paper delivered at NAVA-34 in Lansing, Mich., 6 October 2000.

116. James Ferrigan owned Flag Services, Inc. in Reno, Nevada. Richard Gideon owns and operates Richard R. Gideon Flags in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania <[www.gideonflags.com](http://www.gideonflags.com)> Lee Herold's store can be reached at <[www.heroldflags.com](http://www.heroldflags.com)> The Ambassador Lapel Flags ® website is <[www.TMEALF.com](http://www.TMEALF.com)> Herold's quotes are from a phone conversation on

20 December 2000, as confirmed in an E-mail dated 21 December 2000. Tom Martin of Piedmont Flag Company in Maiden, North Carolina, travels the country following Civil War re-enactments for which he manufactures flag reproductions. Tom can be reached at <flagmaker@piedmontflag.com>

117. *NAVA News*, Vol. 27, No.1, p.1.

118. “Zweck des Vereins ist die Erforschung, Förderung und Pflege der Flaggenkunde (Vexillologie) und benachbarter Wissenschaften.” First sentence, Article 4, German Vexillological Association, per Gunnar Staack, E-mail dated 3 January 2001.

Jose Alegria writes from Spain (E-mail dated 7 August 2000) that the dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy defines vexillology as “a science auxiliary of History ...” – another good way to sidestep the real issue.

119. From the *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary*, special second edition, 1987: (1) a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths, systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws (2) systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation (3) systematic knowledge in general (4) knowledge, as of facts and principles; knowledge gained by systematic study .

120. “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.” G.K. Chesterton, *What’s Wrong With the World*, Part 1, Chapter 5.

121. E-mail dated 17 December 2000.

122. E-mails dated 24 December 2000 and 01 January 2001.

123. *NAVA News*, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 4. The name was also selected because “in the United States any name involving the word flag would likely be misunderstood as being related only to the Stars and Stripes.”

124. *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, No. 1, p.7. Also *ibid.*, Vol. 26, no. 6, p. 2. An excellent treatment by Charles Spain, with thorough quotes from NAVA’s articles of incorporation approved on 19 March 1968. By writing a scattershot, ‘something-for-everyone’ definition of what “scientific study of flags” includes, the founders of NAVA saddled the association with an unfillable task, as the dearth of serious flag studies, let alone scientific work, over the following 20 years demonstrated. Smith is certainly on target about that.<sup>51</sup>

125. *Ibid.*, Vol. 18, No. 5, p.3.

126. Emmet Mittlebeeler, Is Vexillology a Science? *The Flag Bulletin*, No.

40.

127. John D. Sterman, *Business Dynamics – Systems Thinking and Modeling for a Complex World*, Irwin McGraw-Hill, 2000, p. 846.

128. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 84, p.293.

129. “In so far as a scientific statement speaks about reality, it must be falsifiable: and in so far as it is not falsifiable, it does not speak about reality.” Karl Popper in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, as quoted by Brian L. Silver, *op. cit.*, p. 18. Also: “Theories can only be disproved, they can never be proved.” *ibid.*, p. 20.

130. Isaac Newton, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, 1687, “arguably the greatest scientific publication in history,” according to Silver.<sup>129</sup> Title in English: *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. “Natural philosophy” = an early name for the natural sciences.

131. *The New York Times*, 18 January 2001, p.1.

132. *Faster Than the Speed of Light*, by João Magueijo, Perseus Publishing, 2003.

133. E-mail dated 5 January 2001.

134. *NAVA News*, Vol. 28, No. 5, p.2.

135. E-mail dated 28 August 2000.

136. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 191, p.4.

137. E-mail dated 8 January 2001.

138. Aldo Ziggio, *Vexilla Italica*, Year XXVI, No. 2, July-December 1999, p. 33.

139. Review entitled (in translation) “FIAV at Thirty: Vexillologists of Yesterday and Today” by Aldo Ziggio, *ibid.*, Year XXIV, No. 2, July December 1997, pp. 30-36.

140. *The Flag Bulletin.*, No. 41.

141. *Ibid.*, Nos. 7 and 13.

142. *Ibid.*, Nos. 23, 25, 26, 32, 34, 35.

143. *Flag Data Bank*, No. 11.

144. *Raven*, Volumes 3/4, 1996-97.

145. <[www.atlasgeo.net/communes/index.htm](http://www.atlasgeo.net/communes/index.htm)>
146. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 41.
147. *Crux Australis*, No. 46.
148. *Ibid.*, No. 54.
149. *Ibid.*, No. 31.
150. *Vexillacta*, No. 5.
151. *Flag Data Bank*, Nos. 1, 6, 11.
152. *Ibid.*, No. 7.
153. *Ibid.*, Nos. 3, 4, 7.
154. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 37.
155. *Raven*, Vol. 1.
156. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7.
157. *Raven*, Vol. 5.
158. Manuscript entitled *Canadian Civic Vexillographical Motifs*
159. *FDB* = *Flag Data Bank*, with issue number in parenthesis.
160. *Vexillacta*, Nos. 4 and 5.
161. *NAVA News*, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 and 6; see also *Flag Data Bank*, No. 8. A lecture entitled "Maps on Flags" is scheduled for delivery at ICV-19 in York, England. It surveys and categorizes more than 300 flags featuring a map.
162. *Flag Data Bank*, No. 10.
163. *Ibid.*, No. 11.
164. *Ibid.*, No. 5.
165. *Ibid.*, No. 13.
166. *Ibid.*, No. 8.
167. *Crux Australis*, No. 53.
168. Emil Dreyer, E-mail dated 18 January 2001.
169. Lee Herold, private telephone communication, 14 January 2001.
170. George Pasch, *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 37.
171. John Purcell comments in an e-mail dated 25 February 2001: "Pasch's article about there being only 6 colors in flags is not strictly true, and you might want to make an aside that statistically the flags with orange, purple,

and brown (as well as "exotic" colors like pink or saffron) are far fewer in number, though they exist. (India, Ireland, Ivory Coast, the former flag of South Africa, the Spanish Republic, Sri Lanka, the "Newfie" flag, just to name some that come to mind). In fact, heraldry does allow for both orange and purple (Tenné and Purpure), though orange is relatively rare. Purple is apparently more common in heraldry than in vexillology. Heraldry even has yet another (rare) "official" color, Sanguine, described as "a peculiar shade of red," that I have never heard of in vexillology!"

172. *NAVA News*, Vol. 22, No. 5, p.1.

173. *The American Flag, 1777\_1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990.

174. *Raven*, Vols. 2, 6.

175. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5.

176. *The Flag Bulletin*, No. 191; quotes are from pages 13 and 21.

177. *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation – Totem rituals and the American Flag*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 1,2

178. John Purcell, E-mail dated 1 February 2001.

179. Whitney Smith, article entitled "National Symbols," *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, Vol. 1, Academic Press, 2001.

180. Scot Guenter, "Majulah Singapura: National Day and Flag Culture in a Southeast Asian City-State", *Raven*, Vol. 6.

181. To get responses from 7 people at a response rate of 0.1% one needs to contact 7000 people per country.  $7000 \times 45$  countries = 315,000 letters at a cost of 85 cents per letter (postage + envelope, mailing service handling).

182. *Flagmaster*, Nos. 89, 92, 93, 95, 97

183. *Crux Australis*, No. 58.

184. A small minority used the survey to espouse inappropriate opinions or suggestions, and these responses were eliminated. And before you start shaking your head in disappointment at the low response rate, two consolations: (1) The people who actually took the time to answer the survey were probably the *crème de la crème* among flag enthusiasts; hence even as few as two respondents gave meaningful and consistent stories about the flag environment in their country. (2) The presidency of the United States was decided by about the same margin in Florida, November-December 2000.

## SURVEY RESPONSES

185. **ARGENTINA – Nicolas Rucks:** [rated private flag use “moderate” in the survey] **(a)** The sole fact that any national sports team competes is a reason to fly the flag, win or lose. Strikes and protests are very common occasions to show the national flag.. National Days (May 25 and July 9) are the most common days to fly the flag, commonly hanging from the balcony, and wearing an “escarapela” (cockade) or ribbon on clothes.**(b)** Each ‘Provincia’ has its own ways of choosing a flag, but probably the most commonly used method is a contest, open to everyone or to school-age youngsters. 2 October 2000

**Santiago Aversa:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] **(a)** A 1985 law allows civilians to fly the War Flag [celeste-white-celeste Argentine national flag with the “Sun of May”] but many senior people who want to be politically correct still abide by the pre-1985 rule forbidding civilians to use the war Flag. **(b)** Buenos Aires Province selected a flag by a competition open to all K-12 [Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade] students. Funny thing, after the new flag was approved, they discovered that circa 1990 a provincial flag had been created by law. 1 September 2000

186. **AUSTRALIA – Matt Cook** [rated private flag use “rare”]: The question of how municipal flags are created is not valid for my country, as most of our flags in use come from the 1800's. 17 November 2000

**Beau Martin:** **(a)** The national flag can be used freely for any purpose. However, permission must be obtained to use the coat-of-arms of Australia. **(b)** The Australian flag is very rarely used by private citizens. It is widely used on government building and schools and moderately common on non-government high-rise buildings. The Queensland flag is even rarer, and usually only appears in large groupings of flags. Just a point of interest; The Queensland State Parliament, used to fly the British, Australian, and Queensland flags on a trio of flagpoles in the courtyard, on the roof, etc. However, for the past few years the British flag has been removed, leaving the middle flagpoles bare. 7 November 2000

**Craig Howard Smith:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] The Australian flag is flown and used on a regular basis. Both my neighbors have poles and have our flag prominently displayed. 16

October 2000

**Name withheld by request** [rated private flag use “moderate”]: In general the public in Australia do not have the same respect for our national flag as exists in other countries, most notably USA, Great Britain, etc. The black Australian community generally abhors the Australian flag, as they see it as a flag denoting oppression of their race and loss of their homeland. They are supported by other sections of the community, especially ethnic sections, specifically Asian, Arabic, and those of non-Christian backgrounds. 27 October 2000

**Dan**: Australia has been hearing a lot about flags lately because Australians feel that the current flag is irrelevant to modern Australia. 30 September 2000

**Zane Whitehorn** [rated private flag use “moderate”]: If it weren’t for sporting success, Australians wouldn’t be able to recognize their own flag. 21 September 2000.

*Why do you think Australians are reluctant to fly the national flag?*  
[Note: Italics = follow-up questions asked by the author] I think this is due to a mixture of reasons. First, the question should have been “reluctant to fly the national flag compared to Americans.” I have spent some time in the US and it struck me how much more patriotic Americans are compared to Australians. I’m not a psychologist, so I won’t attempt to compare the collective psyches of the nationalities, but it probably has something to do with the possibility that Australians, in general, are raised to be more self-deprecating.

Second, the growing Republicanism feeling in Australia has made people rethink its history and its cultural baggage it has brought from England, and the flag is part of it. Australia is one of the most multi-cultural nations on earth, and for many people a flag with the Union Jack doesn’t exactly inspire them. Actually, the Southern Cross has been appropriated by some far-right groups in Australia, and so some people are wary of the flag for that reason. New flag designs are regularly displayed through the media, but I can’t see our flag being changed anytime in the near future.

Third, the design of the flag itself leads to confusion. The flag is very similar to that of New Zealand and shares similarities with many other flags. On the other hand, who is going to see the Boxing Kangaroo flag and confuse it with another country’s flag?

*Why does the national government decide on the design of municipal flags? Why can't there be open competitions to design local flags?* In retrospect, there is probably as much influence on the design of municipal flags by the local authorities as by the federal government, but I'm not too sure about this. While there have been some open competitions to design flags, I guess that if people think they can design their own local flags, then they may think they can change the national flag. 25 September 2000

**Ralph Bartlett:** [rated private flag use "moderate"] In Australia the flying of the existing national flag and even state flags is becoming more popular, especially after the failure of the 1999 Republican Referendum and of course with the hosting of the Sydney Olympics. Furthermore, in 2001 Australia and our national flag will be celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This will no doubt create more flag waving. Even in Australia our more conservative politicians use the national flag as a way of promoting themselves and their policies. 21 September 2000

*Why did you rate the flag use as 'moderate'?* A bit of everything. On the whole, Australians show their pride quietly – the main exception being our sports victories. We do think that the American razzmatazz patriotism is over the top. Also, deep down Australians know that we do not have a national flag that is truly and totally native to this land and its varied people.

*Why are there no open contests to design municipal flags?* At the moment, any government body or organization that wants a flag hires a graphic-design consultant at great expense to the taxpayer or the shareholder to come up with something 'out of this world,' sometimes with little relevance to the user. These flags are not illegal as the hirer does finally approve the design before it is launched (by the use of a promotion consultant). "We must have consultants" is the current catch cry. 27 September 2000

**Peter Green Wood:** [rated private flag use "rare"] Very few people have a private flag pole, as do few businesses, except those of stature. In north and central Queensland the aboriginal flag has become a recognized symbol and is seen widely on T-shirts, car stickers, and as a territory marker in some communities. 14 September 2000

**David Warner:** [rated private flag use "rare"] *Why did you rate the use frequency "rare"?* Generally people in Australia aren't really that patriotic as a whole. Usually they are quite reserved and quiet, but when a day comes that requires some show of patriotism, they are 'in

your face.” Flag-wise, though, they do fly the national flag on certain occasions, such as sporting events and Australia Day, but its use is nowhere near as widespread as in Canada or the US. A lot of Aussies also have the Boxing Kangaroo flag. 7 September 2000

**Drenkhahn:** [rated use private flag “rare”] Often community or town flags contain some symbol of the areas, e.g., produce, scenery, pioneer. Our town has a killer whale and waves of green and blue, signifying the whaling history and the fishing and timber industries. We have a historic flagmast from our pilot station re-erected on Main Street, where the national, state, and town flags are flown 24 hrs/day. The flags of different nations are flown on their national days, as are special flags, e.g., Total Fire Ban or National Cancer Day, etc. 18 August 2000

187. **AUSTRIA – Thomas Schulreich:** All municipal flags in Austria are very old, so we do not need to create any new flags. 28 September 2000

**Friedrich Nekolar** [rated private flag use “rare” during a personal interview, 30 May 2000] *Why is national-flag use “rare” in Austria?* The national flag is used widely during Labor Day on 1 May. It is also commonly seen in the working-class districts of Vienna. Because of these associations, public display of the Austrian flag has acquired a left-wing (or communist) connotation and most Austrians avoid displaying it for that reason.

187A. **BELGIUM – Clem Roelens:** [rated private flag use “rare”] As you know, Belgium is divided into 2 main parts, Vlamingen and Walons, and so in Belgium we have 3 important official flags: national flag, flag of Flanders = “Vlaanderen” (black lion on yellow), and flag of Walon = “Walon” (red cock on yellow). People use the national only in very special occasions, or together with the regional flags. Post-war Belgians are not so attached to their country. A small minority of German-speaking people probably don’t have their own flag. Of course each municipality has its own flag, which is used for special occasions like national holidays, cultural and sports manifestations, etc. 30 September 2000

188. **BRAZIL – Luis Fernando Bindi:** [rated private flag use “rare” in the survey] Brazil is a country that loves sports (especially football, Olympics, Formula 1 car racing). More than the flag, Brazilians use the green and yellow national colors in small flags, bracelets, pennants, and on clothes. 12 September 2000

*As a Brazilian geographer researching flags since 1992, why did you rate private flag use as “rare”?* To be honest, Brazil’s politics have been bad ever since the country was discovered in 1500. The politicians never took care of the people. Brazilian people are patriotic, but the politicians’ negligence doesn’t encourage positive manifestations of patriotism. When something happens that encourages patriotism (a sports triumph – football especially – during the World Cup, Ayrton Senna, Gustavo Kuerten, etc., or some big folkloristic or political manifestation) we use our beautiful flag. In short, nothing prevents us from using our national flag, just disappointment with the authorities. Actually we love our flag. We are very patriotic. 16 September 2000

**188A. BULGARIA – Peter Robbins:** Cities in Bulgaria do not have their own flags. However, they do have coats-of-arms, which are used solely for badges. People occasionally display the national flag in their homes for special reasons (national holidays, wedding parties, etc) but it is not a real tradition. 24 July 2000

**189. CANADA – David Kendall:** [rated private flag use “frequent”] Canadians are probably one of the top nations in terms of ‘vexi-pride.’ The flag flies here often, not in a sense that the Americans fly it, with an almost reverent worship, but Canadians are proud to be Canadian, and like to fly the flag as a symbol of what it means to be Canadian. Especially when they are overseas, Canadians wear or display the national flag, since it is recognized and liked overseas. 13 September 2000

**Joel: (a)** [rated private flag use as “moderate”] Flags and nationalism in Canada are growing, mainly attributable to younger generations demanding more separation and division from American culture. **(b)** Most municipal flags carry historical symbols or coats-of-arms containing Canadian symbols. Usually the government at some level (city, provincial, national) creates the flag, though most cities have had theirs for many decades. 18 September 2000

**David Zulis:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] I found it difficult to answer the question about who designs our flags. Our national flag, which came into being in 1965, welcomed suggestions from the public, but the final choice was done in a less-than-transparent manner. The [Nunavut] flag was selected with the input of native peoples themselves. Municipal flags are well established and there is not a great deal of new flag selection going on. 5 October 2000

**Doug Brink:**[rated private flag use “frequent”] In the past 10 years, Canadians have become more patriotic. We see more flags flying in front of houses and see flag bumper stickers everywhere. 6 October 2000

**J L (Full name withheld by request):** There are no legal prohibitions against flying flags in Canada. However, in a well-publicized case in 1999 or 2000, a man who flew a flag in his backyard was taken to court by his neighbors who claimed that the sound of the flag flapping in the wind was very irritating. They sought to have the court force him to take his flag down. The court ruled in the man’s favor, and he was allowed to continue to fly his flag without restrictions. 22 August 2000

**David Winter: (a)** [rated private flag use “frequent”] Canadians fly the national flag all the time at their homes and at the workplace. I always have one flying in my yard and one on the boat. My small street only has about 20 homes but there are four flag poles. All in use. Every day. ‘Course, there is an ex-Navy type in that four and I’m ex-Air Force. **(b)** Usually there will be suggestions requested [for designing municipal flags], a judging done, and the winning design turned over to professional designers. Then the final design is approved by the appropriate body, e.g., town council, etc. 22 August 2000

*In Canada, is there some hint of a flag cult as part of a “civic religion” as some have written about the US?* There is no “flag religion” here, that’s for sure. No folding ceremony and all that. No oath of allegiance. No hand over the heart. Canadians would be embarrassed. But Canada is a vast country, much larger than the USA and, with only 1/10 of the population, Canadians often turn to things that “bring them together.” The flag is simply an important part of a huge extended family. A familiar face when “away.” Added to that is the overwhelming, no, choking, presence of US culture and media right next door. Picture yourself trying to have a quiet moment with your family while your neighbor is using a jackhammer on your doorstep and drowning out all that sound with his stereo. ALL THE TIME. THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE DAYS A YEAR. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY. Despite sharing the same language, well, nearly, there is a deep-rooted social/cultural difference between the US and Canada, and the Maple Leaf is a handy defense mechanism. If you are perceived by everyone in the world as being American, then the Canadian flag becomes the obvious

difference. So flaunt it! More? Perhaps, when the sky is clear, bright, and cold blue, the Maple Leaf just looks good up there. 23 August 2000

**Kevin Harrington:** (a) [rated private flag use “moderate”] There is an increasing and quite noticeable use of large cardboard flags placed in the windows of houses or display windows of shops on the days leading up to and after our national holiday. The cloth variety is flown from short staffs mounted on the front of the house or shop. The presence of actual flag poles on residential property is very rare. (b) There is increasing use [in designing municipal flags] of consultation with a herald from the Canadian Heraldic Authority. This is more prestigious as it involves a grant from the Governor General, and there is usually a ceremony connected to the presentation of the grant of arms and flags. Often a contest notice may say that the contest is open to all residents of a city. 7 August 2000

**François Lambert** [rated private flag use “moderate”] (translated from French by the author): The provincial flag is the one most utilized in Quebec, the flag of Canada being most often used as an official flag. In the majority of cases, it is the municipality that decides on the design of a flag. 10 August 2000

**Name withheld by request:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] As Canadians, we are starting to take pride in our country and the flag, but still a few of us favor the Union Jack and the Canadian Red Ensign. But more Canadians are flying the Maple Leaf at home and camp and also on their cars. 6 August 2000.

**Michael Halleran:** The design of a municipal flag most frequently is based on that which is suggested/approved by the Canadian Heraldic Authority. 7 August 2000

**Luc Baronian:** (a) [rated private flag use “moderate”] Some people [in Quebec] fly the fleurdelisé [Quebec provincial flag] year round in front of their houses, but this is certainly less frequent than in the States (according to what I have seen since I have moved to study in California). Many teenagers like to have the flag on the walls of their rooms. (b) Recently some municipal authorities [in Quebec] have gone through the Canadian Heraldic Authority [to design municipal flags], but this is still marginal. I can’t think of a civic flag adopted by

contest, but there must be some. In the overwhelming number of cases,

the flag is adopted by the city council without consulting anybody. 9 August 2000

190. **CHINA (PRC) – Guaihou:** “Nope.” [answer to whether there are any prohibitions against flying the national flag]. “In a competition open to all persons.” [How are municipal flags selected?]

190A. **CHINA (Hong Kong) – Ellis Wong:** The government usually takes care of the flag design. 12 October 2000

191. **CROATIA – [eljko Heimer** [rated private flag use “frequent”]: I believe that all competitions [for municipal flags] are open, (at least to Croatian citizens) though in practice they are sometimes rather limited due to public ‘ignorance’ of their existence. Regarding local flags (counties, cities, municipalities) there are rather restrictive regulations regarding their design. In general, the rules are that the locality should “re-adopt” its historical coat-of-arms [following Croatia’s becoming a sovereign state in 1991], in a modernized graphic rendition and without any ornamentation (i.e., shield design only). Newly devised COAs “should follow the heraldic tradition.” Regarding flags, their design is limited as follows: (1) counties should have flags with only two colors (not necessarily bicolors in the classic sense, other partitions are accepted) with the COA set in the middle of the field or offset toward the hoist; (2) cities or municipalities should have flags with a field in only one color, with the COA in the middle or offset toward the hoist. Acceptable colors are the “heraldic” ones: red, blue, yellow, green and white. Notably, black is not among them. The flag width-to-length ratio is prescribed as 1:2. In some cases where the local bodies already have a “traditional” flag, exceptions to these rules are adopted, while other exceptions are made by some “local bodies,” either through ignorance or on purpose, without the approval of a ‘central flag authority.’ The legal status of such flags is not clear, but sometimes they are used extensively anyway.

The central flag authority in Croatia used to be the Ministry of Administration, now changed to “State Office of State Administration and Local Self-government.”(MA for short). MA has an expert commission, assigned for a period of four years, that delivers opinions or approvals on the designs submitted to them. The commission consists of a chairman and four members: a jurist, a heraldist, an archivist, an artist, and a historian. The chairman represents the MA. There are a number of examples of what the MA commission approves and what it does not. They seem to be strict regarding the rule of “two

colors for counties and one for cities or municipalities,” though with a few exceptions for traditional civic flags, notably Varazin, see my site <<http://jagor.srce.hr/~zheimer/flags/home.htm>> The MA tends to avoid inscriptions, except on ceremonial flags (gonfalons) as in the Rakovica municipality on the site above. The COAs are restricted to “shield only”, except for a few exceptions, again. Also, the MA seems to be strict regarding the legal prohibition against using national symbols on local symbols, that is, a local symbol cannot include the national COA or a part of it. 6 August 2000

[rated private flag use “frequent”] *How do you explain your flag-use rating of “frequent”? Another respondent from Croatia rated it “rare.”* First, I have to admit that the frequency of flag usage has dropped for sure after the end of the war [for independence], and especially after the 2000 elections. However, I believe that this drop is not significant enough to affect my designation of “frequent.”

Certainly, the frequency is not as high as, say, in Denmark, but Croats are used to flying their flag “for no special reason,” just to show their national feeling. Most are used to flying the national flag during public holidays. The flags are almost obligatory equipment, and play an important role, in almost every wedding ceremony. Flags are hoisted at other gatherings and celebrations, hung in shop windows, hoisted in front of company buildings (along with some logo-on-bedsheet company flag). They show up as bumper stickers on cars, luggage. Flags are used by football supporters and other sports fans. 26 January 2001

**Janko Ehrlich Zdvorak** [rated private flag use “medium”]: Without the approval of the Ministry of Administration it is forbidden to show any symbol in public. This is because the government wants to maintain heraldic standards, since heraldry was *de facto* reborn after Croatia became free and independent [in 1991]. In Yugoslavia heraldry was not very popular, especially socialist Yugoslavia where flags and heraldry were full of red stars and cogwheels, wheat sheaves, and other such “proletarian” stuff. When Croatia became independent, various communities and cities adopted symbols, which they often did not take from the pre-Yugoslav period but rather invented brand-new symbols, often with bizarre and terrible designs. The only important effort was to fill those symbols with as many national, religious, and patriotic elements as could be found.

To stop this trend, the Croatian government adopted – in 1994, 1995 and once again in 1998 – “Regulations About the Procedure for

Approving Coats-of-Arms and Flags for Local Bodies.” All non-heraldic designs were rejected, and local authorities had to re-adopt their symbols according to the “Regulations.” Almost all local authorities did it in this way, except only for the county of Sisak and Moslavina, which continued to use the “illegal” flag design with three colors, and the town of Sisak, which also continued to use its tricolor design – see <<http://MiYeonJan.tripod.com>> and <[www.geocities.com/jankoez](http://www.geocities.com/jankoez)> . In general, flags of communities and cities are mono-colored, counties have bicolor flags. Only the national flag has three colors. This is however a very dubious rule since many historical local flags do not fit into such a rigid law.

Speaking about how the symbols are created, there are generally two ways. First, for those local bodies that already have historical symbols, the usual procedure is to re-adopt them. Second, those authorities without historical coats-of-arms and flags – and these are mainly newly formed communities or counties, not existing ones – had some kind of competition. In actual fact, they gave the job to some painter or graphic artist (there almost no heraldists in Croatia) and just for the sake of form – by law obligatory – published the decision to create symbols via an open competition in the local gazette, which nobody knows of, or put up a notice, which nobody reads, in the community-office hall. Most often, results are insipid, quasi-traditional inventions of doubtful esthetic qualities, the most obvious example being the Croatian coat-of-arms. 10 August 2000

192. **CZECH REPUBLIC – Jan Zrzavy:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] **(a)** The public use of the national flag is declining from the revolutionary peak in 1989-90 to the present. **(b)** As concerns city and municipal flags, they must be approved by a special heraldic commission, and then they are provided to the cities and municipalities by the chairman of the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of the Parliament. 11 September 2000

193. **DENMARK – Ole Andersen:** [rated private flag use “frequent”]  
**(a)** Danes fly the national flag on many occasions, including private birthday parties. I think the frequent use is related to our relation to Germany. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we achieved a free Constitution and fought against the Germans, and the [Dannebrog] flag was such a popular symbol that denying its use to the population would be horribly stupid. The flag is an integral part of the Danish self-image, and using another flag [i.e., civic] seems to be almost treason. So all in all, though the Danish flag culture grows quite luxuriously, it is a mono-flag culture. **(b)** Towns and communes generally do not use flags because they just don’t have flags. 16 and 18 August 2000

194. **FINLAND – Liro Hyrsky:** [rated private flag use “frequent”]  
The national flag is used on special days designated by the Act for Using the Flag of Finland of 28 May 1978. Examples are: Day of Finnish Culture (28 February), Day of Finnish Labor (1 May), Mother’s Day (second Sunday in May), Defense Forces Flag Day (4 June), Flag of Finland Day (the Saturday between 20-26 June), Independence Day (6 December), Parliament Election Days, Presidential Inauguration Day, and several “semi-official” flag days such as Veteran’s Day, War Victims Day, municipal anniversaries, etc. All schools must use the flag on the first and last day of the school year. The flag flies from building apartments on the 50<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup> etc. birthday of inhabitants, at weddings, confirmation, graduation, and (at half-mast) funerals. The use of the national flag is quite common in Finland, all official buildings have poles, and so do most large apartment buildings, and even many one-family homes. Most pleasure boats use the national flag or special ensign, most camps (for youths, etc.) have flag ceremonies every morning and evening. 12 October 2000

*Would it be possible for the citizens of a Finnish community to design a flag in an open competition and adopt it without approval from a higher authority?* Finland is the “promised land” for associations – we have all kind on clubs, societies, associations for sports, yachting, hunting, knitting, all possible (and impossible!) hobbies, scouts, political parties, trade unions, etc. Most Finns have memberships in many societies (I belong to 12!). Most of these societies have their own flags. There is no outside authority involved, just some basic rules of flag law (one cannot use the national flag as a “base” for a society flag, etc.). Also, many municipalities have their own flags, mostly based on their coats-of-arms, which every municipality has. These unofficial flags are used in society activities but mostly not on outdoor

flagpoles. Any three persons can form a society and design their own flag – when, how, by whom is left to their own choice. 21 October 2000

195. **FRANCE – François Boltz:** [rated private flag use “moderate”](translated from French by the author): Town Hall and elected officials choose civic flags. It happens frequently that more and more cities either select a new flag, or modify an existing one to render it more esthetically pleasing or richer in significance. Vexillologists present projects and officials choose. In large cities the “Invitation for Bids” system applies; in principles all orders from large public institutions must abide by this process. But I know, for having observed it, that in the smaller cities the choice is made in a less formal manner. In this latter case the “vexillologist” is always an amateur, a town person sometimes with few qualifications who does (I have observed it) anything he likes, following his own imagination. (when very small towns adopt a flag, it suffices that the mayor likes the idea). 27 October 2000

**Perraudin:** [rated private flag use “rare”] The French flag is mainly used to represent the French state (administration, army). It’s never used by the people (home, house or office like in the USA). Sometimes it is used at nationalist commemorations, fascist meetings ... or when winning a football cup. French people are not that much attached to their flag (which is not very beautiful). They’re more attracted to the ideas it (should) represent. 12 October 2000

**Michel Bolloré:** [rated private flag use “rare”] (translated from French by the author) **(a)** The French flag is used in political manifestations (often extremist) and because of that citizens don’t dare to brandish it except during sports events, which have gilded its image recently (World and European Cups in football in particular). Regional flags are used more often, for example in Brittany. One sees many more regional flags than national flags at public manifestations. **(b)** Civic flags are often designed by private persons or associations. The French protocol is simple: all communities must show the French national flag. Other flags are “without legally defined value.”

**Jérôme Sterkers:** [rated private flag use “rare”] (translated from French by the author) **(a)** The use of the national flag tends to reduce itself to national sports events or patriotic commemorations. Regional flags resurface regularly thanks to the renaissance of regionalism (Corsica, Brittany, Alsace), sometimes to the detriment of historical flags. Thus, the Breton Gwen-ha-du of the 1920s has replaced the

historical flag of that region. **(b)** The flags ordered by French departments, regions, and municipalities in the past 20 years are really ugly. They simply reproduce logos, which were not designed for this purpose, and look all alike. Flags inspired by the arms of the departments (not very beautiful, one must confess) seem to have totally disappeared. It seems that municipalities have better taste in their choice of flags.

196. **GERMANY – Marcus Schmöger:** [rated private flag use “rare”] **(a)** Private citizens usually do not fly the German national flag from a flagstaff. It is mainly used for waving during sporting events, especially football. Frequently in Bavaria, a variant of the State flag, rather than the German flag, is used at these events. There are many people who have a flagstaff with the Bavarian flag in their garden. **(b)** As Germany is a federal country, the practice [of designing municipal flags] varies between the states (Länder). In Bavaria, civic flags are not “designed” in a real sense. They are usually just plain striped flags in the colors of the COA, usually with the COA. The only thing a community decides is the order in which the colors will be arranged on the flag. The arrangement has to abide by heraldic rules. The State Archives plays a decisive role in approving a COA and flag. Formerly, the COA and flag also had to be approved by the district (Bezirk) government. For Bavarian municipal flags: [www.ed-wappen.de](http://www.ed-wappen.de) 15 September 2000

**Matthias Feldhoff:** [rated private flag use “rare”] Although the current German flag has been a symbol for democracy, liberty, justice, and unity for more than 150 years, the majority of German people find it ridiculous to fly a flag as a private citizen. I think that is because under the Third Reich Hitler focused on the flag as a symbol of victory over other peoples. But the German flag during the Third Reich was much different from the current one. 28 August 2000

**name withheld by request:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] **(a)** Private citizens hardly fly the national flag just for a national holiday. They either do it year round as a kind of decoration (like the European flag) or for sports events, mainly football. **(b)** A commune (Gemeinde) receives the right to have a flag from the State government, which normally does what the commune wants and will not change a design. It is possible for a commune to ask for designs from private citizens, but the question hardly comes up because most communes already have flags. 22 October 2000

**Ian-Heinrich Brockmann:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] **(a)** Germans tend to be quite reserved about “waving the flag”, mainly

because of our history. Official buildings fly the federal and State service flags (also the national flag) on public holidays. The national flag is mostly seen at international sports events, such as football championships. **(b)** Most municipal flags are quite old, dating back to the Middle Ages. I know of one or two rare incidents when the general public was asked to select a design for a new flag, e.g., when towns are merged or incorporated.

1 November 2000

**Jörg Karaschewski:** [rated private flag use “rare”](translated from German by the author) **(a)** Private persons use the national flag only rarely. Private flagpoles are seldom found, except in vacation resorts and single-plot areas where they are frequent; however, usually the local flag or the State flag is flown. **(b)** New flags for cities and communities are ordered by the respective authorities. The administration decides whether a public announcement [invitation for bids] will be made or the contract given directly to a designer. As far as I know, there are no hard rules. In several States (Länder), the resulting flag has to be approved by the appropriate authorities, since strict rules apply (in Bavaria for example). In other Länder (for example Niedersachsen) the town or community alone decides whether to recognize a flag.

*Why don't the inhabitants of a German city initiate a flag contest by themselves?* There are several reasons for this. First, the interest in flags and banners is small. In my home town of 32,000 inhabitants [Achim] hardly anyone knows that the city has its own flag and even fewer know what it looks like. On the city's website, only the logo and arms are displayed, the flag is not mentioned. Another reason is surely the fact that flags must be registered with the administration of the State and the respective State Archives. As a rule, a lengthy process. The main reason, however, is certainly the lack of interest. Where no one is interested in flags, they are not missed.

*Why are the rules so strict?* The strict rules for registering flags are historic. One wanted to ensure adherence to heraldic rules and also prevent cities and communities from selecting flags that could be confused with those of other cities or with symbols of the State or Federal Republic. For example, the federal colors black-red-gold are not allowed as city colors. In Bavaria, the well-known Rautenflagge (white-and-blue lozenges) cannot appear on civic flags. 7 August 2000

**Guido Barlau:** In the case of German towns, coats-of-arms are more important as a symbol than flags. The flags are derived from the

COAs. 8 August 2000

197. **GREECE – Phoivos Panagiotidis** [rated private flag use “moderate”] : *Why do only city or town governments decide on flag designs? Why couldn't the inhabitants of a town hold a contest and select their own flag?* The real answer is that they do not care. Period. Local flags are not popular in Greece. Even in the regions that used to have one (Ionian islands, Crete, Samos) have totally forgotten it. The flag of Greek Macedonia is an artifact spontaneously created (in quasi-official status today) by Greeks of Greek Macedonia to annoy the Macedonians.

Some municipal councils (Athens, Pireus, Volos, Patras, Aegina, Lefkas – to name just the ones I'm aware of) have established municipal flags to the general indifference of everyone. In Athens there was but one question from a left-leaning parliamentarian regarding the cross symbol, but it was hardly noticed. The flags of municipalities were created out of the practical need to have some symbol for the town at international conferences.

*Would the Athens Ministry call a locally created flag illegal?* The Ministry has no word in what local authorities do with their symbols. It's just that nobody cares. 11 August 2000

198. **INDIA – Ashutosh** [rated private flag use “frequent”]: The flying of the national flag on cars is prohibited, except for the president of the country! However, there still are people, especially political party workers, who do fly it on their cars, but then they are like Gods here and nobody checks them. 5 August 2000

199. **INDONESIA – Sammy Kanadi**: There is a protocol here, regulating when civilians (as opposed to government officials) can hoist the national flag on special occasions. So it is not every day that Indonesian civilians can hoist their national flag.

200. **IRAQ – Are there any prohibitions for flying the national flag in Iraq?**

**name withheld by request:** ”It depends!!!!” 30 August 2000

201. **IRELAND – Declan Hayes** [rated private flag use “rare”]: The national Flag is very rarely flown in Ireland, even on Government buildings, except the really important ones such as the Parliament and courts. Local government buildings never seem to fly the flag. Private

citizens never fly a flag, the only exception to this when the Republic of Ireland is playing an extremely important football match! However, the whole country seems to fly it on St. Patrick's Day. 25 September 2000

202. **ISRAEL – Dror Kamir** [rated private flag use “frequent”]: Israelis like to use the national flag as a decoration for balconies, cars, and shops, mainly on the national holiday, but often in everyday life as well. The use of the flag is more frequent in disputed territories like the Old City of Jerusalem or West Bank settlements. Many citizens use home-made flags that don't comply with the official design. From Passover (mid-April) to the national holiday (usually in the beginning of May) the streets are decorated with national flags and local flags. The local flags are designed by municipalities and authorized by the government. They have the same size and status as the national flag, but ordinary citizens usually don't use them. All municipal flags have arms that are usually designed by a local designer according to a special order and receive permission to use them from the state's government. On rare occasions, especially in small municipalities, there is an open competition. 15-16 September 2000

**Dov Gutterman** [rated private flag use “moderate”]: Israel is administratively divided into six districts, but these don't have any form of government and hence no flags or emblems. The subdivisions of Israel are municipalities, about 200 of them. Israeli municipalities have only a statutory coat-of-arms, and their flags usually are the COA on a background that is chosen by the mayor, city council, or a city official and can be changed at their will. Some cities use the Israeli flag as a background and replace the *Magen David* with a COA, for example, Jerusalem. Because these flags have no legal status and because mayors may wish to make their cities more colorful during holidays, in some cities one can see the COA printed on different backgrounds. *FOTW, Israeli municipalities.*

*Why don't Israeli citizens organize a flag contest in a town or village? What would happen if they did?* Unfortunately, there is no awareness about vexillology in Israel. If a community selected its own flag, it's legality would be up to the local authority. If the latter adopted it, it would probably be approved by the Minister. Fifteen years ago you could hardly see any flags while traveling in Israel. The amendment of 1986, compelling government buildings to hoist the national flag, was the beginning of the change that resulted in the current situation when you see flags all over the land. 6 August 2000

203. **ITALY – Roberto Breschi** [rated private flag use “moderate-to-frequent”] (translated from Italian by the author): **(a)** Private citizens fly the national flag on national holidays, in ceremonial and commemorative processions, at political and sporting victories; very rarely are they seen on the balconies of houses. In Italy waving the flag is primarily a group behavior. The tricolor is raised also by private establishments like banks, shops, supermarkets, hotel, movie houses, almost always together with the European flag. Italians love the tricolor in a profound way, but shyly, almost secretly (like all great loves). Our flag has an incredible unifying power far beyond all the parochialism and separatism. **(b)** There are no specific rules for designing or adopting municipal flags. The primary civic emblems are the arms and gonfalon, and these must follow precise legislative requirements. Flags do not have legal standing. 8 August 2000

**Giuseppe Bottasini** [rated private flag use “rare”] (translated from Italian by the author): In Italy almost no community has a flag, except large cities like Milan and Rome. Every community has a gonfalon, usually designed more than 100 years ago. I am proposing to the city council in my community a flag derived from our gonfalon, but it isn't clear if it is legally feasible. In the past years new regional and provincial flags are being adopted in Italy. The flag for the province of Milano was created two years ago. 11 August 2000

204. **MEXICO – Alejandro Vega Rdz.:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] There are no state or civic flags in Mexico, just the national flag 29 August 2000

**Federico Ortiz:** [rated private flag use as “moderate”] From my work as a journalist for six years, I know that cities like Monterey, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Hermosillo and the town of Cerralvo in the State of Nuevo León have their own flags. In the case of Cerralvo, the flag combined elements from a flag that existed a long time ago, according to the local historian. Also, I have seen in newspapers a few invitations to participate in the creation, elaboration, or design of emblems and flags. 3 September 2000

205. **THE NETHERLANDS – Peter Hans van den Muijzenberg** [rated private flag use “frequent”]: **(a)** Flags can be and are used on any occasion. Though the Dutch are not as flag-happy as the Danes, maybe because our flag doesn't look so well in poor wind conditions, flags are used for many occasions. These can be Royal occasions, in which case those possessing an Orange streamer will hoist that atop, other national occasions, personal occasions like birthdays, graduation,

various festivities, cultural and sportive events, or sometimes merely as a decoration for buildings, a greeting to tourists, etc. **(b)** Since the Netherlands are, territorially speaking, completely covered with municipal flags, there's no frequent adoption of new flags. On those occasions when new municipal flags are required, due to the creation of a new community or the merger of communities, I have the impression that this is usually done by selecting a specialist, often a heraldist, to design a new flag. 11 September 2000

**Jarig Bakker:** [rated private flag use "frequent"] Municipal flags were not official until the 1950s. Then historic flags were adopted and new flags were designed by some wandering vexillologists. Now all municipalities have their own flags. There seems to be a tendency to hold flag competitions for newly created municipalities, which have to send their designs for approval to the Department of Interior Affairs, but that is a pure formality. 31 July 2000

*To what do you attribute the Dutch love for the national flag? Our attitude is comparable to that of the French: people holding the "Rood-Wit-Blauw" sacred are a (rightish) minority. However, if some fool were to propose a flag change, he would be lynched instantly. No idea why.*

*How do private citizens use the flag to celebrate the Royal family? Until the 1960s and 1970s one could regularly see private citizens using the national flag, without the orange streamer, on birthdays of members of the Royal House. Now there are so many princes and princesses that it doesn't seem worthwhile. Even the Queen's (real) birthdays is hardly greeted with flags. I suppose it has to do with the complete madness of "Koninginnedag" (30 April, birthday of Princess Juliana) when the whole of the Netherlands is one great marketplace, surrounded by millions of flags – mostly orange. 18 August 2000*

**Gerard van der Vaart:** [rated private flag use "frequent"] COAs of Dutch Gemeenten (municipalities) are to be confirmed by Koninklijk Besluit (Royal decision) but there is no rule about the confirmation of municipal flags. Commonly the Gemeenteraad (municipal council) decides following a proposal from the Burgemeester en Wethouders (municipal government). The design can originate with local citizens, a flag manufacturer, or even an advertising company, but most often the design is made by a specialized flag designer or de Hoge Raad van Adel (Supreme Court of Nobility). The latter also designs the coats-of-arms. Other than the many flags approved by the Gemeenteraad, there are still some municipal flags that are unofficial or only decided by the

Burgemeester en Wethouders.

*Why couldn't ordinary citizens hold a flag contest and decide on a civic flag? Would that flag be "illegal"?* There is not much flag-law in our country, so there aren't many illegal flags. Personally, I would only consider a municipal flag "legal" if confirmed by the Gemeenteraad. In many Gemeenten, most citizens (and maybe even members of the Gemeenteraad) could not identify the design of their municipal flag. On the other hand, there are also many Gemeenten where the municipal flag is rather well known and popular, like the one of my home city of Vlaardingen. The latter may be the result of shipping tradition or flag usage by the local government. I can't recall a contest like the one in New Milford, but there were some case when ordinary citizens rose up and became flag-conscious, especially when the municipal government tried to change the flag (as in Weesp), or when the municipality is threatened to be annexed by a larger municipality ( as in Rosmalen). 21 August 2000

**Derkwillern Visser, Jr.:** [rated private flag use "moderate"] After the beginning of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, cities only had a coat-of-arms, while only a few large cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam had flag. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did more and more city flags appear, most of them based on COAs or historical events. I have edited a soon-to-be-published book, divided into four parts, on the flags and arms of Dutch municipalities 1815-2000. <sup>218</sup> Normally, when a city flag is designed, it is done by a committee, appointed by the city council, with members from throughout the community. The Netherlands is known for being one of the densest "flag-populated" countries in the world. 28 August 2000

206. **NEW ZEALAND – name withheld by request** [rated private flag use "rare"]: Flag flying by private citizens is rare. When they are flown they are used all the time until they fall apart.

207. **NORWAY – Willem von Erpecom:** [rated private flag use "frequent"] **(a)** The national flag is universally flown, both by public institutions and private individuals, on 17 May, Constitution Day. Private individuals often fly the national flag on 1 May, Labor Day, which is a national holiday, and sporadically on other days officially appointed for flying flags. Flags are also frequently flown by private individuals when celebrating birthdays in their families. There is inevitably a great deal of flag waving (but not flag flying) at international football matches and other international sporting events.**(b)** Flags for counties and municipalities are normally based on

the armorial bearings of each local authority (county or municipality). Local authorities adopt their own armorial bearings, which must conform to the rules of blazon, and are subject to official approval. Currently, all counties and all but two municipalities possess armorial bearings. However, about ten municipalities are using arms lacking official approval, which is granted by the King in Council of State (“kongelig resolution,” i.e., by the decision of the King, presiding over a meeting of the cabinet ministers, usually once a week) on the advice of the Public Records Office (“Riksarkivet”), which is responsible for heraldic matters. Most arms have been approved between 1980 and 1993, but the oldest city arms date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. 5 October 2000

**Roy Risrem:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] The flag is flown on national holidays specified by the government at all public institutions such as schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, national and local government buildings, and on state-owned ships. The flag is also widely used during private occasions like marriages, birthdays, and funerals [at half-mast]. Since most municipalities already have their own flags, there is rarely, if ever, the need for flag-design contests. Such a contest would be legal, but it would ultimately be up to the local council to decide. The national government would not interfere unless flags or coats-of-arms of other municipalities were copied. Go to <<http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/no-l0001.html#reg>> for more information on Norwegian flags and coats-of-arms. 18 and 20 September 2000

**Per Christian Dahlen:** [rated private flag use “frequent”] It’s rather common to fly the national flag on private anniversaries, weddings, funerals, and other private occasions. 6 September 2000

**Jostein Nygård:** [rated private flag use “frequent”] By “using a flag” I assume you mean hoisting it. There is a list of official days in Norway, which I would divide into three categories: national, religious, and political. On national flags days (like 17 May), most people with a flagpole hoist the flag. On religious days (like Christmas Day) or political days (like 1 May), it is less common to hoist the flag. In addition, people hoist the flag on special occasions like baptism, confirmation, wedding, and funerals [at half-mast].

*Do Norwegian municipalities design their flags in an open competition?* In Norway, most municipal flags are based on the COA. Since 1898 all COAs have been approved by Royal resolution, that is, “Kongen i statsraad,” the weekly meetings between the King and the

Government. Prior to approval, Riksarkivet (National Archives of Norway) see to it that the COA is heraldically correct. COA for municipalities became very popular after 1970, and since then more than 300 new COAs have been approved.

In most cases when the local authorities decided they wanted a COA, they either contacted a heraldist (Hallvar Trættberg designed more than 50 COAs for municipalities and counties), or a local person came up with a proposal. Since the COA had to be heraldically correct, open competitions never seemed like a natural choice. 9 August 2000

**208. PORTUGAL – António Martins** [rated private flag use “frequent”]: The national government delegates the issue of flag design to the Portuguese Heraldry Institute (PHI), then duly transforms their resolutions into legal texts. There may be only a couple of exceptions to this procedure in the some 3000 municipal and communal COAs and flags approved since the 1930s. 5 August 2000

If a community were to choose its own flag, bypassing an approval from the PHI, the government would not accept it and it would be illegal. 24 August 2000

*Do Portuguese citizens identify with the national flag?* Yes, almost without (political, social, regional) exception.

**Jorge Candeias:** [rated private flag use “moderate”] *Why don't more Portuguese communities have open flag contests?* Things go like this: first, there is a quite comprehensive law on local symbols that defines what can and cannot be done in that regard. That's why, for instance, all Portuguese sub-national flags look the same: either a plain background with a COA or quartered with or without a COA, or a gyronny with or without the COA. The COAs are also defined by that law as to their overall structure: shield without partitions, scroll, mural crown, occasionally a decoration, and that's it. Flag colors are, by the same law, derived from the charges in the COA.

So – the only degrees of freedom are the actual charges of the COA. The local authorities may use whatever procedure they want to determine those charges, and the result is proposed to the central government. The proposal is then evaluated, at considerable cost, by the Portuguese Heraldry Institute, a separate institution dependent on the central government. Usually the PHI either proposes changes or denies the application altogether. In both cases, the process returns to the local authorities. The latter may insist on the design as originally

proposed, but usually they obey the PHI, otherwise the whole process can drag on for decades. Finally, when everything is OK'd, the central government makes official the symbols (COA, flag, seal), issuing a decree published in the official journal (Diário da República). The whole procedure has been in use since the early 1930s, soon after a fascist coup put Salazar in power in 1926. The purpose was to bring order to local symbols that were, indeed, quite disorderly and in general of very low heraldic quality. Interestingly, since democracy was instituted in 1974, the rules have not changed, they have only become stricter. 7 August 2000

209. **PUERTO RICO – Jose Diaz:** [rated private flag use “frequent”] **(a)** Private citizens use and display the flag not only on formal occasions, holidays, and celebrations, but also during political and labor manifestations, and as a decoration in their homes and workplaces. In fact, attempts to enforce proper flag etiquette/protocol – on issues such as using it as a garment or draping, or limits on flying it in foul weather or darkness – have been seen as limiting the people’s right to use the flag and have met with resistance. **(b)** The flag-design process is dictated by the local municipal assembly, which enacts the local flag ordinance. Sometimes the design is commissioned to a professional, sometimes derived from open competitions, sometimes the competition is restricted to residents or artists. The Institute of Culture, a state organization, reviews the flag proposal for heraldic and vexillological appropriateness. 21 October 2000

210. **SPAIN – Jose Alegria** [rated private flag use “moderate”]: **(a)** The national flag is used at sporting events, religious celebrations, festivals, public rejoicings. **(b)** Flag-design rules vary between the 19 autonomous regions. Usually city/town governments can approve a flag, but in some regions it must also be approved by the regional government. The design may be the work of an expert or other collaborations.

*How does flag use relate to the monarchy?* I think the monarchy is now well accepted in Spain, and the national flag is not seen as representative of the monarchy, but of Spain as a whole. Incredibly, that is a problem in our days. We have strong independentist movements in several regions (Galicia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Navarra) and the use of the national flag has been decreasing because of trying to be “polite” to everybody. There has been a proportional increase in the use of regional flags, and all over Spain you can see the flags of autonomous regions being widely used. That’s why the national flag is used primarily at popular events such as sports, where

no one can claim regional power, rather than on National Day (12 October) or Patron's Day (25 July) when it becomes more problematic to ignore regional flags.

In sum, the Spanish flag is seen as a symbol of what Spain once *was*, not what it is today. For many people in the autonomous regions, the regional flag is the "national" flag, and the "Senyera" in Catalonia and the "Ikurriña" in the Basque Country certainly enjoy more than "moderate" use. Many more people would use the Spanish flag if they didn't have to fear the radical independentists. 6 August 2000

**Santiago Tazon:** [rated private flag use "rare"] In Spain the national flag is rarely used by private citizens, but regional flags are frequently used. In specific regions like the Basque Country it is very dangerous to carry the national flag. 3 September 2000

**Joan Molina** (Catalonia) [rated private flag use "frequent"]:  
**(a)** For most of us [in Catalonia] our true National Government is what you would call the Regional one. After being forbidden for a long time, the Catalan flag, or "Senyera" (ensign) as we call it, is flown as a symbol of national affirmation *versus* Spain.  
**(b)** The Catalan Government, called Generalitat de Catalunya and dating back to 1359, has a specific department that deals with heraldry and arms. Our arms and flags come from our history, which is more than 1000 years old, so it wouldn't make sense to have an open flag-design competition to design a new one. In any case, if a municipal council decided to do just that and the winning design were approved by the council, there wouldn't be any problem. 3-4 September 2000

211. **St.KITTS-NAVIS – Melissa** [rated private flag use "moderate"]:  
In my country the use of the national flag is very liberal and common. Persons who are interested may fly the flag outside their home or certain workplaces. Not unnaturally, it must first be sanctioned by the government, to ensure there is no misuse of the flag. The first and only flag competition held in my country was for designing the national flag in 1983. All residents were allowed to participate. 3 September 2000

212. **SWEDEN – Mike O'Dowd** [rated private flag use "frequent"]:  
In Sweden the national flag has been "stolen" as a symbol for racist/extremist patriotism. It's okay to fly the flag outside your home, but if you walk down the street holding it, and it's not a Flag Day, you're taken to be a racist. The same goes if you have the flag sewn

onto your backpack or clothing, or stuck on your car. Strangely enough, all the surrounding countries (Norway, Finland, Denmark) fly their national flags proudly without any racist overtones. 27 October 2000

**Stefan Klein** [rated private flag use “frequent”]: **(a)** We have many official flag days that are not national holidays, for instance the birthdays of our King, Queen, Crown Princess, and also the anniversary of the death of Nobel, of Nobel-prize fame, on 10 December. It is also very common to fly the flag on family birthdays, upon passing examinations, or just at a garden party. At the school where I teach, the flag flies on the first and last days of the school year as well as on flag days (from August till the following June.). **(b)** Almost all communal flags are based on the corresponding arms, which date back as far as the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Of Sweden’s 258 communes, only two or three don’t have heraldic arms. The use of flags follows the same pattern: the local government flies the flag on buildings, at approaches to the town or city, etc. Civilians do not use these flags, not due to any regulations, but because they are the flags of the local government. As far as I know, civilians have never shown an interest in flying the local flags, and I haven’t heard of any cases when civilians used them. They use the Swedish flag. But if anyone would like to design a local flag and use it, there are no regulations against it. You may fly whatever flag you like on your flagpole (except a swastika).

Provincial flags are another story. They are two kinds. First, we have the traditional medieval heraldic flags; I also occasionally fly my province’s flag on my pole (Södermanland). Then we have newly designed provincial flags based on the Scandinavian cross in different color combinations. These are my personal objects of hatred. I mean, can you imagine the Swedish flag in green and pink! 2 September 2000

*Do you agree that racists have “stolen” the Swedish flag?* About the racists: I think it's a bit exaggerated, it was worse a couple of years ago with the fear of being considered racist by wearing a flag. There was some hesitation in schools about singing the national anthem, and so but my point of view is that we have stolen the flag back from the fascists. 28 January 2001

**Elias Granqvist** [rated private flag use as “moderate”]: The official flags of Swedish municipalities are based on their coats-of-arms, thus being banner of arms. Until the mid-1970s, municipal flags were

formally granted by Royal grants, but since then it is the municipalities themselves that adopt their own arms, and hence flags. The arms and flags are adopted by the city council and registered at the Patent and Registrations Office. Arms are designed by a heraldist, sometimes by the state herald, in cooperation with people of the municipality.

*Is there a tradition of flag contests in Sweden?* Such a contest could happen, and I think some municipalities have had competitions set up by private initiative, by a newspaper, for example. I suppose there isn't a tradition for this kind of contest in Sweden. 8 August 2000

*Is there a "racist" problem?* I think this is not really so anymore. This was a big issue in the political debate around ten years ago, but I think it has cooled down a little. You also don't have to be a racist if you walk down the street holding the national flag \_ you could be on your way to a sport event. Actually, I seem to recall that all the leading Swedish political parties agreed that all of them would use the Swedish flag, thus making its political meaning more neutral. On the other hand, the political parties don't use the flag very much either.

**213. SWITZERLAND – Pascal Jaberg** [rated private flag use "frequent"]: At least 50% of private homes in Switzerland have the national or canton flag on a flagpole in front of the house. All year round. The flags of cities, towns, and communes are traditional and several hundred years old. Newly designed flags are very, very rare because new cities and communes aren't founded anymore. 21 August 2000

*Why is flag use so frequent in Switzerland?* In my opinion, it is a result of World War II when Switzerland was completely surrounded by Hitler's Germany. To mark off the border, the Swiss flag hung everywhere. And when the Allied bombers attacked Germany, huge Swiss crosses painted on all the roofs were signals to the pilots not to drop bombs on Swiss territory. You can find the Swiss cross everywhere: on official documents, passport, license plates, coins and bank notes, trains, planes, etc. Another reason could be the simplicity of the flag, in contrast to most other national flags. 24 August 2000

**214. TAIWAN – Anne Hinds** [rated private flag use "frequent"]: Taiwanese are very proud of their flag and fly it everywhere at all times of the year. When I was in mainland China and Vietnam (both communist), there were more flags than I have ever seen. I don't think people are hanging them up but the government. In Hanoi there was one on every building, whether business or residence. 3 September

2000

215. **UNITED KINGDOM – Thomas Heathcote** [rated private flag use “rare”]: **(a)** Use of the Union flag by private citizens is very rare indeed; and when it is used, it is almost never flown from a proper flagpole. On special occasions (sporting events, Royal occasions) small hand-held flags are seen. National holidays have no patriotic significance, and are not connected with flags or flag-waving at all. Regarding sports, Britain is unique in that each of its constituent countries (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) has its own national team. So at many sports events you are more likely to see flags of the constituent countries than the British national flag.

The English flag is in a rather unusual position. It is rarely seen flying. About the only place I have seen one on a flagpole is on churches that are part of the Church of England, although even this practice is far from universal. Until recent years it was quite unusual to see an English flag even at an appearance of the English national sports team. English fans seemed to have co-opted the Union flag to represent England alone, to the annoyance of the Scots and Welsh. However, this has now started to change, and the English flag has made somewhat of a comeback in sport. It is my impression that the Scots and Welsh are much more inclined to use their own flags than the English are, but are not particularly inclined to fly the Union flag. Northern Ireland is different again. The use of flags there is highly politically charged. My impression (only from TV) is that the flying of flags is much more common than in England. The loyalists (those who consider themselves British and wish to remain part of the United Kingdom) appear to fly both the official flag of Northern Ireland and the Union flag pretty much equally. Whereas the nationalists (who consider themselves Irish and favor the unification of the province with the Republic of Ireland) fly the Irish tricolor.

**(b)** There are no laws restricting use of the flag, and its image can be found on many everyday objects – mugs, hats, T-shirts, even on underpants. In general, the flag is thought of with a sort of vague fondness, rather than being revered.

**(c)** Smaller sub-divisions of the UK (cities, towns, counties) generally do not have their own flags (although they virtually always have their own coats-of-arms and in many cases a corporate-style logo also) so the question about how the design is chosen is not really applicable for the UK. Some local entities “create” a flag by simply placing their logo (or arms) onto a piece of cloth, in much the same way that large

companies do. 28 August 2000

**Peter Robbins** [rated private flag use “rare”]: Most Brits never display the Union Jack on their private houses. The exceptions are great national occasions, when the upper classes will bedeck their mansions with the U.J. However, on the feast day of the national patron saint (St. George, 23 April), all public buildings, churches, etc., display the flag of St. George. The U.J. is definitely not seen as a royal symbols, but purely as a national symbol. Only the Royal Standard is seen as the royal flag. The use and overuse of the U.J. at football matches, on underpants, etc., is, sadly, a result of the job culture that now pervades our fair isles, largely perpetrated by the young men of the working classes, who are usually drunk when they are displaying the U.J. and are quite definitely racist, using the U.J. as a symbol of their hatred of any other race but their own. 25 July 2000

**Peter Jack** [rated private flag use “rare”]: Seeing the English flag flying is much rarer than the flags of the other constituents of the UK. We seem to have difficulty feeling comfortable expressing our national identity, whereas the Scots, Welsh, and Irish are much more at ease flying their flags. The only occasions when the English feel able to fly the flag is during great sporting occasions (usually football), and even then it is not widespread. Most English people don't even know when St. George's Day is, let alone celebrate it.

On the road you will see Scots and Welsh flags displayed proudly on the rear of cars, but the only time I have seen an English flag sticker, it had some text stamped across it, saying “Proud to be English”, as though you might have some strong reason not to be!!

**Marc Dodge** [rated private flag use “rare”]; The UK flag is almost never used by private citizens outside Loyalist Northern Ireland. It is also associated with extreme-right political groups. 18 August 2000

**David Wilkinson** [rated private flag use “rare”]: *Could municipal flags be selected in an open competition in England?* I wouldn't say it was out of the question, but I have heard of a contest being open to one or two selected artists. There seems to be a culture of elitism here – leave everything to those who are perceived by the local councils to be best for the job. I may point out that the general public rarely agrees with the council. 30 August 2000

**John Windle** [rated private flag use “moderate”]: St. George's Flag (England) can be seen flying out of windows and car aerials all over

England when the English football team plays in international matches. The Union Jack seems to appear mostly as a sticker on people's cars.

*Would it be impossible for an English community to design its own flag in an open competition? Would the resulting flag be illegal? It wouldn't be impossible or illegal. It is just unlikely. Vexillology is not as important in the UK as it is in the US. Apart from St. George and Union Jack, most people don't care about symbolism. The majority of Britons would not be able to tell you what is on the shield of the Royal Arms. This could be the result of the fact that communities have centuries-old roots that go back to a time when a flag was the heraldic mark of an individual, rather than the emblem of a people. Or it could be the result of apathy. Also, things here tend to get decided far more by committees of the appointed than by committees of the directly elected.* 12 September 2000

**Patrick O'Brien** [rated private flag use "moderate"]: In the UK, flag-flying/waving (by extremist organizations) is often seen as an act of chauvinistic "patriots." (In Britain "patriotism" is often regarded as "the last bastion of the scoundrel.") 18 September 2000

**Neil MacKenzie** [rated private flag use "rare"]: Cities, communes, etc. rarely design new flags. When they have flags, they are often armorial banners based on coats-of-arms. Stratford-upon-Avon recently had a flag-design competition through the children's TV program "Blue Peter." 18 September 2000

**Gerhard** [rated private flag use "rare"]: The English flag is used only at international football matches by the English public who otherwise does not give a continental about their flag. The Scots and Welsh show more interest in their flags. People using the Union Jack succumb to something like madness: either every Englisher goes for it and wears it on any type of clothing, including underwear, or at all other times doesn't want to know about it. 22 October 2000

#### 216. UNITED KINGDOM – Wales – Peppino San Kership:

Regarding the private citizen's use of the Welsh flag, this is exclusive to sporting occasions, when the flag serves to identify foe from friend, incite violence, and justify living in a country with no natural resources or sun, where sheep are considered effeminate.

217. VENEZUELA – **Guillermo Tell Aveledo Coll** [rated private flag use "moderate"]: The national flag is used on national holidays

and political rallies. Flag protocol is rarely observed or enforced. For example, any ordinary citizen can fly the state flag (with arms) rather than the civil one. This is fairly common, as both flags are easily sold to the general public, and there's no ruling on this matter.

*How are municipal flag designed?* For regional flags every one of the situations you mentioned [open and closed competitions, designs provided by the national and local governments] has occurred. In Lara State it was the regional government which decided to use the Governorship flag, although it isn't mentioned in that state's Constitution. The most common process is an open competition, rarely closed competitions. Another case is that of a single citizen -- usually a historian, designer, or vexillologist -- who submits a design for the approval of the local legislative body. Other proposals might be added and a contest would probably follow. Aside from the flag of the Sucre State, which has been flown since the 1960s, other regional flags are of more recent origin (especially after the federal reforms of 1989), and given the characteristics of the process, these later flags were the result of a more participative and open process. Closed contests were usually used in the past to design the COAs of states and cities, when local and regional flags were not yet in use, not because of any legal prohibitions, but because of custom. 24 August 2000

218. *Vlaggen en wapens gemeenten Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in heden en verleden (1815-2000)*, translated as "Flags and arms of Dutch municipalities, past and present, in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-2000)."

219. "A Flag's a Religion" by Wilbur Zelinski, *NAVA News*, Vol. 18, No. 5.

220. John Sterman, *op. cit.*, p. 331; "The ability of a model to replicate historical data does not, by itself, indicate that the model is useful."

221. *NAVA News*, Vol. 34, no. 2, p. 4. Ted Kaye's survey represented a milestone in raising flag awareness across North America and established his principles of flag design, described in *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, see <[www.NAVA.org](http://www.NAVA.org)>, as the essential starting point in any flag-design endeavor.

*Because blank pages cry out for impression, Baudelaire brings  
able succor. Dedicated to all who understand the language of  
flowers and of things silent ...*

## ÉLÉVATION

Au-dessus de étangs, au-dessus des vallées,  
Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,  
Par-delà le soleil, par-delà les éthers,  
Par-delà les confins des sphères étoilés.

Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité,  
Et, comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l'onde,  
Tu sillones gaiement l'immensité profonde  
Avec une indicible et mâle volupté.

Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides,  
Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur,  
Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur,  
Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides.

Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins  
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,  
Heureux celui qui peu, d'une aile vigoureuse  
S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins;

Celui dont les pensées comme des alouettes,  
Vers les cieus le matin prennent un libre essor,  
Qui plane sur la vie et comprend sans effort  
Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes!

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