

Evolutionary Vexillography: One Flag's Influence in Modern Design

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Introduction

Recent advances in the field of anthropology have revealed the existence of a true “Eve,” i.e., a woman from whom all modern humans have descended. This research was based on a study of the mitochondrial DNA found in the cytoplasm of cells, which is inherited exclusively from the female parent. (Regular DNA is inherited equally from both parents and, therefore, is not as easily traceable.) In the field of vexillography (flag designing) can one find a comparable “Eve,” a flag that has inspired all — or at least a good portion — of the world’s current national flags?

This is the story of one flag that could be considered a candidate for that distinction. It has influenced flags in all parts of the world and provides a common thread in the vexillographic history of such diverse territories as New Jersey, Haiti, Argentina, Ireland, Bulgaria, the Central African Republic, Indonesia, South Africa, and Lebanon. That flag is known as the Prince’s Flag,¹ an early Dutch tricolor of orange, white, and blue horizontal stripes named in honor of Prince William of Orange, founder of the independent Netherlands.

When the independence of the Netherlands was finally accepted by Spain in 1648, it had established one of the first republican forms of government in Europe. Later the Netherlands evolved into a major seafaring and trading power stretching its colonial empire to India, Africa, the East Indies, and both Americas. Its impact on vexillography has been due only partly to its empire-building. The main source of its influence comes from Dutch ties to republicanism.

¹Whitney Smith, *Flags Through the Ages and Across the Word* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), 156–63.

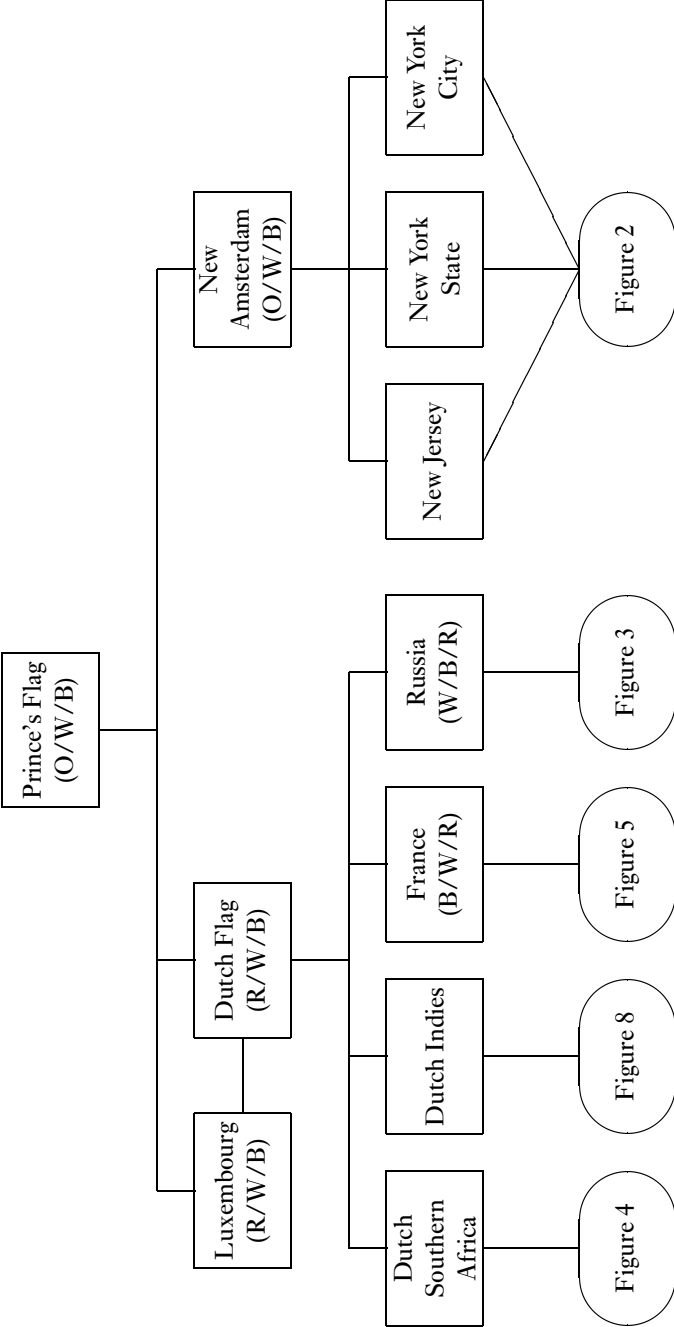


Figure 1: The Prince's Flag

Five distinct paths can be defined in establishing the family tree of the Prince's Flag. For simplicity's sake, these can be called the New Amsterdam branch, the South African branch, the Russian branch, the French branch, and the Dutch branch. While much of the evolution of these five branches is shrouded in myth and legend, those very myths are an integral part of each flag's story. Without them, much of the charm and emotional attachment to these flags would not exist. Vexillologists must be careful to distinguish between myths and historically verified data, while recognizing the power and significance of both.

The Dutch revolt against domination by the Spanish Hapsburgs was begun by the stadtholder of the Netherlands, William of Orange, who had been appointed by King Philip of Spain. During this revolt, which lasted from 1568 to 1648, Dutch revolutionaries adopted the Prince's Flag in honor of William. Their battle cry, "Orange on Top," referred both to the desired supremacy of the House of Orange and to the proper position for display of the flag. The use of orange in the flag was a problem, however. The dyes of that era could not guarantee a colorfast orange and it often faded to various indistinct shades. By the end of the sixteenth century, the orange was beginning to be replaced by red; by 1660 the color change was complete.

The Dutch flag was influential both as red, white, and blue stripes and orange, white, and blue stripes. Before the change-over to red occurred, sailors from the Netherlands had already traveled and traded extensively, disseminating the orange-white-blue far from the area of the North Sea. The major vehicles for spreading the Prince's Flag were two great trading companies, the Dutch West Indies Trading Company and the Dutch East Indies Trading Company.²

The New Amsterdam Branch

The first branch of the Prince's Flag's family tree appeared in New Amsterdam,³ the Dutch West Indies Company settlement in what is now southern New York and northeastern New Jersey. Although the colony existed for only forty years (1624–64), its influence on flags was much longer lasting. Its vexillographic impact on the region follows three different paths. First to be noted are the various orange, white, and blue flags of cities and counties in the State of New York. Albany and New York City are among the cities

²Derkwillem Visser, "V. O. C.," *Info-Bulletin* no. 74 (1987): 19–21.

³Whitney Smith, *The Flag Book of the United States*, rev. ed. (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1975), 175–76.

in the area using either vertical or horizontal tricolor flags. Bronx County, King's County (Brooklyn), and Richmond County (Staten Island) — all part of New York City — have used orange, white, and blue flags.⁴

Flags of the second path begin with a legend that unites the Dutch flag and George Washington.⁵ During the American Revolution, General Washington assigned troops from the states of New York and New Jersey buff-colored facings for their blue uniforms. When New Jersey and New York formally adopted state flags (in 1896 and 1897, respectively) they justified the buff backgrounds in these flags by reference to General Washington's order. (New York converted its flag to dark blue in 1901.)

State Senator Hopkins in New Jersey claimed that the reason for buff facings was the belief of General Washington that buff, white, and blue had been the Dutch colors. The identification of buff may have been based upon a faded orange stripe; whatever the historical truth, the buff in the current New Jersey flag harkens back to the Dutch settlements before British rule. Within New Jersey, buff continues to be a popular color choice for flags. Several counties, including Mercer and Union, use buff flags.⁶ Among the many New Jersey cities also using buff are Passaic and Clifton.

The third set of flags based on the Dutch flags flown at this colony are those that extend the confusion between orange and buff, a color which is hard to define precisely: in some flags buff has "mutated" into yellow, a much more common flag color because it is a primary color. Many counties and communities within the Garden State have adopted the color yellow — some even basing their selection on the incorrect assumption that blue, white, and yellow are the state's official colors. Indeed the leading color combination for municipal flags in New Jersey is blue-white-yellow; Newark, Jersey City, Trenton, New Brunswick, and Atlantic City all use this mutation.⁷ Surprisingly, only Jersey City continues the triband tradition and even here it has been changed to a vertical orientation. A comparison of the present city flags of New Jersey with the old Dutch West Indies flag of New Amsterdam would never suggest their close relationship.

⁴Corrine Oates, "Flags of the Five Boroughs of New York City," paper presented at the annual convention of the North American Vexillological Association, Trenton, N.J., Oct. 1986.

⁵Smith, *United States*, 170–71.

⁶David B. Martucci, "The Flags of the State of New Jersey," *The Flag Bulletin* 10 (1971): 187–206.

⁷Don Healy, "Civic Flags of New Jersey," *The Flag Bulletin* 22 (1983): 38–57.

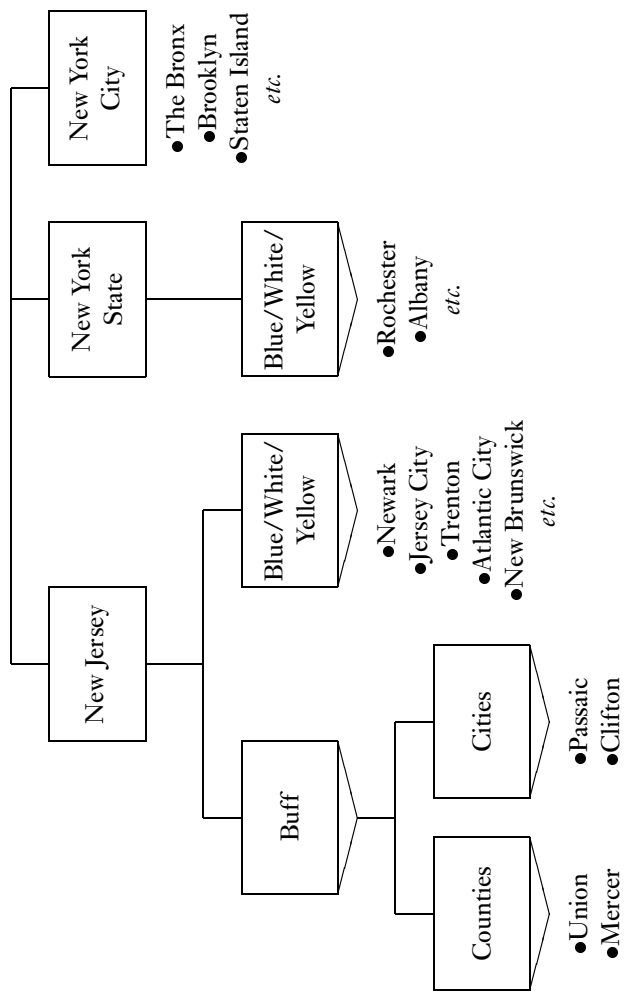


Figure 2: New Jersey & New York

The Russian Branch

The eighteenth century tour of western Europe by Peter the Great, Tsar of all the Russias, began the second branch in the evolutionary tree of the Prince's Flag.⁸ Peter brought back to Russia from his stop in Holland at least two things, a great desire for his nation to become a major sea power — and a new national flag. By the time of Peter's visit, the Netherlands had converted from the orange to red, making the Dutch flag a tricolor of red-white-blue. Upon his return from Holland, Peter introduced a flag of white, blue, and red to symbolize his country.

Although the link with the Dutch flag is incontrovertible, Peter's new flag was given several new Russian interpretations. The triband flag was associated with the shield in the national arms which depicted St. George, the patron saint of Russia, wearing a blue cloak and riding a white charger all on a red field. Another interpretation had red standing for love and courage, white symbolizing nobility and frankness, and blue representing honesty and chastity.

The final interpretation given to Peter's flag dealt with the people of Russia. The Byelorussians' (Ruthenians') traditional color is white, because the name means "White Russians." When Ruthenia declared independence in 1918, it first used solid white as its national flag.⁹ The Ukrainians are known as Lesser Russians or Blue Russians. Their traditional color, logically, is blue. Ukraine's independent, pre-Soviet flag was a bicolor of light blue over yellow and, as a Soviet republic, the Ukraine SSR added a light blue stripe to the Soviet banner to create its local flag. The "Great Russians" (traditionally called just Russians) are also known as "Red Russians" and were so called for centuries before they were Communists.

This triband spread as Russia expanded its empire in all directions. The flag, as modified and carried by the Russian-American Trading Company, crossed the Bering Straits to fly in what is now Alaska and, down the Pacific coast, to a point just north of San Francisco.¹⁰ The flag of the Russian-American Trading Company had the white-blue-red stripes in a 2:1:1 ratio and bore the black eagle arms of the company in the center.

As the most numerous of the Slavic peoples, the Russians have always had a major impact in the rest of the Slavic world; so, too, has their flag. In the troubled year of 1848 revolutions swept Europe. The Austrians

⁸Smith, *Flags Through the Ages*, 174–78.

⁹Walter Trembicky, "White Ruthenia," *The Flag Bulletin* 8 (1969): 136–38.

¹⁰William R. Furlong and Byron McCandless, *So Proudly We Hail: The History of the United States Flag* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 191–92.

and the Hungarians were both minorities in Austria-Hungary: most of the people within the boundaries of the empire were Slavs. Their resentment of Austrian domination was graphically shown by the adoption of flags in 1848. The Slovaks chose white-blue-red, as did the Slovenes. Croats selected red-white-blue. These Slavic flags drew their inspiration from the Russian tricolor, as did the Serbian flag. Serbia, the only other independent Slavic nation, adopted its red-blue-white flag in 1835, drawing inspiration from "Mother Russia." With the proliferation of white, blue, and red flags in various combinations, these became known as the "pan-Slavic colors."

Around 1880, Montenegro adopted a red-blue-white flag, similar to that of Serbia, but bearing its own arms. Bulgaria, the southernmost of the Slavic states, made a substantial departure from the norm when it adopted its national flag in 1878.¹¹ Because of the already widespread use of the pan-Slavic colors in different arrangements, Bulgaria changed the central blue stripe to green to create its national flag.

The former Czechoslovakia—a union of the three states of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia—originally adopted the Bohemian white over red flag when independence came in 1918.¹² This flag being identical to that of its northern neighbor, Poland, Czechoslovakia in 1920 modified its flag by the addition of a blue triangle at the hoist. This flag thereby combined the colors of the Czechs (Bohemians and Moravians), red and white, with those of the Slovaks: white-red-blue.

In 1918, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes became independent, combining the independent kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro with the former Austro-Hungarian territories of Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹³ Its flag was blue-white-red.

Just as World War I led to new Slavic flags, so also did World War II. As Hitler and Mussolini carved up Europe, they created a series of vassal states in regions outside their expanded borders. In the Balkans, when Yugoslavia was dismembered, three "independent" states were created—Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. The last two utilized their pre-World War I flags. Croatia adopted its traditional tricolor from the revolts of 1848,¹⁴ adding to this flag its arms and, in the upper hoist, the emblem of the Ustasa, the fascistic political party which had control of the region.

In the eastern portion of the former Czechoslovakia, a puppet state of

¹¹E. M. C. Baraclough and W. G. Crampton, *Flags of the World* (London: Frederick Warne, 1978), 109.

¹²Baraclough and Crampton, *Flags of the World*, 110.

¹³Baraclough and Crampton, *Flags of the World*, 147–48.

¹⁴Don Healy, "Flags of Independent Croatia," *NAVA News*, Sept.–Oct. 1988, 6–7.

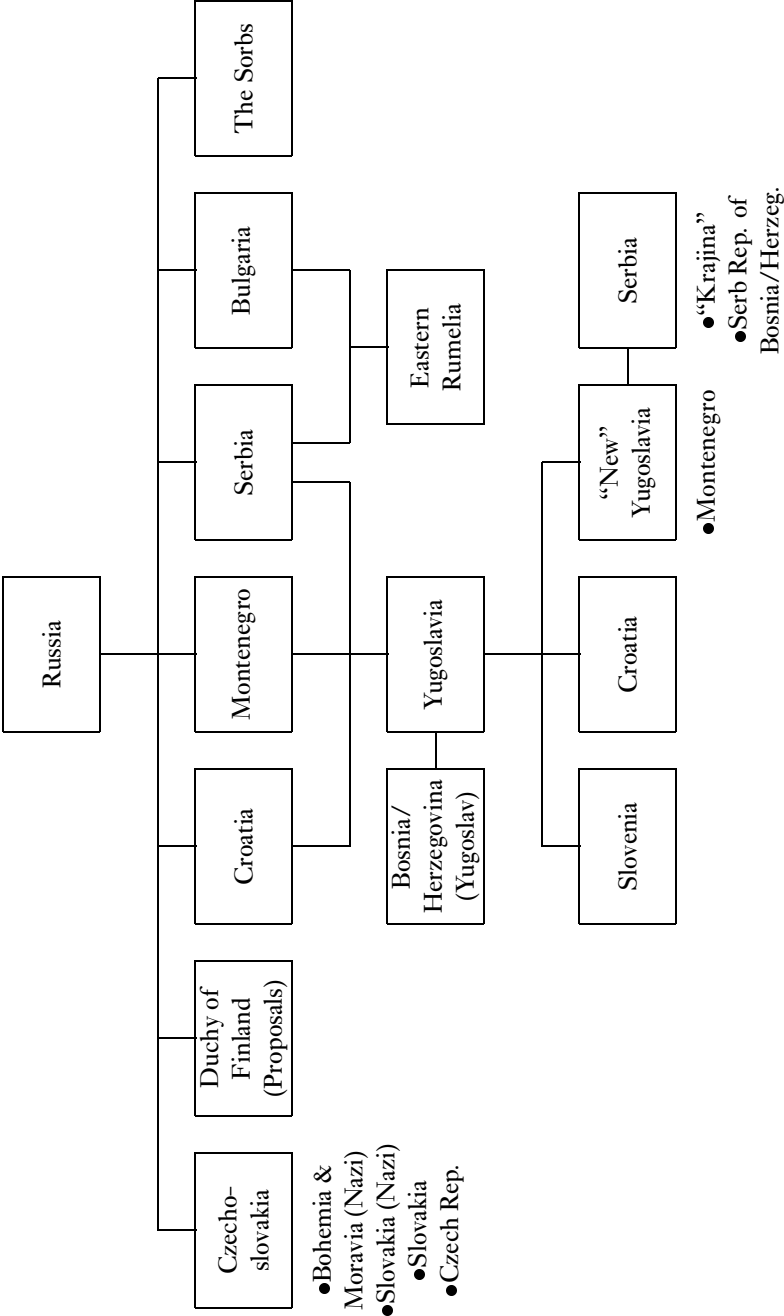


Figure 3: Russia

Slovakia was created. In its short period of existence it had two national flags, both composed of white-blue-red, one bearing the arms of Slovakia in the center as well. These puppet governments and their flags all disappeared with the collapse of the Third Reich. Czechoslovakia reverted to its 1920 flag when it reappeared, but a new flag appeared in Yugoslavia.

The old Yugoslav tricolor now bore a large red star for Communism, the flag used by the Partisans under Josip Broz, "Tito." The only difference between the new Yugoslav flag and the Partisan flag was the addition of a yellow border, or fimbriation, to the red star. This new flag and the traditional tricolors of its constituent parts were the inspiration for flags of five of Yugoslavia's six republics.

With the demise of the three multi-ethnic Slavic states, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, the evolution of the Russian branch has all but dominated vexillological changes in the 1990s. Slovenia, Croatia, and Slovakia have emerged as sovereign states, all adopting horizontal tribands of white-blue-red combinations and bearing their respective arms. Within the truncated Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro have eliminated the formerly ubiquitous red star, and Serbia's puppet regimes of Krajina and the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina use the Serbian flag as their own.

Russia has reverted to its triband and, in doing so, may have inspired yet another "mutation." Several of Russia's internal subdivisions have adopted horizontal tribands to replace their former Communist symbols, including Chuckchi, Kaliningrad, and Komi. The Ukrainian autonomous region of Crimea, heavily populated by Russians, has decided to show its affinity to Russia, not Ukraine, by using a triband of blue, white, and red.

Another Slavic group, from a region in eastern Germany near the Polish border, the Sorbians, use the "pan-Slavic" colors in the order blue, red, and white. One other nation found on the Russian branch of the Prince's Flag's family tree is Finland.¹⁵ Although the Finnish flag is not related to Peter the Great's flag, two Finnish flags used in the 1860s and 1870s incorporated the Russian flag as a canton when the Duchy of Finland was a part of the Russian Empire.

¹⁵ Olof Eriksson, "Proposals from the Years 1863–1918 for a National Flag of Finland," *The Flag Bulletin* 16 (1977): 49–55.

The South African Branch

Of all the “descendants” of the Prince’s Flag, the most easily recognizable is the current national flag of the Republic of South Africa.¹⁶ It is simply the Prince’s Flag with a distinctive emblem in the center. This emblem consists of three small flags that reflect the long history of the Dutch flag in the region. South Africa was formed by the union of two British colonies, Natal and the Cape Colony, and two former Boer republics. Natal and the Boer states (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State) all had origins as Dutch settlements, and their flags derive from their ties to the Netherlands. Prior to its absorption into the British Empire, Natal used a flag of red, white, and blue consisting of a white triangle with its apex at the center of the hoist and its base along the fly. The two triangles formed by the remainder of the flag were red (on top) and blue.

The Orange Free State¹⁷ still uses a flag of seven white and orange stripes with the Dutch tricolor as a canton, which is identical to the flag it used as an independent state prior to 1901. The Transvaal uses its old flag, the Vierkleur (four-color).¹⁸ This consists of the Dutch flag with the addition of a wide green vertical stripe at the hoist. This modified an earlier Transvaal flag that was identical to the Dutch flag. Like the flag of the Orange Free State, the Vierkleur disappeared with the defeat of the Transvaal in 1901, but became part of the current South African national flag in 1928. Two other short-lived Boer states used the Dutch flag as their own, Swellendam and the Lydenberg Republic (1857–1860); two others, Land Goshen and the New Republic, used variations on the Vierkleur.

The evolution of the Dutch flag in southern Africa does not end with the reemergence of the flag in 1928, but continues still. The descendants of the Boers, now known as Afrikaners, continue to take pride in their rugged history and have influenced the vexillographic development of modern flags. Three of the Bantustans, or homelands created by South Africa to house its black populations, have flags that can be viewed as continuing the evolution of the Dutch flag in South Africa.

The flag of the oldest Bantustan, Transkei, was adopted in 1966, eight years before “independence.”¹⁹ It is a simple tricolor, just like the Dutch

¹⁶Baraclough and Crampton, *Flags of the World*, 165–67.

¹⁷F. Edward Hulme, *The Flags of the World* (London: Frederick Warne, 1897), 125 and plate 22.

¹⁸Smith, *Flags Through the Ages*, 163.

¹⁹[Whitney Smith], “New Flags — Republic of Transkei,” *The Flag Bulletin* 15 (1976): 143–49.

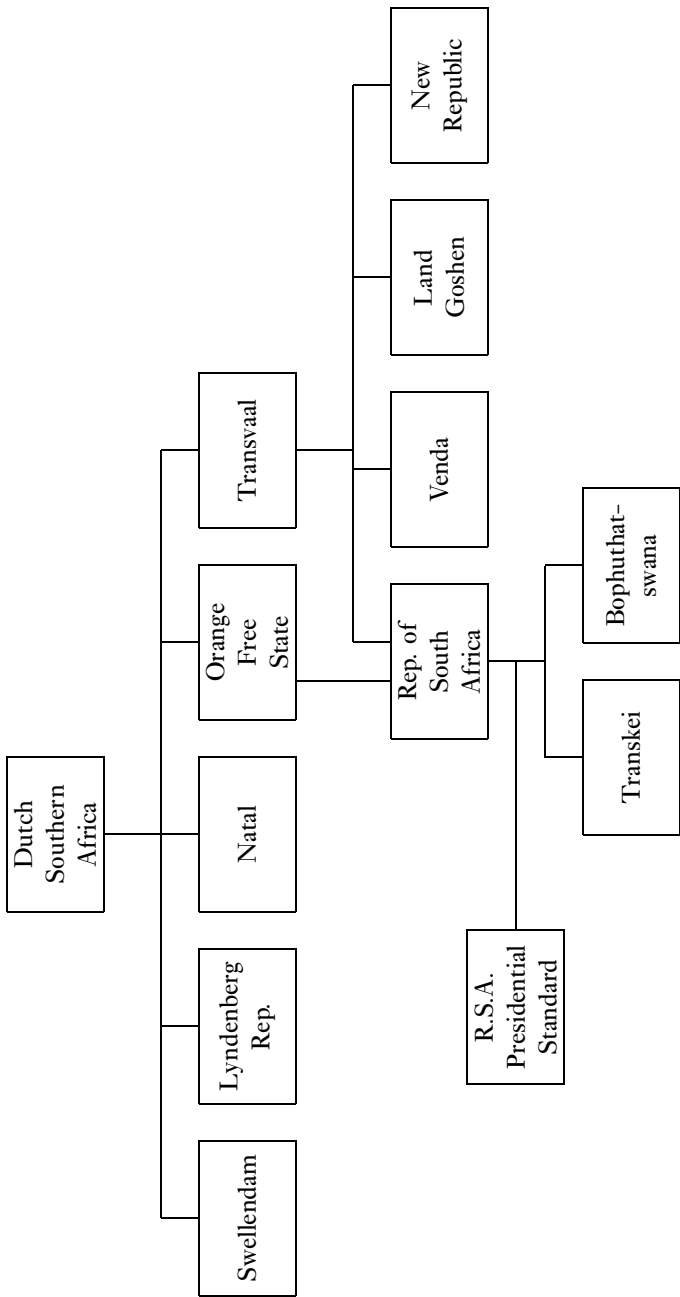


Figure 4: Dutch Southern Africa

flag, but composed of ochre-red, white, and green. Bophuthatswana in 1973 adopted a flag of blue with an orange diagonal stripe and a white circle bearing the head of a leopard.²⁰ Bophuthatswana and South Africa are the only states on the continent to use those three colors, though in very different ways.

The third nominally independent homeland is Venda, whose flag is a variation on the Vierkleur.²¹ It uses green, yellow, and brown stripes with a light blue hoist and adds a brown V to the yellow stripe.

A fourth homeland, Ciskei,²² has been granted independence and is located within the Cape of Good Hope, the province with the greatest British influence and the least Dutch influence. Its flag does not show signs of having evolved from the Dutch flag. The three homelands whose flags show ties to the Prince's Flag all have slightly different influences—Transkei uses its form, Bophuthatswana its colors, and Venda a design based on a direct descendant, the Transvaal Vierkleur.

The most recent descendant of the Prince's Flag in the region is the new flag adopted for use by the president of South Africa.²³ The flag is composed of a white triangle starting in the fly, with its base filling the entire hoist. On the triangle is the full achievement of arms for South Africa. Of the two triangles formed by the white one, the upper one is orange, the lower one blue. Thus the colors of the national flag appear in the President's standard, and the national flag is simply a variation on Prince William's flag. The family tree continues to grow almost 350 years later.

The French Branch

By far the largest branch, the French flag's story is almost too large and global in nature to merit chronological order. It starts in 1789 with the overthrow of the House of Bourbon and creation of the French Republic. Those revolutionaries looked to Holland's republican government as an ideal and adopted the colors of Holland as the "colors of liberty"—a concept that constantly reappears thereafter.²⁴

This selection was also encouraged by the use of these colors by an

²⁰[Whitney Smith], "New Flags—Bophuthatswana," *The Flag Bulletin* 12 (1973): 3–5.

²¹[Whitney Smith], "New Flags—Republic of Venda," *The Flag Bulletin* 18 (1979): 201–3.

²²[Whitney Smith], "New Flags—The Ciskei" *The Flag Bulletin* 13 (1974): 122–24.

²³Frederick G. Brownell, "New Southern Africa Flags," *The Flag Bulletin* 28 (1989): 29–37.

²⁴Smith, *Flags Through the Ages*, 130–38.

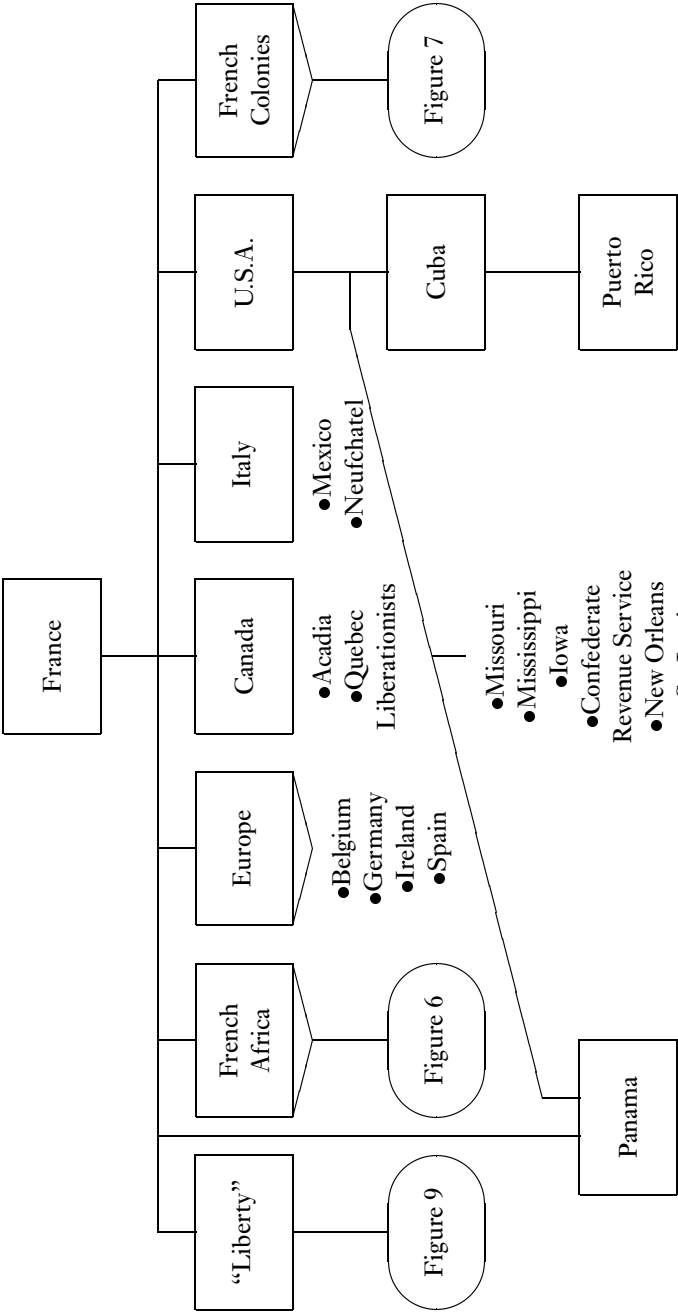


Figure 5: France

upstart republic in North America that had ousted the British monarchy some twenty years earlier. The “colors of liberty” fortunately combined colors already familiar to Frenchmen. White had been the traditional color of France, and the flag of the monarchy was plain white. The colors of Paris were (and are) red and blue. So the “colors of liberty” united the colors of Paris and France. Nothing could be more logical.

When the French Republic first adopted a national flag, it used a banner that was identical to that of the Netherlands. One variant of the French flag reversed the colors (blue on top) and cut a triangle out of the fly end to create a swallowtail design. The famous “Tricolor,” so associated with France today, first appeared in 1794. With only a few short interruptions, it has been the supreme symbol of France ever since.

Because of the enormous influence the “Tricolor” has had on the design of flags around the world, it is easier to view it geographically. Since both France and the Netherlands are European states, it is best to start there.

Belgium, located between the two countries, adopted its flag when it successfully ousted the Hapsburgs in the nineteenth century. Its flag used the design of the French flag, but substituted the colors of Brabant.

In Germany, which was a myriad of small monarchies until 1870, the revolutions that swept Europe in 1848 sparked an early attempt at unification. The flag adopted in 1848 was a triband of black, red, and gold²⁵ — colors derived from the arms of the Holy Roman Empire, the umbrella which loosely tied the German states together. The triband concept was seen by revolutionaries as a symbol of republicanism based upon its use in France and before then, Holland. The success in Belgium added to its mystique. From then on a triband flag would be a graphic display of belief in republican principles.

The hope for German unification of 1848 never succeeded, but the flag was not forgotten. When the empire died after World War I, the Weimar Republic resurrected the black-red-gold. It again reappeared after the defeat of the Third Reich. Both East and West Germany used the black, red, and gold tribars as the basis for their flags, and unified Germany continues under the old West German colors.

Napoleon Bonaparte played a role in the spread of the triband in Europe. The most notable contribution was the assigning of flags of green, white, and red to his client states, the Cispadine and Cisalpine Republics.²⁶ These later were united into Bonaparte’s Italian Republic. For a flag, Napoleon

²⁵Smith, *Flags Through the Ages*, 114–22.

²⁶Smith, *Flags Through the Ages*, 140–47.

had simply replaced the blue stripe in the French flag with green. Abolished when Napoleon was defeated, the green, white, and red reappeared again in the turmoil of 1848. This time it spread across the peninsula, only to be eliminated within a year. Only the Kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont) retained the flag. Beginning in 1858, the Italian tricolor, championed by Giuseppe Garibaldi, spread back across Italy as the country was finally unified. By 1870, the entire peninsula was under the green, white, and red except for tiny San Marino. (The Vatican reappeared in 1929.)

Within Switzerland, the tiny Republic of Neuchâtel²⁷ adopted the Italian tricolor but added the Swiss cross in the upper fly end. Several other small, short-lived states in Switzerland, Germany, and Italy adopted republican tribars as well.

Ireland's popular green, white, and orange is tied to the French tricolor, too. French support for Irish independence and the transformation of the triband flag into a symbol of republicanism made it a readily acceptable design to Irishmen fighting for freedom from Great Britain.

The last European nation to adopt a republican tricolor, prior to the collapse of the communist empire, was Spain. The Spanish Republic of 1931 to 1936 used a flag of red, yellow, and purple stripes.²⁸

Referring back to the "colors of liberty," Norway added a cross of blue to the red and white flag of Denmark to create its own flag.²⁹ The "colors of liberty" were adopted half a world away when Thailand, to show solidarity with the allies in World War I, added blue to its flag, thus giving it the same colors as Britain, France, the United States, and Russia.

In North America, the French tricolor has affected many different flags. In Canada, the Acadians, French descendants living in Nova Scotia, fly a French tricolor bearing a yellow star in the upper hoist. Quebec Liberationists were credited with two different flags. One was a horizontal tricolor of green, white, and red with a yellow star similar to Acadia's (based upon the flag of the Republic of Lower Canada); the other was blue and white with a large red star edged in gold. One used the tricolor idea; the other, the French colors.³⁰

²⁷ Christian Pederson, *The International Flag Book in Color* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1971), 158–59.

²⁸ Jose L. C. Perez and Luis Gonzalez, *Banderas de España* (Madrid: Silex, 1983), 22, 200, 202, 204.

²⁹ Hans Cappelen, "The Struggle for a 'Pure' Norwegian Flag: Nationalism and Symbolism in the 19th Century," *The Flag Bulletin* 19 (1980): 87–97.

³⁰ Kevin Harrington, "Flags of the Rebellion in Lower Canada, 1837–1838," *Flagscan* 3, no. 1 (1988): 2–3.

Heading south, the United States finds French influence in the flags of Missouri, Iowa, and Mississippi as well as cities such as St. Louis and New Orleans, amongst others.³¹ In the past, the Confederate Revenue Service flew a French tricolor bearing the Confederacy's ring of seven white stars in the upper hoist.³²

Mexico used several flags based upon the French flag between 1815 and 1821. One legend even claims that the current Mexican flag was derived from the flags of Napoleonic Italy because the Mexican leaders thought the Italian flag was so crisp, clear, and striking in its design. The Mexican flag is identical to the Italian flag, but bears the Mexican arms in the center.

On Hispaniola, the Caribbean island that is home to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, both nations owe their designs to the French tricolor. Haiti's legend is that the white stripe was ripped from the French flag to show both the ouster of the whites and the formation of a new nation of blacks (blue stripe) and mulattos (red stripe). Twice in the history of Haiti the blue stripe was actually changed to black, but with the exile of "Baby Doc" Duvalier in 1986, the blue stripe returned to the Haitian flag.

Fifteen years after Haiti emerged as the second independent nation in the Americas, its eastern two-thirds revolted and formed what is the Dominican Republic. Adopted as a flag for this new nation was the Haitian flag of blue over red with a white cross throughout. Later, the red and blue squares in the fly end were switched, thus forming the flag used today.

The Haitian colors were adopted by Francisco Miranda, leader of the revolution in what is now Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. With the addition of yellow, to signify the Creoles and the legendary "El Dorado" or the gold of the New World, these colors continue today in the national flags of the three northern South American states and even had a short use in Texas as the purported flag of the pirate Jean Laffite's "Republic of Mexico" on Galveston Island.

Across the Caribbean in Central America, Costa Rica, the longest continuing democracy in the region, added a red stripe to the traditional blue-white-blue of Central American flags to show solidarity with the other democratic nations under the "colors of liberty"; they are traditionally considered to be the United States, France, Britain, and the Netherlands.

In the remainder of South America, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay all have historical or current flags derived from the French or

³¹Smith, *United States*, 142.

³²Devereaux Cannon, *The Flags of the Confederacy* (Memphis: St. Luke's Press, 1988), 71-72.

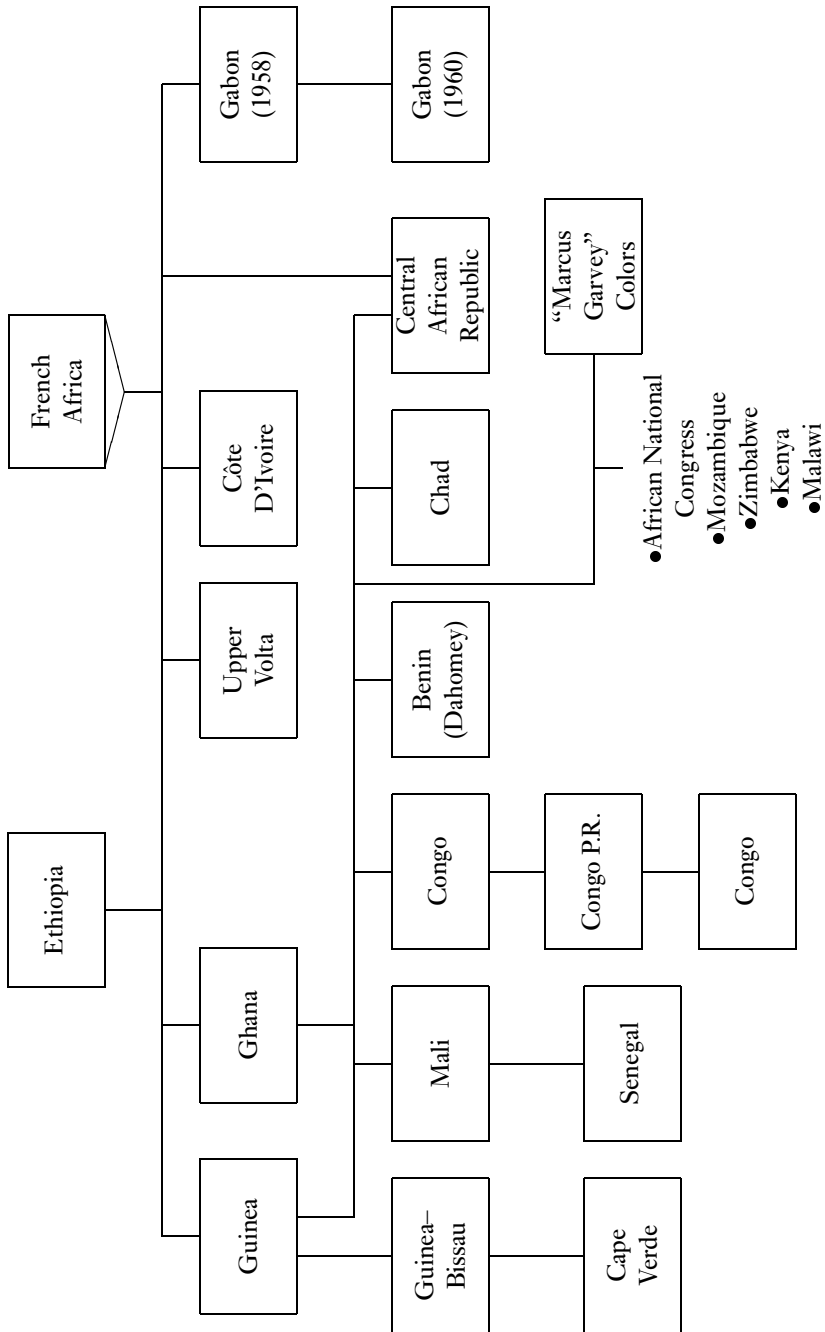


Figure 6: French Africa

Dutch flag.³³ At the time of their revolt from Spain, they looked to France for inspiration and were encouraged by the Dutch success in evicting the Spanish 150 years earlier. Paraguay's flag is simply the Dutch tricolor with the arms of the country inserted in the center. Locally, the color red stands for "federation," the union of all the states that were created during the revolt against Spain.

With the return of democracy to Argentina, the individual provinces are starting to adopt flags. Several have reverted to using historical banners, but all those adopted so far use red, white, and blue combinations, with one lone exception.

France's influence on its former colonies is widely reflected in their national flags.³⁴ Senegal, Mali, Guinea, the Côte d'Ivoire, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Dahomey (now Benin), Gabon, Congo, and Madagascar all adopted variations on the tricolor. Many used the "pan-African" colors of green, yellow, and red, but the republican symbolism of the tricolor continued. A few, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Congo later discarded their tricolors in favor of flags inspired by revolutionary or Marxist-Leninist design ideas. Two of those, Benin and Congo, have since recanted. The Central African Republic's flag went so far as to combine the French colors with the "pan-African" colors to symbolize the solidarity between themselves and their former master.

The tricolor, as a purely republican symbol, spread beyond the former French regions of Africa. In the British territories, independence movements and native political parties adopted triband flags in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Uganda, Kenya (with a shield and crossed spears), Nyassaland (Malawi), Tanganyika (Tanzania) and Bechuanaland (Botswana). Upon independence, Sierra Leone and Nigeria selected this republican symbol, and the short-lived republican Zanzibar used a triband with a narrow white stripe along the hoist.

Outside Africa, King Amanullah of Afghanistan, inspired by the predominance of tricolors he saw on a visit to Europe in 1928, altered the Afghan flag to a tricolor, replacing the original black flag.³⁵

French colonies and protectorates in the Middle East used French cantons in their local flags. Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, and the states of Jeb-el

³³William Crampton, "New Flags—Province of Santa Fe, Argentina," *Flagmaster* no. 52 (1986): 3.

³⁴Don Healy, "The Dawn of Modern Flag Design," *The Flag Bulletin* 30 (1991): 88–92.

³⁵Whitney Smith, *CVM Set No. 1* (Winchester, Mass.: The Flag Research Center, 1986) Afghanistan, plate 9/24.

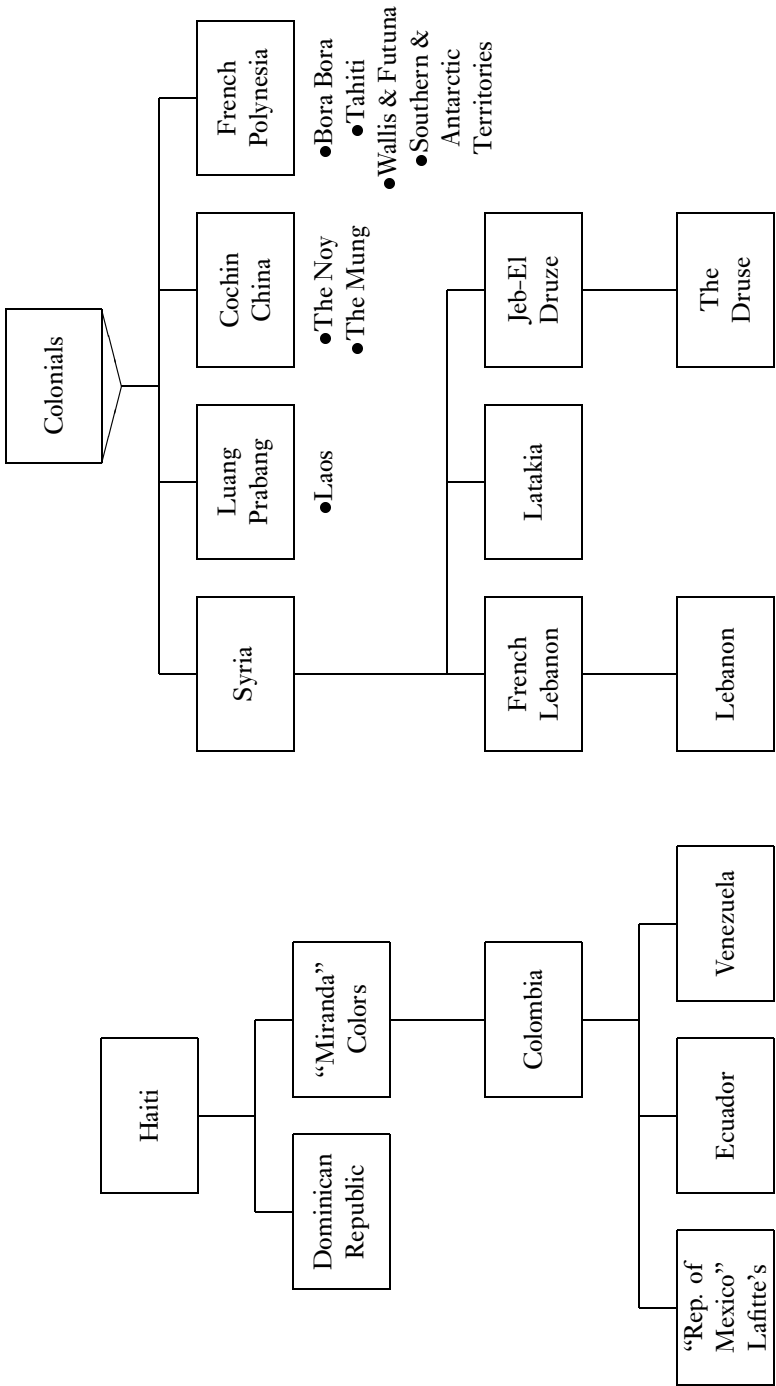


Figure 7: French Colonies

Druze and Latakia within Syria all used flags with French cantons.³⁶ Nineteenth century revolutionary movements in both Sudan and Pakistan used the French flag as their own during altercations with the British in the hope that France would be inspired to come to their assistance.

The same theories affected states in the Far East. Luang Prabang, in what is now Laos, and Cochinchina, in southern Vietnam, used flags with French cantons. The Mo and Nung tribes in Vietnam used French flags with special golden emblems in the center. (Thailand was referred to above.)

Lastly, the French influence in Polynesia spread across many of the islands now under French rule. Many used the French flag as a canton, just like the protectorates of the Middle and Far East. Most are only of historical interest now, but the local flag of the French Territory of Wallis and Futuna Islands and the new flag of the French Southern and Antarctic Territories still contain the tricolor.³⁷

Many of the flags attributed to France's influence were those created by its colonial empire, but those flags are a valid part of the national flag history of those countries, just as the British, Dutch, Swedish, French, and Spanish flags are part of America's flag history.³⁸

The Dutch Branch

The final branch of the Prince's Flag's descendants are those whose ties are directly back to the Dutch flag in recent years. Even these flags can be divided into two groups that recall the great Dutch trading companies. The first group is found in the East Indies (Indonesia) and the other in the West Indies.

Before investigating these two, a brief mention must be made of the unusual impact the Dutch flag has had on its neighbor, Luxembourg. To avoid confusion, the flag of Luxembourg was altered by changing the bottom blue stripe to a lighter shade. It had previously been identical to that of the Netherlands. This is one of very few cases of a country altering its flag to avoid such confusion.³⁹

Prior to the end of World War II, the country we know today as Indonesia was the Netherlands East Indies. Between 1945 and 1949, the Dutch and

³⁶ Gilbert Grosvenor and William J. Showalter, "Flags of the World," *The National Geographic Magazine* 66 (1934): 338–96.

³⁷ Derk willem Visser, "French Antarctic and Southern Regions," *Info-Bulletin* no. 76 (1988): 9.

³⁸ Furlong and McCandless, *So Proudly We Hail*, 15–21.

³⁹ Liechtenstein modified its flag in 1936 to avoid confusion with Haiti's.

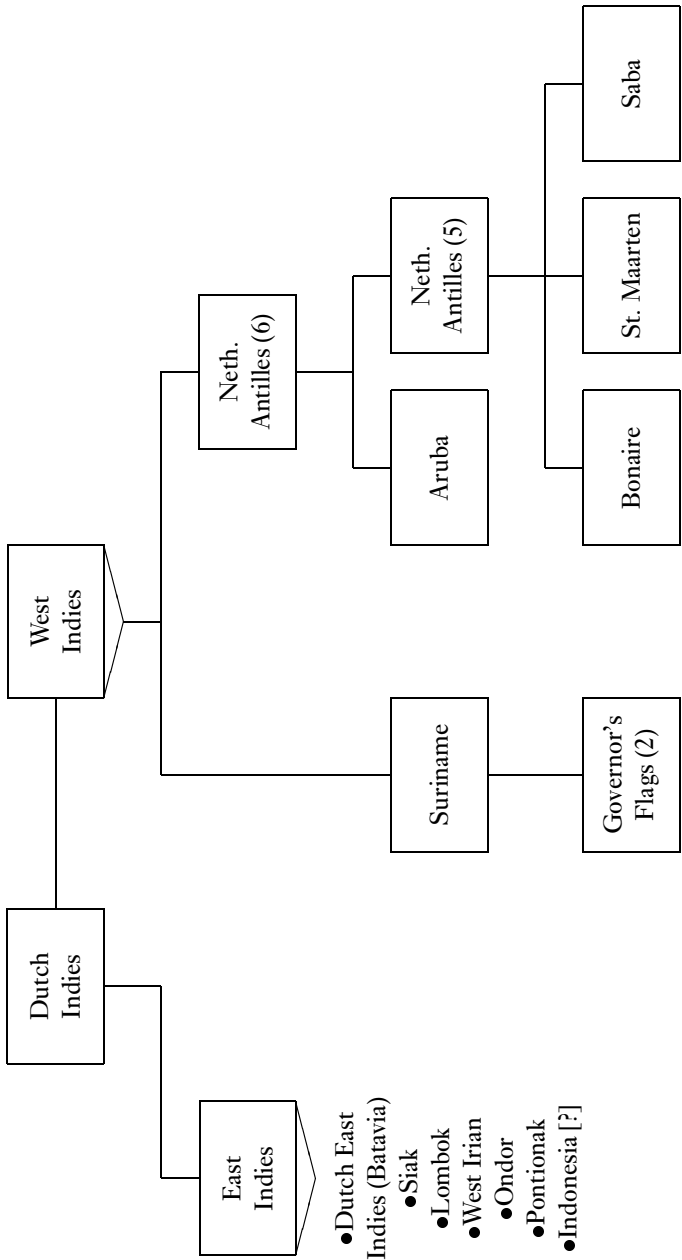


Figure 8: Dutch Indies

Indonesians fought for control of the archipelago. During this civil war, the flag of the Dutch East Indies consisted of six stripes, the Dutch flag repeated twice, with an emblem consisting of a gold sword and star flanked by two palm fronds.

The Dutch even created local flags for the various provinces within the islands. The flag for Siak consisted of the Dutch flag surrounded on all sides by a red border. Lombok used a flag of five stripes: red, white, blue, white, and red. Two other provinces, Ondor and Pontionak, used variants on the Vierkleur. All of these disappeared with Dutch recognition of Indonesian independence in 1949.

The flag of Indonesia, itself, has ties to the Dutch flag.⁴⁰ Supposedly, Indonesia's flag recreates that of the Majapahit Empire (1200–1475), but the selection may have been simplified by the ability to create this flag by tearing the bottom blue stripe from the Dutch flag. Such an idea had occurred previously in Haiti.

The last major portion of the Dutch East Indies to be amalgamated into Indonesia was West Irian (Western New Guinea) in 1963. Its flag, still used by those seeking an independent West Irian, was based upon the colors of the Dutch flag.

In the West Indies, the Dutch flag influenced flags of its colonial territories, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. Before Suriname (then spelled Surinam) became independent, its governor used a flag composed of the then-current flag of Suriname between two narrow bands in the colors of the Dutch flag. An earlier version was the Dutch flag with three small white discs in the canton.

The Netherlands Antilles, until recently composed of six islands in the Caribbean (Aruba has been separated from the rest and has equal political status with the Netherlands Antilles), uses a flag based upon that of its motherland.⁴¹ The flag has a white field with a blue stripe cutting horizontally across the middle and a red stripe cutting vertically from top to bottom in the center and going behind the blue stripe. In the center of the flag, on the blue, are five stars indicating the five remaining islands in the group.⁴²

Of these five islands, Saba and St. Marteen use flags based upon the Dutch colors. Bonaire and the now-separated Aruba had several proposed designs using either the current Dutch colors or the original orange, white,

⁴⁰Smith, *Flags Through the Ages*, 242.

⁴¹[Whitney Smith], "New Flags: Netherlands Antilles," *The Flag Bulletin* 25 (1986): 203–5.

⁴²[Whitney Smith], "New Flags: Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire," *The Flag Bulletin* 25 (1986): 83–109.

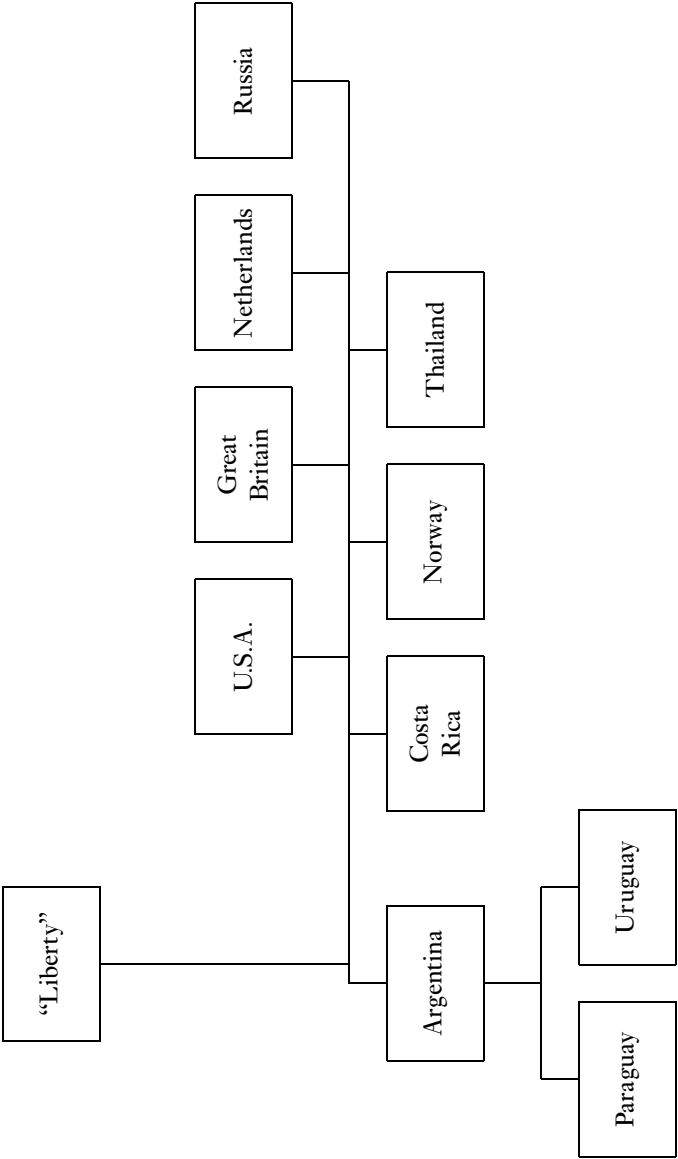


Figure 9: “Liberty”

and blue.

This completes the family tree of the Prince's Flag so far. There can be little doubt there will be more in the future. By now, those adopting flags with ties back to the Prince's Flag may not even realize the full vexillographic past that they are continuing.

For nearly 350 years, one flag that symbolized liberty, progress, and republicanism has spread across all six inhabited continents.⁴³ (Abel Tasman of Holland discovered Australia; the island of Tasmania is named for him.) One small nation on the North Sea has spawned hundreds of vexillographic children far from its borders. No symbol has ever exceeded the flag in its universal appeal and ability to express ideas and ambitions, and no flag has ever exceeded the Prince's Flag in its impact on flag design or its inspiration.

⁴³John Edwards, "Some Flags and Banners of the Dutch in Australia," *Crux Australis* 4, no. 3 (1988): 33–46.