

Flags: stripes and crosses

There are things that we take for granted in our life, not bothering what their origins or real meanings are. Such are the flags of our nations. We salute them, we respect them but nobody, at least very few of us wonder ever, that maybe a hundred years ago, our grandfathers, or the fathers of our grandfathers, (or the fathers of our grandfathers' fathers or their fathers; if we want to quote some Monty Python here) may have respected other flags. This is especially true for Germany or the Eastern European "newly formed" states.

Has the highly regarded reader audience ever wondered about the origins of their national flags? Have you ever realised that different cultural circles use similar symbols for their flags and these differ from area to area.

Northern European and European countries



The other approach, used in Northern Europe is the crossed flag. The cross can symbolise many different things. For example Sweden's cross is based on the Danish flag, the choice of colours is based on their medieval coat of arms. The Scandinavian countries were, over hundreds of years, more or less voluntarily, bound to each other in the Calmar Union. That's the reason of the great effect they

use, with few exceptions, two different approaches with their flags.

One is the striped, tricolour- kind of flag. The tricolour origins from the French revolution, where the three colours symbolised brotherhood, freedom, and equality.

Tricolours became popular in the time of the birth of the nations in the 19th century. Some countries, however, rotated the vertical position to horizontal position.

It was not necessary, nevertheless, that the country is a republic to have a tricolour-type of flag. Just think of the black-white-red flag of the Bismarck- Germany. Or today's Netherlands.

Among the countries being dealt with on this website, the followings have striped flags:

had on each other. Except for Finland, all Scandinavian countries are parliamentary monarchies, so talking about tricolour-type of flags is not relevant.

Finland has so strong cultural and historical bounds to Sweden, that explains everything about their white flag with the blue cross in it.

Here is a list of the flags of the Scandinavian states:



Sweden

Finland

Norway

Denmark

Iceland

In case of the British Isles, the crosses in the flags represent Catholic saints (not that there would be other saints), so these crosses are in connection with religion.

Let us see, what the flag of Great Britain is composed of:



St. George's cross that represents England,



St. Andrew's cross, that represents Scotland



and St. Patrick's cross that represents Ireland (today, only Northern Ireland).

If we put together these flags, we got the famous flag of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the so called Union Jack:



St. George's cross, on some level represents Wales as well, otherwise the Welsh would be quite upset, that they left out their dragon from the Union Jack, although it would have been quite difficult

to include it. About the reasons you can read in the Union Jack link above.

The Welsh flag with the red dragon in it:

