

## CUSTOMS GOVERNING THE USE OF NATIONAL FLAGS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

### BACKGROUND

In May 1990 a busload of students of ethnology from Turku made, with me as guide, an excursion to the Hamburg district in northern Germany at the invitation of Associate Professor Outi Tuomi-Nikula, who was at that time living and working there. The targets of our trip were the local university institutions and museums, and the area itself which had many quite special cultural features. Our Professor's home was, in fact, situated in an area near Hamburg called Altes Land, which in its day was built by Dutch immigrants who dammed up the sea and built typical Low German houses on the land.

What first caught my attention when we drove our bus into the Professor's yard was the blue and white Finnish flag hanging from the flag staff in her neighbour's garden.<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1.) When I saw the flag I thought that Germany is indeed a liberal country if the flag of a foreign state is allowed to be flown. In Finland this is prohibited unless another flag staff has been reserved for our own flag. Later, Outi Tuomi-Nikula told us that her neighbour had a custom of raising the Finnish flag every time she received Finnish visitors.

Since then I have often paid attention to different flag customs in the various European countries. For example, in Madrid faded and tattered red and yellow flags of Spain could be seen day and night hanging from state buildings. In Finland flags are always lowered for the night and ragged or washed out flags are not used. Then again, in Athens I was looking at pleasure boats moored to the jetty of a sailing club on the shore, all of which flew a national flag, either of Greece or Britain. Finnish vessels only display flags when they are on the move, and the flag is removed after mooring and certainly for the night. In Riga I observed while travelling by taxi through the city red and white Latvian national flags that were fastened to the walls of houses at an angle of 45 degrees, which had two black mourning ribbons attached to the top of the pole above the flag. The driver said this was a symbol of mourning for Latvians who had been transported to Siberia during the Soviet period. Such mourning ribbons are not used in Finland.

### MATERIAL

These and other such observations aroused in me the idea of charting different flag-related customs. Every independent state has its own flag but the customs for using it can vary considerably. At the start of spring in 2005 I e-mailed a questionnaire about this to all the Finnish missions in Europe. I got the addresses from the information

---

<sup>1</sup> Plate 1: Ruotsala Helena: Slide B 472. University of Turku, Archives of the School of Cultural Research

service of our Ministry for Foreign Affairs where by chance one of my former students works, Antti Vuojolainen. I gave my respondents the whole of the autumn to answer the questions and there was time in December to examine the material received. The respondents were in most cases public administration trainees, but they did also include Finnish *chargés d'affaires* as well as one ambassador and one commissioned officer who had served in international missions. Among the replies were also pages printed straight from the internet, although this in no way diminished their usefulness. Answers came from our representation in the following countries: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, there were replies from 18 countries. Actually, the answer from Rome came in Italian, since they did not have the resources to translate the pages of the Italian state into Finnish or English. It was proposed there that we ask our own university's Italian literature and culture studies for help with the translation, as in fact I did, and so I also received the assistance of Pauliina de Anna. On the other hand, no answers came from the following 17 countries: Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Great Britain, Iceland, Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine. Antti Vuojolainen from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs nonetheless considered the response satisfactory, because Finland only had representation in eleven of those countries from which replies were not received. The others were in countries where representation was managed by a travelling ambassador resident in Helsinki or countries with only a consulate. According to him, these were the Balkan countries except Slovenia, and Belarus. He also stated that many of the embassies from which no answer was received were the busiest of our legations.<sup>3</sup> No doubt this is the situation in the embassies of our neighbours at least, Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Russia. He suggested that rather than try again to get these answers, I should go to their missions in Helsinki. This I did, and translated my questionnaire into English, further adding to the list the embassies of Canada and the United States in Helsinki. Indeed other responsibilities did sometimes occupy my time, but I was able to return to the matter a year after I had sent the questionnaires out, that is, in June 2006. Thus, we got answers from the missions of Canada, Switzerland and the USA, in other words we now had information concerning 21 countries altogether, also including the two important nations in North America, whose presence in and effect on Europe has long been significant.<sup>4</sup> So that the material obtained, while it does not catch all, is representative, since answers have been received evenly from the Baltic to the Balkans and from Ireland to Italy as well as from the United States and Canada. Further, with the help of our senior lecturer in Estonian at our University, Eve Mikonen, I was able to print the instructions for using the Estonian flag from the internet. This page has been

---

<sup>2</sup> University of Turku, Archives of the School of Cultural Research, Questionnaire B 44, June 2005, SPA 336

<sup>3</sup> Vuojolainen, Antti, FM, Information Service of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, e-mail message to the author 8.12.2005.

<sup>4</sup> University of Turku, Archives of the School of Cultural Research, Questionnaire B 44, Customs for flying the national flag, June 2006, SPA 336.



added to the material in our archive.<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise stated the information that follows is based on the questionnaire data stored in the archive of our department. It is clear from the context which country's answer is applicable in which case.

The first things that I noticed from this material represented two extremities. There were no regulations at all for the France's Tricolour, but in principle anyone could do what they want with the French flag. Of course, even in France there are guidelines, traditional customs and good practice, but they have not been recorded, they have not been written into any kind of law, not to speak of the fact that there are no sanctions for misuse. This is probably because of France's revolutionary tradition. The other extremity in the material constitutes the USA, which has the most verbose legislation, 14 pages of densely-packed text concerning the use of the national flag. Admittedly, Canada's material was even more extensive covering 22 pages, but it was accompanied with a lot of photographs. There was more text concerning the USA regulations which did, in many ways, differ from the average in their strictness and detail. Nevertheless, the United States in ridding itself of Britain through the War of Independence is, essentially, just as old as the Republic of France which emerged through the great French Revolution. Both are among the world's oldest republics dating from the 16th century and both flags are approximately the same age. Of course, France did go back to being a monarchy for a while and even an empire before it returned to being a republic and the situation stabilised. On the other hand, many of the rules concerning Finland's flag do appear in their strictness to observe the USA model and perhaps for just that reason. When Finland gained her independence in 1917 there were still not many republics around and Finland became the first in the Nordic area, because Norway, which had won independence a few years earlier in 1905 chose to become a monarchy.

Yet, there was a third extremity, Germany. This was made clear in an article for the daily newspaper *Turun Sanomat* in July, 2006. The Berlin correspondent of the paper Risto K. Tähtinen wrote the following:

*"I have never seen a German national flag on the street in which I live in northern Berlin, not to mention that somebody should have fastened a miniature flag to the side-window of his/her car. Nonetheless, flags have been visible all the time in front of public buildings, but never the German flag on its own. There are always three flag staffs side by side: one for the German flag, one for the flag of a state and one for the EU flag. This required by the flag law. Private citizens do not have the right to fly the red, black and gold flag of Germany. This is, on the other hand, everybody's right in the Nordic countries."*<sup>6</sup>

In continuation let it be explained how, at the time, it seems that the world football championships changed Germany permanently and how the German flag became visible after Germany had dropped out of the competition. The flags did not disappear from balconies, windows and not even from cars. The writer also relates how many elderly people, some foreigners and Jews followed events in dismay when the German flag began to appear on the streets and they even became afraid. He states that on this account Germany's acceptance of European normality has not been easy, but continues:

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.riikiteataja.ee/ert/ert.jsp?link=print&id=882755>, read 3.10.08.

<sup>6</sup> Tähtinen 2006.

*“On Berlin’s football street between the Brandenburger Gate and Siegelssseule it has been a pleasure to observe that beer has been drunk at the same table, with the flags of Germany, Sweden, Brazil or France in the hand.”*<sup>7</sup>

Thus, when Outi Tuomi-Nikula’s neighbour hoisted the Finnish flag nothing illegal had been done. But, if the flag of Germany had been flown the law of the land would have been broken. Erecting a proper flag staff is not at all a simple matter, so the question arises as to whether the neighbour erected it only for hoisting when our Associate Professor was receiving guests from Finland. On the other hand, in Finland it is not allowed to hoist the flag of another country unless there is another flagpole alongside it flying the Finnish flag. In other words, if the former neighbour in question now visits Professor Outi Tuomi-Nikula in Pori, she cannot reciprocally fly the German flag in that person’s honour without breaking the law.

## FLAGS AND POLES

Those types of flag staff that are stuck upright in the ground or are placed the roofs of buildings represent the customary and common practice. It is also customary to secure the flagpole to a wall at an angle of 45 degrees. In this case it can be fastened in the same way as with upright poles, that is, the flag is fastened to a pole with the help of a rope, or the flag is permanently fixed to the pole, in which case it is fitted into a bracket attached to the wall when the flag is due to be flown. The latter are to be seen in central and southern Europe to the south of Latvia. In the south the flagpole can also stick out of the eaves in a horizontal direction, as for example in Spain. The military ensigns of the ancient Romans were vexilla attached to poles with string. This model was retained in Byzantium, from where it was adopted by the Orthodox Church to become a flag used in processions. The Russian revolutionaries borrowed this style for their protest marches. They were even seen in Finland in workers’ processions. The National Socialists used such flags in Germany.<sup>8</sup> Nowadays this custom can be observed in Austria, where a flag in vexillum-form is hung, for example, from a window on the façade side without the help of a pole.<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 2.)

The size of the flag in relation to the pole and the form of the flag vary with country. Even in Sweden the flag is longer relative to its height than in Finland. Flag models vary. Extremes are represented by neighbours Switzerland and Austria, in the former the height and length are the same, that is, Switzerland has a square flag. In Austria though the dimensions can vary and the flag can be any length, as long as it fits in,<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 3.) the same in the Czech Republic. In a horizontal or 45-degree-angled pole even the width of the flag (or height, if the flag is horizontal) can be more than half the length of the pole. Similarly, in flying a flag at an angle of 45 degrees, fixed to the pole, the height of the flag may be more than half the length of the pole, as for instance in Latvia.

---

<sup>7</sup> Tähtinen 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Lehtonen 2003. 141.

<sup>9</sup> Picture 2: Anders Gardberg, Colonel, Finnish OSCE Mission, Vienna, University of Turku, Archives of the School of Cultural Research, Questionnaire B 44, SPA 336.

<sup>10</sup> Picture 3: Anders Gardberg, Vienna, see above



When many flags are flown, there is a general practice everywhere that there should only be one flag on each pole. Ordinarily the aim is also to ensure that all flags are then as similar as possible in size and form, but the latter does not always succeed where there are a number of different types, as in the case of Switzerland and Austria. In such case that there are an odd number of flag staffs, the flag of one's own country is placed in the middle, the place of honour. Otherwise, the place of honour as in heraldry is generally occupied by the pole on the right, which means that when the observer looks at the flag staffs in front of the house flying the flag from the direction of the façade, the flag flies from the flagpole on the right. Furthermore, the flag of one's own country may in this case also be at the other end of the row. One's own flag and that of one foreign country can also be so placed that the foreign flag is in the middle and the flags of one's own country on both sides.<sup>11</sup>

In English-speaking countries flags other than that of one's own country are flown in the order of the English alphabet, in other countries, with the exception of Italy, generally in the order of the French alphabet, as in Finland. Normally the order is the same in the two alphabets, since the names of countries in French and English generally start with the same letter. Exceptions are Germany, Spain and the United States, whereas in French, *Allemagne*, *Espagne* and *Etats-Unis*. Nevertheless, in Italy the order can be either according to the English or Italian alphabet.

Flying the national flag and the flag of an enterprise side by side on festive days is allowed, but out of respect only the national flag is flown on flag-raising days.<sup>12</sup> Every country has its own official flag-raising days, so we need say no more of this. In general every country has its own national or independence day, which is one of these days. Nevertheless, as a peculiarity let it be mentioned that in a way there are three national days in Latvia: the Latvian National Day 18.11 (1918), Convocation of the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Latvia, Labour Day 1.5 (1920) and the new National Day 4.5 (1990). Furthermore, Lithuania 16.2 and Estonia 24.2 are independence days that are also flag-raising days in Latvia.

The EU flag is of course only raised in member countries, but only in Germany is it always alongside the national flag, whereas in Finland and certain other European countries that is not usually the case; rather the EU flag is considered the flag of an international organisation with the stipulation that it is suitable for the flag to accompany the national flag on the flagpoles of public buildings, departments and enterprises even if it is rarely seen in such surroundings. On the other hand, at least in Austria, Germany and Italy this flag is regarded as equal with the state and national flags. In fact, even among member nations there are significant differences in the use of the EU flag, which is indeed natural, since the EU has left the matter to the national authorities to decide.<sup>13</sup>

Those countries that fly the flag only from public buildings and where private citizens do not normally involve themselves with flags are in a class of their own. In Germany the national flag is always flown next to the flags of the states and the EU, as in Austria on public buildings. On the other hand the buildings of the administrative regions of Austria fly the national flag and the regional flag, and possibly a third

---

<sup>11</sup> Lassila 1991. 490., Kämäräinen 2005. 404–405.

<sup>12</sup> Kämäräinen 2005. 405., cf. Lassila 1991. 490.

<sup>13</sup> Antola, Esko, Professor, University of Turku, e-mail message to the author 25.9.2008.

flag, that of the EU, or perhaps not. In Switzerland public buildings fly the Swiss and canton flags, but private citizens may fly one or the other or both, but Switzerland does not belong to the EU and therefore does not use the EU flag.

In Italy the national and EU flags are flown from public buildings every day, except on 24th October, United Nations Day, when the national flag is flown next to that of the UN. Thus, in this way even the UN flag is regarded as equal to the Italian national and state flags and it is not considered an organisational flag, as in most other countries. The Italian flag is also flown in state universities and schools. Remarkably, the flags are always flown on lecture and exam days. Yet, in Italy private citizens are free to fly the national flag.

## FLAG-RAISING TIMES

As far as the time for flying flags is concerned, those countries that were the subject of this study can be separated into two groups according to whether they generally fly flags only during the daylight or also at night. Most countries only fly flags during the daylight hours, usually between sunrise and sunset. In important locations even in this case the flag can hang from the flag staff during the dark hours, but it ought to be illuminated. In this respect at least the practice is the same in Finland, Austria, Estonia and the USA. Otherwise, in Finland the flag is usually lowered for the night except at Midsummer, which is the Day of the Finnish Flag. Again, in Austria the flag is flown all weekend from Friday to Monday on Mother's Day. Also in Finland on Independence Day 6.12 the flag is flown until later than normal, 8 p.m., since at that time of year there is very little light. Other countries in which flags are only flown during the day are Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxemburg, Sweden and Switzerland. At their holidays homes and on yachts the Swiss tend to fly flags morning and night when resident.

In Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain there are public buildings and locations considered important from which flags are continuously flown, although elsewhere in the country on specific festive days and during the day. Just so, in Spain one often sees torn and faded state flags dangling from buildings, as mentioned above. Flags can also be seen in Hungary that are faded and have been left to their own fate, because although the matter of regulations is starting to be debated after the change in order in the 1990s and according to this flags should be lowered after sunset, the practice has not yet gained a footing. There are buildings belonging to the state and regarded as important even in Poland from which flags are always flown. In addition there are national festive days on which flags are flown all day for several days in a row, but again, there are days when flags only fly during the daytime. In the Czech Republic most flags are flown on offices and a flag or flags are raised the night before to remain on the poles overnight, very often also through the night following the festive day, since nobody will be around to lower them.

## FLAG AT HALF-MAST

When mourning, the flag is always raised first to the top of the pole and then lowered one-third of the way down the pole in such a way that the bottom edge reaches down



to the middle of the pole.<sup>14</sup> This is international protocol. According to the information service of Helsinki City Library used by *Helsingin Sanomat* the flagging protocol for mourning originated in Denmark. Here in the past in castles and on ships—at the beginning they were not to be found anywhere else—a black mourning “Dannebrog” (i.e. flag) with a white cross on a black background was used. The Danish government relinquished the use of this black flag on 15.5.1743. In Denmark after that the red and white national flag of Denmark began to be lowered to half-mast as a sign of respect to the memory of a deceased dignitary. This procedure was found to be practical and was implemented throughout Europe.<sup>15</sup>

I mentioned at the beginning the custom of tying two black mourning streamers above the flag at the top of the pole, which I noticed is practiced in Latvia. Actually, in Latvia there are a number of days of public mourning. The reason for the use of the ribbons is clear: they are used with flags that remain permanently on the flagpole and that are hung from a wall bracket at an angle of 45 degrees. Flags of this type cannot be lowered to half-mast. In the case of a normal flag staff mourning is shown in Latvia by lowering the flag to half-mast. In Italy both methods of mourning can be combined by lowering the flag to half-mast and then tying two black gauze ribbons to the upper fastening hole in the flag. In addition to the two most common international types of flag mourning customs there is another diverging procedure observed in Austria and Hungary: a plain black flag is raised to the top of the pole. In this case it is a question of mourning after the death of a private individual, since in neither country are there national days of mourning.

## THE NATIONAL FLAG, STATE FLAGS AND EXTRAORDINARY FLAGS

In most countries differentiation is made between the national and state flag. In Finland the national flag is the familiar Blue Cross Flag and on the state flag a red and yellow lion coat of arms is situated on the intersection of the cross. This flag is used by state institutions, for example, the universities. According to new legislation which will come into force at the beginning of 2010, the universities will no longer be state institutions, whereby presumably the University of Turku will return to the use of the national flag as was the case before the universities were made public in 1974. In many countries the state flag diverges in this way from the national flag with the state coat of arms in the middle, as for instance in Austria and Spain. The difference was quite evident in Hungary in 1956 and Romania in 1989, when the people rebelled against communist dictatorship. The insurgents then flew state flags with the coats of arms (symbols of communist rule) cut out, leaving a hole in the middle of the flag. This then became the national flag, otherwise an unknown concept in communist countries. As is well known the insurrection in Hungary was aborted, but not in Romania, for times have changed.

As in other Nordic countries, in Finland the swallow-tailed state flag, which has three triangular points on its outside edge, is in use. This is called the military flag and is flown by the armed forces of these countries. In Finland nowadays it is the

---

<sup>14</sup> Lassila 1991. 316.

<sup>15</sup> Torsti tietää 2008.

special flag of the incumbent president. It is a swallow-tailed flag, that is, the military flag, on which there is a blue and yellow Order of the Cross in the top corner next to the pole. In Finland the incumbent president is also commander of the armed forces. In an international setting it is precisely the upper area of the flag adjacent to the staff that is the most esteemed part of the flag. For example the British Naval Ensign takes the form of a red cross on a white background with a “Union Jack” in the upper corner on the side adjacent to the pole. The red and white flag with the cross is, incidentally, the flag of England. When the flag of Scotland with its blue saltire cross reaching from corner to corner (Andrew’s cross) on a white background is added and the combination is refined a little, the result is the “Union Jack”, the union symbol of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 4–5.)

The top corner next to the pole is also the most respected part of the flag of the USA. The name of this is the “Union” and it is composed of 48 white stars on a blue background, each of which represents a federal state. The last two more stars were added in 1959 when Alaska and Hawaii were upgraded to become official states. The flag is known as the “Star-Spangled Banner”. This flag is unique inasmuch as that if flown upside down with the “Union” side at the bottom next to the staff it is a signal of distress in cases where person or property is in danger. As far as is known this is not mentioned in instructions concerning the use of other state flags.

On festive occasions when the flag of any country is raised or lowered the general public is expected to stand to attention keeping their eyes fixed on the flag. Men in civilian clothes should then remove their headgear while those in uniform perform a military salute. This is so also in the USA, except that men in civilian clothing ought to place their right hand on the left-hand side of their breast, that is, on the heart. Even flag lapel badges are decreed in the USA: the badge is fastened to the left lapel, and so above the heart in this case, too.

## OTHER USES OF THE NATIONAL FLAG

National flags can also be used at demonstrations—in two senses. For example, in 2005 when the EU was planning to curb the production of sugar Finnish sugar beet growers participated, along with farmers from other European countries, in a demonstration in Brussels in July opposing these restrictions, at which groups of farmers brandished their own national flags, in this way too the Finns waved the Finnish flag.<sup>17</sup>

The second way of using the flag in demonstrations is to deface it in one way or another. We have become accustomed to seeing demonstrators burning the USA’s Star-Spangled Banner all over the world when demonstrators have been protesting somewhere against the policy of the United States. Less frequently has this degradation been directed towards a Nordic state. This nevertheless took place in 2006 in connection with the so-called Mohamed cartoon affair when the Danish *Jyllands Posten* published caricatures of Mohamed. On this occasion Danish agricultural products were put on boycott in Islamic countries in different parts of the world and mobs of

---

<sup>16</sup> Pictures 4–5: Barker 2008. 59.

<sup>17</sup> EU:n sokerituen uudistusta tarpeen vielä jalostaa 2005 [EU sugar beet subsidies reform must still be revised], [Finnish flag can be seen in photo]



Islamists degraded Danish flags in various different ways. For instance, Danish flags were burned in front of an EU building in the Palestinian area of Gaza occupied by Israel and in front of the Danish Embassy in London.<sup>18</sup>

It is a custom to cover the coffin with the national flag at the funerals of great statesmen and soldiers.<sup>19</sup> Still fresh in the memory in Finland are perhaps the funerals of General Adolf Ehrnrooth in 2004 and President Lennart Meri of Estonia in 2006, which were both shown on Finnish television. The older generations may still also remember the funeral of President Kekkonen in 1986. At such funeral ceremonies as these the flag is of course removed from off the coffin before it is lowered into the grave or cremation takes place. But in a corresponding way to this the flag is used at the funerals of rank-and-file soldiers. Even we Finns have had to get accustomed to this in recent years on account of the peace-keeping missions in many of the world's trouble spots. It seemed strange at least to Finns to see, in newspapers and on television, the coffins of the Swedish victims of the Tsunami in 2004 in Thailand and in Sweden draped in the Swedish flag, though this time those in question were ordinary tourists, and not statesmen or soldiers. But then again the customs for using the national flags differ even between such close neighbours.<sup>20</sup>

## THE FINNISH FLAG AND OTHER NATIONAL FLAGS

As explained above the flag regulations in Finland are, in general terms, stricter than in many other nations in Europe. It was my purpose in commencing this investigation to attempt to encourage a more liberal attitude closer to that of Europe concerning the flag customs of Finland and I stated this in the questionnaire. The purpose was that the Finnish flag would be more visible in our own country than at our missions abroad. I also explained how on a coach trip to Riga in the summer of 2003 our Estonian guide told us, hiding a smile, how, while Finland had fine embassies in all the Baltic States there had been insufficient money to buy any flags. I actually knew that this was not the case, at least as far as Estonia is concerned, because I had often seen the Finnish flag in Tallinn flying from our country's embassy building, elevated above the city—at night also illuminated. An answer from Lithuania to our questionnaire indicated that this was not the case there either.

At the Finnish Embassy in Vilnius the national flag of Finland and the EU flag fly in front of the Ambassador's residence continuously and are illuminated at night. However, for the moment (5.7.2005) the embassy's office is situated in modest accommodation on a rather busy narrow street. Here the flag can only be flown on a wall pole and even there it would be dirty in just a few days. On that account – after consideration – we decided only to raise the flag at the residence, from where it can be seen at street level also.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Oksanen 2006; Kiihtyneet muslimit osoittivat mieltään Muhammed-pilapiirroksia vastaan [Angry Muslims demonstrate against Mohamed cartoons]

<sup>19</sup> Lehtonen 2003. 119., 121–122.

<sup>20</sup> Koponen 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Kalle Kankaanpää, Secretary of Legation, regular chargé d'affaires, Finnish Embassy, Vilnius. University of Turku, Archives of the School of Cultural Research, Questionary B 44, SPA 336

So much for the Finnish Embassy in Vilnius. The reply also showed that flying the flag or not flying the flag can also be a matter not only of principle, but also of practicalities. The same can be surmised from the answer given by Ambassador Jorma Inki from the Finnish Embassy in Prague.

*"We always fly the flags of Finland and the EU on the outside wall of our office. Personally, I don't think it stylish, but it observes the EU rules for flying flags, and secondly in reality there is compulsion to imitate the other embassies, and thirdly the value of the flag as a sign of the country, since we have sought office space on the third floor of a block of flats (above the Norwegian flag), is also of significance. These flags are so sooty and are always having to be cleaned.*

*When I arrived in this country there were two standard-sized flags (Finland and the EU) inside in the negotiation room. I removed this Americanism from the room immediately. We use miniature flags inside (including Saami flag, if necessary). For next year's [2006] EU meetings (there is only ample space left in the hotels for the growing number of guests) I can indeed put standard-sized flags in every room for the solemnising. It's such a conference that...*

*There is a big state flag with the coat of arms flying from the flag staff at the residence today [6.6.2005] Eino Leino's Day, until I haul it down when I get home. Actually, today is also the 590th anniversary of the execution of Jan Hus and a local saint's day and a flag-raising day. No mourning, however.*

*I think the traditional strict rules in Finland are good and are very suitable, especially for janitors and other ambassadors.*"<sup>22</sup>

Now that I have been able to go through the material I have collected, even I have changed my mind and am of precisely the same opinion as this Ambassador. Then again, Finnish people have internalised their own strict flag regulations and wish to hold fast to them. This is evident from letters from readers in the press, according to which our athletes for instance have adopted "international practices".

As one who followed in an armchair the world athletics championships that have just ended I may have approved of the extra large national flags they were flying. But on the contrary it was irritating to watch how athletes wrapped soaking wet (from sweat) national flags around themselves as one would any protective clothing.<sup>23</sup>

From what has been presented it has become evident that there are all sorts of customs related to the national flag. From an international perspective some of these are prevalent in all countries, some in just certain countries, some in only a few, and there are even flag customs that are observed only in one country. But there is no one unambiguous international custom of ethics that Finland could begin to accept in order to become more cosmopolitan than ever in this respect. Each national flag has its own different historical background and therefore every nation also has a different approach to its flag. Here, too, the familiar rule for many other cultural phenomena is valid: national and international are not opposites but prerequisites for each other.

---

<sup>22</sup> Jorma Inki, Ambassador, Finnish Embassy, Prague, University of Turku, Archives of the School of Cultural Research, Questionnaire B 44, SPA 336

<sup>23</sup> Robinson 2005.



## LITERATURE

BARKER, Johnson Brian

2008 *Maailman liput*. Gummerus, Singapore.

EU:n sokerituen uudistusta tarpeen vielä jalostaa [editorial] - *Helsingin Sanomat* 20.7.2005.

KÄMÄRÄINEN, Eija

2005 *Käytöksen kultainen kirja. Hyvä käytös - Hyvät tavat*. WSOY, Helsinki– Porvoo.

LASSILA Sirkka

1991 *Uusi käytöksen kultainen kirja. Hyvät tavat, luonteva käytös*. WSOY, Porvoo – Helsinki –Juva.

LEHTONEN, Juhani U. E.

2003 *Sotilaselämän perinnekirja*. Ajatus Kirjat, Gummerus Oy. Helsinki - Jyväskylä

2006 Kiihtyneet muslimit osoittivat mieltään Muhammed-pilapiirroksia vastaan, AP, Reuters, *Helsingin Sanomat* 31.1.2006.

KOPONEN, Kalle

2005 Ruotsin johto sai murskakritiikkiä tsunamin hoidosta. *Helsingin Sanomat* 2.12.2005.

OKSANEN, Annukka

2006 Tanskan-vastainen vihamielisyys yltyy useissa Arabimaissa. *Helsingin Sanomat* 31.1.2006.

ROBINSON, Ruut

2005 Missä oli kisojen lippuetiketti, Mielipteet. *Helsingin Sanomat* 17.8.2005.

2008 Torsti tietää. *Helsingin Sanomat* 26.10.2008.

TÄHTINEN, Risto K.

2006 Liput liehuvat Saksassa. *Turun Sanomat* 8.7.2006.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.





Fig. 4.

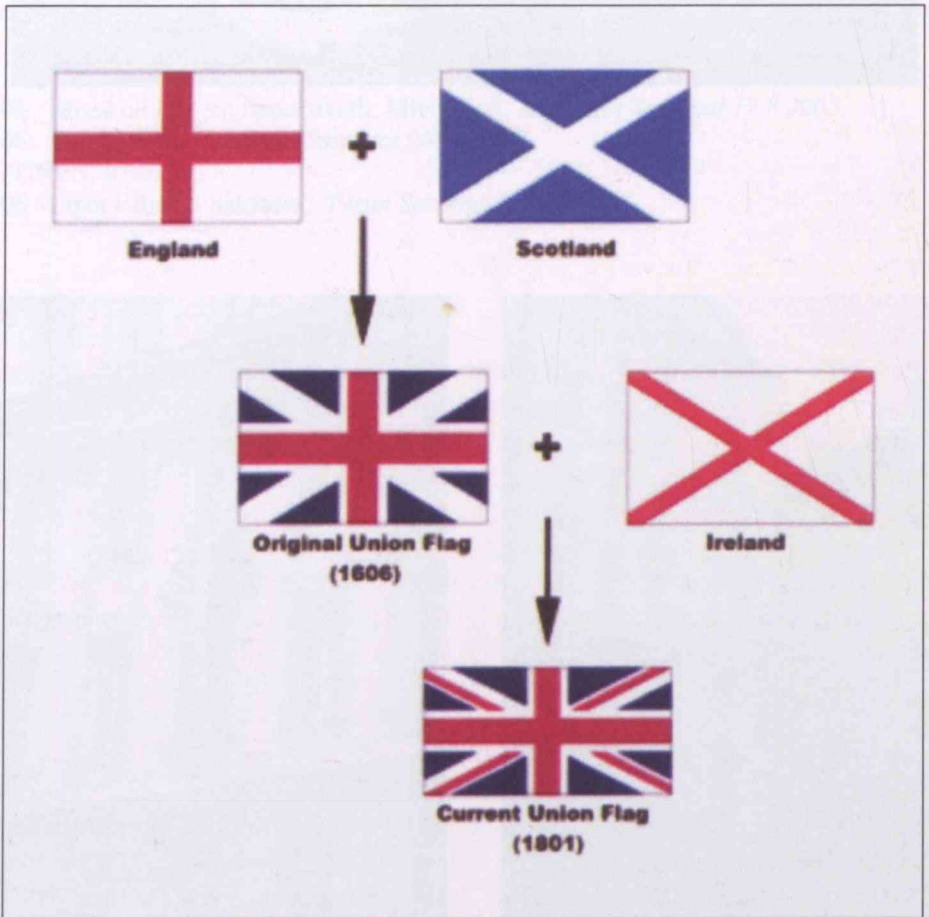


Fig. 5.