

Historical

It is only possible to make guesses about the **origins** of flags, at all events, nowadays they fly in all countries and on **all the seas** of the world.

So-called "vexilloids" were the precursors of our present-day flags made of cloth.

These were **striking** objects, such as feathers or figures of animals, which were fixed to the tip of poles and – without being a flag – fulfilled its purposes. "Vexilloids" were recorded from ancient Egypt already from 5500 bc on.

The decisive **foundations** for the **rules of flagging** and **flag customs** were laid at the beginning of the **modern period** by seafaring.

It may be taken as certain that the flags of the present day date back to the **signs** and **symbols** used on the **Crusades**.

It is easy to understand that, against the background those actions, the **cross** was for the most part chosen as the symbol of **Christendom**. Gradually, the princes of the various countries introduced their own crosses in **various** colours and forms from which, in the course of time, signs developed which initially symbolised just **belonging together**, then later also the **nationality**.

The national flags of many countries can still be **traced back** to that time even today. The best example of this is the **flag of St. George**, the red cross of which is still to be found in the British Union Flag, as well as the white cross of the **Danish national flag**, known as the "Danebrog", which dates back to Denmark's crusade against Estonia.

At all times, the rulers showed flags as the **symbol of their strength** and in order to represent their territory. The flag was – and still is today – regarded as the **symbol of victory**. A victorious army took the vanquished opponent's flag in battle and in every war the victorious side's flag is raised after a victory.

In earlier times, flags were by no means for ordinary people, because only the authorities, or later the state, had the right to raise flags. This strict rule only changed during the **French Revolution**. With nations' growing awareness of liberty, the flag came to be regarded more and more as a **political symbol** and no longer – as previously – just as a **national symbol**. Political movements took over the flag as the symbol for their followers. A great number of the flags in the Americas, for example, had their origin in the flags of liberation movements and revolutions.

Individual citizens' need also grew more and more to raise their country's flag on their property so that one day no ban of any kind helped any more and instead rules for flagging were introduced. Nowadays, **strict rules** apply on land and also on water on the showing of flags and almost all countries in the world comply with them.

The **hour of birth** of our present national flag was in **March 1949**. After a flag committee of the Parliamentary Council had discussed a large number of ideas and designs for the new state since 1948, in March 1949 they voted for the "black – red – gold" flag.

Way back since the **Hambach Festival** in **1832**, at which 30,000 participants had called for German unity, the black – red – gold flag has been regarded as the **symbol** of the German **movement for unity and liberty**.

Nowadays, all states of the world have their national flag. In some countries a distinction is made between the **national flag** – which every citizen may show – and what is known as the **state or official flag**, which may only be flown by the state authorities or their representatives.

The national flag is nowadays a **revered symbol** in all countries of the world, its colours are regarded as the **national colours**. It is **respected** and held in **honour**. Everywhere it is shown the **respect** due to it as one of the country's **highest symbols**.