



4TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM OF GENEALOGY, HERALDRY, AND VEXILLOLOGY (ICGHV4)

June 5 2025, Vilnius, Lithuania, www.icghv.com

Theme: “Heads of State: Ancestry, Coats of Arms, and Flags”



A FLAG FIT FOR AN ANCIENT KINGDOM. SYMBOLS, HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN NEWLY INDEPENDENT NORWAY

Doc Dr Jan Oskar Engene (Norway)

Summary (in English)

In 1905 Norway and Sweden parted ways, ending a union between the two countries that had lasted since 1814. Upon independence Norway continued to fly the national flag created in 1821, a modern tricolour in Scandinavian cross design. The new kingdom would need a royal flag. This was no secondary issue, to be settled when more important matters were out of the way. Rather it was publicly discussed alongside questions related to the form of government and the question of who would be offered the throne. As the process turned out, the national flag was rejected as the basis for a royal flag. Instead, a heraldic banner of the national coat was adopted as the royal flag – without any dynastic references. This presentation uses the public debate as found in newspapers to explain this. The argument is that the flag of 1821, though highly respected, was unable to convey the dominant sense of national identity at the time of independence. The flag of 1821 was unable to represent the idea that though Norway’s independence was just recent, the country’s history was centuries old and what happened in 1905 was the restoration to independence of a monarchy with a golden past, in the 11th and 12th centuries, and that the symbols of the kingdom should also be found there.

CV: Jan Oskar Engene, dr. polit. Associate Professor, Department of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen, Norway. Former Head of Department. Former Associate Dean for Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bergen. Board member, Norwegian Heraldry Society. Former board member Nordic Flag Society & former editor Nordisk Flaggkontakt. Fellow of FIAV, International Federation of Vexillological Associations. Recipient of Robert De Caluwé Award.