



SOUTHERN AFRICAN VEXILLOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
FLAG SPECIFICATION SHEET

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Stellaland

National flag 1882 - 1884

HISTORY AND SYMBOLISM CONTD.

Sir Charles despatched it to the Reverend John Mackenzie in Cape Town, who proclaimed Stellaland as part of Bechuanaland. The British government disapproved of this decision, however, and Graham Bower, imperial secretary to the High Commissioners for South Africa, returned the flag to Vryburg. There it was once more hoisted by the so - called Van Niekerk party, which represented only part of the population. After Van Niekerk's return to the Transvaal, the flag was handed to Captain Trotter, who forwarded it to Charles Warren, who in turn sent it to the Colonial Office in London. It is amazing that after all these wanderings the flag ultimately did reach it's intended destination, Queen Victoria.

In February 1934 C.T. Te Water, High Commissioner of the Union of South Africa in London, wrote to Sir John Hanbury - William that one of his assistants had discovered the Stellaland flag in Windsor Castle. He enquired whether any value was attached to it there and, if not, whether it could not be returned to South Africa. The matter was discussed with King George V, who declared that he should be happy to hand the flag back to South Africa. He expressed the hope that it would be conserved with great care and displayed in a well - known public place. In that way it came to the Transvaal Museum and , ultimately, to the Cultural History and Open Air Museum in Pretoria.

An unsolved question is why most sources describe the flag as green with a white five - pointed star when the only remaining example is red and green with the star eight - pointed. Red had been the colour of the Mankoroane Volunteers and it may be that the adding of this colour to the flag was a gesture of appeasement, while a comet in Heraldry is more likely to be depicted with eight points than with five.

In the Town Hall of Vryburg, the old capital of Stellaland, an entirely different flag has been preserved. It is 1.39 x 2.25m in size and prominently displayed behind glass in a show case. The flag is green and on it appears the Stellaland coat of arms. This is as follows:

Quarterly, 1 argent, a bustard (*korhaan*), wings expanded, its left leg held by a right hand extending out of a sleeve from the sinister, all proper; 2 vert, a mullet argent; 3 azure, a pair of scales argent; 4 gules, two fishes naiant per pale argent, the one in base contournée, both pierced by a sword pointed downwards or. Crest: A mullet argent, radiant or, resting direct on the shield. Motto: *Genxpend en regtvaardig* ("Armed and Just").

According to a letter from the Vryburg Town Clerk, the meaning is as follows. The bustard represents Mankoroane, defeated by the volunteers (the hand holding it by the leg). The mullet (five - pointed star) on green is the national flag. The scales symbolise justice and indicate hope. The fishes are for the Batlapin tribe and red was the colour of the ribbons which the Mankoroane volunteers wore round their hats.

On 13 June 1884, Cecil John Rhodes officially replaced John Mackenzie as Commissioner of Bechuanaland, and worked zealously to have Bechuanaland annexed by the Cape Colony. A compromise was possible with Stellaland, but Goshen resisted.

In the meantime Rhodes, with the concurrence of Stellaland, reached an agreement on 8 August 1884, to have it declared a British territory. The following resolution was then drafted by the Stellaland Executive on 21 August 1884: "The Bestuur of Stellaland, being informed that Bechuanaland, including Stellaland, is about to be proclaimed a Crown Colony, and that it is the intention of his Excellency, Major General Sir Charles Warren, K.C.C.G., To proceed to England within a few days, requests that he may be pleased to take the accompanying flag, being the Standard of Stellaland, in his charge, and present the same, on behalf of the Bestuur and the Public of Stellaland, to Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen, praying, that she may be pleased to keep us under her protection.

WE Lee,
Gov. Secretary"

Rhodes, the champion of British Imperialism, aspired to an united South Africa under the British flag. Furthermore, Bechuanaland which was referred to as the *Suez Canal*, or Missionary road to the North - had to remain open. This principal clashed with the Afrikaner ideal of 'Africa for the Afrikaners' and in 1879 the recently formed *Afrikaner Bond*, under Rev. SJ du Toit, advocated a united South Africa, under a free flag.

These principles clashed in Bechuanaland and the attempts by both to gain possession of the latter territory, led to a rapid undoing of the two Republics of Stellaland and Goshen. Bechuanaland became a Crown Colony, while in September 1885, the territory north of the Malopo, to 22 degrees South Latitude and 20 degrees West Latitude , became a British Protectorate under the *Union Jack*. The two Republics then disappeared from the scene.

Source: "The History of the flags of South Africa before 1900" by JA Van Zyl, published as SAVA Journal SJ:4/95
"The riddle of the Stellaland flag" by Dr C. Pama, published in the Flag Bulletin, vol XXII, May - August 1993 www.savaflags.org.za