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BOOK SERIES
International Color Guide
Tektronix Color Connection™

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If you can dream it up, we’ve got a way to get you there. For more than 15 years, Tektronix has built the future of color printing, helping businesses move from black-and-white to cutting-edge color. Our successes were earned early, amidst the exacting needs of the graphic design and engineering communities. Our next-generation printers have expanded on those achievements, making color printing easier and more affordable than ever before. And making Tektronix the standard for network color printing around the world.

Whether it’s solid ink or color laser, Tektronix color printers boast record-setting speeds, reliable customer support, and award-winning color quality — year after year. Simply put, color communicates. And Tektronix color makes sure people communicate more effectively, the world over.

To learn more about Tektronix color printer products, visit our website at www.tektronix.com/Color_Printers/. Or, in the U.S. and Canada, call us toll-free: 1-800-835-6100, Monday – Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (PST).

Tektronix Up Close
Founded in 1946
Headquartered in Oregon
8,630 employees worldwide
Sales and support in more than 75 countries
$2.1 billion in sales
THE COLOR CONNECTION BOOK SERIES
International Color Guide
Colors mean different things in different cultures. In Western countries, black signifies death and is worn during times of mourning; but, in Egypt, it represents rebirth. The color combination red and white has religious significance in India, is associated with festivals in Japan, and implies national pride in Poland.

Obviously, no businessperson could possibly understand the meaning of every color in every culture. But poor color choices can make products, packaging, and advertising confusing or offensive. As companies continue to become more global, and products and messages cross national borders, it is important to familiarize yourself with the symbolism of color.

At Tektronix, we want to help you use color accurately and effectively. That’s why we produced this International Color Guide, a must-have for any business with international interests.

The International Color Guide delves into 18 cultures and provides an overview of the symbolism of color within them. It is based on the ambitious research of Surya Vanka, associate professor of art and design at the University of Illinois. Vanka is an expert on the international attributes of color and is the author of “ColorTool: Cross-Cultural Meanings of Color,” interactive multimedia software that designers can use to inquire, specify, and evaluate color choices for products to be marketed internationally. For more information: www.colortool.com.

Tektronix, Inc. was honored to work with Professor Vanka, and we hope you find this guide useful as you explore the world of color.
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British color tradition is rooted in the country’s rich history and culture.

The centerpiece of the British flag — called the Union Jack — is the red cross of St. George, who is the country’s patron saint.

The royal blue and white cross symbolizes St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. The Union Jack flag was created in 1600, when England and Scotland were united.
British royalty has always influenced color usage in Britain. “Royal” colors, deeply saturated hues such as purples, blues, reds and greens, have found their way into all corners of British life, even on buses and mailboxes. Dull colors, those worn by peasants in ancient times, are still associated with commoners.

In the 1950s, paint colors began to catch up with the dye colors that had long been available, and British buildings began to appear in an entire range of colors, from grays to reds, from yellows to blues and greens.

As in most countries, the colors of the flag figure prominently: Royal blue and red speak both of the monarchy and of Britain’s democratic government.

In Stuart Britain, white was the color of death and burial; of an unmarried man or woman; or for a woman that dies during birth. In Tudor Britain, however, white stood for purity, faith, truth and sincerity. Today, brides wear white, and Yorkshire fishermen are superstitious about wearing it.

Red is a male color in Britain. In Tudor Britain, flame red was for lovers, while dark red represented those who were long in love. Scarlet represents royalty and state officials, and is said to have warming and cooling properties, so it is used in sickrooms. Red is also the color of livery.

In Tudor England, brides of high societal rank wore a gold dress. Perfect yellow is used to represent joy and honor, or it can stand for jealousy and fading love. Gold has royal associations through its use in crowns, jewelry and other regalia.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Orange represents love.

In Tudor Britain, peasants wore browns and blacks because the dyes used in more beautiful clothes were expensive. Brown can stand for autumn or despair, and a reddish-brown speaks of steadfastness.

In Tudor Britain, violet was the color of mourning, as well as the color of religious fervor. Today, purple is another royal color.

In the 1950s, paint colors began to catch up with the dye colors that had long been available, and British buildings began to appear in an entire range of colors, from grays to reds, from yellows to blues and greens.

As in most countries, the colors of the flag figure prominently: Royal blue and red speak both of the monarchy and of Britain’s democratic government.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Orange represents love.
The Chinese have a classic love of color and have used it abundantly throughout their cultural history. Red, the primary color of the flag, is also one of the most important colors in China, not only representing the country symbolically, but also standing for good fortune and happiness.
China has its own alchemical tradition linked to color: yellow for earth, white for metal, blue-green for wood, red for fire, and black for water. Each color also corresponds to an animal, a part of the body, a season, a planet, and a compass point.

Historically, each of China’s Dynasties was associated with a specific color: brown for the Sung dynasty, green for the Ming, and yellow for the Ching. Color coding continued in the first flag of the Chinese Republic where it represented various ethnic groups.

Red has been an especially significant color in China. It has been used in wedding ceremonies, during revolutions, and in everyday life to promote good luck and joy.

For the Chinese, white represents the west, autumn, metal, and mourning. White gifts are associated with funerals, and a woman never wears white unless she is in deep mourning. On the Chinese stage a dignified person wears a white face, while a comedian usually has a white nose.

Yellow was the symbol of earth and was emblematic of the Yin principle. Tradition says that if clouds are yellow, prosperity would follow.

For the Chinese, brown was the color of the Sung dynasty.

Black signifies the North, yin, winter, water, and the Tortoise — one of four spiritually endowed animals in the country. Black jade is traditionally used in burial to pay respects to the north. Black-colored gifts are associated with funerals. Black clothes are not worn when visiting during New Year. For the Chinese, red represents the sun, the phoenix, fire, summer, the south, joy, good fortune and happiness. It is the luckiest of all colors. Bright red envelopes are used to present gifts of money in China. On the Chinese stage, a character with a red face was a sacred person.

In China, blue represents the heavens, the east, clouds, the Azure Dragon of the East, spring, and wood. Blue-colored gifts are associated with funerals in China. Blue has been emblematic for centuries of workers’ uniforms; Chinese peasants universally dressed in blue. Blue is also the accepted clothing color for adult men and middle-aged women.

For the Chinese, green takes the same symbolism as blue, with which it is interchangeable. It represents the blue or green dragon, spring, the east, wood, and also water. Green is the color of the Ming Dynasty, and of jade, which is considered lucky.

In Chinese art, black on yellow signifies a religious element; yellow on black represents an old man’s death.
In Columbia, colors connect the physical world and the peoples who occupy it through long-held traditions.

Each color in the Colombian flag has a powerful and even graphic significance. Gold represents the golden land of South America, which is separated from bloody Spanish rule by the beautiful blue sea. Today, the colors of the country’s Liberal and Conservative parties — red and blue — are also represented in the flag.

South American liberator Simon Bolivar carried the Colombian colors during all of his battles to eliminate Spanish rule from this area.
North, south, east and west are as connected to color in Colombia as is a citizen’s well-being. Among the Cagaba, the indigenous people of the country, east is white and therefore good; west is black and therefore bad. North, the direction from which natives believed illness came from, is also bad. South is red and is a color of good.

According to Colombian folk beliefs, illnesses also have color, no matter what direction they came from. Light-colored illnesses — white, red and yellow — are curable, while dark-colored illnesses — black, blue and green — are incurable. For instance, fevers are red. Extreme weight or strength loss, on the other hand, are black or blue conditions.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Orange represents love.
Egypt

Egypt is an ancient land with rich and powerful color traditions.

The flag’s use of red, white and black reference Egypt’s revolution, its promising future and the dark days the country has left behind, respectively. But green is still considered to be the country’s national color.

Since it obtained independence in 1923, Egypt has had four different flags that included green, white, red, and black in various combinations.
Ancient color traditions in Egypt have made the transition to the modern world in this country. Camels in the desert wore — and still wear — red tassels as charms; today, red is still considered lucky. Ancient pharaohs wore a white crown to represent their rule over Upper Egypt, and a red gown to signify rule over Lower Egypt. Blue was a mourning color in ancient Egypt, and it remains the color of death today.

But new color traditions have emerged as well. Green, a sacred color for Muslims, is now the national color of the country. But don’t create packaging or mail packages in green: It’s not well-regarded.

White is a color of status; ancient pharaohs wore a white crown which represented their rule over the land.

Black is a color of the preparation of rebirth, not of death. On the flag, it signifies the end of oppression.

In ancient Egypt, red was the color of the god who separated earth and sky. Red is considered a lucky charm.

Yellow conveys happiness and good fortune. Yellow and red are wedding colors. Yellow ochre was used by the ancient Egyptians to cosmetically lighten their skin.

Dark blue is a mourning color. Blue beads have been worn by some Egyptians, and animals have been adorned with blue beads or cloth, all as charms against evil.

The national color, green should not be used on packages. It is a sacred color among Muslims. Green can mean fertility, vegetation, rain and strength.

Purple denotes virtue and faith in Egypt.
Ethiopian colors are so provocative, they have come to represent African identity as a whole.

The only African country that was never under Western rule, Ethiopia has a flag with colors that have become symbolic of independence on the continent. The colors have been adopted by many other freedom seekers in Africa.

The red in its flag stands for faith and power; yellow stands for peace, church, love and natural wealth; and green, land and hope.
Among other things, yellow symbolizes natural wealth in the Ethiopian flag. It’s the wealth of the environment and the arts and crafts that arise from these resources that present such a beautiful color palette in the country.

The palette is rich: delicious coffees; art crafted from gold, silver and amber; thick carpets and intricate baskets woven from natural fibers; and detailed carvings in native woods. Ethiopia’s varied scenery also adds to the mix: Everything from mountains and tropical forests to savannas and deserts offer their hues. Add to that the more than 80 ethnic populations and their traditions and languages, and a complex rainbow of color presents itself.

For the Amhara, a native population in Ethiopia, white skin coloring suggests illness or being underfed. But the Amhara wear white robes, as the color also suggests spiritual purity.

European skin color is seen as red in Ethiopia. Red in the flag stands for faith and power.

This color combination, from the Ethiopian flag, has become the intercontinental color triad of Africa.

Black suggests spiritual impurity or anything that is unpleasant or depressed.

Most Amhara would describe their own skin color as brown, which they see as preferable to black. Brown is prevalent in many Ethiopian crafts, baskets, wood carvings, and other products.

Blue and green are not differentiated by the Amhara. Green in the Ethiopian flag means hope.

Yellow is the color of special mourning, worn by monks who are in constant mourning for the passing of Christ. Rich gold and amber (as well as silver) are emblematic of many Ethiopian metal crafts.

Yellow is the color of special mourning, worn by monks who are in constant mourning for the passing of Christ. Rich gold and amber (as well as silver) are emblematic of many Ethiopian metal crafts.

Photos courtesy of PhotoDisc, Inc.
Vibrant colors in art, crafts, clothing, and more are a hallmark of everyday Indian life.

India became independent in 1947 and created a flag built on the flag colors of the Indian National Congress — orange, white and green horizontal stripes, with a blue wheel at its center. The white stripe at center represents peace between the country's two main religious groups: the Hindi, represented by orange, and the Muslims, represented by green.

The blue spinning wheel graphic at the center of the flag is the blue Chakra, a Buddhist symbol representative of change.
India is a land of vivid, saturated color. Red and green is a common color combination for clothing; yellow and red are traditional colors for weddings. Most colors have religious meanings that are strictly respected. Green is sacred for the Muslim and Parsi religions, while orange or saffron is meaningful for the Hindi.

The Hindu religion says there are three basic constituents in the world called gunas. Sattva is a white guna representing calmness, brightness and luminosity. Rajas is red and stands for passion and energy. The black guna, Tamas, represents anger and sloth.

Black is a strictly sanctioned color; orange is the most sacred. Black saris are poorly regarded at happy occasions like weddings, and only the most holy get to wear orange.

White means chastity and purity. For the Hindi, the Brahmin — the highest social caste — is associated with white. Hindu religious leaders cover themselves with white ashes to represent their spiritual rebirth. White is also the color of mourning.

Yellow is a very popular color in India. It represents the god Vishnu and is the color of the space between chastity and sensuality. Yellow clothes are worn and yellow food is eaten at spring festivals. Single girls wear yellow to attract a mate and keep evil spirits away.

Red indicates both sensuality and purity. Wedding garments are typically red and yellow. Green is sacred in both Muslim and Parsi religions. For the Hindu, it is a festive color. In Maharashtra, it represents life and happiness. For that reason, a widow does not wear green.

Photos courtesy of PhotoDisc, Inc.
In Iran, color and its associations are taken very seriously, as they are firmly tied to religious traditions.

Green, red and white are three special colors in Islam, and they have come to be found on the country’s flag. White is believed to be the main color worn by the Prophet Mohammed; red represents the red of sunset; and green, the most sacred, is the color of the Prophet’s turban.

The central device of the Iranian flag is a sword and four crescents. The crescents stand for the word “Allah,” as they resemble the Arab writing of the word. The five parts of the mark symbolize the five principles of Islam.
Color must be used with care in Iran, as it stirs strong emotional and political feelings among the country’s citizens. Iran’s flag and religion are tied together by color and history; the emotion behind each is unmistakable.

Color also has a strong traditional presence in Iran: For example, in Parsi religious ceremonies, a tray of seven multi-colored herbs are used to guard people against evil. Black poppy seeds break spells and ward off witchcraft; brown wild rice, grayish-green angelica, white salt and green leaves remove the evil eye; and milky-white frankincense burns evil spirits.

The connection between color and the natural and spiritual worlds is unmistakable.

White is a sacred color, believed to be the main color worn by the Prophet Mohammed. White is also symbolic of peace.

Black is a mourning color in Iran. The wearing of black clothing during mourning is strictly dictated. Red and reddish-yellow are favorable colors, signalling good fortune. Red is also symbolic of courage.

Traditionally, purple is a color of what is to come. A sun or moon that looks purple during an eclipse is an omen of bloodshed within the year.

As it is believed by some to offer protection from the “evil eye,” blue is a favorable color.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Orange represents love.

The connection between color and the natural and spiritual worlds is unmistakable.

In Iran, purple is the color of what is to come. A sun or moon that looks purple during an eclipse is an omen of bloodshed within the year. Yellow is an inauspicious color; it can signal disgrace. Some believe a yellow-tinged rainbow is a foreboding of illness.

As it is believed by some to offer protection from the “evil eye,” blue is a favorable color.

The connection between color and the natural and spiritual worlds is unmistakable.

The combination of these two colors represents the religious and cultural identity of the people of Iran.

This mix of colors stirs nationalistic feelings in Iran.

Green signals joy. It was the color of the Prophet Mohammed.
The use of both soft and intense colors are visceral signals in the Japanese color tradition.

Japan’s flag is a graphical representation of its title as “The Land of the Rising Sun.” The sun disk at the flag’s center is so recognizable and simple that it has become a symbol for Japan the world round.

The use of red in the flag represents life and vitality. Symbolically, the color is also regarded to have the power to ward off evil.
Colors in Japan are often used for their emotional meanings rather than for their simple visceral effects. The Japanese have two ways of regarding color: Shibui avoids contrasting colors through the use of grayed-down tones, off-whites, beiges, and soft mauves and greens. Kabuki, on the other hand, is identified with contrasting, bright, theatrical colors.

In Japan, black is a mysterious color, speaking of night, the unknown, even non-existence. It is a solemn, sometimes unlucky color. In Japan, orange is regarded as the color of love.

In Japan, blue is representative of the theater, supernatural creatures, ghosts and villains. In Japan, blue is representative of the theater, supernatural creatures, ghosts and villains.

Pink is considered to be a happy, positive color in Japan. In Japan, pink is considered to be a happy, positive color in Japan.

Green is a positive color, signifying life, eternal life, and energy. Olive green symbolizes dignity. In Japan, green is a positive color, signifying life, eternal life, and energy. Olive green symbolizes dignity.

In Japan, orange is regarded as the color of love. In Japan, orange is regarded as the color of love.

Red represents life and vitality. It can indicate unexpected beauty, but is also recognized as unstable, capable of swinging to areas of vulgarity or excess. Some Japanese believe that red can ward off evil.

The combination of red and white speaks of celebration and happiness, linking power and rebirth, signifying the life force. The combination of red and white speaks of celebration and happiness, linking power and rebirth, signifying the life force.

Red is probably the most meaningful color in Japan. The “hi-no-maru,” the red sun disk at the center of the flag, is the strongest color symbol; set in a field of white, it is immediately identifiable as the emblem of Japan. The two colors used together symbolically links the sacred and earthly planes, combining the color of the gods with the color of life.

Purple is widely considered to be the color of nobility. It is not worn at weddings because it fades quickly and can be associated with pornography. Purple is widely considered to be the color of nobility. It is not worn at weddings because it fades quickly and can be associated with pornography.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Pink is considered to be a happy, positive color in Japan.

Black is often unlucky, but not when it is paired with red. This color combination represents sexuality. Black is often unlucky, but not when it is paired with red. This color combination represents sexuality.
Melanesia

Color symbolism in warm, tropical Melanesia is a reflection of the area’s environment.

The design of the Papua New Guinea flag (one of the regions of Melanesia) reflects the two populations it represents — the formerly German settlement of New Guinea and the Australian mandated Solomon Islands. The bird of paradise, a popular local emblem, is combined with native colors and the Australian stars.

Black, red, yellow and white are the colors of the Papua New Guinea flag. Red and yellow are the primary colors of celebration for this area; black and white are ritual colors.
Melanesia includes the regions of Papua New Guinea and the islands of the southwest Pacific, including Fiji, Trobriand Island, Admiralty Island, and the Solomon Islands. This lush landscape offers a profusion of colors and sources for color traditions for the area's inhabitants.

The people of Papua New Guinea borrow from the environment for dances and other celebrations. Clays are used for face paint, and grasses, flowers, leaves, shells and feathers are used for body decoration.

Bright shades of red and yellow figure prominently in celebrations, as does black. A person’s face painted red is a sign of status and power; black speaks of beauty.

In New Guinea, white signifies wealth and prosperity. On Trobriand Island, whiteness means excellence. White is also associated with women in their first pregnancy and to all new babies. White signifies newness and cleanliness.

In New Guinea, red is sacred. It represents virility, war and favorable descent. Some groups believe that red is a male color, whereas others see it as female. Red also represents sexual desire.

In New Guinea, orange represents love.

In Papua New Guinea, gray is a mourning color. Certain tribesmen adorn their faces with gray clay to represent death and spirits.

Yellow, in some tribes, is a festive color. Combined with black and red, yellow is a traditionally popular color.

Blue has colonial associations in Melanesia because of its association with the British Union Jack.

Red and yellow are the foremost colors for celebrations.

Red and white are used for ritual decorations.

White and a tannish-brown have a festive association.
Mexico’s color palette is a mix of historical associations and the environment’s deeply toned offerings.

The colors of the Mexican flag are long-lived. First used in 1821, the colors are all symbolic: Green represents independence or hope; white stands for purity and unity; and red stands for the blood of patriots and other heroes. The colors also mirror those found in different areas of the Mexican landscape.

The flag’s centerpiece, the national emblem of Mexico, is drawn from the symbol of the Aztec capital, which translates to “cactus rock.”
Where the sun is full, colors tend to be rich, deep and vivid. Mexico’s color traditions certainly reflect its environment: the deep blue sky, the yellow sun, the warm colors of the sand and dirt, the greens of vegetation.

The Aztecs had very definite meanings for color: Green stood for royalty, blue was for sacrifice, and yellow was for food. Dark blue is a common color for mourning clothes. For the Aztec, blue represented sacrifice.

In some areas, yellow is the color of mourning. Yellow marigolds are grown only in cemeteries. The Aztecs used yellow to represent food.

Among the Aztecs, white meant death. Today, white is considered to be pure and have the ability to cure sickness and fight black magic. White also has religious connotations.

In Mexico, red and white have religious significance, sometimes representing the Sacred Heart of the Catholic church.

Today, colors are more centered on cultural conventions. Bright reds and yellows signal a fiesta, while red and white have more somber, religious connotations, symbolic of the passion of Christ and purity. White alone is somewhat magical, imbued with the power to fight black magic and prevent illness. Green has come to stand for national independence.

Red is thought by some to have protective capabilities. If a person passed a house where someone was very ill or had died, he or she would cover his nose and mouth with a red handkerchief. Red also stands for unity.

The Mayans associate green with luck. The Aztecs regarded green as royal. Today, green as a national color, stands for independence.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Orange represents love.
Ancient Maori culture and art drives the color traditions of present-day New Zealand.

New Zealand’s flag is a graphic representation of its history. The Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner hearkens back to the country’s days as a British colony, as do the flag’s colors.

The four stars stand for the Southern Cross, a small but beautiful constellation shaped like a cross which is most visible in the southern hemisphere.
With no written language, the early Maori (the original inhabitants of New Zealand), recorded their history in art. Stone and bone carving, weaving with flax, painting on stones and even the art form of tattooing were passed from generation to generation, and with them, the favored color traditions.

Red is a sacred color in New Zealand even today, and green is favored as well. Black, red ochre and white or silver are considered to be the country’s national colors. Blue has long been a color for personal adornment: The Maori use a blue earth called pukepoto to decorate their faces. Another modern-day convention with roots in the environment: The Maori word for orange—parakarka—alludes to the ripe berries of the karaka tree.

The Maori do not distinguish yellow as a particular color and usually call it red.

Blue is frequently used by the Maori to decorate their faces.

The Maori consider red and green to be colors of celebration.

Red ochre is a national color of New Zealand.

The Maori believe red to be a powerful, sacred color. The Oceanic peoples feel that red stands for nobility and divinity. In general, red denotes hard work and achievement.

A holdover from British rule, red and gold are associated with knighthood.

The Maori use white as the color of surrender. The color also has patriotic associations.
Colors have meaning in nearly every aspect of everyday life in Nigeria today.

Nigeria’s flag, adopted in 1960 when the country became independent from British rule, was chosen from entries submitted to a competition. The winning entry, submitted by a student, represents in green and white the Nigerian land being crossed by the Niger River.

The Nigerian flag colors are also interpreted to symbolize agriculture (green), and peace and unity (white).
Colors have definite and significant meaning in Nigerian society. A color like red can have an entire palette of meanings: prosperity, vitality, aggression. Black, on the other hand, has more limited connotations: it is almost universally considered a frightening color.

White is a meaningful shade, especially for followers of the Yoruba religion. The color is associated with deities and peace, as well as with the afterlife. Yoruba believers wear white clothes and regard albinos to be people specially chosen by God.

Black is a powerful color, and red is considered by some to be dangerous. A cool, bright blue, on the other hand, has positive attributes.
The color traditions of Peru’s indigenous people drive the country’s modern conventions as well.

In the center of the flag is a shield with images of a cinchona tree (the source for quinine), a llama, and a yellow cornucopia filled with coins, all framed by a green wreath.

Peru has had several different flags, but most have been red and white, colors chosen by a national hero during the country’s war for independence.
The indigenous peoples of Peru, the Quechua, Aymara, and Tupac Katari among them, weave cloths that are highly symbolic of their spiritual lives. The color and pattern of the weaving can identify where it was woven, the cloth’s function, as well as the user’s gender and social status.

The Tupac Katari honor a complexly-patterned flag, which is square and consists of 49 squares of red, orange, yellow, white, green, purple, blue, light blue, pink, dark red, coffee, lead, ochre, black and light green. Each color has its own special meaning.

Color symbolism is evident in Peruvian funerals. A pink and white wreath is seen at a service for a single person or child. A black, purple and green is used in wreaths for married people.

White wreaths are used at the funerals of single persons or children. White is a color associated with angels, good health, and time. White used with red have patriotic connotations.

Black is a funeral color, associated with grief and mourning. Black is also the favored color of clothing for men.

Orange should not be used in any memorial arrangements. The Tupac Katari Indians associate orange with society and culture.

Green can be symbolic of economy for the Tupac Katari.

For the Tupac Katari Indians of Peru, blue stands for space. A woman who wears a blue shawl is either engaged or married.

Red is the color for children and unmarried people. Red can symbolize a healthy soul, and for some native peoples, it is symbolic of the earth. Red combined with white has patriotic connotations.

For some native populations, gray is the funeral color.
South Africans refer to their country as the “rainbow nation” because of its many ethnic groups.

South Africa’s present flag incorporates elements from other flags, including those of Britain, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal (the last two were original independent settlements in South Africa). The use of orange and blue hearkens back to a previous flag, and strips of black, green and yellow refer to the flag of the African National Congress.

South Africans refer to their land as the “rainbow nation,” because of its mix of ethnicities and cultures. Many call their flag the “rainbow flag.”
The original people of South Africa, the Zulus, use black, red and white in particular in their personal decoration and medicines. Black and red are almost synonymous; they represent both good and evil. White alone is representative of good. Whenever black or red is used, it must be followed with white.

Zulus do not like black and consider dark greens and blues to be black. Black beads stand for darkness.

Blue symbolizes a happy dove. Zulus classify dark blue as black, and clear blue as white.

In China, purple is worn by literary and educated figures. Orange represents love.

Green represents the sea, nature, water and the sky. It also can signify that something is raw or unripe. Green can also represent illness.

For the Zulus, the color white stands for goodness and power. White beads symbolize love.

For the Zulus, yellow beads are a symbol of wealth.

Pink beads, for the Zulus, represent poverty.

Red can be either a sign of misfortune or blessing. Red beads represent the red eyes of a distraught lover.

Zulus also use colored medicines to treat what they see as spiritual illnesses: The cures are used to rebalance the individual with his or her environment. Black and red medicines drive badness from the body and strengthen it against future illness. White medicines help the body to regain its health.

Zulus give black medicines to strengthen a person after a death in the family or other misfortune; they follow with a white medicine to take away the effects of the black.

These colors are symbolically important and are strictly used in this order. Black and red stand equally for goodness and badness; white represents good. Wherever black or red is used, it must be followed with white.
Tibet’s rich spiritual life relies on colors to express symbolism on the human plane.

Two lions at the bottom of the Tibetan flag support a “wishing gem,” a symbol of sacred Buddhist law. Above this symbol are flames, representing Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, three revered figures in Tibet. Above this is a golden sun, symbolizing freedom and prosperity. The color of the stripes stand for two protective deities: blue for the female deity, red for the male.

The white triangle is symbolic of a snow-covered mountain, suggesting Tibet’s geographic location. The green and white lines stand for co-existing rule between earthly and spiritual law, respectively.
In Tibet, colors have strong connections to many aspects of everyday life—aspects of nature, human emotions, even the days of the week. Often these connections merge, adding layer upon layer of meaning on a single color.

For example, Monday and Wednesday are blue, a color associated with water. Tuesday and Sunday are red and are related to fire. Thursday is white and is related to air. Saturday and Friday are yellow—Saturday is related to the earth and Friday is neutral.

The next layer of meaning involves human emotions: Red days are angry. Blue and white days point toward good fortune. Blue Wednesday and yellow Saturday are good days to receive payments. Friday, again, is neither good nor bad.

White is the color of the East and is related to goodness, purity, and the concept of air or space. Symbolically, the lion and the wheel are also related to white. White can also be representative of the religious or spiritual worlds.

Yellow is the color of the North. It represents religious persons or life; the earth; and the complexion of a mild god. It is linked symbolically with the horse and the jewel. The golden sun in the flag represents freedom, happiness and prosperity.

In Tibet, blue is the color of the East (and sometimes the South), air, the elephant and the thunderbolt. Light blue suggests celestial beings. The color blue in the Tibetan flag symbolizes a female deity, a special guardian of the flag.

Green is the color of the North. Green is associated with water, rebirth, and a crossed thunderbolt. Green also can be representative of the earth.

Red is the color of the West. Red is related to light, fire, anger, and the complexion of fierce gods. Symbolically, the peacock and the red lotus are linked with red. The color red in the Tibetan flag symbolizes a male deity, a special guardian of the flag.

The sign of a religious building in Tibet is a crimson, maroon and white flag not in this orientation.
Vibrant color and patterns mark Ukrainian color traditions, to the delight of the country’s citizens.

The colors in the Ukrainian flag represent golden fields of grain under a clear blue sky, appropriate for a country known as the “bread basket” of its area.

The Ukrainian flag was light blue over yellow prior to the establishment of the Soviet Republic.
Ukrainian Pysanky Easter eggs, the colorful, patterned shapes known around the world, contain much of the country’s color traditions. Native artisans produce wonderful designs that tell rich stories of the land.

Yellow on Pysanky eggs stands for light and purity; orange, strength; black, fear and death; brown, the earth; blue, good health; white, innocence; purple, faith and trust; green, fertility or hope; and red, a color that figures prominently in folklore, represents action or awakening.

Ancient pysanky carried a message of good will or fortune to the recipient. Today, the magical eggs contain more individualized art, with more personalized symbolisms.
Like the multi-cultured, multi-hued citizens of the United States, colors of this country have many different personalities.

The red and white, equal-width stripes are representative of the country’s original 13 colonies. The blue field stands for the government, uniting the 50 states.

The 50 white stars on the American flag represent the 50 states in the union.
Perhaps due to extensive commercialism and marketing, or perhaps due to its multi-cultural history, the United States has an extensive list of color associations. From red power ties worn by businesspersons to innocent pink bows worn by baby girls, and from the green freshness of spring to the cold, crisp greenback dollar, colors present an intricate language.

White is the color of purity, holiness, innocence and silence. It is associated with weddings, truth, peace, cleanliness, emptiness or even fright.

Black is a color for mourning and for formal wear. Black is a serious color and can communicate sophistication. Black has high-tech connotations; another on-the-edge application is in clothing worn by anarchists.

Red is a provocative color in the U.S. Red can stand for warning or danger, love, courage, anger, heat, spiciness, embarrassment, sexuality, romance, Christmas, national holidays, and patriotism.

Yellow is associated with spring, joy, cowardliness, freshness, illness, caution, and the sun.

Blue is a male color; it suggests a corporate or conservative atmosphere. It is the most popular clothing color for young people. Blue can also suggest sadness, superiority (as in a first-place ribbon), freshness, calmness, water, cleanliness, winter, and coolness.

Green is the color of luck in the U.S. Green can also communicate the concepts of money, growth, jealousy, the environment, illness, spring, youth, inexperience and newness.

The color orange is related to the fall season, as well as to holidays during that time. Orange is an energetic color related to vibrancy, energy, warmth, and cheerfulness.

Purple is related to luxury, power, mystery, religion, maturity, and richness.

Pink is a feminine color, associated with rosy health, grace, gratitude, admiration, innocence, and romance.

Most prominent are those in the country’s flag, Old Glory: red, white and blue. Used in any combination — they say “patriotism.” Marketing professionals exploit this color association extensively. But in recent years, they ignore previously honored conventions: For example, black or green used to be poor choices for food packaging. Today, they are used extensively.
Simple color schemes illustrate Zambia’s art, traditions, rituals and beliefs.

In the Zambian flag, green represents agriculture and the benefits it provides; orange represents its mineral riches; black stands for the Zambian people; and red is used to recall the country’s struggles for freedom.

The flying eagle represents the Zambian peoples’ ability to rise above all problems.
Black, white and red make up a color trio that appears again and again in Zambian culture. Frequently found in traditional Zambian art, the colors are used in initiation rituals and rites of passage. Black and red are also patriotic colors, as they are found in the country’s flag.

These basic colors must be interpreted in the context in which they appear. Black usually represents evil and illness; white is for purity; and red denotes power and sexual maturation.

One explanation of the origin of this palette is that these are the only colors the Ndembu have descriptive language for. The colors are seen as powerful, even sacred colors, flowing from God and rushing through the world.
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