

Minna Henriksson

**The *Finnish* Swastika:
Sun Swirl of Happiness, Fertility and
Sexuality**

I Painting from my grandmother

When my grandmother passed away in 2008 I inherited an oil painting. I had seen it on her wall since my childhood. But only when it was taken off the wall I saw what was in the back of the canvas.

The large nazi-stamp in the linen that the artist E. Janatuinen had used for his painting, dated 1949, was still intact. Some notes by the frame maker of how the picture was to be framed, were written next to the stamp. It is obvious from the way the fabric is stretched that the artist merely used the linen fabric as his painting surface and there just happened to be a Nazi stamp. But I was astonished that regardless the historical fact of there having been a brief war (due to external pressure in defeated Finland) between Finland and Germany in the winter 1945, as result of which much of buildings in Lapland were burned, the artist working with paint and brushes on the other side of the canvas, in northern Finland in the late 40s, did not have the desire to paint over the nazi-stamp. Nor did the frame maker, who wrote notes with red chalk next to it. Nor did my grandmother who hung the painting in her living room wall and had it there until she died.

During most of WW2 Finland was ally of Germany in warfare against Russia. The north of Finland was controlled by the German Nazi troops, while the Finnish forces led the war in the south. Oulu, where my grandmother lived and where also . Janatuinen is from, is halfway in Finland, on the west coast. The largest German base camp in Finland during the war, *Waffen-SS Finnland Stützpunkt IV*, or 'Berlin', was in Oulu. So we can guess that the Nazi-symbol had become part of everyday imagery, and the in the back of the painting did not cause much distress even in 1949, only a few years after the Lapland War.

When I got possession of the painting in 2008, I also did not cover the stamp. But also I didn't hang it on my living room. Instead it became a starting point for an investigation into the swastika-symbol in Finland.



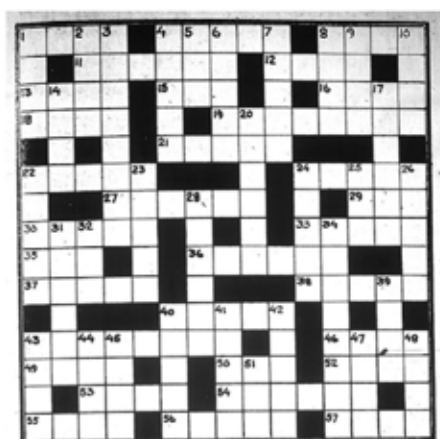
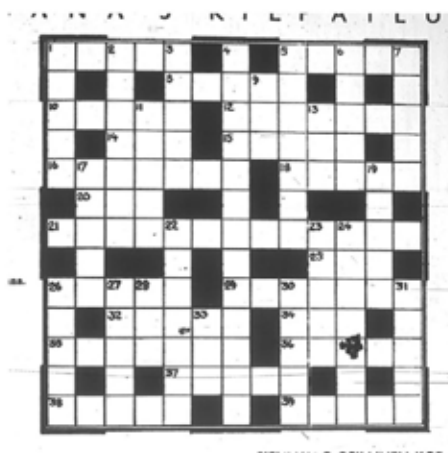


II Hidden

I was browsing through weekly *Suomen Kuvalehti* in the microfilm archives of the National Library, searching for a travelogue by writer Mika Waltari in Europe in 1939.

Waltari traveled through Denmark to Germany, and continued from there to Switzerland. Out of these three destinations, he was most impressed by Berlin, and writes (published in *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 21.1.1939):

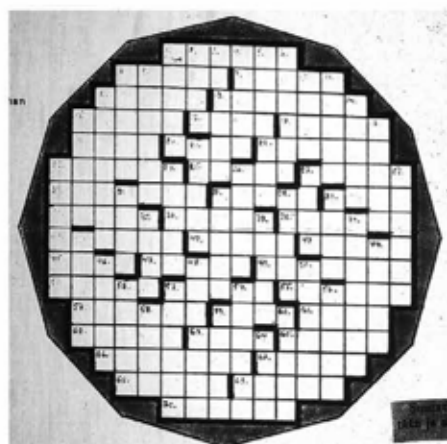
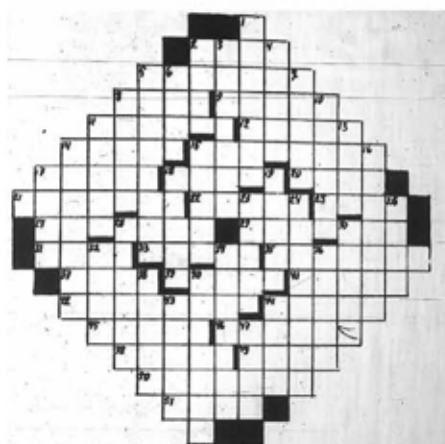
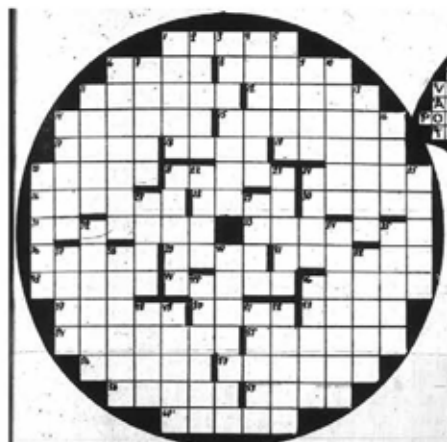
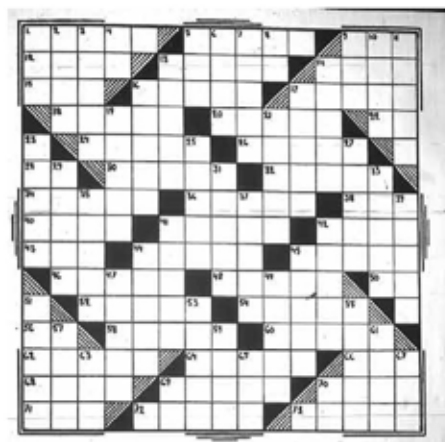
”Ten years ago in a private conversation a remark could very easily slip that ‘I guess you Finns do remember that you are in an eternal gratitude toward Germany for your freedom’. Today no one is making this kind of side-remarks hinting to a slightly repulsive gratitude-geschäft. Instead, many know that the 27th Jäger battalion fought next to the Germans on the Eastern front and they are speaking with respect and admiration about the Finnish freedom fight. This

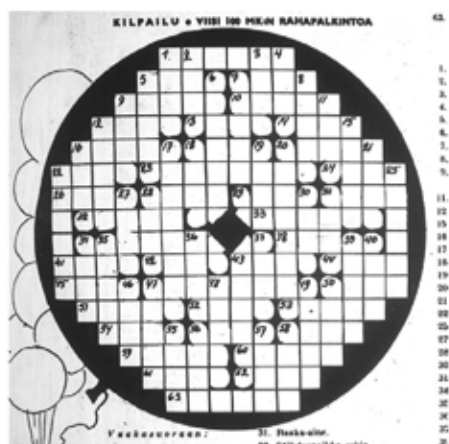
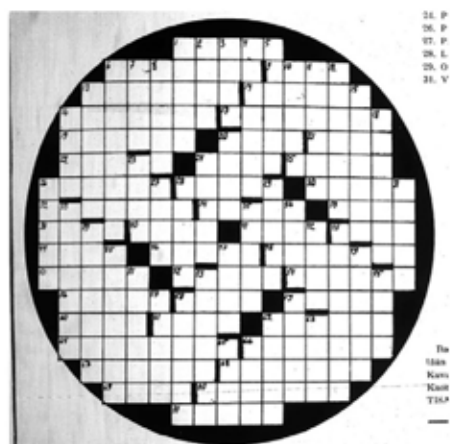


is just a small example of how and into which direction the German spiritual atmosphere has changed. Because the whole German people has changed – in such an enormous, unbelievable way, that it makes you wipe your eyes. It is a People, who believe in themselves, its young peoples posture is straight and careless, people laugh plenty and nothing is feared. Ten years ago Berlin was the spiritual dumb pit of Europe. Still today it is a city of a million, it has its continental bars and dancing places. But the stamp of hysteria has completely vanished [...] I came to Berlin a few days ago after the big Jewish riots. The only visible signs of it were the occasional boarded shop windows and an announcement glued in the entrance of every café and restaurant in Berlin and in Munich, saying: 'Entrance forbidden from Jews!' In only one joint it was pronounced: 'We do not welcome Jews here!' On the day when I arrived a big anti-Jewish exhibition was opened in the Houses of Parliament in Berlin. The queue on the door stretched for a few blocks. The magic word 'Finnish' helped me to get in directly without even needing to show my press pass."¹

I started to look at also other issues of *Suomen Kuvalehti* of the same time. I had not been aware of the amount of writings, published in Finnish language prior to and during the war, that aimed at justifying the war against Soviet Union and the expansion of Finland to Karelia and beyond, or describing the dangers of the demography of Finland, or the threat that the Jews and the Free Masons pose to Europe. There were also several glorifying photo albums of Adolf Hitler and the German Nazi-party. It seemed that the academic and

1 My translation. Original in Finnish see: *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 21.1.1939





cultural elite of Finland was mobilised for the pro-German and anti-Soviet propaganda. These issues of *Suomen Kuvalehti* from the end of 30's and early 40's were filled with fascism to such an extent that I started to think I was seeing swastikas even in the shapes of the crossword puzzles in the leisure pages.

The very first crossword puzzle in Finland was published in 1925 in *Suomen Kuvalehti*. The author has remained unknown, but used 'Suometar' (Lady Finland) as the pseudonym.

During the WW2 the crossword puzzles of *The Daily Telegraph* were used to distribute the secret code names of the planned landing sites of the 'Overlord' operation of the Allied Forces. The crossword puzzles of *Suomen Kuvalehti* from the same era also contain double meanings, but these are much more apparent than those of the Allied Forces and are only playfully disguised, in the visual forms.

III The *European swastika*

I found the book "The swastika: constructing the symbol" (Routledge London & New York 1994) by Malcolm Quinn very inspiring. It doesn't discuss the particular Finnish swastika, but in more general terms describes the central role of the sign in the core of the European-wide Aryan race ideas. From my

opinion we cannot separate the discussion of the Finnish swastika from its uses elsewhere in Europe.

Usually it is thought that it was only Hitler, who attached the symbol to Aryanism when designing the flag of the Nazi party in 1919. And only with the founding of the Third Reich in 1933, or according to the most conservative interpretations, only with the WW2 breaking in 1939, can the swastika symbol elsewhere in Europe be connected to Nazi-Germany and to all that it represents (or some dare to claim that it was only in the very end of the war, when the rest of Europe found out [read: could no longer pretend not to know] what was going on in Germany).

The radicality of Malcolm Quinn is that he manages to trace the Aryanization of the swastika to much earlier, to the archaeological excavations of Heinrich Schliemann in the Hissarlik of Turkey in 1871-75. Schliemann believed Hissarlik to be the location of the ancient Troy and connected the swastikas of the artefacts that he found there to Aryanism, because also similar symbols had been found in the territory of Germany. From this Schliemann jumped to the conclusion that the Trojans were the ancient teutonic people, proto-Aryans, and therefore the Germanic people are the most original of all peoples. Influenced by these proto-Aryans, the symbol has spread also to other cultures worldwide.

As part of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 a Polish librarian, anti-Semite, Aryanist and swastikaphile Michael Zmigrodski organized an exhibition of drawings of over 300 objects in the Palais des Artes Libéraux in Paris. The task of Zmigrodski was to promote swastika as the heraldic tool of Aryo-German family, and he interpreted the ancient swastikas as symbolic, not decorative signs. Also his interpretation differs from Schliemann's in that when for Schliemann the swastika was a symbol of *historical* Aryanism, Zmigrodski saw the swastikas found in the artefacts in Hissarlik as symbol of *eternal* and pure Aryanism.

Zmigrodski was by no means alone in claiming such meaning for the swastika symbol. Malcolm Quinn even goes as far as calling the 1880's as the decade of Aryan mania. The Aryan race discourse reached its peak in the 1880s and swastika was already then strongly connected to this race ideology. The antisemite German völkish-movements drew influence from

orientalism, which were a great inspiration also later on to Hitler in the ideological formation of the Nazi-party. The meaning of the sign as symbol of anti-Semitism and therefore the Aryan, has an uninterrupted continuity from the 1880s to the Nazi-swastika.

Famous orientalist and anti-Semite Emile Burnouf wrote to Schliemann as early as 1872: "the swastika should be regarded as a sign of the Aryan race. It should also be noted that the Jews have completely rejected it."

In his work 'Mein Kampf' in 1925 Adolf Hitler writes: "In the swastika [we see] the mission of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man, and, by the same token... the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic."

IV Aino-triptych

The Finnish national romantic painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela (originally Axel Gallén) is said to have fallen in love with swastika. He first used the symbol in the frames of the first version of the famous Kalevala-themed Aino-triptych. He painted it in Paris in 1889, in the same year as the swastika-exhibition of Zmigrodski. The painting is currently in the collections of the Bank of



Finland. It has distinctively massive wooden frames, which he designed and got made in Paris, also in 1889.

Gallen-Kallela's use of swastika in the frames is interpreted as signifying movement and rotation from evening to morning, and also the eternal return of the myth.

How did it happen that Gallen-Kallela fell in love with swastika in Paris in 1889? It is possible that he was unaware of the exhibition of Zmigrodski, and that he was uninformed about the interest in race discourse in central Europe, and employment of swastika as its central symbol. It is possible that for Gallen-Kallela, who was a Finnish nationalist, the symbol only had meaning in reference to prehistoric Finnishness. But according to the website of the Gallen-Kallela Museum the artist was also 'a bold explorer and a cosmopolitan' and it is more probable that he was aware of what was going on in the European cultural-intellectual circles.

When discussing the particular Finnish swastika, Gallen-Kallela is an important figure, not only because of his *Aino*-triptych, but also in spring 1918 during the Civil War of Finland, the artist was commissioned by Marshall Mannerheim to design the Finnish military orders. According to the popular story, in March 1918 during the Civil War of Finland Swedish count Eric von Rosen had donated an aeroplane to the Whites. This plane became the first



airplane of the Finnish Air Forces. Its wings were painted with the personal symbol of luck of von Rosen, which was a blue swastika. Gallen-Kallela took the sign (which it is said he had already fallen in love with long before, in 1889) from those wings to the military orders. This was two years before von Rosen met with Hermann Göring, with whom he befriended and got so close that eventually Göring married sister of the wife of von Rosen. And still a bit later, von Rosen became one of the central figures in the Swedish Nazi movement.

The swastika in Finland is still in use in official state symbols. It is at least in the Mannerheim cross (which is also in the corner of the President of Finland's flag), in some of the emblems of the air forces, and in the symbols of the Lotta Svärd association and the association of Finnishness.

TALVI- JA JATKOSODAN MUISTORISTIT



Commemorative crosses of the Winter War and Continuation War

A state-scandal arose when the Finnish President Urho Kaleva Kekkonen gave the Grand Cross of the Order of the White Rose to French President Charles de Gaulle in 1962 with large swastikas in the chain. There were embarrassing moments when de Gaulle tried to hide the swastikas with his jacket. Some months after this also the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal Josip Broz Tito received a swastika-chain. The next year the swastikas were already

KAULARISTIT



Vapaudenristin I. lk:n Mannerheim-risti. Risti 49 mm. Nauha 41 mm.



VR I tammenlehvän kera. Risti 4 mm. Nauha 41 mm.

Cross of liberty (left: Mannerheim Cross)



About the Lotta Svärd emblem it says in Wikipedia: "The Lotta Svärd emblem designed by Eric Wasström in 1921. It includes four heraldic roses and a swastika. The swastika motif was inspired by a symbol of luck that decorated the first aircraft in the Finnish Defence Forces, which was donated by the Swedish Count Eric von Rosen in 1918."



replaced in the chain by fir crosses. It is interesting that in this context, due to international attention, the swastika was replaced with a more neutral symbol, but in other emblems it is still kept.

I contacted the Bank of Finland with the request to access their premises to photograph the Aino-triptych hung in the 'Kuparikantasali' in the Headquarters of the Bank of Finland. The person in charge of the collections told me that he will find out whether my request is possible, and get back to me via email. A week later I received a phone call, but this time from the lawyer of the Bank of Finland. We had a long telephone conversation during which I learned about the articles in the Finnish copyright law to do with protection of classics and 'respect right', copyright law articles 52 and 53. Also we had a debate about whether we can even use the term 'swastika', or if we should use a more euphemistic word, such as 'sun swirl'. My argument was that the director of the Gallen-Kallela Museum uses the swastika-word in the context of speaking about the frame of the Aino-triptych and so we should be safe to use it too. Also during the telephone conversation the lawyer revealed to me that he happens to be one of the board members of the Gallen-Kallela foundation. He told me that in order for the Bank of Finland to be

able to even consider my request, I need to provide with a reading of the copyright law from the Ministry of Education for my project plan, attached with a detailed description of the context of the photo-documentation of the painting.

That was the beginning of a complicated bureaucratic procedure, during which the lawyer of the Bank of Finland called me a number of times, usually in the evenings, I preferred writing him emails, and I had some conversations with the Ministry of Education. Also my claims were forwarded to the director of the Gallen-Kallela Museum, who invited me to research the correspondence of Gallen-Kallela during his years in Paris with influential cultural people, such as Louis Sparre, Gustaf Adolf Serlachius, Albert Edelfelt and Leo Mechelin. Also the director of the Gallen-Kallela Museum connected me to a researcher there, who then further connected me with another, external researcher. This external researcher gave me a more critical reading about Gallen-Kallela than I had expected; she confirmed that the swastika of Gallen-Kallela is likely to be connected with the race theories of the times, and to Aryanism. But she added that the significance of races and Aryanism was not the same in 1880s as in the Nazi Germany. The researcher in the Gallen-Kallela Museum agreed with this reading.

In the end of the bureaucratic ordeal and a vast amount of communication with several fronts, the lawyer of the Bank of Finland emailed me a photograph that was the official press photo of the painting. Accompanying was letter, where the Bank of Finland made their own reading of the symbol:

In the end of 1880s in Paris there was a great India-enthusiasm. One estimate is that this is the reason why Gallen-Kallela got frames made for his first Aino-triptych of 1889, where a swastika is repeated in the ornament. The swastika-ornament has been in use since the times of the Antiquity. It is still in broad use in the Indian religions. In the 1920s the Nazi party unfortunately appropriated the symbol. Each time when the painting is presented, it is emphasized from the Bank of Finland that it was made in 1889, when the use of swastika was connected with that time, and it has nothing to do with what happened 30 years later.²

2 My translation. See original in the letter from Suomen Pankki, dated 7th of May 2013



OKM/5/691/2013

23.4.2013

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Viite Kirje 26.3.2013

Asia **Tiedustelu mahdollisesta klassikkosuojan loukkauksesta**

Olette kirjeessänne pyytänyt opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriötä ottamaan kantaa tekijänoikeuslain 52 ja 53 §:n soveltamisesta suunnitelmaanne, joka koskee Gallen-Kallelan Alno-triptyykistä otetun valokuvan käyttämistä installaatiossanne.

Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö toteaa, että tekijänoikeuslain 52 §:n säännösten tarkoituksena on turvata se, ettei taideteoksesta tehtyä jäljennöstä sekoiteta alkuperäisteokseen. Kuvaamanne installaatiosuunnitelman osalta mainitun säännöksen soveltaminen ei ole relevanttia.

Ns. klassikkosuojaa koskevan 53 §:n soveltamisen osalta ministeriö toteaa, että mainittua säännöstä sovelletaan, jos teoksen suhteen tekijän kuoltua menetellään julkisesti sivistyksellisiä etuja loukkaavalla tavalla. Tällöin asetuksella määrättävällä viranomaisella eli opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriöllä on valta kieltää sellainen menettely.

Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö katsoo, että edellä mainittu säännös on sovellettavissa vain silloin, kun teosta on jo käytetty. Säännöksen nojalla ei voida ennakolta kieltää sellaista, mitä ei ole tapahtunut.

Asiaan vaikuttaa myös Suomen perustuslain 12 §:ssä turvattu sananvapaus ja 16 §:ssä säädetty taiteen vapaus. Ylipäätään sananvapautta tai taiteen vapautta voidaan Suomessa rajoittaa vain lailla. Vastaavat oikeudet on säädetty myös Suomea velvoittavissa ihmisoikeussopimuksissa. Molempien perusoikeuksien lähtökohtana on ilmaisuun kohdistuvien ennakkolisten esteiden kieltäminen, joka koskee erityisesti julkisen vallan toimia.

Ylijohtajan sijainen,
Johtaja


Rauno Antila

Johtaja


Jukka Liedes

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Johdon sihteeristö

ILMOITUS

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7.5.2013

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Viite: Hakemuksenne 26.4. ja 2.5.2013

AINO-TRIPTYYKISTÄ OTETUN VALOKUVAN KÄYTTÄMINEN INSTALLAATIO- TEOKSEN YHTEYDESSÄ

Olette pyytänyt lupaa saada itse valokuvata Akseli Gallen-Kallelan Aino-triptyykin (1889) Suomen Pankin tiloissa tai vaihtoehtoisesti käyttää Suomen Pankin valokuvaa. Aikomuksenne on käyttää valokuvaa ei-kaupallisessa tarkoituksessa ja osana installaatiokokonaisuutta siten, että valokuva olisi muista installaation osista irrallinen ja kehystetty tai muuten ripustettu kunnioittavalla tavalla. Teoksenne tulee olemaan esillä Fiskarsissa 11. päivänä toukokuuta 2013 avattavassa taidenäyttelyssä. Installaatioteoksenne käsittelee svastikan käyttöä Suomessa 1880-luvulta lähtien.

Pariisissa 1880-luvun lopulla oli taidepiireissä suuri Intia-harrastus. Yksi arvio on, että tästä syystä vuonna 1889 valmistuneeseen ensimmäiseen Aino-triptyykkiin Gallen-Kallela hankki Pariisissa valmistajalta kehykset, joissa svastika kiertää ornamentissa. Svastika-ornamenttia on käytetty antiikkiin ajoista asti. Se on edelleen laajasti käytetty intialaisissa uskonnoissa.

1920-luvulla natsipuolue otti valitettavasti käyttöönsä kysymyksessä olevan tunnuksen. Suomen Pankissa korostetaan teosta esiteltäessä, että se on tehty vuonna 1889, jolloin svastika-tunnuksen käyttö liittyi siihen aikaan, ja että sillä ei ole tekemistä 30 vuotta myöhemmin tapahtuneen kanssa.

Hakemuksenne liitteellä on taideteostanne koskeva projektikuvaus. Hakemuksenne liitteellä on myös opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön 23.4.2013 antama lausunto, joka koskee tekijänoikeuslain mm. 53 §:n (ns. klassikkosuoja) soveltamista.

Edellä todettuun viitaten Suomen Pankki antaa teille luvan käyttää Aino-triptyykistä otettua valokuvaa, johon Suomen Pankilla on tekijänoikeudet, ei-kaupallisessa tarkoituksessa hakemuksessanne esitetyllä tavalla.

Helsingissä 7. päivänä toukokuuta 2013

Kunnioittavasti

SUOMEN PANKKI


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V Love of swastika

In 1925 ethnologist U. T. Sirelius in his article about the swastika published in the annual anthology of the Kalevala Society connects the roots of the globally spread symbol to Eastern Germany. He aims to prove that there is a link between the Finnish people and the cultures of central and southern Europe, and as proof of the cultural connection he uses the simultaneous spreading of the swastika in Finland and Germany in the 14th Century.

Sirelius also claims that the swastika shapes have been found all over the Finnish territory with the exception of Lapland. His aim, typically for the times, is to make a difference between the Finns and the Sami people. In the 1910s and 1920s there were theories in Central Europe that the Finns originate from the Mongolians. In Finland scientists were busy trying to prove that it is the Sami people who originate from the Mongolians, and not the Finns. Rather, the Finns have their roots in the European Germanic races. Or if not, then at least in the Eastern Baltics!



Alb. Gebhard, Cover illustration of *Nuori Suomi*, 1901

Today the interpreters of the the Finnish swastika aim at the total opposite from the theories of the 1920s: to *justify* the continued presence of the swastika in fundamental national institutions *regardless* the Nazi crimes. The swastika can be seen among other places in the state and military symbols, as symbol of national rightist associations, and in the architecture of Helsinki (even in the Houses of Parliament). It is argued that the Finnish swastika is different from the German one, because it is turning the other way around, it is not tilted, and/or is different colour.

In Finland the sign has many uses and comes in many variations of the shape, colour and position, sometimes resembling the Nazi swastika very closely, other times not. Nevertheless the contemporary readings of the symbol are always the same in all the cases – that it is the traditional Finnish symbol of sun and happiness.



The blue-and-white emblem of the Union of Finnishness was designed in 1998 by 'an active reservist'³ Juha E. Tetri and it was in use until the year 2006, when a new design for the emblem was taken into use for the 100th Anniversary of the association. The new emblem doesn't resemble the swastika.

I sent an email to over 30 researchers associated with history and cultural history departments of various Finnish universities, and other specialists of different fields, who might have in-depth knowledge about the particular 'Finnish' swastika that can be found in state symbols and in the public space. My question was:

3 According to the website www.reservilainen.fi

"Is this swastika the prehistoric Finnish symbol, which has been found as the sign of also other cultures all around the world from Murmansk to Sao Paulo and is 8000 years old? Or does it represent the Aryan ideals, in the name of which Michael Zmigrodski compiled a swastika-exhibition in Paris in 1889 (in the end of the decade which Malcolm Quinn calls that of 'the Aryan mania', and during which Gallen-Kallela painted his first Aino-triptych – also in Paris), and the symbol of which it has been to Count Eric von Rosen, who donated the first aeroplane to Finland in 1918?"

Fifteen of the researchers replied to my question either by email or over phone.

Four of the replies could not form an opinion as the replicants were not specialized in this particular topic, although might be academic researchers dealing with history of Finland, political movements or more specifically historical racism or the involvement of Finland with the Nazi Germany.

Seven emails and one phone call refused any Aryan connection, all with the argument that the swastika symbol has been found in Finland already in the prehistoric time and is an ancient symbol of sun and happiness, and both Gallen-Kallela and von Rosen were using it long before the Nazi party was formed. And also because it became the official state symbol in Finland in March 1918, when Hitler sketched out the flag of the National Socialist party one year later, in 1919. Although the symbol looks the same, it has a different history, and therefore it is a mistake to confuse the symbol with National Socialism.

Some of these answers, defending the difference of Finnish swastika from the German one, also explain that probably people didn't know of the references of the symbol elsewhere and when taken to use here its meanings were probably not thought of. With this argument these researchers contribute to the popular myth of naivety according to which Finnish people are usually innocent and

4 The question in original Finnish: "Onko tämä hakaristi se muinainen suomalainen symboli, jollainen on löydetty myös muiden perinteisten kansojen merkkinä aina Murmanskista Sao Pauloon? Vai edustaako se arjalaista suuntausta, jonka nimissä Michael Zmigrodski kokosi hakaristinäyttelyn Pariisissa vuonna 1889, ja jonka symboli se oli kreivi Eric von Rosenille, Suomen ilmavoimien ensimmäisen lentokoneen lahjoittajalle vuonna 1918?"

unaware, when it comes to critically discussing their involvement with events in history.

Also among the answers the story of how the symbol came to be used by Count von Rosen differs. Some researchers say (quoting Wikipedia) that he saw it in runestones in Gotland, when a child. Others say it was the symbol of his family. And about Gallen-Kallela falling in love with the symbol in 1880s, some researchers explain it was an invention of his own, where parts of the synthesis were folkloristic Karelia, fennomania, and the national epoch Kalevala, but also the influences by the meanings connected to it in the East are recognized.

Also two of replicants, who didn't see a connection between the Finnish and the Aryan swastika, advised me to read an article "Hakaristin pitkä historia" (The Long History of Swastika) Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja, 31 (Tallinn 2011) by former Assistant Vice-President of Finnair and hobby-historian Ronny Rönqvist. These researchers referred to the text by Rönqvist as a thorough and correct research about the symbol.

In his article Rönqvist tells that specifically in the ancient Lappish culture there has appeared the magic sign 'Tursan Sydän', which is a variation of the swastika. The sign has become famous the use of the 'white anarchist', Ilmari Kianto (1874-1970) adopting the sign as his personal.⁵

Ronny Rönqvist argues that because the history of the swastika is longer than that of the Christian cross, 8000 years, and it was in the service of the Nazi Germany only for 12 years, it is short sighted to connect it only to the ideology of the Third Reich.

I claim, in the lines of Malcolm Quinn, that the use of the sign as Aryan symbol reaches further than just 12 years, all the way from 1870s to today, when it is still in use as symbol of racism, although nowadays only in relatively marginal rightist subcultures.

5 I contacted the Kianto society to inquire when he took on the swastika-like sign for his use, but the association did not have information about that, just a guess that it must have been in his childhood.



I also claim that the swastika in the Finnish official symbols is symptom of a certain desire to have and maintain a connection to Europe that is based on race, origin and roots. Also the sign, as contrast to the socialist red star, is a symbol of a rightist national 'freedom' (like the blue & white flag of Finland). Rönqvist in his acclaimed text writes: "It was very common also to use the swastika as decoration or vignette in the writings about the Freedom War [...] This way the swastika gradually became a kind of symbol of the Freedom War."⁶ Here revealing of the writer's ideological standpoint is already the choice of the name that he uses when discussing the Civil War of 1918 that the whites explained as fight for national freedom at the time when Finland had already gained independency, whereas the reds understood it as class war and revolution. Rönqvist continues "although after the war the usage of the swastika had to be given up in official contexts, it remained in military orders. In old military orders and in the Mannerheim cross, this goes without saying."⁷



Pohjoisranta 20, Helsinki
Built in 1929

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- 6 My translation, original in Finnish see: "Hakaristin pitkä historia" *Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja*, 31, Tallinn 2011
- 7 My translation, original in Finnish see: "Hakaristin pitkä historia" *Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja*, 31, Tallinn 2011

Only four replies suggested, although quite carefully, that the swastika in use in Finland today can be a synthesis of both Aryan as well as prehistoric Finnish meanings, acknowledging that the 1880s was the golden era for Aryan race discourse, and they saw similar inspirations also in Gallen-Kallela's project of illustrating Kalevala.

My attempt here and in my small investigation, which has so far taken the form of art installations, has been to prove that ever since the 1880s the swastika in Europe, including in Finland, has not been free from the race ideology. And it is absurd still in Europe of the 21st Century to claim the sign to be symbol of happiness, fertility and sexuality, in the history of which the era of Nazi Germany was just some kind of error, and which can be ignored as lunacy and exception, and from which the symbol should be saved (as historian Juha-Matti Granqvist writes in his text 'Pelastakaa hakaristi' (Save the Swastika) demanding the end of demonizing of the swastika, because it is a 'significant part of a worldwide cultural heritage'⁸).

As if the swastika was not only a geometric sign, which in today's western world equals with racism, but that it would possess a life on its own or a magical power and therefore would need to be saved from the hands of the evil. It seems that also Ronny Rönqvist believes in the magic of the sign. He writes:

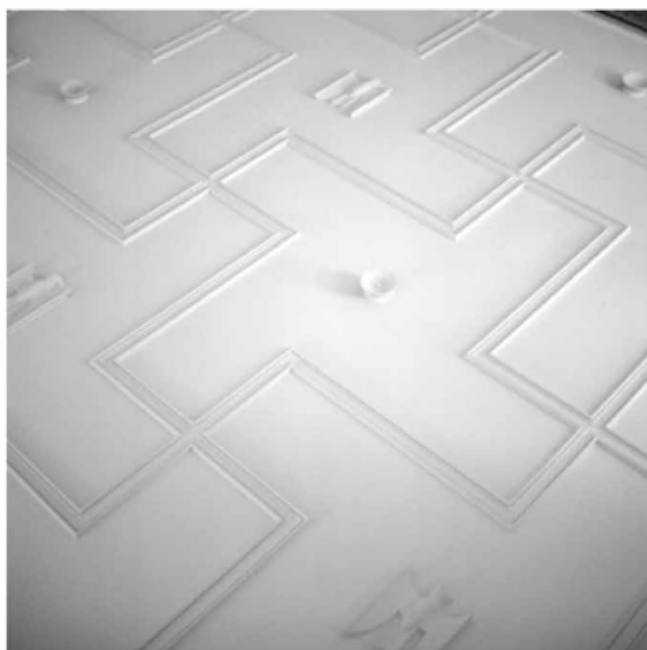
"Also today an observant reader can find the swastika shapes in most diverse contexts. It seems that often the author is not him/herself aware that it is the swastika sign. This means that the swastika must have some instinctual charm that pulls one towards."⁹

8 My translation, original in Finnish see: http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/kronos/kronikka/kronikka1_05/kronikka/hakaristi.htm

9 My translation, original in Finnish see: "Hakaristin pitkä historia" Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja, 31, Tallinn 2011



Korkeavuorenkatu 10, Helsinki
Built in 1930



Parliament House
Mannerheimintie 30, Helsinki
Built in 1931