

THE MAP OF FINLAND AS A NATIONAL SYMBOL IN FINNISH PRESS CARTOGRAPHY, 1899-1942

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Maps have meanings beyond the topographical reality they represent. The information on maps is always a variety of choices, a social construction. Similarly, definition of regions and places and also nationalism are mental constructions and products of certain social actions. Mapping and mass media often play significant roles in these processes. The social and political connections of maps can be interpreted on the basis of iconographical analysis and iconology. In this presentation, press maps are regarded as historical documents within other historical documents, newspapers and magazines. Cartographic analysis and hermeneutic interpretation are supported by qualitative and quantitative methods of press history and political history. This paper aims to show the ways in which the map of Finland was presented in the Finnish press during the first decades of the 20th century. Special attention is paid to its use as a national symbol. Maps were often used in the political press and the most influential newspapers and magazines shared similar imagery. All Finnish parties used maps for several political purposes, such as to introduce town planning, to organize demonstrations, and to hit their political opponents. Disagreements between Finnish-speaking Finns and Swedish-speaking Finns, as well as between working-class and right-wing parties were reflected in press cartography. Maps were also often used for nationalistic purposes. During the autonomy, Finns protested against the Russian oppression and strengthened their own Finnish identity with maps. After independence, the right-wing press started to manifest the territorial hopes in Eastern Karelia. This expansive nationalism had its heyday during the first years of the Continuation War, as Finns sought correction to the injustices of the Winter War. The border between Finland and Russia was always made markedly clear, not only by drawing a line symbol on a map, but often also by emphasizing the mental differences between the “western” Finns and “eastern” Russians.