The Finnish landscape and its meanings

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The landscape has played – and continues to play – an important role in the process of constructing a national identity in Finland. In this process, certain areas and views, whether real or imaginary, are designated as vital symbols of the national culture. The landscape is not merely an image, a map or a view of the existing motherland, however. It is also a part of the nation's history, which is marked in the landscape in the form of significant buildings and monuments to historical events, so that the past may be seen as forming an unbroken continuum with the present. Work is constantly going on to maintain and renew the national traditions of landscape description. This means that whatever its age and nostalgic associations, the landscape is an integral part of our present-day lives. The images, maps, and discourses associated with the landscape may have altered in the course of time, and even the physical areas or views may have been replaced with new ones, but the ideal of a Finnish landscape has persisted. The signs and significations attached to it thus remain a powerful part of our national culture.

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Three faces of the same scene

Landscape is one of those words whose meaning is closely connected with the context in which it is used, whether we refer to the view that opens up from some vantage point, a historical milieu, an image, a geographical region, or an environment perceived with the senses. It is commonly used as a synonym for an environment characterized by unspoiled nature, a rural area in the traditional sense, surroundings that form significant elements in our cultural history, or simply an aesthetically satisfying view. We can also speak of *national*, *traditional*, or *idealized* landscapes, in which case we allude to cultural meanings that create notions of national or local identity. The word incorporates at least three essential features or connotations, however: It may be understood as referring to (1) a visual scene, (2) a geographical region, or (3) a culturally determined way of viewing or analysing the environment. These properties are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, the notion of landscape frequently subsumes all three. A landscape can thus have many faces, or, in other words, one landscape has numerous new landscapes opening up within it.

A scene

The most characteristic feature attached to a landscape is its visuality. Usually the first connotation that comes to mind is that of the scene that opens up before us when we stand at a certain high point somewhere, or at least a pictorial representation of that scene. The origins of the term *landscape* in the history of art go back to Italy during the Renaissance. There, the word *paesaggio* began to take on the meaning of a painting which had a distant view projected as its background in accordance with the geometrical principles of perspective (Cosgrove 1985: 52). From these beginnings, the word *landschap* came to be used by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch artists to refer to a rural scene with characteristic human figures, animals, buildings, and natural environments. Eventually, it gained the more general

meaning of "any general view depicted in a painting." Another reason for the emergence of landscape as a visual concept lay in the development of cartography, for both these forms of description – a perspective drawing or painting and a map drawn to scale and intended to represent the physical environment as accurately as possible – came to be combined in the form of depicting and viewing landscapes known as the *panoramic view* (Jackson 1964: 47–49).

A landscape is nevertheless much more than simply a view or a picture representing such a view. Looking, drawing, painting, or photographing cannot in itself be sufficient, as there is something more to a landscape. Whereas the human eye can take in just under 180º of a panoramic view at any one time, the physical landscape extends around one for the full 360º. Whereas a map, painting, or photograph has the form of a two-dimensional surface, a landscape is at least a three-dimensional construct (Mills 1997: 6). The confinement of a landscape to the sense of vision alone is thus apt to reduce its dimensions, for in reality we recall the landscape that we see, compare it with others, taste it, smell it, and so on, just as we can imagine a landscape that we have never physically seen on the basis of what we have read or heard about it (Karjalainen 1987: 9). Thus, alongside actual visual landscapes, we can also speak of landscapes of sound, of smell, of the mind, and of the memories or expectations that we associate with them (Porteous 1996). The experiences that we have of landscapes form a two-way process that engages the full range of the senses and involves not only the physically perceived landscape, but also all the pictures, images, texts, and narrations that are connected with it (Daniels & Cosgrove 1989; Duncan 1990).

A region

Apart from a multidimensional view perceivable with a broad range of the senses, a landscape may also be understood as denoting an area or region. There are differences between languages in this respect, however. The English word *landscape* and the Finnish *maisema* both refer primarily to the visual environment, but the German *Landschaft* and the Swedish *landskap* have a double meaning that also incorporates that of a certain region or province (Granö 1998: 15).

Geographers have always studied landscapes alongside places and regions, ever since the introduction of the German concept of *landscape geography* (*Landschaftskunde*). Here, landscape referred to an internally consistent area which could be delimited on a map and distinguished from the surrounding areas in terms of certain characteristics (Holt-Jensen 1988: 37). Such descriptions were backed up by a precise, standardized system for classifying the features of landscapes, based on exactly defined terms for identifying the forms coinciding within a given area (see, e.g., Passarge 1929).

The notions of landscape contained in landscape geography and the associated research methods influenced many national traditions of geographical study, including that of Finland. The outstanding figure in Finnish landscape geography was, without doubt, Johannes Gabriel Granö (1882–1956). He developed the necessary terminology and methodology and spoke of a perceived environment as a spatial entity that could be divided into two parts: *the proximity*, extending away from the observer for some 200 metres and perceivable with all the senses, and *the landscape*, extending as far as the horizon (Granö 1930: 14–22). It was the sense of sight that primarily defined the form and limits of the landscape, but Granö was also interested in other aspects of the perceived environment. The landscapes of sound, smells, and colours, and the variations in these with the time of day and season of the year thus played an important part in his research alongside the visual landscape.

One essential aspect of Granö's method of landscape geography was the description of forms that serve as the visual manifestations of landscapes and regional analyses constructed on the basis of these. The landscape entities, which Granö referred to as "districts," "provinces," and "regions," were based on cartographic analyses of established sets of forms and the coincidence of their boundaries. The principal sets of forms recognized in his system were (1) landforms, (2) water forms, (3) vegetation forms, and (4) forms of artificial matter, each with subdivisions (Granö 1929a, 1930). These constructs enabled the spatial form and content of a landscape to be defined by means of a specific formula. Granö's main work of landscape geography was his *Reine Geographie*, first published in German in 1929 and subsequently in Finnish, as *Puhdas maantiede*, in the following year. An English translation was published in 1997 under the title *Pure Geography*. Some of the specialized terminology that he

created for this purpose is still in use, and he coined many established names for landscape regions in Finland, such as the Lake Region. In fact, the landscape-based system of regions originally proposed for Finland by Granö in the 1925 edition of the *Atlas of Finland* is still current today (Granö 1929b). In the most recent map, adapted to the revised post-war boundaries, Finland is divided into five major landscape regions, thirteen landscape provinces, and fifty landscape districts (Fig. 1) (Raivo 1999a: 105).

A cultural way of seeing

No matter whether we consider views or discourses, images, or areas of physically homogeneous features, one aspect that is common to all these landscape types is that they exist only as cultural environments that are dependent on human concepts, experiences, and appreciations. In connection with the cultural perspective, mention is frequently made of *interpretative landscape research.* It may be defined as a way of seeing and interpreting cultural environments in which the reproduction of meanings, values, and social order is mediated (Cosgrove 1985; Daniels & Cosgrove 1989). In other words, it is the human cultural presence that makes sense of the semantic meanings attached to a landscape. This cultural dimension associated with landscape is partly subjective, bound to the life-history of the individual, but, at the same time, intersubjective, in that social and cultural background influences that are common to particular groups and communities govern the view taken (Raivo 1997: 327).

The interpretative approach also emphasizes the ontologically complex nature of a landscape. It can be simultaneously both a concrete physical entity, such as a region or scene, and a painting, a poem, a literary description, or some other culturally generated discourse that can be read and interpreted over and over again (Daniels & Cosgrove 1989: 1). The cultural meanings attached to a landscape do not spring up out of nothing, but are constantly being produced and reproduced. Just the word "landscape" is always charged with innumerable preconceived expectations and significations. In this sense, there is no such thing as a value-independent, neutral, objective landscape.

Constructing an imagined landscape for Finland

Searching the ideal scene

The values and significations attached to a landscape are cultural conventions regarding what people can or would like to see in it. A landscape is always someone's landscape, with its own creators and observers engaged in producing and reproducing the processes by which meaning is assigned to it. Landscapes have had, and continue to have, an important part to play in the process of building national identities. For instance, certain landscapes of particular significance for a nation's history and traditions may be marked out as codes that belong intimately to the culture in question (see, e.g., Lowenthal 1994).

One notion inherent in nationalism is that of one nation with common cultural features: a common language, system of values, history, and geographical location. A shared geographical dimension is thus an important element in the sense of community that unites a nation (Hooson 1994: 6). A nation must be located somewhere; it must be associated with a clearly delimited area that its members inhabit, just as an independent state has a territory of its own. But alongside this, a nationalistic cultural identity will also incorporate a powerful imaginary geographical aspect in which the nation's history and cultural traditions are seen as anchored in certain places and landscapes – real or imaginary (Daniels 1993).

The Finnish landscape as we understand it today is largely a product of the Grand Duchy era in the nineteenth century which has been perpetuated and filled out throughout the period of independence (Klinge 1980). The descriptions on which it is based are to be found in the poetry of Johan Ludvig Runeberg and the books of Zacharias Topelius. In his collection of poems entitled *Fänrik Ståls sägner* (*Tales of Ensign Stål*) (1848 and 1860; see Runeberg 1874), Runeberg outlined the nature of Finnish patriotism and the landscape to which this applied. Topelius' two picture books, *Finland framställd i teckningar* (*Finland in pictures*) (1845–1852) and *En resa i Finland* (*A journey through Finland*) (1873), and his *Boken om vårt land* (*A book about our country*) (1875), intended originally as a reader in history and geography for schools, had a major influence on the rise of a national landscape ideal (Tiitta 1982, 1994: 280–313). The last-mentioned work, in particular,

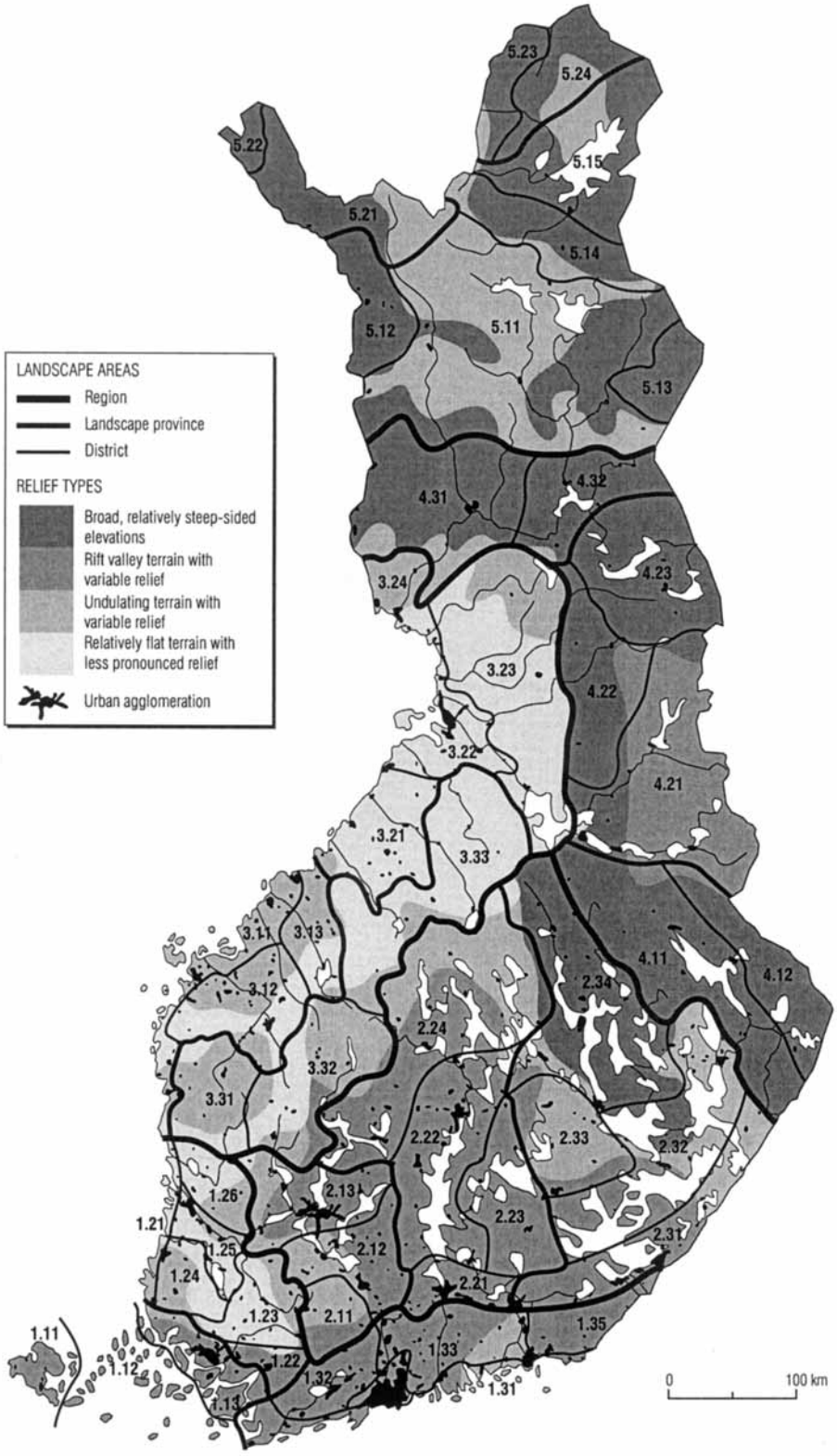
LANDSCAPE AREAS
Region
Landscape province
District
RELIEF TYPES
Broad, relatively steep-sided elevations
Rift valley terrain with variable relief
Undulating terrain with variable relief
Relatively flat terrain with less pronounced relief
Urban agglomeration
5.23
5.24
5.22
5.15
5.21
5.14
5.12
5.11
5.13
4.31
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Fig. 1. Finland's physical landscape areas (Raivo 1999a: 105).
Finland's landscape areas are classified traditionally into three groups by degree of their physical homogeneity of ground, waters, vegetation, and artificial structures. The 5 main landscapes regions consist of 14 landscape provinces and 51 landscape districts. The entities are as follows:

1. SOUTHERN FINLAND: 1.1 Archipelago Finland (1.11 Åland archipelago, 1.12 Kihti archipelago, 1.13 Turku archipelago coast); 1.2 The Southwest (1.21 Satakunta bay coast, 1.22 Salo hill district, 1.23 Loimaa arable flatlands, 1.24 Vakka-Suomi hillock district, 1.25 Ala-Satakunta arable flatlands, 1.26 Satakunta hillock district); 1.3 The Southern Coastland (1.31 Gulf of Finland archipelago coast, 1.32 Lohja lake and ridge district, 1.33 Uusimaa arable flatlands, 1.34 Helsinki metropolitan districts, 1.35 Ylämaa hillock district)

2. LAKE FINLAND: 2.1 Southwest Häme (2.11 Tammela hillock district, 2.12 Kanta-Häme arable flatlands, 2.13 Pirkanmaa hill district); 2.2 Päijät-Häme and Central Finland (2.21 Lahti ridge districts, 2.22 Päijänne mountainous district, 2.23 Puula hill district, 2.24 Keuruu–Keitele hill district); 2.3 Savo (2.31 Lappee–Kitee ridge district, 2.32 Greater Saimaa lake district, 2.33 Southern Savo hillock district, 2.34 Northern Savo hill district)

3. OSTROBOTHNIA: 3.1 Southern Ostrobothnia (3.11 Quark archipelago coast, 3.12 Kyrönmaa arable plain, 3.13 Lappajärvi hillock district); 3.2 Central and Northern Ostrobothnia (3.21 Central Ostrobothnian flatlands, 3.22 Oulu plain, 3.23 Koillispohja fenlands, 3.24 Kemi–Tornio river district); 3.3 Suomenselkä (3.31 Suupohja flatlands, 3.32 Suomenselkä hillock district, 3.33 Suomenselkä peatland)

4. VAARA (Wooded Hill) FINLAND: 4.1 Vaara Karelia (4.11 Pielinen vaara district, 4.12 Border Karelia mire district); 4.2 Kainuu and Koillispohja (4.21 Kainuu lake district, 4.22 Koillispohja vaara district, 4.23 Kuusamo vaara district); 4.3 Peräpohjola (4.31 Peräpohjola river country, 4.23 Kemijärvi–Salla vaara district)

5. LAPLAND: 5.1 Forest Lapland (5.11 Lapland aapa mire district, 5.12 Ounasselkä fell district, 5.13 North Salla fell district, 5.14 Maaresta–Saariselkä fell district, 5.15 Inari lake lowland); 5.2 Fell Lapland (5.21 Enontekiö mountainous district, 5.22 Enontekiö high fells, 5.23 Taka-Lappi fell district, 5.24 Taka-Lappi birch tundra)

created an image of the Finnish nation, its tribes, and the landscapes in which it lived. Gradually, this image became instilled in the minds of all sectors of society through the medium of the school system.

It was through the works of Runeberg and Topelius that the lake scene became established as the typical or ideal landscape of Finland, for which painters then began to seek out suitable manifestations (Häyrynen 1996: 147). A lake in the inland, pictured from a nearby hill-top or in bird's eye view, thus came to be recognized in the art of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as representative of the whole of Finland (Fig. 2). Some other descriptions also gained similar status in the early poetry, paintings, or picture books: narrow eskers crossing lakes, the manor houses and rural iron works milieux of the southern and western parts of the country, and landscapes reflecting the peasant cultures of the various regions were notably popular (CD-Fig. 1) (Grotenfelt 1988: 36). Following independence in 1917, however, pictures of factories, power stations, and mines, symbols of the prosperity and future expectations of the young republic, tended to supersede in books or wall-charts depicting the Finnish landscape (Hakulinen & Yli-Jokipii 1983). Progress and development have thus played a prominent part in the image of the Finnish landscape.

The rural cultural landscape was also an important element in the patriotic views of Finland. This harked back to classical and neo-classical models with their harmonious environments evoking a pastoral idyll in which traces of human action are clearly visible. The type of idealized agrarian landscape altered radically, however, when the focus was moved further east. Then, the image of the swiddens of eastern Finland and the poor people who toiled to make and cultivate these clearings gained a certain status alongside the harmonious, luxuriant rural idylls of the south (Raivo 1999b: 78–79) (Fig. 3).

The National Romantic movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century also shaped the picture gallery representing the Finnish landscape (CD-Fig. 2) (Sihvo 1969). This was no longer a matter of fine art, but simply of faithfully recording delightful views of one's native land, glorifying the hard work put in by its people and romanticizing over its natural beauty. Such landscape paintings as Akseli Gallen-Kallela's view of the unfettered rapids of Imatra, *Imat-*

Fig. 2. A view to Lake Kallavesi from the Puijo Tower in the city of Kuopio. (Photo courtesy of Matti Tikkanen, 07/83)

Fig. 3. A view to Old Town Porvoo in southern Finland. (Photo courtesy of Matti Tikkanen, 06/78)

ra talvella (*Imatra in winter*) (1893), or Eero Järnefelt's storm clouds rising over Lake Pielinen, *Syysmaisema Pielisjärvellä* (*Autumn landscape on Lake Pielinen*) (1899), contained a powerful symbolism that reflected the will of the Finnish people to gain independence and protested against the pan-Slavic repression policies of Russia (Sarajas-Korte 1992: 53–54). The moral landscapes that emerged at this time consisted of unspoiled wilderness, hills stretching away into a blue haze, the glowing red trunks of pine trees, the stark outlines of standing dead pines, and ancient, untouched forests (Raivo 1999b: 79).

The breakthrough of landscape photography at the end of the nineteenth century again relied very heavily on patriotic and national romantic sentiments. Photography allowed the production of popular picture books that were faithful to the earlier tradition but employed new techniques. The landscape was entering the era of mass production. Postcards with picturesque views, books of photographs from the whole country or its regions, and other printed matter established the gallery of idealized Finnish landscapes more or less in the form in which we know it today (Eskola 1997: 17–18). Among the early artists in this field and creators of the national landscape, particular mention should be made of the landscape photographer Into Konrad Inha, whose *Suomi kuvissa* (*Finland in pictures*) (1896) and *Suomen maisemia* (*Finnish landscapes*) (1909) recorded, reiterated, and reinforced the images of the earlier national and regional landscapes that poets, writers, and painters had evoked.

Re-creating territorial unity

A few areas that were either entirely new or had new images attached to them were introduced into the national landscape gallery after independence. New regional themes that gained acceptance were the Swedish-speaking coast and archipelago and the Orthodox area of Karelia close to the eastern border. The former symbolized a new harmony between the linguistic groups in the country and the latter, an environment that was quite distinctive and different from anything belonging to the dominant culture, but still definitely Finnish. In other words, the landscape reflected the political trends of the time. The archipelago and its inhabitants and cultural landscapes had been depicted earlier, of course, but chiefly in Swedish-speaking artistic circles, whereas the question of national landscapes had been very much concerned with the Finnish cultural identity. The Swedish-speaking archipelago and coastal areas had thus remained external to this process at first (Häyrynen 1997). Correspondingly, it was now essential to accept the Orthodox environments of Karelia as part of the national kaleidoscope, albeit with their many symbols that were foreign to the Finnish landscape, such as the eight- or six-pointed Orthodox crosses with the additional cross-piece and the Russian-style cupolas. Acceptable landscape elements – as far as the majority culture was concerned – were either environments that could be regarded as 'museum pieces' and largely of ethnographic significance or more recent religious buildings that had been purged of their 'Russian elements'. The sight of 'otherness' was permitted provided it could be adapted to the framework demanded for the national gaze (Raivo 1997).

It is history and geopolitics that determine the boundaries of landscape regions in the end, for such a boundary is always a national matter and, thus, inevitably political. The Finnish landscape must be located within the boundaries of Finland. Conversely, territorial claims have been justified politically on the grounds of the similarity of the physical landscape, e.g., in connection with the question of Eastern Karelia in the 1930s and 1940s. Then, reference was made to landscape features to justify the notion that the whole of Karelia "belonged to Greater Finland in terms of its natural history" (Leiviskä & Kärki 1941: 49). The physical boundaries of a natural environment, in this case the granite bedrock of the Fennoscandian Shield, the drainage basins of major rivers, or the zones in which particular types of coniferous forest occur were similarly transformed into 'natural' political boundaries in the context of this geopolitical rhetoric (Raivo 1998: 26).

World War II and the subsequent ceding of certain territories to the Soviet Union meant some changes in the Finnish landscape gallery. The areas that had been lost could no longer be held to represent national landscapes and views, and many of the symbolic landscapes of Karelia and Lapland had to be reconstructed within the country's new boundaries. The landscapes of Northern Karelia came to be associated more closely with elements that had previously belonged mostly to the scenery and people of the border region of Karelia. The same thing happened in the north, where other Lapland scenes took the place of the

landscapes of the lost territory of Petsamo (Raivo 1999b: 81).

History, nostalgia, and tradition

The mental images of landscapes are linked very closely to history, tradition, and past times, creating a temporal dimension that feeds our own experiences. The fascination of things past, i.e., every item of information, feeling or concept of historical strata, or traces of the past that have remained visible, is an integral part of the attraction that a landscape holds for us. The spirit, or aura, surrounding a landscape arises from our recognition of its history, its past, and the traditions attached to it.

The visible traces of the past lend landscapes a temporal perspective and historical continuity (CD-Fig. 1). Remains of prehistoric settlements, historical towns (such as Turku or Porvoo), stone castles from historical times (such as Olavinlinna in Savonlinna), medieval grey-stone churches in southern Finland, the characteristic sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wooden churches in Ostrobothnia, the regional variations of peasant style buildings, and the remains of former agriculture environments represent this perspective and continuity in the case of the physical landscape in Finland. Further historical aspects of landscapes are to be found in the place names, stories, and memories attached to these entities.

The historical landscape is also part of the ideologized past of a nation (Crang 1999: 448). In addition to its geographical dimension, a national identity derives its force from the past. It therefore always attempts to present earlier events as a part of the nation's unbroken history. The combining of the historical dimension with the physical environment and its recording in that environment are essential parts of the 'landscaping' of a nation. A nation's history is frequently marked in the environment in the form of significant buildings, monuments to historical events, and statues to national figures and heroes. These monuments and other historically significant places form a kind of map or narrative engraved in the landscape that tells of the nation's history as a continuum extending from way back in the past up to the present moment (Raivo 2000a: 145).

As far as the national narrative is concerned, the principal types of historical landscape are places and scenes representing battles and wars. Marks of historical battlefields, fortifications dating from earlier times, statues of heroes and victors, memorials to the dead, and cemeteries are an essential part of the chronological stratification of the landscape in Europe and of the collection of pictorial symbols of nation-states. Finland is no exception in this respect (Raivo 2000b: 139–140).

The Finnish landscape gained its first features of this kind at an early stage, in the form of battlefields in Ostrobothnia dating from the Great Wrath (1713–1721) and the war between Sweden and Russia in 1808–1809 (CD-Fig. 1) (Grotenfelt 1988: 35). This part of the country was poorly endowed with the features looked on generally as the most typical manifestations of the ideal Finnish landscape, being largely lacking in eskers and broad expanses of lake that can be viewed from the tops of high hills, but it did serve as the principal arena of war in 1714 and 1808. The events were of such importance that they may be said to be crucial to the national narrative (Klinge & Reitala 1995). These old battlefields thus came in time to form part of the regional and national gallery of landscapes.

Constructions, monuments, and battlefields connected with World War II and its battles and sufferings have now replaced the memorials to earlier wars as the principal features of the nation's historical landscape. In fact, one can speak of an entirely new type of Finnish historical landscape that has just recently acquired particular significance in the nation's collective memory (Raivo 2000b: 83).

In spite of its temporal dimension that extends into the past, one characteristic feature of a historical landscape is its actuality, its bond with the present moment. Because of their concrete location, landscapes are in existence 'here' and 'now', and the elements of the past that are connected with them will be interpreted from the perspective of the present. For example, the marks of ancient land use, old buildings, historical monuments, and memorials are located temporally in a past that people remember or are able to imagine, but spatially in the present-day landscape (Lowenthal 1975). A historical landscape is therefore a landscape of the memory, and the essential question is what people are able to remember and are desirous of remembering (Schama 1996). In other words, the meanings assigned to a landscape and the historical interpretations given to those meanings do not arise of their own accord. Instead, they are continually being produced, re-

produced, and put forward (CD-Fig. 3). It is only the present that can bring the history of a landscape to life.

The concept of landscape has altered with time to come ever closer to being a synonym for an old-time agricultural environment. Old swiddens, meadows, pasturelands, animal enclosures and the surviving traditional peasant farming milieux, and other old built-up environments have become major objects of landscape conservation in recent times. 156 nationally significant landscape areas has been named since 1995. They all represent traditional old agricultural environments. In addition, 145 of local and regional landscape conservation sites have been set aside (STV 2000: 36) Innumerable inventory and conservation projects that focus on traditional or built-up environments have been initiated all over the country. In 1993, the Ministry of the Environment and the National Board of Antiquities were able to list a total of 1,772 environments of national significance in terms of their cultural history (Rakennettu… 1993). The fortress of Suomenlinna in Helsinki, the wooden houses in the centre of the town of Rauma, the factory site of Verla, Bronze Age burial cairns of Sammallahdenmäki, and the wooden church in Petäjävesi represent Finland on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. Landscape conservation and the associated planning and design work are emerging as an increasingly significant branch of landscape science (Monuments… 1999).

All Finland's current national landscapes are in effect echoes from the past. These include such early industrial sites as the Tammerkoski area of Tampere and the previous manor house and rural iron works milieux. Those landscapes that once stood for modernization and the nation's prosperity and expectations for the future have now been transformed into picturesque monuments to early industrial traditions.

Conclusions

The values and meanings attached to landscapes represent cultural conventions regarding what people can see and want to see in their surroundings. Those landscapes that are of relevance to the nation's history and traditions are incorporated into its cultural code. In other words, the nation is *landscaped* in accordance with certain places and scenes of particular kinds and selected features associated with them. As a consequence of this same process, however, a certain national history and tradition are marked in the landscape in the form of memorials and monuments. The resulting canonized historical landscapes serve as significant components of the national identity. They are places which bind the members of the nation to a common national past. They are literally parts of the nation's history that have been inscribed in the landscape.

The tradition of describing idealized Finnish landscapes has been maintained and renewed over a span of 150 years, but the range of national landscapes has not altered greatly within this time. The images and discourses connected with the landscape have changed with time and some physical scenes have been replaced with others, but the ideal of the Finnish landscape has remained very much the same. The signs and significations associated with this ideal still occupy an important role in the national culture.

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