

# THE FINNS PARTY AND THE KILLING OF A 12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BISHOP THE HERITAGE OF A POLITICAL MYTH

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*The parliamentary elections in Finland in the spring of 2011 shocked the political consensus over the country's participation in the European integration. The populist party called Perussuomalaiset (the Finns Party) won a landslide victory and became the third largest party in the Parliament. This meant that the popular opposition and criticism among the electorate against the European Union has become a political factor that had to be taken seriously by the other parties. The popularity of the Finns Party represents a general trend in today's Europe, but it also draws in significant ways on particular interpretations of Finnish history, nationalism, and identity politics, carrying along sentiments that first emerged and developed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Fennoman nationalism. For this reason, the Finns Party's opposition to the European integration is not merely an issue of current economic politics but also a question of cultural and political heritage. The paper discusses the role that one of the key nationalist myths in Finland, concerning the killing of a legendary Christian missionary bishop in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, plays in the argumentation of the party supporters' values.*

*Keywords: Finland, the Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset), populist EU-skepticism, nationalism, myth, cultural heritage, Bishop Henry, Lalli.*

*Parlamentarne volitve na Finskem spomladi 2011 so pretresle politično soglasje o udeležbi države v evropski integraciji. Populistična stranka Perussuomalaiset (Stranka Fincev) je dosegla prepričljiv uspeh in postala tretja največja parlamentarna stranka. To pomeni, da sta popularno nasprotovanje in kritizem, usmerjena proti Evropski uniji, postala politični dejavnik, ki ga morajo druge stranke resno upoštevati. Popularnost Stranke Fincev predstavlja splošno težnjo v današnji Evropi, hkrati pa na pomenljiv način vpeljuje posebne interpretacije finske zgodovine, nacionalizma in politik identitete, pri čemer se opira na čustva, ki so vzniknili in se razvila v finskem nacionalizmu 19. stoletja. Zaradi tega je nasprotovanje Stranke Fincev evropski integraciji ne le stvar trenutne gospodarske politike, temveč tudi vprašanje kulturne in politične dediščine. Članek obravnava vlogo enega glavnih nacionalističnih mitov na Finskem, ki se sklicuje na umor legendarnega krščanskega misijonarja škofa Henrika v 12. stoletju in je pomemben za argumentacijo vrednot strankinih podpornikov.*

*Ključne besede: Finska, stranka Fincev (Perussuomalaiset), populistični EU-skepticizem, nacionalizem, mit, kulturna dediščina, škof Henrik, Lalli.*

The on-going Eurozone debt crisis has fueled up a great deal of political opposition across Europe against many of the European Union's economic and administrative policies. Critical attitudes have been in many countries channeled into the formation of distinct political parties, but in Finland such parties have had very little impact and their percentage of received votes in elections has been very marginal. Yet, at the same time, approximately half of the electorate in Finland is skeptical towards integration policies or at least towards the European Union in its present state. For the last 15 years or so, there has been in Finland a political consensus among the major parties and in their leadership to support and participate in European integration, even though many of the members and supporters of these parties continue to think differently. Consequently, the parliamentary party map has

not necessarily manifested the actual division of views among the population. The elections for European Parliament are more representative in this regard, as EU-critics tend to get the majority of the votes (see e.g. Rainio 2011).

As far as the political consensus over European integration is concerned, the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2011 brought about major change. Much of the general mistrust against the EU was channeled into support of a populist party called *Perussuomalaiset* (English translation discussed below), which won a landslide victory and this becoming the third largest party. With 39 representatives in the 200-seat Parliament, they now have only five representatives less than the largest party. The results of the April 2011 elections also meant that popular opposition to European integration has become a political factor that had to be taken seriously into account by the other parties in the Parliament. What was also crucial was the fact that this was not only a domestic issue. Just one week prior to the elections, the Portugal bailout package came on the European agenda, and a rescue operation required the support of all member states. In Finland it was now likely that Parliament would not give the government the necessary mandate to support the rescue operation, and the new situation in the Finnish parliament came to threaten the possibility of taking joint measures at the EU level.

At the very least, the popularity of the Finns Party partially draws on the general skepticism towards European integration but especially from their vehement opposition of the Eurozone bailout packages. In addition to EU-skepticism, their main agenda includes the call for more restricted immigrant and multicultural policies, the abolition of mandatory Swedish language education in schools, and the support of cultural activities that “promote Finnish identity”. The English language Wikipedia characterizes the party as combining “left-wing economic policies with conservative social values, socio-cultural authoritarianism and ethnic nationalism” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True\\_Finns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_Finns); see also Arter 2010).

The name *Perussuomalaiset* can be and has been translated into English as Basic Finns or True Finns. In August 2011 the party announced that its official name in English is now the Finns Party. The leader of the party for the last 15 years, Mr. Timo Soini, said in a statement to the Finnish news agency STT that he got tired of the miscellaneous translations of the party’s name into English and of having to provide explanations to such terms as “Ordinary Finns” and “Basic Finns”. He said that the name “True Finns”, which has been commonly used abroad and which, as Soini admits, contains a reference to extreme nationalism, never had an official status in the party. By simplifying their name to the Finns Party, the party wishes to emphasize that its members are ordinary people in Finland.<sup>1</sup> The implication here is that the way the *Perussuomalaiset* think represents the way in which ordinary people in Finland think.

The agenda of the Finns Party links directly to current issues in the European Union and Finnish society, but the party’s popularity can also be seen to rest on long-term themes

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.iltasanomat.fi/kotimaa/art-1288408766248.html>, 21.8.2011; [http://yle.fi/uutiset/true\\_finns\\_name\\_their\\_party\\_the\\_finns/5410148](http://yle.fi/uutiset/true_finns_name_their_party_the_finns/5410148)).

in Finnish history, mentality and identity politics. Their public support draws in significant ways on particular interpretations of shared history, language ideologies, nationalism, and heritage politics; in addition, they build on sentiments that first emerged and developed in 19th century Fennoman nationalism. Accordingly, the Finns Party's opposition to European integration is not merely an issue of current economic politics but also a question of cultural and political heritage.

In this paper, I shall discuss the role that a key nationalist myth in Finland concerning the killing of a legendary Christian missionary bishop in the 12th century plays in the argumentation and manifestation of the Finns Party's political values and that of its supporters. My discussion draws on my ongoing research into political ethnography.

Here's the story: According to clerical and popular sources from the 13th and 14th centuries as well as many Finnish history books that draw on these sources, a crusade was launched in 1155 from Sweden to what is present-day Finland. This crusade is said to have been conducted by Erik Jedvardsson, the King of Upland who was later to become King Erik IX of Sweden. In the said crusade, an allegedly English-born bishop named Henry accompanied Erik. According to the same sources, Henry had been recently nominated the bishop of Uppsala in Sweden. After the said crusade, Erik went back to Sweden while Bishop Henry stayed on in Finland to continue the work of Christian conversion and the organization of the local church. According to oral tradition, he baptized a great number of heathen Finns to Christianity at a fountain that still exists in the city of Turku. An illustration of such a baptism, a Romantic-style fresco painted in the early 1850s by Robert Wilhelm Ekman (1808-73), decorates the altar area of the Turku Cathedral.

A liturgical legend called *Legenda sancti Henrici*, which dates from the late 13th century (see Heikkilä 2005), describes how Bishop Henry soon met his death at the hands of a local villain and murderer whom he had tried to discipline. A folk ballad dealing with the same theme, commonly known as *The Song of the Slaying of Bishop Henry*, tells a slightly different story.<sup>2</sup> According to this source, the bishop was killed by a local peasant from the parish of Köyliö who had been angered by the bishop's visit to his home in his absence without showing adequate respect to hospitality rules. On the basis of the folk ballad's testimony, the legendary killing of Bishop Henry is regarded as having taken place

<sup>2</sup> The written (often fragmentary) documents of this folk song are preserved at the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. They are published as numbers 985–1005 in the volume VIII of the *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* collection (SKVR 1932), as numbers 1–3 of the volume IX,1 (SKVR 1918), and as numbers 20–27 of the volume X,1 (SKVR 1933). All of these texts are also available on the Internet in the SKVR digital database, URL: <http://dbgw.finlit.fi/skvr/>. For the English translation of two variants, see Kuusi, Bosley and Branch 1977, numbers 66–67 (pages 315–324). The oldest known handwritten document of the song, dated to the late 17th century, was printed in edited form as VIII: 990 (SKVR 1932), and has also been published by the Finnish Literature Society (SKS) as a facsimile in 1999 (*Piispa Henrikin surmavirsi / The Ballad of the Death of Bishop Henry*).

on the ice of Lake Köyliö. This was in the lower Satakunta area, less than 100 kilometers north from the town of Turku.

Historical research is unable to confirm which version of the narrative is true, and it is even possible that the whole story is fictitious. For the medieval Christian church, however, the story constituted a major myth of origin and identity, and it continues to hold a central symbolic position in both Lutheran and Catholic churches in Finland even today. The medieval church named Bishop Henry the patron saint of the Diocese of Turku and the apostle of Finland. These nominations are still valid, despite the fact that in the Reformation in the 16th century, Catholicism was replaced by Lutheranism as the official and orthodox form of Christianity in Finland. In addition to raising Bishop Henry to the position of a patron saint, the medieval church founded a martyr cult to commemorate his life as well as to testify to the miracles said to have taken place after he died. A pilgrimage was established to the site in Köyliö where he was believed to have been killed. The Church also elevated the journey that Erik and Henry allegedly made to Finland to the status of a crusade. The cult of Saint Henry was performed and practiced in medieval times mainly in church liturgies, pilgrimages, memorial festivals, and church iconography.

In medieval iconography the bishop's killer was depicted as a small, bald, almost a creature-like man holding an axe, the murder weapon, in his hand. He is trampled under the feet of his victim, Saint Henry. This motif is present, for example, in mural paintings in many medieval churches. Medieval paintings also depicted the event of the killing as well as the story's most dramatic motif, the murderer's return to his home with the bishop's miter on his head, only for him to discover that the headpiece would not come off, which was regarded as God's punishment.

The earliest source to give the killer a name, Lalli, is the Finnish translation of the Latin hymn *Ramus virens olivarum* that was included in the reformed Lutheran Piae Cantiones collection of pious Latin songs compiled by Jacobus Finno, headmaster of the Turku cathedral school, and published by Theodoric Petri of Nyland in 1582. The Finnish translation is from 1616 by Hemmingius Henrici, also known as Hemming of Masku, the vicar of Masku parish near Turku (for discussion on the translation, see Lehtonen forthcoming). The killer's name was also mentioned in the orally circulating folk ballad and its textual documentations. Consequently, the narrative of the death of Bishop Henry has come to be known as the story of Bishop Henry and Lalli. Naming it this way has strengthened its conceptualization as a narrative concerning an encounter between a foreign-born bishop and a Finnish peasant. This reading was already present in medieval times when the followers of the Saint Henry martyr cult would in collective shame ritually curse the bishop's killer, and the murder incident would serve as an indication of the necessity of Christian mission work among pagan Finns. Eventually the reading of the encounter's significance for Finland and Finnish identity would change in tone, but whichever its reading, the story continues to carry national significance as a commentary on the Finns and their relationship to Christianity. The Finnish historian and archeologist Markus Hiekkänen has characterized

the narrative as “the cornerstone of Finnish history and historical identity” (Hiekkanen 2002: 80). One of the most prominent Finnish folklorists of the 20th century, Matti Kuusi, has defined said folk ballad as “the national legend of Finland” (Kuusi 1963: 307).

The story of the killing of Bishop Henry is a narrative of many beginnings, which makes it a myth. Many politicized meanings have been given to its formulations of origins. It is first of all a national myth concerning the Christianization of Finns and Finland. It deals with the arrival of Finland’s allegedly first Christian bishop and the violent death that he encountered soon afterwards. It is a legend that has lived on in various arenas of oral and written circulation at least since the late 13th century. It continues to be retold, referred to, re-enacted and ritualized even today. In addition, it continues to provide research materials for a wide array of scholarly fields, including church and political history, folklore study and ethnology, religious studies, literary studies, and archaeology (especially regarding relics and their scientific verification).

Since the story has been regarded as both designating and depicting the arrival of Christianity in Finland, it marks the beginning and origin of Finland as a Christian land. More specifically, it is a mythical narrative that locates the origins of Christianization in Finland and Finnish bishopric in martyrdom. At the same time, it marks the beginning of the country’s historical period and the end of its prehistory (e.g. Huurre 1979: 229; see also Lehtonen and Joutsivuo 2002: 37). But first and foremost, it is a myth of origin for two Christian churches in Finland, first the Catholic Church and nowadays the Lutheran Church. There are, however, significant differences in their respective readings of the narrative. The Catholic Church prioritizes the medieval liturgical legend over the folk ballad and carries on the medieval martyr cult, including its pilgrimage tradition, while the Lutheran Church has taken a more active role in the Ecumenical re-interpretation and appropriation of the narrative, as well as in linking Bishop Henry to the history of the Lutheran Church (Anttonen 2004). These activities include an ecumenical pilgrimage to the site of the bishop’s killing (Anttonen 1999). In 2005, the Finnish churches jointly celebrated the 850th anniversary of the permanent settlement of Western Christianity on Finnish soil, which made it evident that the year 1155 is officially regarded as the starting point for Finnish church history. As the logo of the 2005 celebrations, “Church in Finland 850 years”, revealed, Bishop Henry was made the focal point of attention, giving evidence of his continued importance in Christian history and mythology in Finland.

The story of the bishop’s killing has also become a local myth about the place of Köyliö and its history in the Finnish national context. Consequently, for the present-day residents of Köyliö, the narrative provides a means for advertising the municipality – for example, on its official Internet pages ([http://www.koylio.fi/the\\_yeoman\\_lalli.htm](http://www.koylio.fi/the_yeoman_lalli.htm)) and in tourist brochures – as the birthplace of written history in Finland. Here the killer’s identification as the first Finn known by name and an ancient resident of Köyliö has come to play a central symbolic role.

The developments in the historical and symbolic reading of the narrative in Köyliö, the allegedly original site of narrated activity, rest on a crucial ideological change that took place in the interpretation and appropriation of the narrative during the 19th century. In the Protestant-minded nation-building process, nationalist intellectuals in Finland began to mold the killer's image to meet the interests of national heroism and symbolism. At the same time, the image of the bishop as well as the Catholic form of Christianity came to be seen as representing foreignness on Finnish soil. From the Fennoman nationalist viewpoint, most of Finland's historical time was plagued by foreign domination (Sweden) and by a foreign religion (Catholicism). The true markers of Finnishness were only to be found by looking beyond the country's Catholic past – to its prehistoric and pre-Christian antiquity, which was believed to be documented in folklore and pagan mythology. Finnish culture and cultural history was thus ideologically disassociated from the country's medieval Catholic past, which was denied of a contributing role in the formation of national culture and in the writing of its history. The construction of the cultural foundations of the emerging nation-state was a historical process in which Protestant Lutheranism became one of the fundamental ingredients in the category of Finnishness, while Catholicism became a designated Other. In this historical context, the narrative of the killing of Bishop Henry was given a new reading in which the killer was seen as a liberator hero who defended his land and people against a foreign intruder, a Catholic bishop. In other words, the story of the violent encounter of Bishop Henry and his killer came to designate the country's attempt at defending its own non-Christian religion as well as its sovereign cultural and political rights. In this reading, the testimony of the folk ballad, especially its motif concerning the defiant peasant, was given more historical credibility than the liturgical legend and the wretched actions of its unnamed anti-hero. In addition to late 19th century nationalism, this reading was especially strong and influential in the extra-parliamentary right-wing political activism of the 1920s and 1930s. The early 1990s brought about its re-emergence but without any direct reference to right-wing politics.

At the same time, the narrative of Bishop Henry and his killing also became a national myth about the place of Finland in Europe and its location between east and west. After the Soviet Union had collapsed and Finland was taking on membership into the European Community (later European Union), the geopolitical identity of the country was under reconstruction, although not quite in the same manner as in the case of the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The story of Bishop Henry and his encounter with his killer came to designate the early beginnings of the country's Europeanness and Westernness. The narrated incident became a testimony of preferred cultural contacts and political identifications, contributing to the historical justification of the country's new EU membership. Both the legendary 12th-century event and Finland's new membership in the European Union came to represent an entrance point to the idea of Europe. In other words, the appropriation of the Bishop Henry legacy played an important role in promoting the idea that Finland became European – in the present-day sense of the word – through

its Western Christianization in the 12th century. The celebration of a medieval Catholic saint in Protestant modernity demonstrated a geopolitical identification, that is, Finland's legitimate partnership in a common Europe.

However, the linking of Finland to the emerging idea of a common Europe in the early 1990s also met with resistance. Some of this resistance rested on economic argumentation, especially regarding agricultural policies, but it also had some symbolic dimensions, due especially to the strong legacy of the Reformation in the constitution of national culture. For example, the political drive for European integration raised questions and caused fears regarding the potential resurgence of Catholicism in Northern Europe. In Köyliö, the narrative of the killing of Bishop Henry became actively invoked in local resistance against Finland's EU membership. Lower Satakunta, where Köyliö is located, was one of the strongholds of opposition against Finland's membership in the European Union, and the defender hero image was employed in the Köyliö area to symbolize this opposition. To a large extent, opposition in Finland against EU membership concerned the future of the farming industry, and for those who believed that farmers are not independent in the EU the historical hero from Köyliö seemed to provide an apt collective symbol. Especially in Köyliö but also elsewhere in the country, the bishop's killer came to be presented as a local and national hero, a freedom fighter and a liberator hero who stood up for the local community and its values, defending these against foreign control and oppression, foreign culture, foreign religion, and a foreign intruder (Anttonen 1997).

In these readings of the narrative, the murdered bishop and the European Union belonged to the same category of foreigner while Lalli and Finland fell into the category of domestic. The European Union was associated with the foreign bishop, and the foreign bishop was associated with the EU. Accordingly, the Finns of the present generation were expected to do as Lalli had done in the narrative in order to defend their freedom. "Killing the bishop" of the European Union would mean staying outside of it. The narrative thus came to represent the first historical moment of Finnish national defense, and the EU came to be seen as one in the series of foreign powers that throughout history had threatened and suppressed Finnish independence.

Regarding the character of the bishop's killer, the images that were created and reproduced, for example in local festivals in Köyliö, differed greatly from those presented by the medieval church in its iconography. Instead of being an impenitent criminal and a creature-like human figure placed low under the feet of his saintly victim, the killer was now humanized and visualized as a man of physical strength and ideological determination, signaling masculine values in the making and protecting of the local community. This view is presented most conspicuously in the larger-than-life statue that was erected in 1989 in the centre of the municipality of Köyliö (see [http://www.koylio.fi/the\\_yeoman\\_lalli.htm](http://www.koylio.fi/the_yeoman_lalli.htm)) next to the now bankrupt Säästöpankki Savings Bank, which paid for the statue as a token of its hundredth anniversary. The purpose of the statue image is to stand up as a model for the "independent

and proud Finnish farmer”, as stated by a municipal authority in the summer of 1991. As a defender hero, the bishop’s killer symbolizes the nationalized Protestant idea that the Finnish farmer owes his independence to the Reformation – that is, to the liberation of the country from the so-called wealthy and greedy bishops of the Catholic Church.

The symbolic role that has been granted to the bishop’s killer as a national liberator hero does not merely concern Köyliö. It has been presented in numerous arenas in recent years, both in popular discourse and in scholarship. In an English-language presentation of the Finnish political system, two professors of political science write as follows: “When the pagan peasant Lalli killed Finland’s first bishop Henry, he defended very concretely what was Finnish some eight and a half centuries ago” (Pesonen and Riihinen 2002: 24). In 2004, the National Broadcasting Company YLE organized a public poll for the top 100 great Finns of all times, and the bishop’s killer received enough many votes to place him on the 14th position in this competition.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Henry did not make it to the top 100 at all, despite his status as the culture hero of Finnish Christianity. One can infer from this that despite the common idea that Bishop Henry is the legendary originator of Christianity in Finland, he has never, unlike his killer, entered the category of a Finn.

A similar poll, albeit in more modest terms, was organized by the Satakunta region’s local newspaper *Satakunnan kansa* (The people of Satakunta) in the summer of 2011. They wanted to find the greatest person of all times who came from Satakunta in order to promote regional identification. On October 7, 2011 the newspaper announced the results and published them with the following headline: “Murderer more famous than the Saint” (*Satakunnan kansa* webpage). The headline made it appear that the bishop’s killer won the vote, but actually he was fourth. The news inspired readers to write their comments online, and one of them wrote as follows: “One would assume that Lalli’s candidacy for the greatest person from Satakunta inspires the perussuomalaiset to vote for him” (*Satakunnankansa.fi*, 7.10.2011, 16:15). The reader then indicated his own political views on the narrative: “Lalli was the first to use force to oppose the import of Western vanities to Finland. Lalli could be characterized as the first EU opponent” (Ibid.).

The direct link drawn between the Perussuomalaiset and the heroization of the bishop’s killer is an indication of continued popular opposition to the European Union in Finland and the conceptualization of this opposition as national defense. This defense is seen to be historically exemplified by the actions of the bishop’s killer.

The link between the Finns Party and the bishop’s killer has been made even more explicit on the Internet forum of the *Iltalehti* daily tabloid newspaper, which carries a thread entitled “Peasant Lalli for the Finns Party’s role model”. Username Suomenmies (Man of Finland) wrote in this thread on March 10, 2011 as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> For the top ten great Finns, see: [http://yle.fi/vintti/yle.fi/suuretsuomalaiset/in\\_english/index.html](http://yle.fi/vintti/yle.fi/suuretsuomalaiset/in_english/index.html).



*Peasant Lalli should be a hero for the patriotic Finns Party because he defended the faith of the fathers and his country by killing a representative of a foreign power. Bishop Henry and his troops invaded Lalli's home and robbed food. The Church has always disparaged Lalli and praised the robber bishop as a great hero. (Iltalehti.fi, Suomenmies 10.3.2011, 19:54.)*

The reading of the murder narrative given by username Suomenmies follows the Fennoman nationalist anti-Catholic legacy in its political logic. As such, it is in no way exceptional among the online commentaries on the topic. On the contrary, a statistical analysis would easily show its commonness and popularity, since there are no comments in which this reading is questioned or challenged. Crediting the Finns Party as the parliamentary representatives of this reading and its nationalist premises is not exceptional either. Later the same day the same reader continued his commentary with the following:

*The building of parsonages and churches and the salaries paid to the bishop and priests brought new burdens on the newly Christianized people who did not want to submit themselves to these burdens. The Song of the Slaying of Bishop Henry tells us how the hated hospitality tax was the cause for Lalli's protest. After Finland joined the European Union, there have been obligations and payments that have made the people angry. Greece, the Irish loan, EU membership fees, and cumbersome directives. (Iltalehti.fi, Suomenmies 10.3.2011, 20:50.)*

In this commentary, the Fennoman-minded political contextualization of the folk ballad is linked with current EU-related economic hardships, indicating a common interpretive frame for all Finnish history. The Finnish people has always been burdened by taxes and administrative policies imposed by its rulers, and these rules and rulers always come from abroad.

To my knowledge, the Finns Party has not published any statements regarding the Bishop Henry narrative, but the examples presented here suffice to show that a special link is made between the Finns Party and the continuation of the killer's heroization. No such link is drawn vis-à-vis any other political party. The linking serves to indicate that the goals and agendas of the Finns Party, especially in their EU criticism, are considered by party supporters to emerge from the same ideological premises as the heroization of the bishop's killer and the reading of his actions as exemplifying national defense and self-esteem. Not all make references to this narrative, but some do it most explicitly and see it as epitomizing the party.

One of them is Mr. Lasse Laaksonen from Helsinki, a blogger who uses Lalli as his first name and who calls himself Incorruptible Language Warrior Lalli of Finland (in Finnish: *Lahjomaton Kielisoturi Suomen Lalli*). He has a photograph of himself in his blog holding a medieval axe in his hands and quotes as his motto "There is plenty of work for Lalli's tool" (with the word 'tool' carrying an unmistakable sexual connotation). (See <http://lasselaak->

sonen.puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/.) Another blogger, Ms. Elina Keränen, member of the Center Party, has called the supporters of the Finns Party as followers of an ideology that she calls Lallism, that is, willingness to grab an axe in fight against immigration (see <http://elinakeranen.puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/93926-lallismi>). In January 2012, fierce online debating took place on this issue between the two bloggers and a number of other readers.

Another critical comment about the linking of the bishop's killer and the Finns Party was made by Professor Emeritus Matti Klinge, one of the most well-known historians in Finland. In a talk given at the House of Science in Helsinki in August 2011, Klinge said that the Finns Party agitates the Finnish people in the spirit of Lalli and propagates a "we have been oppressed" interpretation of Finnish history (blogivirta 2011).

This is more or less the same point that I have tried to make in this article. The Finns Party's opposition to European integration, immigration, and Finland's official bilingualism is not merely an issue of present-day politics but represents cultural and political heritage. The narrative complex *in toto* is cultural heritage on a number of different performance arenas, such as the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Ecumenical movement. All of these heritage arenas are political arenas as well, concerning not only the politics of religion but specifically the relationship of particular religious denominations with the state. The heroization of the bishop's killer is a special discursive arena that constitutes a heritage of its own but that still in many ways is linked with other heritage arenas concerning the narrative complex. In this special discursive arena that is represented by supporters of the Finns Party among others, the narrative of the bishop's killing serves as a mythological basis for two ideological premises: first, the construction of Finnishness and Finnish culture vis-à-vis foreign threats, and second, the preservation and defence of Finnish customs against international influences in general and multicultural influences in particular. Both are highly defensive approaches to history and exemplify what I would call the defensive ethos in Finnish nation-making. The continuation of this defensive ethos in this particular myth can be considered cultural and political heritage for two reasons: first, it is explicitly cited and circulated as a narrative carrying symbolic significance in the definition and characterization of Finnishness. It is shared history. Second, it draws on a recognizable ideological frame regarding cultural sovereignty and defense even when it is not explicitly referred to or not even agreed upon.

Yet, as far as the Finns Party as a political institution is concerned, the popular tendency to see the bishop's killer as a heroic figure is a problem rather than an asset. The leader of the party, Mr. Timo Soini, is a converted Catholic and identifies with a different heritage arena than those who see the legendary actions of the bishop's killer as exemplary. Online commentators have pointed out that "The True Finns are not allowed to admire Lalli because Lalli killed Soini's idol, the Catholic bishop from Sweden!" (Iltalehti.fi, 2.04.2011, 03:09). I wrote to Mr. Soini and asked him kindly for an interview on this particular topic, but he never responded to my email.

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## STRANKA FINCEV IN UMOR ŠKOFA IZ 12. STOLETJA. DEDIŠČINA POLITIČNEGA MITA

*V parlamentarnih volitvah na Finskem spomladi 2011 je populistična stranka Perussuomalaiset (Stranka Fincev) dosegla prepričljiv uspeh in postala tretja največja parlamentarna stranka. S tem je popularno nasprotovanje Evropski uniji postalo politični dejavnik, ki ga morajo druge stranke resno upoštevati. Popularnost Stranke Fincev govori o splošnih težnjah v sodobni Evropi, hkrati pa na pomenljiv način vpeljuje posebne interpretacije finske zgodovine, nacionalizma in politik identitete, pri čemer se opira na čustva, ki so vzniknila in se razvila v finskem nacionalizmu 19. stoletja. Zaradi tega nasprotovanje Stranke Fincev evropski integraciji ni le stvar trenutne gospodarske politike, temveč tudi vprašanje kulturne in politične dediščine.*

*Članek obravnava vlogo enega glavnih nacionalističnih mitov na Finskem, ki se sklicuje na umor legendarnega krščanskega misijonarja škofa Henrika v 12. stoletju in je pomemben za argumentacijo vrednot strankinih podpornikov. Zgodba o umoru škofa je pripoved o številnih začetkih in na formulacije njenih izvirov so se prilepili številni politizirani pomeni. Najprej gre za nacionalni mit o pokristjanjevanju Fincev in Finske. V bolj specifičnem pomenu gre za mitično pripoved, ki postavlja pokristjanjevanje Finske in Fincev v škofovo mučeništvo. Hkrati označuje začetek zgodovinskega obdobja države in konec njene predzgodovine. Toda v prvi vrsti je mit o izviru dveh cerkva na Finskem, katoliške in danes tudi luteranske cerkve.*

*Pripoved je tudi nacionalni mit o položaju Finske v Evropi n njeni lokaciji med vzhodom in zahodom. Po razpadu Sovjetske zveze in ko je Finska vstopala v članstvo Evropske skupnosti (pozneje Evropske unije) se je geopolitična identiteta države prenavljala in zgodba o škofu Henriku in*

*njegovem srečanju z morilcem je postala eden izmed označevalcev zgodnjih začetkov evropskosti in zahodnosti države. Pripoved o dogodku je postala pričevanje o prednostnih kulturnih stikih in političnih identifikacijah ter je prispevala k zgodovinski upravičenosti članstva države v EU. Vendar je ista pripoved simbolično uporabljena tudi za nasprotovanje članstvu Finske v EU. Po tem branju sodita umorjeni škof in EU v isto kategorijo, tj. kategorijo tujih vsiljivcev, medtem ko je škofov morilec obravnavan kot lokalni in nacionalni junak, borec za svobodo, ki se je postavil za lokalno skupnost in branil njeno suverenost pred tujim nadzorom in tujo vero (krščanstvo/katolicizem). Takšno branje izvira iz finskega nacionalizama sredine 19. stoletja, ko se je morilčeva podoba spreminjala, da bi se ujela z interesi nacionalnega junaštva in simbolizma.*

*Prepoznavna povezava je danes postavljena med privržence Stranke Fincev in heroizacijo škofovega morilca. Zveza implicira, da cilji in program Stranke Fincev, zlasti njihov kritikizem do EU, po mnenju strankinih popornikov, izvirajo iz enakih političnih podmen kakor legendarna dejanja škofovega morilca – kot nacionalna obramba proti tujim vladarjem in kot nacionalna samozavest. Vendar se stranka spoprijema z dilemo pri rabi svojega simboličnega vira, ker je njen voditelj zadnjih petnajstih let in tudi prihodnjih, gospod Timo Soini, spreobrnjen katoličan. Skladno s tem se isti s precej drugačno dediščino kakor tisti, ki častijo legendarna dejanja škofovega morilca.*

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