

Finnish scout colors

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The beginning

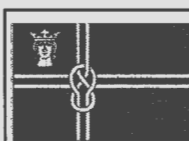
The Scout movement was introduced in Finland as early as 1910. The first Scout troops made their own symbols as the founder of the movement, Lord Baden-Powell, had suggested in his famous book *Scouting for Boys*. Many troops had colours and patrols had pennants of their own. Scouting was first organized for boys only and Fleur-de-Lis and Kim's smile has always been their emblem. Their motto is *Be prepared*. Thus the colours of the first Finnish scout troop carry these two symbols on a dark blue field. The colours are heraldic although the Kim's smile has the text BE PREPARED on it (Figs. 1, 2).

After a few years the first world war broke out and Russia was involved in it. Being an autonomous part of the Russian empire Finland could not stay out of the world politics. The Scout movement was allowed in Russia during the World War 1, but it was banned as a revolutionary activity in Finland. All Scout troops were ordered to give up all their activities, but some of them kept on going underground as a 'secret society' — a few of them quite actively. No Scout colors or emblems could be shown in public (Fig. 3).

After the Russian revolution and the Finnish independence in 1917, the Scout troops came back into public life and numerous troops were founded throughout the country. The Finnish civil war broke out in early 1918 and the republicans (the nationalistic 'whites') won. Minor fighting took place with the Russians and the peace treaty was signed in 1920 with the Soviet Russia. Scouts were mainly on the white side against the 'reds' who wanted to make Finland a socialistic country. Some Finnish scouts were in the voluntary troops fighting in Eastern Carelia, Ingria and Estonia in the early 1920'ies.

Finland had no official flag of her own before gaining the independency in 1917. But the unofficial flag carrying the coat-of-arms of Finland (a lion) was used from the middle of the previous century (Fig. 4). Annals reveal that this flag might have been used much earlier, when Finland was a part of the Swedish kingdom. Otherwise there have been mainly military colours or colours for grief and sorrow (in funerals).

As Finland gained her independence in December 1917 the only official flag was this red flag with a golden lion. Many people had used various unofficial flags in their summer houses from the turn of the century as the nationalistic atmosphere grew. Dur-



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Figure 1 Toimen Pojat: This is one of the oldest scout colours in Finland carrying the scout badge of the first class (the lily and Kim's smile). It is still being used. It dates back to 1911.

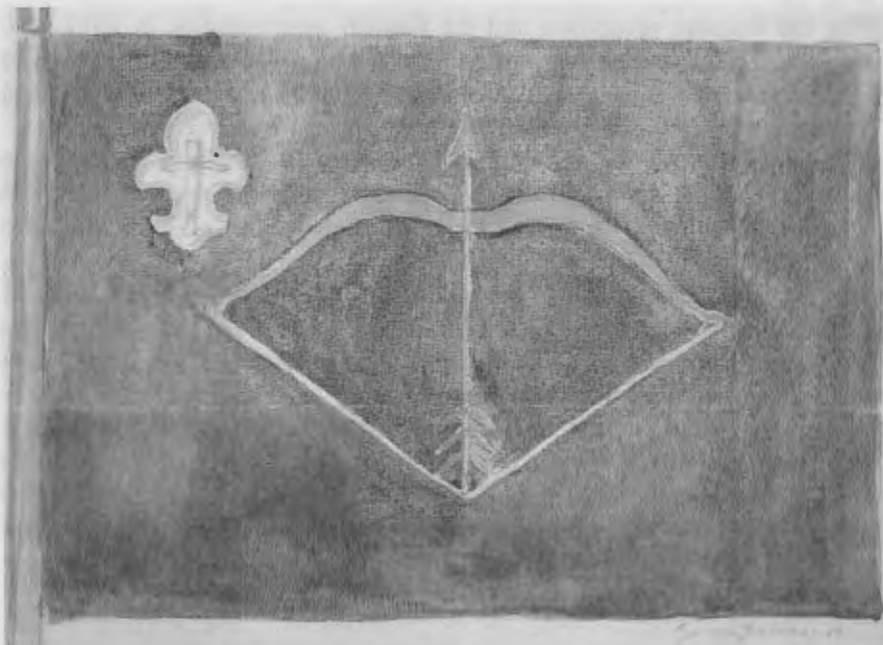


Figure 2 Wasa Flickor: The lily and emblem of the royal Wasa family indicate scouting and the city of Vaasa. Bow and arrow are related to Swedish speaking scouts.

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ing the civil war the legal government and the 'whites' used the lion flag (red flag with a lion) or blue and white flag and the revolutionary 'reds' in Helsinki used the international revolution (red) flag. The war ended and the white side won in May 1918. This is the reason why red could not be used when the Finnish national flag was being designed.

Artists Eero Snellman and Bruno Tuukkanen designed the white and blue cross flag of Finland in May 1918 and it was accepted immediately. The previous flag carrying a golden lion on a red field — as the coat of arms of Finland — was the model for the first colours of the Finnish Scout Movement.

There are two scout emblems and the Finnish lion in the colours as well. It is heraldic but the symbols are too small which was typical to the period.

From 1918 until the Second World War

There were about 20 years of peace and scouting was accepted and given support throughout the country. Finnish girls started scouting, 'guiding,' and they designed their own symbols and colours before the trefoil was taken as a symbol for the international guides association. The first Finnish Scout Movement shattered into several smaller organisations.

New colours were designed and some showed specific graphic design and some knowledge of heraldry. A few colours were almost naturalistic and there was no artistic control involved. Non-heraldic colours like brown were used widely. When the blue and white colours were accepted as the national flag, many scout colours were designed on a blue field. The Union of Finnish Girl Guides had a rule, that a white field might be used only by the association herself. Some examples follow here (Figs. 5-8).

The scout colours stayed like this until 1945, because most of the scoutmasters served in the Defence Forces and scouting was not very active without them. Some scout troops and many scout activities were suspended during the World War 2. Many scouts served as staff messengers. After the Winter War 1939-40 Finland had to cede 11% of her land area to the Soviet Union and many scout troops were transferred to other parts of the country with the evacuated people if they were not closed down completely.

After the Second World War

The political atmosphere was a bit uncertain in the late 1940's and nobody was sure if scouting could be continued. The Control Commission of the Allies had closed down many societies in Finland, but perhaps the British delegates made the Soviets to understand that scouting was all right. Scouting was started in England and many British representatives of the Control Commission had been scouting in their youth.

Scouting could go on even though few troops had ceased and some had been re-born after the war. Karelian troops were active in their new neighbourhoods. And the old colours were used as the troops from Viipuri moved to Helsinki and the troops from Värtsilä moved to Forssa. The old colours were used until the 1970's (Figs. 9-12).

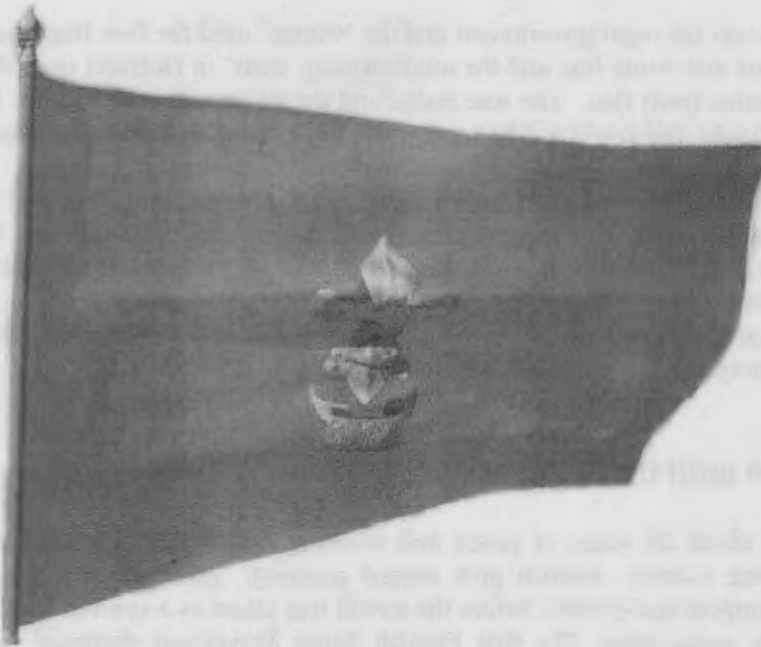


Figure 3 Suomen Partioliiitto: This colours dates from January 1918, as the national flag still had a yellow lion on a red field. The symbol is the first class scout lily.

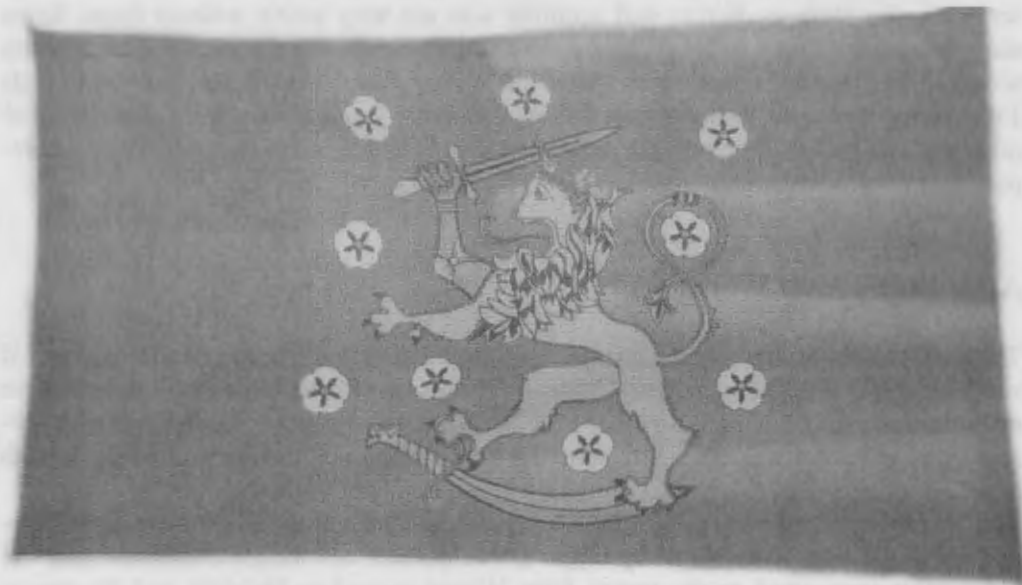


Figure 4 Flag with a lion: First unofficial and for a while the official flag of Finland. It was replaced by present blue and white flag in May 1918.

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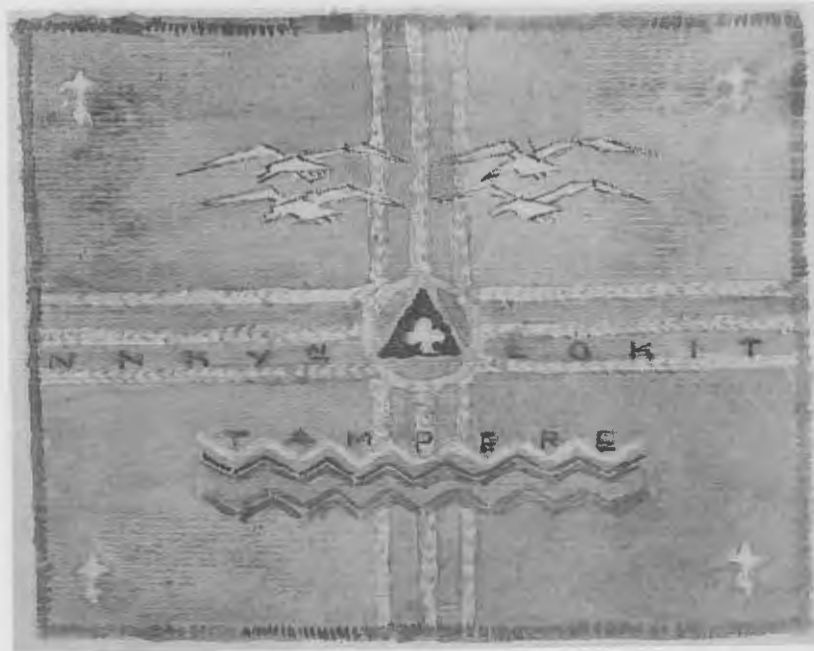
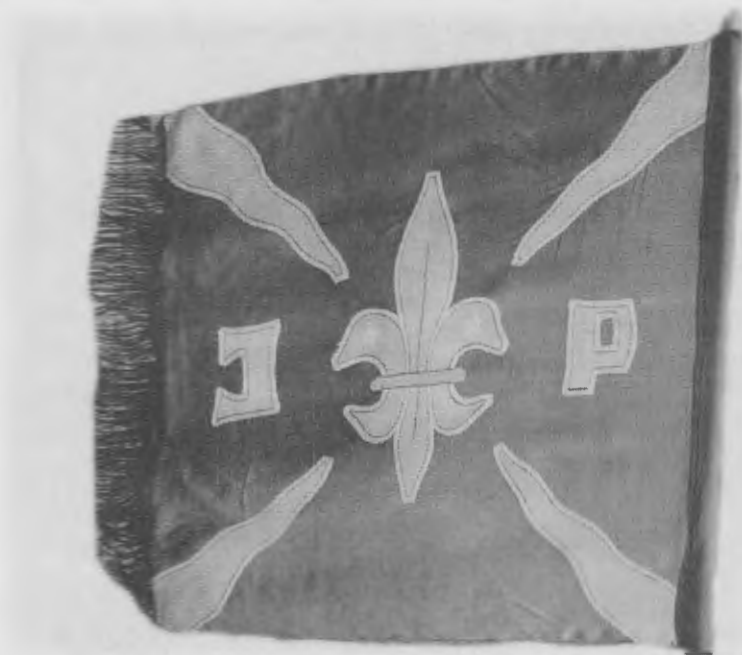


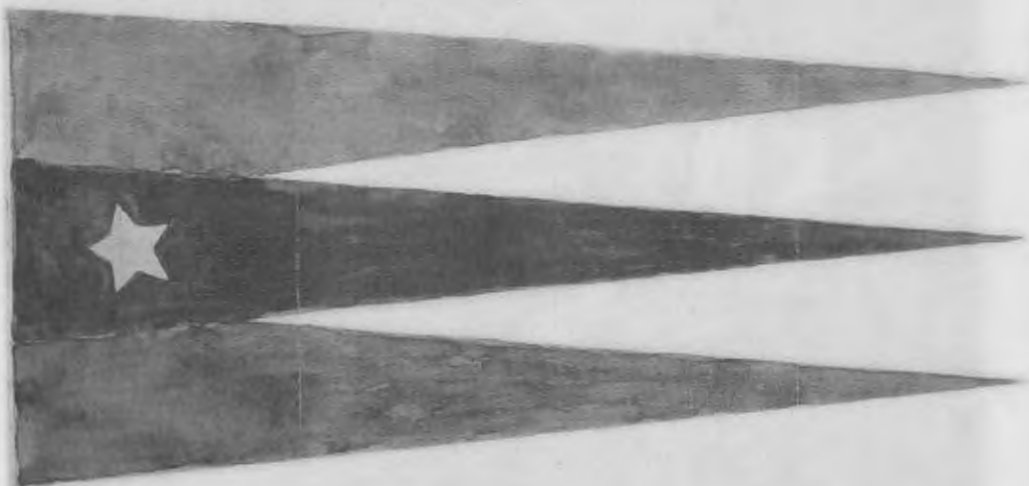
Figure 5 Tampeen Lokit: Colours of the girl guide troop "the seagulls" from the 1920's. In the very middle there is the symbol of one of the Finnish Girl Guide Associations. 1927.



Figure 6 Suomalainen Partiotyttöliitto: Colours are very much like the badge of the association — a trefoil, Kim's smile and scout salute. 1925.



*Figure 7 Jaarlin Pojat: A plain colours from the 1930's.
Does not follow exactly the rules of heraldry. 1931.*



*Figure 8 Finlands Svenska Flickscout Förbundet, N. Tarpojaviiri: A pennant from the
1920's and 1930's. 1930.*

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The renaissance of the Finnish heraldry started when the municipalities wanted to get the coat-of-arms for themselves. This started in the late 1940's and many scout colours were designed following heraldry rules (Figs. 13-14). Many famous heraldry designers like Olof Eriksson and Robert de Caluwé have designed many scout colours. Olof Eriksson examined and revised numerous new scout colours while being the heraldry advisor to the Scout Union of Finland.

Still some scout colours have been designed by people with limited knowledge and skills of heraldry. This is natural and understandable but we hope that all scout colours could follow the rules of heraldry. The stubbornness of a few Finnish Scoutmasters has led to quite variable scout colours even though there has been specific surveillance on this most of the time since the early 1950's (Figs. 15-16).

Partioheraldikot was founded in 1972 and it was taken as the heraldry advisory body of the Finnish Scout and Guide Association. This society has always had a fixed purpose of making the Finnish scout colours to follow the rules of good heraldry more exactly (Figs. 17-20). When the scouts and guides united into one association, new colours were needed. The scout cross with lilies and trefoils was first designed for the Finnish Scout Foundation, but it was taken as the symbol of the Scouts and Guides of Finland in 1980. The blue and white colours are taken from the Finnish flag as the very first scout colours in Finland were based on the Finnish coat-of-arms in 1917. The new flag was introduced in the first national Jamboree Karelia in Eastern Finland on 1979. The National foundation and sponsoring Scouting and Guiding gave their own badge to the Finnish Scout Foundation.

A few years later the Scouts and Guides of Finland founded a specific heraldry committee that helps the troops to design scout colours. Nowadays the scout colours are generally of a high level thanks to the active members of the Heraldry Committee. The chairman Mr. Tuomas Hyrsky has made tremendous efforts during the past 20 years in heraldry and diplomacy.

We also enclose pictures of recent scout colours (Figs. 21-24). These can be found in our journal *Liehuvat värät* (Flying colours) and new scout colours will be published as soon as the secretary of the Heraldry Committee provides them to us. Partioheraldikot annually awards a special price for the best scout emblem. Most of the time it has been scout colours.

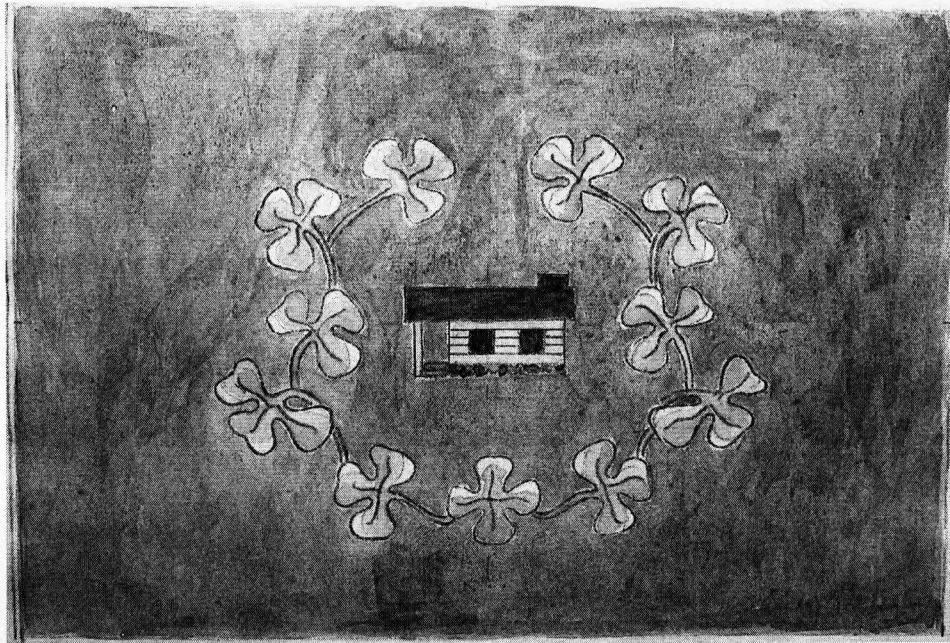


Figure 9 Helsingfors Nybyggarflickor: A circle of trefoils would have been enough. The touching hut is the log cabin of the troop. The style of the hut is from the 1940's.



Figure 10 Grankullorna 1940. A troop in Kauniainen.

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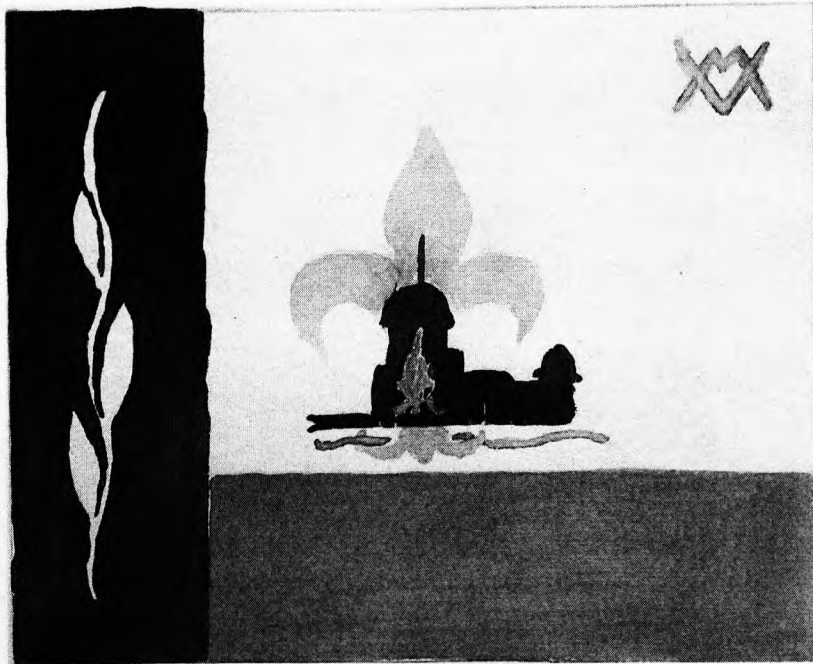


Figure 11 Viipurin Metsänkävijät: The main symbols are a fire, Viipuri castle and a lily. The colours red, black and white remind of the lost Karjala. The old colours was lost in the war and this was made in 1948.



Figure 12 Hiipan Pojat: This colours is from the late 1940's, but the style is basically from the thirties. There are already signs of heraldic renaissance. 1948.

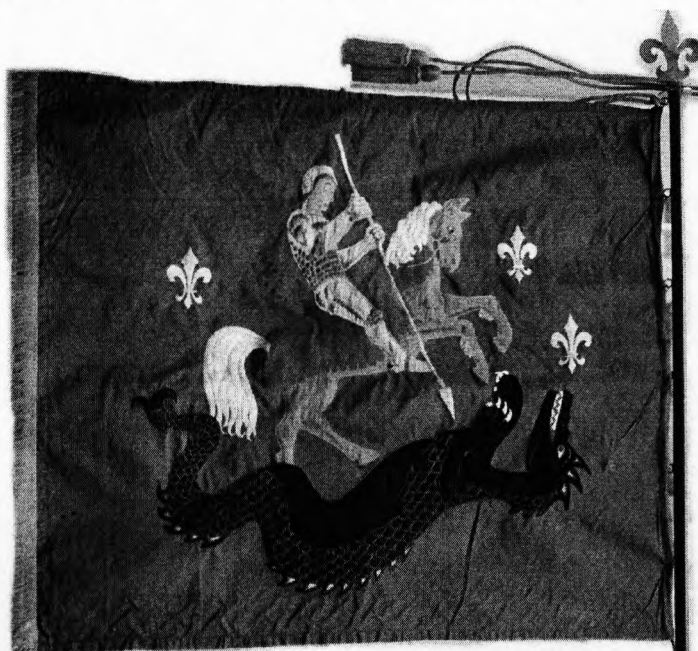


Figure 13 Suomen Partiopoikajärjestö: Olof Eriksson designed the colours for the Finnish Boy Scout Association during the 1950's. St. George and lilies are on a green field representing the nature.



Figure 14 Suomalaisen Partiopoikien Liitto: A white George's cross on a blue field was taken into use in 1956. The lily in the middle was the symbol of the Boy Scout Association as well as the third class badge (design Ahti Hammar).

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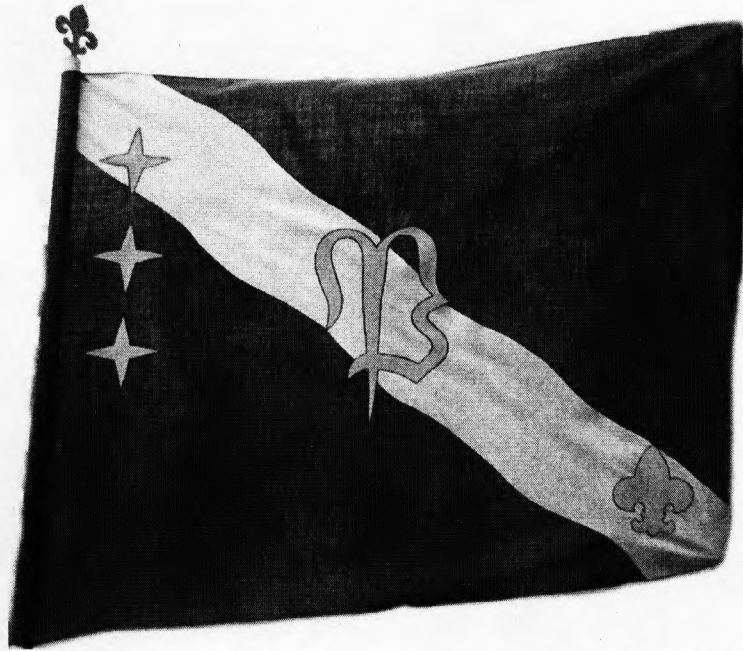


Figure 15 Pirkan Pojat: In the fifties the symbols were still small like in this colour of a boy scout troop in Tampere. 1953.

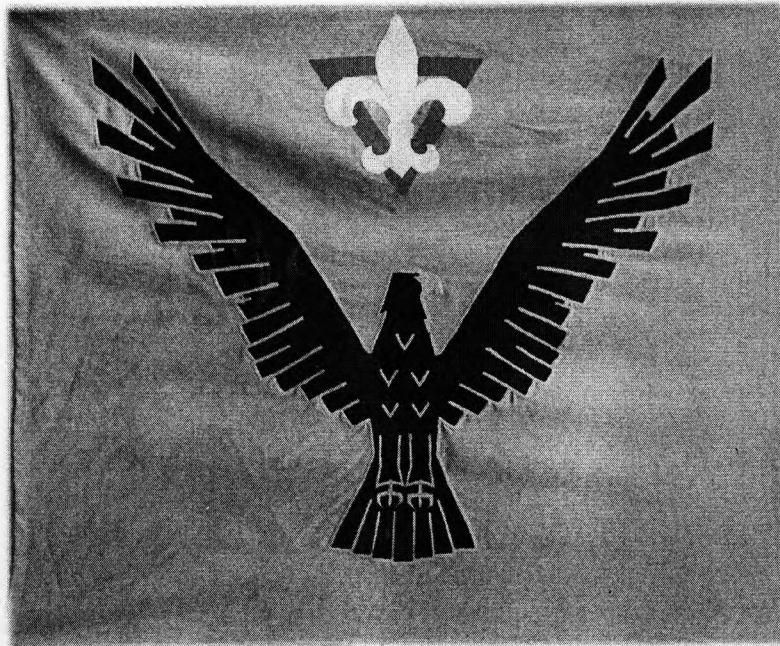


Figure 16 Tampereen Kotkat: A troop with an YMCA background has some heraldic touch in it. Dates back to 1960.

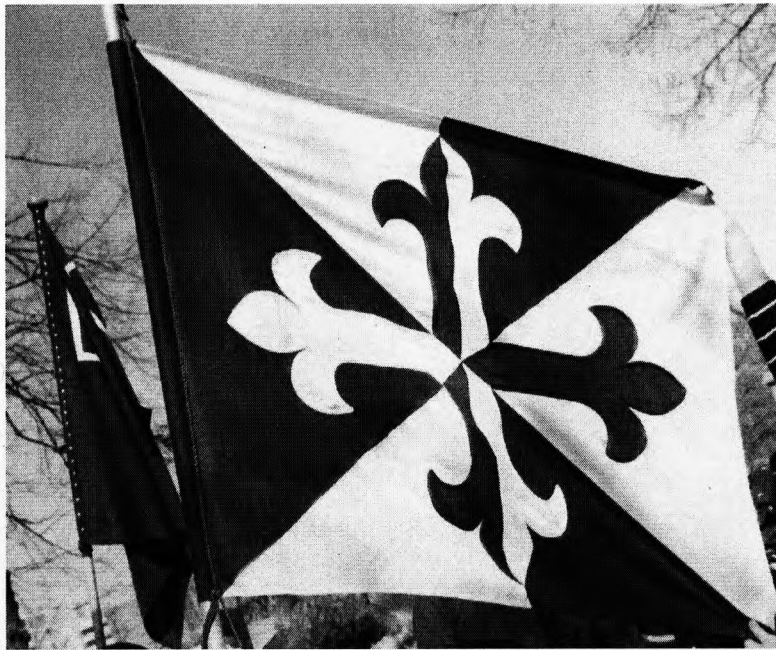


Figure 17 Töölön Siniset: A cross made of four lilies, using only two colours. Designed in 1963.



Figure 18 Suvelan Samoojat: The symbols relate to the area of the scout troop. The scout cross — symbol of the Guides and Scouts of Finland — has been added to the colours so it cannot be used as the tip of the pole. 1982.

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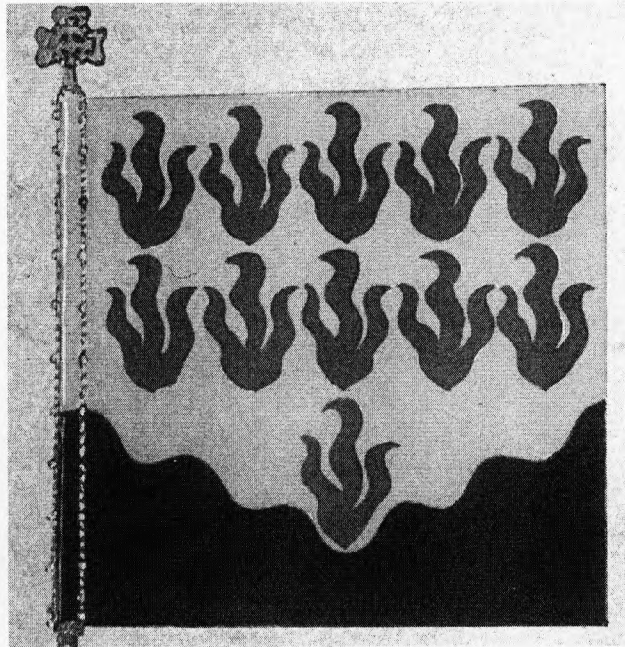


Figure 19 Hiistulen Tytöt: The flames are symbolizing the 11 vigorous people that were dropped to the region by an ancient giant. The lake has the form of a "V" due to the name of the lake and the town Vihtijärvi. 1981.

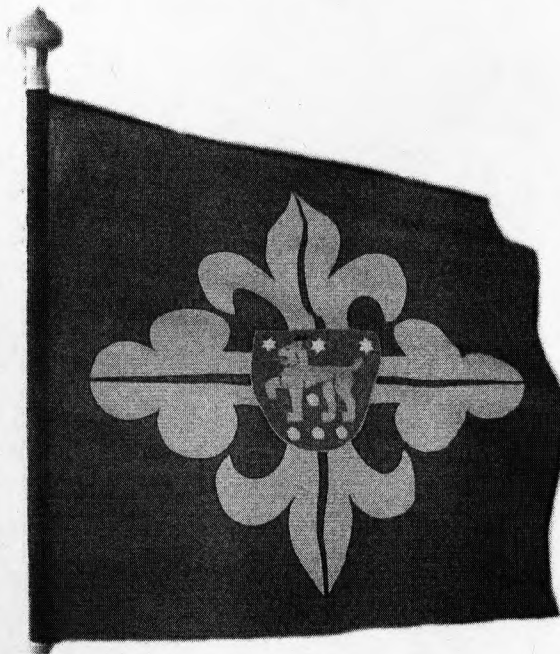


Figure 20 Hämeen Partioliaset: One of the new and well designed colours for a scout district is the colour of Häme. The coat of arms of Häme lies in the middle of the scout cross. Unfortunately the lynx is walking to the wrong direction on the other side. 1981.



Figure 21 Polvijärven Pärempolttajat: The colours represent Karelia and the symbols have been taken from the coat of arms of the municipality (polvi = knee) or the Kalevala legends. 1973.

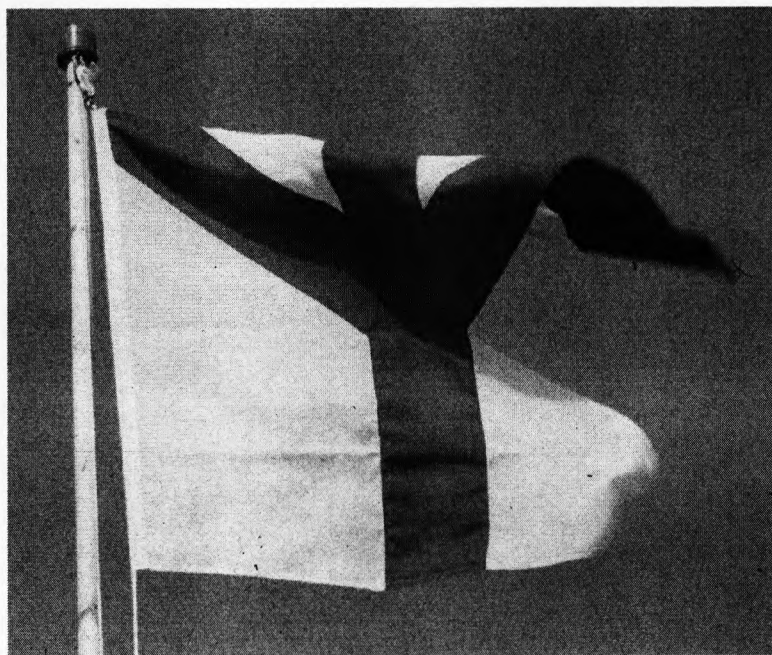


Figure 22 Tavastit: The flag of the troop carries the tree of life. The same symbol has been used in the scarf, too. 1983.

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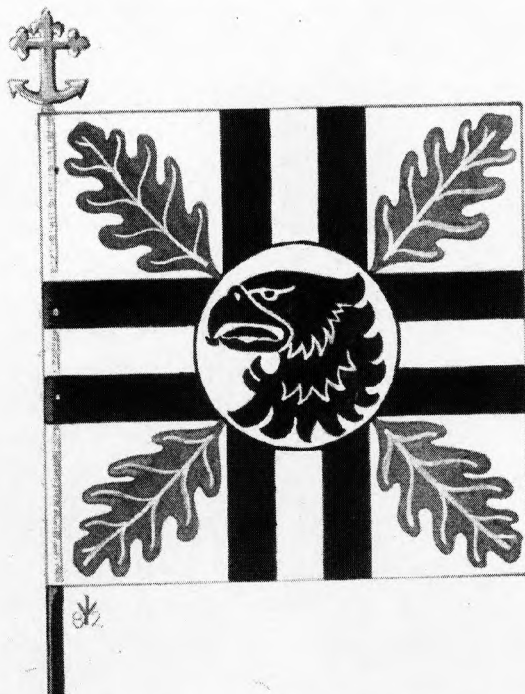


Figure 23 Scoutkåren Havsörnarna Tammisaari: The eagle relates to the name of the troop, oak tree leaves relate to the name of the town and the crosses relate to the local yacting club. 1982.

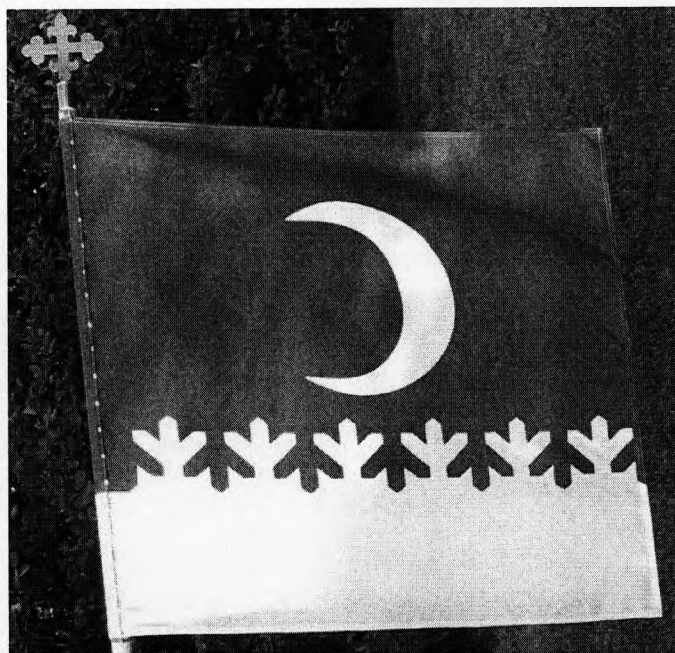
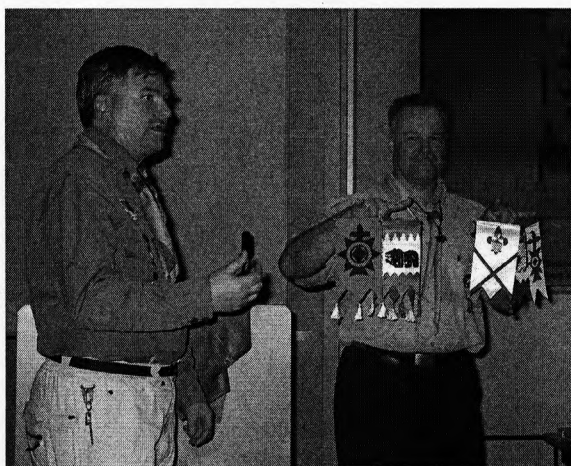


Figure 24 Kuuvalon Vaeltajat: A talking flag that reminds us of a Finnish forest on a winter night. It was awarded the prize of the best scout colour in 2003 by the Scout Heraldry Society.

About the authors



Kari K. Laurla (to the left in the photo) started working on heraldry in about 1956 when the new book *The World Flag Atlas* was published. Kari Laurla has designed about 160 coats of arms; and many more flags and pennants. During the 1960's he was the colour specialist for the Girl Guide Association of Finland and since starting the Scout Heraldry Society he has been helping all Finnish scouts in heraldry. Kari Laurla was the first president of the Scout Heraldry Society and is still the chief edi-

tor of the publication *Liehuvat värät*. He is also a member of the Estonian State Heraldry Council.

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