

Satanism in the Finnish Youth Culture of the 1990s

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The aim of this study was to investigate Satanism among Finnish youth in the 1990s. Thematic interviews of young Finnish Satanists are the basic material of this study. The research employs a theoretical framework derived from narrative psychology and the role-theoretical thinking of Dan P McAdams. The young Satanists in Finland have been divided into two different groups: the criminal and drug using “devil-worshipping gangs”; and the more educated and ‘philosophically oriented Satanists’.

What can we say about this division? In the 1990s around Finland, there were young people calling themselves devil-worshippers (either singular or in groups). They were strongly committed to a mythical devilish and cosmic battle, which they believed was going on in this world. They had problems with their mental health, also in their family socialization and peer groups. In their personal attitudes they were either active fighters or passive tramps. There were also rationally oriented young Satanists, that were ritually active and mainly atheistic. They strongly expressed their personal experiences of being individual and of being different than others. In their personal attitudes they were critical fighters and active survivors. They saw their lives through the satanic ‘finding-oneself experience’. They understood themselves as a “postmodern tribe” (Michel Maffesoli’s socio-cultural concept): their sense of themselves was that of a dynamic collectivity which is social, dynamic, nonlocal and mythically historical. Death and black metal culture in the 1990s formed a common space for youth culture, where young individuals could work out their feelings and express their attitudes to life using dark satanic themes and symbols. The sense of “otherness” (also other than satanic) and collective demands for authenticity were essential tools that were used for identity work here.

Personal disengagement from satanic/satanistic groups were observed to be gradual or quite rapid. Religious conversions back-and-forth also occurred. At the end of the 1990s all of satanism in Finland bore a negative devil-worshipping stigma. Ritual homicide in South-Finland (Kerava/Hyvinkää) was connected to Satanism, which then became unpopular both in the personal life stories and alternative youth cultural circles at the beginning of the 2000s.