

The Story of Place Names

Texts of sample posters from the exhibition on place names in Finland 2010

Reference: Working Paper No. 32, 26th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, 2 - 6 May 2011, Vienna, Austria

Poster 1 The birth of place names - talking about places

Puhetta paikoista / På tal om platser

By using place names, people manage their surroundings in an immaterial way. Names have been given and are given to places important to the people using them. Names help people remember places and tell other people about them. The oldest Finnish place names may be up to three thousand years old, and new names are born every day.

The vocabulary related to a name may be indicative of the original language and culture of the person who has given the name. People having come to the region later on have often borrowed and adopted the original names and accommodated them for their own purposes; but they may also have given names by themselves.

In fact, one place may have multiple names.

The map shows the regions where the current Finnish, Swedish, and Saami-language place names are located on the Basic Map of Finland. We have used the Place Names Register of the National Land Survey as a source.

- **Finnish names / suomenkieliset nimet / finska namn**
- **Swedish names / ruotsinkieliset nimet / svenska namn**
- **Saami names / saamenkieliset nimet / samiska namn**

Poster 2 From one language to another

Kielestä kieleen / Namn i språkkontakt

The Finnish names in the Saami region are often adaptations or translations from the Saami languages. The wilderness church of Pielpajärvi is located by the lake Iso Pielpajärvi (Great Pielpajärvi) east of the village of Inari. The Finnish name *Pielpajärvi* is an adaptation of the Inari Saami name *Piälppáájävri*. Its first part *piälppáá* means a small pointed wooden arrow, whereas its second part *jävri* corresponds to the Finnish word *järvi* 'lake'. There are also other names beginning with the word Pielpa in the region: *Pieni Pielpajärvi* (Little Lake Pielpajärvi) (*Uccâ Piälppáájävri*), *Pielpavuono* (fjord) (*Piälppáávuonâ*) and *Pielpaniemi* (peninsula) (*Piälppáánjargâ*).

The name *Kalkuvaara* is an adaptation of the Inari Saami name *Kálguvääri*. The first part of the name *kálgu* is based on a word referring to a wife or an old woman, and the second part *vääri* is a hill covered with forest. *Sarviniemi* (peninsula) is a translation of the Inari Saami name *Čuárvinjargâ* (*čuárvi* meaning a horn and *njargâ* meaning a peninsula).

Poster 3 Storing the name of a field

Pellon nimi talteen / Att ta vara på åkerns namn

In the countryside, just as in cities, people name places that are important to them. A place name may be used by just a single family. In the course of years, new names are born and old ones become obsolete. Place name collectors have toured around Finland, collecting information on the names of estates, hills, peninsulas, and fields, to be stored in archives.

Text under the Basic Map: the collection of Swedish names from the village of Saxby in Porvoo/Borgå. The hand written numbers on the map (*Numero / Number*) correspond to the place names stored in the collection (*Nimi / Name*). As can be seen, just a fraction of all the names have been printed on the Basic Map. The place examples in the name list are presented in the lower part of the map. Fi *kallio*/ sv *berg* 'rock', fi *pelto*/ sv *åker* 'field'. The collection is stored on the premises of the Swedish Literature Society.

Poster 4 Archived names

Nimet arkistoihin / Arkiverade ortnamn

The Names Archive of the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland

The Names Archive of the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskuksen Nimiarkisto) contains over 2.6 million place name entries from Finland and the nearby regions. Names have been collected systematically since 1915 by interviewing local people. The names are organized according to locality and in a nation-wide index.

The Language Archive of the Swedish Literature Society

The Swedish Literature Society (Svenska litteratursällskapet) has collected Swedish-language place names in Finland since the late 19th century. Their collections cover nearly 400 000 names, organized according to locality and village.

They include names of estates and cultivated lands, as well as names of islands and other natural features.

Poster 5 Names in multiple languages

Nimi monella kielellä / Namn på flera språk

Place names in multilingual regions

Finnish place names are multilingual: In the Saami region in Lapland, there are mostly Saami-language place names, whereas the names in the traditionally Swedish-speaking areas on the south and west coast are Swedish.

If a place has established names in Swedish and Finnish, both are marked on the map. In municipalities where the majority language is Swedish, the Swedish name is given first, e.g., Kristinestad (fi Kristiinankaupunki). In contrast, in Kaskinen (sv Kaskö), the Finnish name is given first. About one percent of the names on the Basic Map have equivalents in another language.

In the Saami region, people speak three Saami languages and Finnish. In Enontekiö, Utsjoki and the northern parts of Sodankylä, the names are given mostly in Finnish and North Saami. In Inari, a place name may be given in up to four languages. On the Basic Map, the Finnish name is given first, followed by the names in North Saami, Inari Saami, and Skolt Saami.

Poster 6 The right name in the right place Checking the names on the Basic Map

Oikea nimi oikeaan paikkaan / Rätt namn på rätt plats

The names on the Basic Map are checked at the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland. The objective is to make sure that the right names are used in the right places in the right forms and that they are written correctly.

In the checking endeavour, the most important sources are the place name collections of the Names Archive of the Research Institute, which have been compiled by interviewing local people. The changes made are stored in the Topographic Database of the National Land Survey of Finland, which serves as a basis for various map printouts and printed Basic Maps.

Above, you will find examples of what types of changes can be suggested to the names on the basis of the name collections and how these suggestions are realized in the topographic database. The changes presented here have to do with the correcting of the spelling of names, the transferring of the names to the right places, and the adding of missing names.

Poster 7 Planned names – Kruununhaka in Helsinki

Kruununhaka /Kronohagen

From a pasture of the horses owned by the Swedish Crown to Kruununhaka

The name *Kruununhaka / Kronohagen* “the Crown’s Pasture” was given to a quarter of Helsinki in the 19th century. The Swedish-language name *Kronohagen* had already been in use at least since the 1750s. It was born spontaneously to designate a grazing land of horses owned by the army of the Kingdom of Sweden, i.e. “the Swedish Crown”. It is in Kruununhaka where the oldest official street names still in use in Helsinki, fi *Unioninkatu / sv Unionsgatan* “Union Street” and fi *Liisankatu / sv Elisabetsgatan* “Elizabeth’s Street”, are found. The Swedish names *Unionsgatan* and *Elisabetsgatan* were given in 1819, in connection with the visit of Russian Emperor Alexander I to Helsinki. A bit later the streets were given their Finnish names. *Elisabetinkatu*, i.e. *Liisankatu* “Elizabeth’s Street” was named after Empress Elizabeth, the wife of Alexander I.

Poster 8 Names in town plans – ”Keimola Hill”

Keimolanmäki / Käinbybacken

Keimolanmäen asemakaava 2009 / The town plan of Keimolanmäki 2009

Keimolan moottoristadion 1966 - 1978 / Keimola Motor Stadium 1966 - 1978

A new residential area has been planned to replace the former Keimola Motor Stadium, *Keimolanmäki / Käinbybacken* “Keimola Hill”. The new names (in Finnish and in Swedish) in the area have been inspired by the motor racing course. *Ajolenkki / Körlänken* “Race Round” used to be part of the racing course. *Lincolninaukio / Lincolnplatsen* “Lincoln Square” refers to the founder of the course, one of the most famous race car drivers in Finland, Curt Lincoln.

Ruutulipunkuja / Målflaggsgränden ”Chequered Flag Alley” refers to the finish line of the race and *Saunalenkki / Bastulänken* ”Sauna Round” used to be a steep curve where there was a sausage advertisement (*lenkki* meaning both a race round and a Finnish sausage shaped as a ring or an oval by tying the ends together, often enjoyed after bathing in the sauna). *Vauhtikuja / Fartgränden* “Speed Alley”, in turn, refers to both the Keimola Hill races and the name *Vauhtitie / Fartvägen* “Speed Road” found in *Eläintarha / Djurgården* (“Zoo”), an area where another famous racing course used to be located.

26 April 2011

The original exhibition included 30 posters and was prepared by The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, the National Land Survey of Finland and the name and town planners of the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa

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