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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
Athens, 17 August-7 September 1977  
Item 7 of the provisional agenda.

Reports by divisions and Governments  
on the situation in their regions and  
countries and on the progress made in  
the standardization of geographical  
names since the Second United Nations  
Conference on the Standardization of  
Geographical Names

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
IN FINLAND, 1972-1977

Paper presented by the Government of Finland

### General

The collection, archiving, and official maintenance of Finnish geographical and personal names was reorganized after the Second Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names organized by the United Nations. In 1976 the private Finnish Name Archives ceased operations, with its tasks being assumed by the Office for Finnish Onomastics of the Finnish Research Centre for the Domestic Languages which was established at that time and is sponsored by the government. Work concerning the Swedish names in Finland became the responsibility of the Office for the Swedish Language of the Research Centre. A board for the Lappish (Sami) Language functions as an organ providing linguistic expertise in matters concerning the Lappish names in Finland.

The Office for Finnish Onomastics has a personnel of 10 (8 linguists and 2 historians); the Onomastics Division of the Office for the Swedish Languages has a personnel of 2 (linguists).

Address: Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus (Finnish Research Centre for the Domestic Languages), Liisank. 16 A 2, 00170 Helsinki 17, Finland.

### National standardization

#### a) Field collection of names

Finnish names. About 293,000 new cards were added to the toponymy collections during the period 1972 - 1976. Besides listing the standardized form of the toponym, each card also lists it according to the local dialect, its location (commune, village, farmstead, and geographical index on a 1:20,000 scale map), in addition to providing a brief explanation of the entity as well as any possible explanations of the etymology or linguistic elements contained in the toponym, the history of the location, etc. In gathering names, efforts are made to record all that are extant, this including the names of small topographical features. The field workers are researchers with a good background in linguistics. The Research Centre grants some 50 - 60 stipends annually for the collection of Finnish names; one stipend is sufficient for approximately a month and it usually results in a collection of six to seven hundred cards.

In the beginning of 1977 the toponymy collections contained approximately 2,000,000 cards. It has been estimated that approximately 80 % of existing

Finnish names have been collected. The onomastics collections are intended to serve the needs of both scientific research and normative maintenance.

Swedish names. During the period 1972 - 1976 a total of ca. 33,000 new cards were collected in the Swedish language areas of Finland. At the beginning of 1977 the collections contained about 195,000 cards in all. It has been estimated that approximately 85 % of existing Swedish names in Finland have been collected. The Research Centre grants six or seven monthly stipends. The collection of the Swedish names in Finland is expected to be completed in five or six years.

Lappish (Sami) names. Lappish names are to be found only in the three northernmost communes of Finland. The onomastics collections contain 6,600 cards with Lappish names. Some of the names have not yet been standardized, because there is as yet no officially sanctioned norm for the Lappish literary language of Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

The field collection and standardization of names is being continued during the summer of 1977 in the areas in which all three languages are spoken.

b) Treatment of names

The Office for Finnish Onomastics and the Office for the Swedish Language have continued the maintenance of toponyms: they provided state and local officials with authoritative opinion in matters concerning proposals for new official names and alterations of names, in addition to having checked the names on a total of 800 new sheets of the Basic Map (approx. 220,000 names) during the period 1972 - 1976. The National Board of Survey completed the topographical work for the Basic Map in 1975, and the printing will be completed in 1977. The Basic Map will contain a total of approximately 750,000 names, so it will be of fundamental importance from the standpoint of the maintenance of names. The map will be continuously updated and when new editions of it are made the names appearing in it will be reviewed. The names appearing in small scale maps (road maps, for example 1:200,000 or 1:400,000) are based on the Basic Map. Maps compiled by the National Board of Survey may be ordered from the address: The Map Service of the National Board of Survey, Eteläesplanadi 10, 00130 Helsinki 13, Finland.

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## c) Treatment of names in bilingual areas

There are two official languages in Finland: Finnish and Swedish. A commune is bilingual if at least 10 % of the population speaks the other language. (There are approx. 300,000 speakers of Swedish in Finland, a figure amounting to 6,5 % of the population.) On the maps, street signs, road markers, etc. of bilingual areas the name first appears in the majority language, then in the minority one. When the linguistic proportions prevailing in a community change the order of the names is changed. The Lappish language does not have the status of an official language (there are approximately 2,300 speakers of Lappish in Finland, a figure amounting to 0,5 % of the population), but efforts are made in the practical maintenance of names to protect Lappish names by following the same principles which are used in those communes where Swedish is spoken as a minority language.

Training and Instruction

In accordance with the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and within the framework of the program for Finnish Aid to the Developing Countries two Tanzanian specialists spent two months in 1973 familiarizing themselves with the organization of research, maintenance, and instruction in the mother language as it exists in Finland. They spent some of their time in acquainting themselves with the principles of onomastic maintenance and field work. Representatives of certain other African countries have made brief visits to the onomastics office and The National Board of Survey. Clarification of the work and principles of operation followed by the onomastics office has also been given by mail.

Gazeteers and other publications

In 1974 The National Board of Survey published the Finnish Postal Map and the Index of Place Names<sup>1</sup>. Together, they are an extensive source of data for location of about 2,000 physical and 12,000 cultural features in Finland, including lakes, rivers, peatlands, towns, boroughs, rural districts, post offices and railway stations.

The index takes into account the recommendations of the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names (Geneva 1967

and London 1972). The classification and symbols used were devised especially with international use in mind. The index includes more features than could be placed on the postal map. The index can also be used with the Motoring Road Map and Road Map of Finland, which have the same graticule and references.

It is often necessary to locate post offices in everyday life, so post office presentation has been given considerable emphasis both on the map and in the index, though it was not possible to include all offices. The data on the map and in the index correspond to the conditions on 1st February, 1974. - Here is a sample from the beginning of the gazeteer, and here are the instructions for its use (see pp. 6 and 7).

In 1976 there was published a special name issue of *Kielikello*<sup>2</sup>, a publication edited by the Finnish Research Centre for the Domestic Languages. Containing 32 pages and having gone through a publication run of 25,000 copies, it is intended as a guide for the orthography and standardization of Finnish toponyms. It also contains the names of countries in the recommended Finnish form. In 1976 the Finnish Association for Standardization published a list of the codes for the representation of names of countries<sup>3</sup>, the basis of which is the "United Nations Standard Country Code. United Nations publ. XVII.70.13(UND ST/STAT/SER.M./49)". This publication represents an effort to standardize both the codes and the orthography of the complete names of countries in the Finnish language. In drawing up the publication authoritative opinion in matters pertaining to onomastics was provided by the Finnish Geographical Society, and by the Office for Finnish Onomastics in the Research Centre for the Domestic Languages. A publication containing the Finnish and Swedish terminology used in onomastic research in Finland appeared in 1974<sup>4</sup>. Since 1972 nothing of significance has been published concerning exonyms, but efforts have been made to follow the list of names and the general principles published in accordance with the recommendations of the First United Nations Conference on Standardization (Terra 69, 81:2)<sup>5</sup> in most school atlases and encyclopedias. This has established the use in Finnish of exonyms in accordance with recommendations in addition to limiting their increase.

International cooperation

Together with the other Nordic countries Finland has clarified the terminological questions linked with onomastic research and drawn up plans for the utilization of automatic data processing in onomastic archiving and research. A Nordic symposium dealing with the protection and maintenance of names, as well as with the planning of names for new urban areas will be held in Helsinki in September 1977. It will have a direct bearing on the standardization of names.

- <sup>1</sup> Postal map of Finland and the index of Place Names. National Board of Survey. Helsinki 1974
- <sup>2</sup> Kielikello 8. Suomen Akatemia. Kielitoimisto. ISSN 0355-2675. Helsinki 1976
- <sup>3</sup> Codes for the representation of names of countries. Suomen Standardisoimisliitto. Helsinki 1976
- <sup>4</sup> Eero Kiviniemi, Ritva Liisa Pitkänen, Kurt Zilliacus  
Nimistöntutkimuksen terminologia. Terminologin inom namnforskningen. Castrenianumin toimitteita 8. ISBN 951-45-0304-X. Helsinki 1974
- <sup>5</sup> Terra. Journal of the Geographical Society of Finland, vol. 81, No. 2. Helsinki 1969

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