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GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
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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  
SIXTH CONFERENCE

Report of Finland

Paper submitted by Finland\*\*

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\*\* Prepared by Sirkka Paikkala, Onomastic Planning and Guidance, Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, Helsinki, and Jorma Marttinen, National Land Survey of Finland, Helsinki.



## **1 Field collection of place names**

The collection of toponyms began in Finland at the end of the 19th century. The objective was to collect and file all names, both those referring to inhabited places and those referring to natural features. The collection process is systematic and involves interviewing the permanent inhabitants of each area. The collectors have linguistic backgrounds and special training in name collection. Handbooks for collectors were published in 1961 and 1965 (including guidelines concerning the linguistic standardization of names). The principles followed in the collection and standardization correspond to the recommendations issued at the first United Nations conference (Geneva 1967 Recommendation 4.B). Financing has been provided by the Finnish government and partly (for Sámi names) by the National Land Survey of Finland.

The purpose of collecting names and their office treatment is to serve the daily needs of name users, cartography, administration and research in the fields of onomastics, dialectology, history, folklore, etc.

From 1992 to 1996, the Finnish toponym collections increased by 104,000 file cards and the Sámi (Lappish) toponym collections by 840 cards. At present, the Finnish collection includes a total of 2,6 million names, the Swedish collection about 300,000 names, and the Sámi collection about 27,400 names. During the current year field work will be continued in some municipalities. In practice the Finnish collection has been nearly completed, because some kind of collections have been made in every region of the country. The Swedish collection was complete in 1986. The original file cards have been arranged alphabetically by municipalities, and copies have been arranged in a countrywide alphabetical collection. The Finnish and Sámi collections are located at the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland and the Swedish collections at the Swedish Literary Society of Finland.

Since 1994, the Universities of Helsinki and Tampere collaborate in collecting toponyms for a project on the perpetuation and change of place names. The goal of the project is to study how well the present archive collections correspond to present usage.

In order to complete the Topographic Database of the National Land Survey, the Sámi names on old maps have had to be respelled. There are three different Sámi languages in use in northernmost Lapland with differing orthographies.

## **2 National standardization**

### **Official treatment of names**

The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland is responsible for the office treatment of Finnish and Sámi names (the Language Planning Department) and also Swedish names (the Swedish Department). The work concentrates on (1) correcting names on published maps, (2) providing statements and recommendations about names of municipalities and other administrative areas, cadastral villages, post offices and public buildings, and checking of proposals for names of roads in the municipalities, (3) organizing onomastic training for cartographers (since 1996), (4) acquiring and providing information about the spelling, pronunciation and inflection of domestic and foreign names in Finland, and (5) studying –

since 1996 – the need of a place-name law for Finland.

The Research Institute maintains a daily toll-free telephone line to answer name questions. More than 20 % of the questions received concern the correct usage of foreign names. Most enquiries come from the media, which receive the names from international news agencies. Other callers include authorities, officials, business people, translators, and travel agencies. The number of questions increased when Finland joined the European Union, as texts to be translated into Finnish contain many names even from outside the Union. In addition, the spelling, inflection, and planning of new domestic names (in three languages) frequently leads to questions. Since the beginning of 1996, the recommendations have been fed into an onomastic planning and guidance database.

Finnish maps are mainly produced by the National Land Survey of Finland which also maintains a Real Estate Register. Map names are checked in cooperation with the Research Institute. Since 1992, about 222,000 place names of the 1:20,000 map series have been revised for the Topographic Database. Of the 954 map sheets examined, 837 sheets had only Finnish names, 18 sheets had only Swedish names, 21 sheets had Finnish and Swedish names, and 78 sheets had Finnish and Sámi names. Field work has shown that in some parts of the country it might be desirable to pay more attention to leaving dialectal features in the names.

In the reorganization of the National Land Survey in 1991, the responsibility of data compilation for the Topographic Database was given to the 11 regional survey offices. At the same time, the organisation was given more freedom to operate on commercial terms.

### **The authorities with the right of decision on names**

The authorities that deal with place names in Finland are subordinate to various ministries. Nowadays, many authorities function on a more commercial basis than previously, and there is no central organization in the country with final rights of decision. Separate units make decisions concerning names in postal addresses, state railways and municipalities. Only the municipalities are obliged to ask the Research Institute for a statement if they are changing their own name.

The law regarding the division of Finland into municipalities (*fi kuntajakolaki*) was rewritten in 1990. This law gives the municipalities (*fi kunta, sv kommun*) the right to decide on their names and on their administrative form (rural or urban municipality). Formerly it was the Ministry of the Interior that had the right to determine these matters.

In the spring of 1996, the situation of the treatment of names was again discussed at the Research Institute. A working group was founded to determine whether or not a place-name law or ordinance was needed, and to make a recommendation as to what measures to take. One idea was to establish a permanent place-name committee to solve the most difficult name problems. In April 1997, the working group arranged a seminar with Norway and Estonia which already had place-name laws. The report of the working group was submitted to the Ministry of Education in October of 1997.

### **Names in postal addresses**

Finnish postal addresses were standardized in 1971 with the introduction of a new national

system of postal codes. This system was presented by Finland Post Ltd both in Finland and abroad, and it was adopted by Zambia in 1990 and by Kenya in 1994. Finland Post Ltd has announced that the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland will be asked for an advisory opinion in the (re)naming of post offices.

Addresses in the countryside is a major ongoing naming project for the Finnish municipalities. Almost 70 % of 455 municipalities had named all their "inhabited" rural roads by the end of 1996. Responsibility for the planning of road and street names was handed over to the municipalities in 1988. The purpose was to create a comprehensive, clear, and consistent nationwide system of addresses for postal services, traffic, emergencies, etc. A prerequisite for such a network is the naming of roads. Many municipal plans for naming roads have been checked by the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland. This name planning is especially sensitive in bilingual municipalities. For instance, formerly it was common to translate traditional place names which were parts of road names, whereas today the tendency is to only translate the terms, such as street, road, way, etc.

The National Land Survey inserts road names in their digital Road Database. This process will combine both urban and rural addresses into a navigable geoinformation system. With 40 % of the municipalities covered in mid-1997, it can be predicted that the completed database will contain approximately 200,000-300,000 names.

### **Changes in administrative division**

In 1992 the Council of State decided on a principle of standardizing the state division into administrative districts. During the 1990'ies the old functional-economic provinces became the base for the new division into provinces (*maakunta*). Since 1997, there have been 20 administrative provinces in Finland, and their borders are the basis of several other administrative district divisions. The administrative provinces are units for municipal government and they do not correspond to the old historical provinces. Even the regional division of the state has been modified to correspond to the division into provinces. In 1993 the division into regional plan districts was reformed, and in 1996 new jurisdictional districts were formed.

In 1997, the number of counties (*fi lääni, sv län*) was reduced from twelve to six, and 15 employment and economic centres were formed. All these changes have created a need for forging new names or recycling old ones. Sometimes old names have been successfully reused and new names created, but there have also been inconsistencies and conflicting views between different authorities. In October of 1997, some names for the new administrative provinces were yet to be ratified.

### **3 Toponymic databases**

The creation of onomastic databases in digital form started in 1991. The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland is creating a databank of toponyms from the original field collections. About 10 % or 250,000 names will be computerized in the first phase. The project started in 1991, and by July 1997, the **Toponyms Databank** contained about 100,000 entries. Additionally, some of the new material collected in the field has been filed in computerized form.

Another database of the Research Institute consists of the names of inhabited places (municipalities and villages). This database, called **the Names of Inhabited Places in Finland**, contains about 21,000 entries and is not for public use. A gazetteer (*Alastarolla Ylistarossa*, 1990; new edition forthcoming) was based on it.

Completing **the Topographic Database** is the most important cartographic project in the National Land Survey of Finland. Begun in 1993, and consisting of the contents of the Basic Map (including place names), a series of topographic maps 1:20,000 (1st edition 1947–1977), which are converted into digital form, the project is designed to fulfill the need of basic geoinformation and to serve as a basis for new maps in scales from 1:5,000 to 1:50,000.

The Topographic Database will be completed at the beginning of the 21st century, but the place names have already been digitalized, and in 1998, after a quality check, they will form a database of names. All the names of the Basic Map have been checked by onomastic specialists during their revision in the 1970s and 1980s. The checking is continued as well in the Topographic Database compilation as mentioned in the previous chapter. Thus, **the Place Names Service Database** can be regarded as having official status.

The National Land Survey has also created a WorldWideWeb service called **The Citizen's MapSite**, where one can browse maps of Finland. A database of 30,000 names is used to choose a location from simple maps ranging from 1:50,000 to 1:8 million. Another service, **The Professional's MapSite**, offers more accurate maps and is available on a fee basis.

**The Real Estate Register** is maintained by the National Land Survey in cooperation with the urban municipalities of Finland. The Register's database was completed in 1994 and consists of approximately two million names. In addition to the names of municipalities and villages, the register contains the names of farmsteads and estates given by their owners during the survey act. No coordinate information is included in the register, but the georeference will be available in 1999 when the Cadastral Map is completed in digital form.

**Road atlases** are published in Finland by private companies such as Karttakeskus (Map Centre Ltd., the former printing office of the National Land Survey) or Valitut Palat (*Reader's Digest* of Finland). The usual scales are 1:200,000–1:400,000, and the atlases have a place–name index. Some data are available in digital form.

**The Nordic Map Database** is a joint Nordic 1:2 million scale digital product in CD form. It contains 5,000 place names and covers Denmark, the Faeroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. A more comprehensive database with 20,000 names in the first version is under preparation as a joint project between Nordic mapping agencies. The work is coordinated by the National Land Survey of Finland.

#### **4 Exonyms**

The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland began to establish a database of Finnish exonyms in 1994, a project that continued in 1995 and again in 1997. This database contains names that have been taken from the largest and most representative atlases published in Finland from 1960 to 1990. The preliminary database consists of about 9,000 exonyms (and exographs) containing approximately 7,000 features. A list of Finnish toponyms with Swedish

equivalents was prepared for the comprehensive Finnish–Swedish dictionary (*Suuri suomi–ruotsi–sanakirja / Stora finsk–svenska ordboken*, Helsinki 1997).

## 5 Courses and conferences

Academic studies of Finnish include linguistic field–work which may involve collecting toponyms.

Since 1996, the Research Institute has arranged onomastic training courses for workers of regional offices of the National Land Survey.

In April 1997, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names organized a toponymic training course in Riga where Finnish name specialists were among its lecturers. Later, Finnish participants attended as observers the second meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN. In the spring of 1997, representatives of Finland participated in a meeting of the Nordic Division of UNGEGN in Oslo. The Finnish participants also attended a Nordic symposium on foreign place names.

In 1995, the 8th International Finno–Ugric Congress was held in Jyväskylä, Finland. Some contributions dealt with name planning and guidance.

## 6 Publications

The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland publishes bulletins in Finnish (*Kielikello*) and Swedish (*Språkbruk*). These publications also discuss name planning and give recommendations.

Literature on onomastic planning and research published in Finland in 1992—1997 (publications in the Sami language have been produced in collaboration between the Nordic Countries):

### Books

Ainiala, Terhi (1997). *Muuttuva paikannimistö* [Changing place names, in Finnish, with English summary]. Helsinki: SKS. 272 pp. – This book examines how, why, and to what extent place names have changed, become obsolete or have been perpetuated over the past two centuries in two villages in Finland.

Hakulinen, Kerkko (1996). *Maailman paikannimet – oikeinkirjoitusopas* [Place names of the world – guide of orthography, in Finnish]. Helsinki: Otava. 2nd edition. 285 pp. – This book contains lists of Finnish termless exonyms, Finnish country names and Finnish names of Russian administrative areas, and discusses the problems connected with the translation of geographical terms in place names.

Laapotti, Marjukka (1994). *Lahten paikannimistö* [Place names of Lahti, in Finnish]. Lahti: Town Planning. 327 pp. – Introduction to the treatment and planning of place names in a city.

Leskinen, Heikki & Sándor Maticsák & Tõnu Seilenthal, eds. (1996). *Sessiones sectionum, Lexicologia & Onomastica*. The 8th International Finno-Ugric Congress, Pars V. Jyväskylä.

Närhi, Eeva Maria, ed. (1994). *Maiden nimet kuudella kielellä* [Country names in six languages]. Helsinki: Painatuskeskus. 164 pp. – Country names in Finnish, Swedish, Sámi, English, French and German. The Finnish, Swedish and Sámi names are also available on Internet (<http://www.domlang.fi>).

Paikkala, Sirkka, ed. (1993). *Insjö–Esbo. Dess vattennamn, natur, historia och framtid* [Lake District of Espoo: water names, history and future, in Swedish]. Espoo: City Planning Office. 128 pp.

Paikkala, Sirkka, ed. (1996). *Saaristo–Espoo: nimistöä, luontoa, historiaa ja tulevaisuutta* [Lake District of Espoo: on names, nature, history and future, in Finnish]. Espoo: City Planning Office. 163 pp. – Place names are discussed by Kurt Zilliacus and Ritva Liisa Pitkänen.

Paikkala, Sirkka & Ritva Liisa Pitkänen & Peter Slotte (1997). *Paikannimet – yhteinen omaisuutemme: tarvitaanko Suomessa paikannimilakia?* [Place names – our common property: does Finland need a place-name law? in Finnish]. 54 pp. – Unpublished discussion paper at the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland.

Pitkänen, Ritva Liisa & Kaija Mallat, eds. (1997). *You name it: perspectives on onomastic research*. Helsinki: SKS. 297 pp. – Dedicated to Eero Kiviniemi, Professor of onomastics. Contains 30 articles by leading scholars of Europe, North America and Africa, e.g. on national and international standardization of geographical names.

Suomen Standardisoimisliitto (1993). *Arabian kielen translitteraatio* [Transliteration of Arabic characters]. Helsinki. 6 pp. – The ISO standard applied to Finnish.

– (1996). *Kreikan kielen translitteraatio ja transkriptio* [Transliteration and transcription of Greek characters]. 8 pp. – The ISO standard applied to Finnish.

– (1994). *Maiden nimien tunnukset* [Codes for the representation of names of countries]. 4th, revised edition. Helsinki. 46 pp. – The ISO standard applied to Finnish.

Viljamaa–Laakso, Marja (1992). *Place Names in the Tapiola Cityscape*. Espoo: City Planning Office. 49 pp. – Discusses place name planning as part of city planning. Also available in Finnish and Swedish.

Zilliacus, Kurt (1994). *Orter och namn i "Finska skären"* [Places and names in the Finnish archipelago, in Swedish]. 152 pp. Lovisa: Föreningen Konstsamfundet.

## Maps and atlases

Mathisen, Hans Ragnar & Samuli Aikio & Anders Henriksen, eds. (1996). *Sámi Atlas*. Tromsø: Romssavárdu. 67 pp. – World atlas for elementary schools in Northern Sámi with geographical and historical maps and a place name index. Maps by Liber Kartor Ab.

*Tiekartasto Suomi* [Road Atlas of Finland] 1:200 000–1:400 000. (1997). 280 pp. Helsinki: Karttakeskus Oy. – Legends in Finnish, Swedish, English and German; with a place-name index.

Jaatinen, Martti, ed. (1991). *Karjalan kartat* [Maps of Karelia]. Tampere: Karjalan Liitto. 192 pp. – Pre-World War 2 maps 1:100,000 of that part of Karelia which Finland lost to the Soviet Union.

*Maastokartta* [topographic map series] 1:50 000. Helsinki: National Land Survey of Finland. – 250 sheets published by the end of 1997, covering 65 % of the country. After 1993 the series is based on the topographic database.

*Maastokartta* [topographic map] 1:20 000. Helsinki: National Land Survey of Finland. – A new series based on the topographic database. About 1,000 sheets published by the end of 1997, covering about 30 % of the country.

The most important digitalized maps published since 1992 have been mentioned under the chapter 3.

## 7 Addresses

Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus (KKTK)

(The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, formerly The Finnish Research Centre for Domestic Languages)

Sörnäisten rantatie 25

FIN-00500 HELSINKI

(<http://www.domlang.fi>)

Maanmittauslaitos (MML)

(National Land Survey of Finland)

PL 84

FIN-00521 HELSINKI

(<http://www.nls.fi>)

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