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TOPONYMIC EDUCATION AND PRACTICE AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION:
TRAINING COURSES IN TOPONYMY

Training courses in toponymy at the Universities in Finland**

Paper submitted by Finland

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Training students to collect toponyms in the field has a more than fifty years old tradition at Finnish universities. An academic degree with studies in Finnish includes linguistic field work as a requirement, and the topic a student is given might involve collecting toponyms in the field.

Students are first given about 20 hours of theoretical teaching, normally during the month of April, at their university. The lectures and exercises treat dialects, the standardization and orthography of names, the classification of geographical features, the use of maps, and interview technique. Two guidebooks are used: Terho Itkonen, Nimestäjän opas /Guide for Name-Collectors/, Helsinki 1961, 67 pages, and Viljo Nissilä, Paikannimistömmen huolto ja suojeleminen /The Maintenance and Protection of our Place Names/, Helsinki 1965, 117 pages. After having received their theoretical teaching the students, under supervision, systematically collect all the place names and pertinent background information for a given area. This interview project lasts from four to seven days. Then they transcribe and edit the fieldnotes they have recorded or written down in interviews on name cards in accordance with a specific model.

The collections contain an average of 200 name cards, a map (1:20,000) in which the places designated by the names are indicated, and a report which tells about the area where the names were collected, the informants, the dialect, the special features of the names, possible divergences between the local use of names and the names appearing on the map. The teacher checks the work and the student corrects any mistakes. When the work has been accepted the collection is added to the archives of the Onomastic Division of the Research Centre for Domestic Languages.

Since field work of this type constitutes a part of university studies in the mother language it is relatively inexpensive, while the collections which it yields are important. But even more important has been and continues to be the fact that this provides a means of training new field workers in onomastics. Those who have been particularly successful in their work may subsequently continue their field work, being granted in such cases a scholarship to support their work by the Research Centre for Domestic Languages.

Foreign onomasticians and students from some African countries have also occasionally acquainted themselves with methods of training and field work in Finland.