



TERHI AINIALA, MINNA SAARELMA, PAULA SJÖBLOM

Names in Focus

An Introduction to Finnish Onomastics

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An Introduction to Finnish Onomastics

Translated by Leonard Pearl

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Preface

Names are used in all languages and cultures. With names, it is easy for people to speak about individuals, certain people, certain places, certain objects or subjects, without having to describe them with a great deal of words. Without names, communication would be difficult, practically even impossible. How would we speak of, for example, Finland, if countries or any other geographic place had no name? How could we be sure that all of the participants in a conversation would be thinking about the same person, for example Jean Sibelius or Mika Häkkinen, if we had no names to use? It is a name that identifies and sets apart a referent from others of the same class.

Names are crucial words when it comes to efficient language use. On the other hand, they are also words which many emotions are associated with: a name carries all of the information we have about its name bearer such as a person, an animal, a place or object. On the emotional level, significant topics such as identity, history, tradition, kinship, ownership, power and money are associated with names. Because names are such words of special quality, they fascinate people and arouse many questions.

This book is about names and onomastics from a Finnish perspective. There has been a great deal of literature published around the world concerning names. On the one hand, there is an abundance of scholarly studies – monographs as well as individual and collections of articles – and on the other hand, there are many name guides in popular literature meant for a broader audience as well as light, humorous name dictionaries. These publications usually focus on one specific area of onomastics, for example, on hydronyms, first names, names of restaurants or dog names. There has not previously been any comprehensive, linguistic work completed in Finland covering the entire field of onomastics and there are not that many international ones either – at least not in such a compact form.

This book was originally written in 2008 in Finnish for a Finnish audience, primarily as study material for university students, covering the “basics of onomastics” as the original title *Nimistöntutkimuksen perusteet* suggests. The aim of our now translated and edited *Names in Focus: An Introduction to Finnish Onomastics* is to introduce Finnish onomastics to an international

audience whilst comparing it to other (mostly European) onomastic studies. The book is about onomastic methods and findings from a contemporary research perspective. It illustrates a new type of take on research and reflects newer theoretical approaches to language, however founded on a strong, Finnish research tradition. Discussion amongst onomasticians from different countries is nowadays quite lively and so efforts have been made to take a great deal of significant international research findings into consideration in this book.

Names in Focus works as a general introduction to the world of onomastics. We hope that this book would serve readers who wish to get a general idea about onomastic subjects, key theoretical questions and research methods. It also provides the reader a glimpse at Finnish history and culture through names.

The question of terminology has come up in the creation of this book. In the past years, there has been an international need for cohesive terminology, many new terms and a clear understanding of old terms. Our book introduces terminology used in Finnish onomastics, relates it to terminology used elsewhere and also connects it to wide-ranging, international terminological discussion. The index should help the adventurous reader navigate through the vast number of terms utilised for the book.

We have divided our book into seven chapters. Its content focuses on the presentation of the most essential research data available. The first chapter discusses general questions on onomastics and the philosophy of names such as what a name is and why a name is given. Readers will also become familiar with the history of onomastics in Finland and materials used by Finnish onomasticians. Without excluding other name categories, place names, personal names and commercial names are covered in great detail and animal names and names in literature discussed rather broadly.

There is a great deal of examples in this book. Because Finnish onomastics is the subject at hand, many of the examples are naturally from Finnish nomenclature. We have given explanations of Finnish examples in glosses when the name's structure is concerned and regular translations when highlighting the name's meaning. As all of the world's languages have a morphological structure, a list of abbreviations and symbols of name formation suffixes and other morphological aspects used in the explanations of Finnish names was created. Some of the examples, however, have been modified and new ones created in English in order to help the international reader to get familiarised with the subject at hand more easily. No strict academic referencing has been applied in the citations but all of the sources used can be found in the bibliography at the end of the book. The titles of Finnish publications mentioned, for example, in the chapter on Finnish onomastic materials and lines of research have been translated into English in brackets which can help the reader get an idea of onomastic topics carried out in Finland.

In addition to the new examples created exclusively for this book, we also included brief explanations pertaining to Finnish history and culture in connection to different names, for example in street names and company

names. The glosses, especially in place names, will help readers grasp the understanding of the grammar, that is, the typology of Finnish names. In addition, because they are in nature quite different from each other, the translations of place names and personal names, with the exception of derivational endings, have been handled differently. With the exception of any names that have an official English equivalent, the translated names are not capitalised. However, the translated newspaper advertisement examples in chapter 6, for example, have been capitalised to fit the style, even though these names have never had official English counterparts.

The authors of the book are onomasticians and represent specialised expertise in different areas of onomastics. Terhi Ainiala, PhD was responsible for the chapters on onomastic materials and history as well as place names, Minna Saarelma, PhD covered the chapters on personal names, animal names and names in literature and Paula Sjöblom, PhD took on the chapters on theoretical questions in onomastics and on commercial names. Linguist and onomastician Leonard Pearl, MA translated the book into English. He did not participate just as a translator but rather as an expert in the field, making many excellent editing suggestions during the translation process. As four onomastic specialists, working as collaborative co-editors, we all came to the project from different angles, all of us sharing our knowledge, ideas and genuine interest in the field of the investigation of names.

We would like to thank the Kone Foundation for financing this project and the Finnish Literature Society for taking our concept with enthusiasm and for the approval of the book in its publications. In addition, we would warmly like to express our gratitude to the anonymous examiners who gave a positive review of our book.

Terhi Ainiala, Minna Saarelma, Paula Sjöblom and Leonard Pearl
Helsinki
September 2012

Abbreviations and Symbols

The following is a list of the most frequently used abbreviations and symbols in this book. Slang suffixes, for example, in chapters 3 and 4 and any other ending mentioned only once have not been listed here but clearly noted in the chapter in question.

Fin. = Finnish
Ger. = German
Grk. = Greek
Heb. = Hebrew
Lat. = Latin
Sám. = Sámi
Swe. = Swedish

Morphological symbols:

- | = Compounding marker in place names, e.g. *Saarijärvi* 'island|lake'; also used to separate name parts in company names e.g. *Musiikki | Oy | Forte fortissimo* 'music | ltd | Forte fortissimo'
- + = Morphological affixations in place names, e.g. *Järvenkangas* 'lake+GEN|moor'; compounding marker in personal names, e.g. *Mustapää* 'black' + 'head'
- ← = Derived from, e.g. *Amadeus* ← Lat. 'love' + 'God'
- = A single lexeme in Finnish that would be a collocation in English, e.g. *Hietalahti* 'fine-sand|bay'
- () = The part of a truncated name replaced by a slang ending, e.g. *Lönkka* 'Lön(nrotinkatu)+KKA' ← *Lönnrotinkatu* 'Lönnrot street'
- * = Archaic form e.g. place name **Haapalaksi* 'aspen|bay'; unaccepted form e.g. in trade names **1991*

Derivational suffixes:

- ADJ = Adjective suffix e.g. personal name *Hyväneuvonen* 'good' + 'advice+ADJ'
- KKI = Feminising/diminutive suffix e.g. cattle name *Talvikki* 'winter+KKI'
- LA = (*la* or *lä*) Name formation suffix traditionally used for a homestead name e.g. *Mattila* 'Matti+LA': 'house of Matti'; also used as a place name suffix in general e.g. *Syrjälä* 'border+LA'
- NEN = Multipurpose name formation suffix: in place names, traditionally replacing a generic name part e.g. lake name *Saarinén* 'island+NEN' ← *Saarijärvi* 'island|lake'; in personal names, typical surname suffix e.g. *Virtanen* 'current+NEN' (this suffix has multiple other nominative functions, such as a diminutive function, however these are not presented in this book)
- URI = (*uri* or *yri*) Agentive suffix e.g. surname *Nahkuri* 'leather+URI'
- VA = (*va* or *vä*) First active participle e.g. place name *Koliseva* 'rattle+VA': 'rattling'

Inflectional suffixes:

- ADE = Adessive (*lla* or *llä*) e.g. *Saimaalla* 'Saimaa+ADE': 'on/at Lake Saimaa'
- GEN = Genitive (*n*), e.g. *Kaisanmökki* 'Kaisa+GEN|cottage'
- INE = Inessive (*ssa* or *ssä*), e.g. *Helsingissä* 'Helsinki+INE': 'in Helsinki'
- PL = Plural (*t* or *i*) e.g. *Naistenluoto* 'woman+PL+GEN|islet'

1. Theoretical Background to Onomastics

This introductory chapter gives a comprehensive overview of onomastics as a field of study, and tackles the core question of the discipline: what is a name. It covers the philosophy of names, the history of onomastics, onomastic terminology and categorisation as well as how onomastics has developed into an interdisciplinary field of research. The chapter focuses on two main perspectives: names as a part of language and names as a cultural phenomenon.

What is a Name?

The word *name* has two fundamental meanings. On the one hand, a *name* is a word or combination of words, such as *Eero* or *Baltic Sea*, referring to one identified person, being, subject or object, in which case the term *proper noun* or *proper name* can be used. On the other hand, it can mean a word or combination of words, such as *boy*, referring to persons, beings, subjects or objects as a representative of its class, whereupon we can speak of a *common noun* or an *appellative*. *Onomastics* is a branch of linguistics in which proper nouns are examined. In this discipline, the word *name* always refers to proper noun.

The word *name* has quite an old history to it. Similar forms can be found throughout the family of Indo-European languages, for example, in Sanskrit *nāman*, Latin *nōmen*, Italian *nome*, German *Name*, Swedish *namn*, Spanish *nombre* and French *nom*. The same root can also be seen in, for example, Russian *имя* (*imya*) and Greek *ὄνομα* (*onyma*). Equivalents to the word *name* have also reached the Uralic languages such as Finnish and Estonian *nimi*, Northern Sámi *namma*, Hungarian *név*, Mari *lüm* and Nenets *ńum*. It has sometimes also been speculated that the broad distribution of the word is proof of early ties between the Uralic and Indo-European language families. (Häkkinen 2004.) Be that as it may, the age of the word shows us how important a concept it is. Different items and phenomena in an environment have generally been named as long as human language has existed.

The question of what a name is has piqued the interest of linguists and philosophers for hundreds, even thousands, of years. When we speak of names on a philosophical and theoretical level, we are always speaking about both meanings found in the human mind and our external reality. As the two-fold meaning of the word *name* already shows, expressions that are categorising and those that are identifying can somehow be quite similar to one another. They are both words of a language but moreover, common to them are the recognition and naming of various, real world phenomena and beings as well as those in the imaginative world. However, due to a certain something at their essence, they are considered different from each other. The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided these notions into the concepts of individual and class. The more abstract a concept is, the more beings are included in the set. Thus, a proper noun referring to one individual would be a more concrete concept. The most abstract concepts of all are hypernyms, which Aristotle called categories. Beings, substances, are designated by both proper and common nouns. Aristotle's contemporary Plato, for one, emphasised concepts, ideas: they are unchangeable and names represent these never-ending ideas.

Efforts have been made to define proper names through the concepts of philosophy and logic later as well. Common to these definitions, generally, is that they are seen as signs which are used to refer to individuals in the extralinguistic world. However, not all philosophers wish to see them specifically as linguistic signs. For example, Saul Kripke (1972) did not want to highlight the meaning of proper names in relation to linguistic form. Instead, he preferred to emphasise a referential relationship as well as the tradition of using proper names in a language community. The referential relationship of proper names emerges in special naming occurrences, in "christenings", where a certain form is connected to a certain object. Form can be any arbitrary symbol which functions as a label. Kripke was not alone in what he was thinking because many others have ignored the fact that names are linguistic signs and a part of language. Before Kripke, the idea of labels was presented by John Stuart Mill (1906) who stated that proper names designate extralinguistic objects and thus have no meaning. The view of the meaninglessness of proper names has been widely accepted in language theories from the 19th century all the way up to the present day.

Often, when speaking about the essence of proper names, reference is made to Bertrand Russell (1956) and John Searle (1969), according to whom the name *Romulus*, for example, is not in a strict logical sense a true name but rather a kind of truncated description of its referent. This description includes all of the necessary and sufficient features with which the referent that is indicated by the name is identified. The name *Romulus* represents a person who did certain things: a person who killed Remus, founded Rome and so on. A name, so to speak, is like a straightforward equivalent to this defining description. In other words, a name equates to what it refers to. A proposal given against this concept, for example, is that different speakers, who use the same name, would probably not define the name's referent in the same way. A proper name can be used effortlessly even though one

would not be able to describe the characteristics of the object indicated by it at all. A referent can therefore not be the meaning of a name.

However, other kinds of views on the nature of proper names have been proposed as well. These views often emphasise the fact that linguistic forms are always meaningful. Proper names have meaning because of the fact that they are words in language, and words always have their “exchange rate”: they are mental equivalents of reality (Gardiner 1940). Meaning must be understood to a broader extent than just a classifying meaning, like that of appellative meaning. Names are different from appellatives in that they have a different function in language use. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (2001 [1953]) later thoughts on language, words do not describe their referents but rather, above all, the meaning of words are seen in how they are used. There are various word classes in language in the same way as there are different tools in a toolbox which are used for different purposes. According to Wittgenstein, the word *meaning* cannot mean the object that “corresponds” to this word because then the name would be confused with the name bearer. If we say that Mr X had died, it means that the name bearer had died, not the meaning of the name. If a name ceased to have meaning, the whole sentence would make no sense. Correspondingly, the views of Edmund Husserl (1929) and Eugenio Coseriu (1987), for example, emphasise the meaning of proper names which are only dissimilar to the meaning of an appellative.

So, names, as elements in language, are quite special, however it is not easy to linguistically define them. Nevertheless, most of us language users, on the basis of our sense of language, know quite well if a word is a proper noun. It is easy to see expressions such as *Helsinki*, *Amanda*, *Johnson*, *Blackie* and *Kalevala* as proper names but can we say that expressions such as *Pearl*, *Stone*, *Owl* and *the Internet* are names and equally as clear? In written form, we can interpret them as names because they begin with a capital letter but in speech, the only opportunity we have to identify the preceding expressions as proper names is to rest on context, that is, the environment in which the words appear. Can you say if the boldfaced words in the following sentences are proper names?

- (1) Every **Tom**, **Dick** and **Harry** is on the go!
- (2) That student is a little **Einstein**.
- (3) I bought some new **Reeboks**.

Basically, in drawing the line between proper and common nouns, the expression’s function has been considered to be the key criterion. Proper nouns are *monoreferential* which means that they have only one outside world *referent*. Names identify their referent, its object, by differentiating it from all other referents of the same class. In their context, the boldfaced expressions in sentences 1 to 3 do not work in an identifying function. They have a classifying function: Of those present in the situation in sentence 1, there is no one necessarily named *Tom*, *Dick* or *Harry*; the words refer to

people in general. The student in sentence 2 may not be identified as *Einstein*, but rather this word refers to the student's characteristics; the student is like the Einstein we know, a genius. Sentence 3 is also not a question of an identifying expression; the word *Reeboks* classifies the sneakers or trousers as an item of clothing bearing a certain label.

In the same way as the recognition of names is often dependent on context, there is always a cultural and social context behind the emergence of individual names as well as name categories. Names are created and used for a specific purpose; the foundation of name giving is in our culture.

Names in Culture and Society

THE MANY FUNCTIONS OF NAMES

Onomastics is quite young for being a field of science. It first emerged in the 19th century as a sub-science contributing to research in language history, history and archaeology. For linguists, names have shed light on the history and distribution of words. They have given historians and archaeologists a clue on the expansion, routes, economy and livelihoods as well as true biogeographic circumstances of settlement.

People have always been interested in names. There is a great interest in names because there are words preserved in them which are otherwise no longer known. By investigating these names and their referents, we can get an idea of what those words mean. For example, many geographic appellatives (*topographic words*) in contemporary Finnish, unfamiliar to its speakers, such as *vaha* meaning 'large rock', *rauma* 'inlet' and *köngäs* 'rapids', may appear in Finnish place names. Old, Finnish surnames and bynames ending with *uri* or *yri*, such as *Kankuri* ('cloth+URI'), *Nahkuri* ('leather+URI'), *Ojuri* ('ditch+URI') and *Vakkuri* ('bushel+URI') may be of interest to Finnish lexicologists because these names can be proven to be based on old occupational titles and by investigating them, information on the age of the words can be revealed to us (Nummila 2007). The same types of names in English ending in *er* can be seen in the same way as we compare these names to, for example, the surnames *Weaver* ('one who works with cloth') and *Lederer* ('one who works with leather').

Furthermore, with a name, we may get clues about the dwelling places of a people that disappeared a long time ago. For example, there are many place names today that are associated with Finno-Ugric languages in the Russian-speaking regions of Central and Northern Russia. These kinds of names make up as much as 10 to 15 per cent in certain regions. For example, there are numerous names of bends and grasslands located in the Arkhangelsk area along the Pinega River ending in *nem*', a word akin to the Finnish word *niemi* ('cape') or small brooks which end with the element *oja* ('ditch'): e.g. *Kuzonem* ← **Kuusiniemi* ('spruce|cape'); *Murdoja* ← **Murto-oja* ('break|ditch'). It is probable that a Baltic-Finnic-speaking people resided in this area before its Russification. Likewise, from its origin or *etymology*, some unclear names of Finnish lakes have given scholars reason to suspect

Names in Focus delves deep into the vast field of Finnish onomastics, covering place names, personal names, animal names, commercial names and names in literature. It provides the history and current trends in this area of research, and also supplements international terminology with the Finnish point of view on the subject. Brimming with examples and clear explanations, the book can be enjoyed by the most studious of researchers as well as the casual reader who has a genuine interest in the study of names.



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