

A Comparison of
Naming Practices
in Eastern and Western Finland
in Late 16th Century
with a short introduction to
Finnish personal name systems

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Literature

Introduction



■ Finland

- ▶ Country in North-Eastern Europe
- ▶ In period eastern part of Sweden, partly contested by Russia

■ Finnish

- ▶ Part of the Uralic language family
 - like Hungarian, Estonian, Saami languages, and a number of others
- ▶ Not related to Indo-European languages
- ▶ Medieval government documents written in Swedish
 - scribes and local nobility largely bilingual

Introduction



— Olaus Magnus, CARTA MARINA ET DESCRIPTIO SEPTENTRIONALIVM TERRARVM 1539

Introduction

Finnish in period



- Usually divided into several phases
 - ▶ Proto-Finnic c. 1000 BC–800
common ancestor of Finnish, Estonian, Carelian, ...
 - ▶ Early Finnish c. 800–1200
no documents
 - ▶ Medieval Finnish c. 1200–1540
documents from Finland but in other languages
 - ▶ Old Finnish c. 1540–1820
complete surviving texts written in Finnish
- Onomastic evidence
 - ▶ Mostly in documents written in Latin (church),
Old Swedish (secular) or Low German (trade)
 - ▶ Scholarly analysis of place names

Introduction

Finnish personal name systems



- Ancient Finnish name system
 - ▶ Roughly –1300
 - ▶ Occasionally found in 14th century documents
 - ▶ Traces in later bynames and family names

- Medieval Finnish name system
 - ▶ Roughly 1200–1900
 - ▶ Established by the Church and state

- Modern Finnish name system
 - ▶ Roughly 1850–
 - ▶ Current system of given name(s) followed by family name

Ancient Finnish name system



- Late Proto-Finnic to Early Finnish
 - ▶ at start, Finnish and Estonian not diverged

- Central criterion:
 - ▶ before establishment of the Christian church
 - ▶ before establishment of the Swedish state
 - ▶ in other words: roughly Iron Age / Viking era

- No written documents
 - ▶ occasionally still in use in medieval times
 - ▶ remnants in place names and bynames

- PhD theses
 - ▶ A. V. Forsman 1891/94: obsolescent but still useful
 - ▶ D. E. Stoebe 1964: no Carelian sources used
 - ▶ J. Raunamaa c. 2021: not quite here yet

Ancient Finnish name system



Characteristics

- Likely based on single names
 - ▶ that is, no systematic surnames
 - ▶ bynames as necessary (as far as we can tell)
- Names largely dithematic
 - ▶ Stoebeke considers this type indigenous
 - ▶ Nissilä treats this as a structural loan from Germanic neighbours
 - ▶ in either case, elements (mostly) indigenous
Mielikirja, Unnipäivä, Hyväneuvo, Viljalempi, ...
- Also monothematic names
 - ▶ largely same elements, with or without derivational suffixes
Päivä, Hyvä|ri, Vilja|kka, ...

Ancient Finnish name system

Stoebke: monothematic



root	-a/-ä	-o	-i	-e	-u	meaning
Auv-	I	I				Freude; Glückseligkeit; Ehre, Ruhm
Hyv-	I					gut; das Gute
Ih-	I	I				Anmut, Liebreiz; Froh, anmutig; herrlich
Ik-	I	I				Alter; Lebenszeit; ewig, dauerhaft
Ilm-	I	I		I		Luft; Wetter
Kaikk-		I	I	I		alle, alles; ganz, sämtlich
?Kak(k)-		III	III	III	III	(unbekannt)
?Kall-			II	II		teuer, lieb (?)
Kauk(k)-	I	I				fern, weit; Fern-; lang; lange
Kirj-	I					(Grundbed.) bunt (?)
Kyll-	I					Fülle; Reichtum; Überfluß; reichlich, satt
?Kult-	III					Gold
Lemp-	I	I	I	I		Liebe
Meel-	I	I	I			Sinn, Gemüt; Verstand
Päiv-	I					Sonne
Toiv-	I	I		I		Hoffnung, Wunsch
Un(n)-	I	I	I	I		Schlaf; Traum
Unt-	I	I	I			Schlaf, Traum (?)
?Ut-	III	III	III		III	(unbekannt)
Valt-	I	I				Macht, Gewalt; Herrschaft; Gebiet
Vih-	I	I				(Grundbed.) grün
Viht-	I	I	I			(unbekannt)
Vilj-	I					Frucht; Getreide, Korn; fruchtbar; reichlich

Ancient Finnish name system

Stoebke: derived



root	?-das	?-ja	-kkA	-la	-lAinen	?-mas	-nðes	-ntV	-ri	-s	-ttU	?-vA
Auv-	III											
Hyv-									II		III	
Ih-	III	III		I	III	II	II	III	II	III	III	
Ik-		III		III	III				I		I	
Ilm-			II						III			
Kaikk-										II		
?Kak(k)-												
?Kall-			II							II	III	
Kauk(k)-				III					I	III		
Kirj-												II
Kyll-			III							III	III	
?Kult-												
Lemp-					II					III	I	
Meel-			I				II	II		I	I	
Päiv-												
Toiv-	III		I			III			II	II	I	
Un(n)-			II							III		
Unt-												
?Ut-			III						III			
Valt-			III									
Vih-						III		III			I	II
Viht-						III			III			
Vilj-	III		I			III		II	III		I	

Ancient Finnish name system

Stoebke: dithematic



root	-heimo	-jouts	-kirja	-lempi	-meeli	-neuvo	-nihatu	-päivä	-toivo	-valta	-vihti	-vilja
Auv-				II								
Hyv-				I	III	II			II			
Ih-				I	I			II	II			III
Ik-	III	III		I	I			I	II	II		
Ilm-				II					II			
Kaikk-					II					I		
?Kak(k)-					III					III		
?Kall-					II					III		
Kauk(k)-				II	I			II	III	II		
Kirj-										II		
Kyll-		III			II	II		II	II			
?Kult-					III				III			
Lemp-									II	I		
Meel-			II			II		I	II	I	III	II
Päiv-												
Toiv-				II								
Un(n)-		III						II	III			
Unt-				II				III	III			
?Ut-		III			III		III					
Valt-				II								
Vih-										III		
Viht-												
Vilj-				II	II			II	II	II		

I: 'certainly Proto-Finnic': found in documents from both sides of the Gulf of Finland

II: 'probably Proto-Finnic': documented in one language, all elements (incl. suffixes) from several

III: 'possibly Proto-Finnic': does not fulfill all requirements of I/II, still documented

— Table on this and the two previous slides: Stoebke 1964

Ancient Finnish name system

But wait, there's more



■ Other names also likely

- ▶ bynames etc. in medieval sources
- ▶ evidence in place names
- ▶ several hypothesised by Forsman

■ Animals:

- ▶ *Hirvi* 'elk', locative byname *Širwelä*¹ 1486, locative / patronymic *Širweſſon* 1478
- ▶ *Susi* 'wolf' *Suſy* 1421, byname
- ▶ *Karhu* 'bear' *Karhu* 1511, byname
- ▶ Forsman has e.g. *Etana* 'snail', *Kirppu* 'flea'

¹Names written in *italics* are normalised, those in **Schwabach** documentary forms.

Ancient Finnish name system

But wait, there's more



■ Other names from nature

- ▶ *Paju* 'willow': *Pajo* 1410, *Paju* 1467, ..., byname, often locative
- ▶ *Honka* 'pine': *Sangha* 1491, *hongainen* 1481 ..., by-name / surname
- ▶ *Kulta* 'gold': *Kultola* 1507, *Kuldamar* 1552, locative bynames

■ Mythological²

- ▶ *Tapio* listed as a forest god in 1551; *tapio* 1479 by-name, *Tapialan* 1469 locative byname
- ▶ *Ahti* listed as a marine god in 1551; *Ahti* 1536 byname, *Ahtiala* 1477 locative byname

²At least, in the sense that some were preserved in mythology – this shouldn't be taken as evidence that any Finnish mythological name could be used by mortals

Ancient Finnish name system

Naming and name use



- Different forms used by the same person
 - ▶ Forsman has examples from census records in 16th–17th C Lapland
Mielikirja ~ *Mieliä* ~ *Mielitty*
Aikia Toivonpoika ~ *Aikia Toivetunpoika*
 - ▶ recorded post-period practice in some regions that the name form one used reflected one's status in life (e.g. *Jussi* 'John, as a boy' / *Juho* 'John, as a mature well-to-do farmer')
- Children possibly named after relatives
 - ▶ other Finno-Ugric peoples have similar practices
 - ▶ the meaning of a name not always the primary criterion
 - ▶ some names not even semantically transparent

Ancient Finnish name system

Naming and name use



- Not known how strongly the names were gendered
 - ▶ virtually no documented women's names
 - ▶ some suffixes more or less gendered as female, e.g.
 - tar* related to *tytär* 'daughter'
 - kki* originally deminutive

- Bynames likely used as necessary
 - ▶ these probably before the given name (cf. Joalaid 2014)
 - ▶ patronymic, descriptive, and locative likely used

Ancient Finnish name system

Out of use



- Christianity (and the emerging Swedish state) brought a new system
- Long transitional period
 - ▶ the Church established by the end of 12th C
 - ▶ an excommunication bull from 1340³ has e.g.
 - Melita de Syrjala Hirvalan Mielitty* (old-style)
 - Melico de Judicala Jutikkalan Mielikko* (likewise)
 - Marcus de Voypala Voipaalan Markus* (Christian)

³A group of major land-owners in the Sääksmäki parish refused to pay their tithes in full, possibly to show the local priest his place. The priest, Henricus Hartmanni, excommunicated them and got Pope Benedict XII to ratify this. He was subsequently elected Bishop of Åbo in 1366; there is still some uncertainty as to whether the tithes were eventually paid or whether the excommunication of certain local families continues to be in effect.

Medieval Finnish name system

Background



- Christianity in Finland c. 11th C
- Names Christianised rapidly
 - ▶ in Western Finland by c. 14th C
 - ▶ in Eastern Finland by 16th C
 - ▶ this is as far as records reach
- Kingdom of Sweden formed in c. 12th–13th C
 - ▶ provinces in Western Finland part of this process
 - ▶ Magnus Eriksson's unified law c. 1350
Swedish established as documentary language
- Saami people had old names still in 17th C
(not known how much of the onomastic similarity to the Ancient Finnish system is due to common Finno-Saamic heritage vs. continuing cultural contacts after the linguistic split c. 1000 BC)

Medieval Finnish name system

Christian names



- Baptism as the common ritual
 - ▶ membership in the Church
 - ▶ naming event
 - ▶ ⇒ religious function of the baptismal name

- Names »only names«
 - ▶ semantically opaque
 - ▶ reference to a patron saint

- Names not always Christian in ultimate origin
 - ▶ many Germanic names
 - ▶ these too mostly arrived with Christianity
 - ▶ no indigenous Finnish saints

Medieval Finnish name system



Name system

- Given name, typically Christian: *Morten, Karin*⁴
 - ▶ Orthography could vary a lot
*Vincentius ~ Vincensius ~ Sinda*⁵
- Bynames as required
 - ▶ patronymic: *Morthen Erichs., Karin Genricksdotter*
 - ▶ locative from farm: *Morten Sindzickalan*
or village: *Mårthen Målfilå*
 - ▶ descriptive: *Siff^d Pÿ 'hazel grouse',
Genrich Libasw 'meat-mouth' (likely, 'thick-lipped')*
 - ▶ not necessarily the same in all documents
(here, all three Martins are the same person)

⁴Unless otherwise indicated, the examples come from 16th C Kangasala, in Suvanto 2001

⁵*Hintsa* usually a variant of *Henrik* but these are one person

Medieval Finnish name system



Name system

- Eastern Finland mostly similar to Western⁶
 - ▶ single name: **Erik**
 - ▶ patronymic: **Clas Peersson**
 - ▶ descriptive: **Påall Svripåå 'big-head'**
 - ▶ pre-Christian name: **Michell Kaukapaáua**
- Family names common in the East
 - ▶ given and family name: **Caupi Syfuárinen**
 - ▶ also with patronymic: **Joan Persson Samuinen**
 - ▶ some possibly still bynames passed from generation to another – many structurally similar to patronymics

⁶These examples from 16th C Savonia Minor, in Alanen 2010



Medieval Finnish name system

Where did the names come from

■ Calendar of saints

- ▶ in late period, virtually all given names appear on the calendar
- ▶ not all saints' names were used – notably, S. Mary was too holy for her name to be given to mere mortals⁷

■ From close by

- ▶ from relatives: *Morthen Sendrighs.* → *Sendrigh Marttensson* → *Senrich Sinderffon*
- ▶ local saints
 - patron of the local parish
 - S. Henry (of the diocese of Åbo),
S. Eric and S. Bridget (of Sweden),
S. Olav (of Scandinavia)

⁷In all Sweden; there are some examples from Denmark

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Eastern and Western Finland



- Significant differences between Eastern and Western Finland
 - ▶ in culture, language, and genetics
 - ▶ in name systems too: Eastern Finland had (some) inherited family names early on
- Comprehensive tax records from both regions in 16th century
 - ▶ let's see how this affects naming
 - ▶ are there are differences in the names
 - ▶ if so, what kind of differences

Eastern vs. Western name systems



Data

- Two tax registers
- Eastern Finland: land register of Savonia Minor, 1562–64
 - ▶ published by Timo Alanen, electronic version 2010
 - ▶ three parishes: Sääminki, Rantasalmi, Tavinsalmi
 - ▶ 1504 persons
- Western Finland: silver tax register of Satakunta, 1571
 - ▶ published only on paper
 - ▶ compilation of personal names in Satakunta 1303–1571 by Seppo Suvanto available online
 - ▶ here, the parish of Kangasala
 - ▶ 433 persons

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Limitations



- Only land owners
 - ▶ not entirely clear if (or how) these names differ from those of the landless
 - ▶ names Suvanto found in judicial records suggest the names are similar
 - ▶ the format of a tax record may affect the choice of bynames

- Only one woman in the data
 - ▶ Karin Hansdotter, former unwed wife of Johan, Duke of Finland (later King John III of Sweden), at the manor of Vääksy⁸

⁸There she also raised their orphaned grandson count Jacob de la Gardie, later Lord High Constable and the only western general so far to successfully occupy Moscow

Eastern vs. Western name systems



Given names

- All in all, 56 different given names
- Spellings normalised in the following table
 - ▶ primarily by Suvanto, eastern-only names by Alanen

Name	West		East		Name	West		East	
	#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%
Pietari	22	5,1	227	15,1	Matti	33	7,6	66	4,4
Olavi	41	9,5	176	11,7	Niilo	8	1,8	54	3,6
Juho	22	5,1	144	9,6	Mikko	14	3,2	37	2,5
Paavo	7	1,6	141	9,4	Tapani	2	0,5	31	2,1
Lauri	32	7,4	137	9,1	Maunu			24	1,6
Antti	12	2,8	131	8,7	Tuomas	27	6,2	23	1,5
Heikki	36	8,3	120	8,0	Martti	23	5,3	20	1,3

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Given names



Name	West		East	
	#	%	#	%
Erkki	21	4,8	17	1,1
Jaakko	16	3,7	16	1,1
Reko	1	0,2	14	0,9
Yrjö	5	1,2	11	0,7
Klaus			11	0,7
Pentti	2	0,5	10	0,7
Perttu	10	2,3	8	0,5
Suni			8	0,5
Sipi	25	5,8	7	0,5
Prusi	3	0,7	7	0,5
Esko	10	2,3	6	0,4
Knuut	7	1,6	6	0,4
Vilppu	2	0,5	6	0,4
Klemetti	10	2,3	5	0,3

Name	West		East	
	#	%	#	%
Arvid	1	0,2	5	0,3
Simo	13	3	4	0,3
Hakuli			3	0,2
Hartikka			3	0,2
Kristoffer	1	0,2	2	0,1
[only byname]			2	0,1
Antonius			2	0,1
Egidius			2	0,1
Jesper			2	0,1
Luukas			2	0,1
Visa			2	0,1
Markku	15	3,5	1	0,1
Albrekt			1	0,1
Asko			1	0,1

Eastern vs. Western name systems



Given names

Name	West		East	
	#	%	#	%
Björn			1	0,1
Daavid			1	0,1
Enevald			1	0,1
Hemminki			1	0,1
Inki			1	0,1
Lattu			1	0,1
Salmund			1	0,1
Sikstus			1	0,1
Silvester			1	0,1

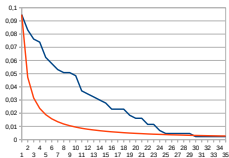
Name	West		East	
	#	%	#	%
Dionisius	5	1,2		
Ragvald	2	0,5		
Urbanus	2	0,5		
Kaarina	1	0,2		
Mauri	1	0,2		
Rasmus	1	0,2		
Total	433		1504	
Different names	35		51	



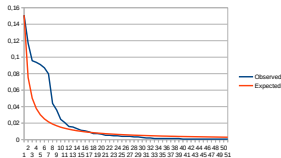
Eastern vs. Western name systems

Zipf's law

- G. K. Zipf 1949: the frequency of n th common word item is roughly $1/n$ of the most common one
- Mostly applies, but most common names more common than expected



Western



Eastern

Eastern vs. Western name systems



Some observations

- All in all, given names rather similar
- Patron saints of Scandinavia and Finland (although not of Sweden) high on the list
 - ▶ S. Olaf #1 in the Western and #2 in the eastern set
 - ▶ S. Henry #2 in West and #7 in East
 - ▶ S. Eric #10 in West and #15 in East
 - ▶ S. Bridget one of the more common female names but not in this data
- Most common names are common in both sets
 - ▶ rank can vary significantly
 - ▶ due to local traditions and saints
 - ▶ some name forms different, e.g.
 - *Kauppi* a markedly eastern form of *Jacob*
 - *Jons* a markedly western form of *Johannes*



Eastern vs. Western name systems

Some observations

- No Russian names in the Eastern set
 - ▶ but Savonia was a clearly Swedish province
- Two people in the Eastern set without clear given name
 - ▶ *Vanha Talonpoika* 'Old Farmer'
 - ▶ *Siffua Jerffueleinen*
Hiiva likely 'Drunkard' / 'Brewer'⁹ / 'Devil',¹⁰
possibly < German PN *Hiva*
Järveläinen a family name < *järvi* 'lake'

⁹modern Finnish 'yeast', older & dialectal 'hops' – it should be noted that brewing was mostly done by women

¹⁰related to *hiisi* 'pagan cult place' > 'devil'

Eastern vs. Western name systems

The rest of the name



■ Significant differences in bynames

Type	West		East	
	#	%	#	%
Given name only	12	2,8	48	3,2
Patronymic byname	385	88,9	366	24,3
Locative byname	33	7,6		
Family name	2	0,5	1315	87,4
Other byname	12	2,8	29	1,9
Patronymic + family name	1	0,2	247	16,4
Patronymic + other byname	1	0,2	3	0,2
Patronymic + locative byname	8	1,8		
Locative + other byname	1	0,2		
Family name + other byname			4	0,3

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Some observations



- Locative bynames rare
 - ▶ redundant in tax books organised by village & farm
 - ▶ still some: **Thomas Victis** < farm *Vihtinen*,
Oleff Pohjalahden < village *Pohjalhti*
 - ▶ possibly one double locative:
Tarhape Tho. Kerpoinen
 - *Kerppola* his home village
 - Lake *Tarhapää* possibly among his hunting grounds
 - here classified as locative + other byname

- 9/10 of Western names have a patronymic
Clemet Jonsson, Lasse Sanderffon Paiular
 - ▶ similar tradition in Sweden
 - ▶ only 1/4 of Eastern names do
Sartwigh anderffon, Anders Matzffon watainen

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Some observations



- 9/10 of Eastern names have a family name
 - ▶ only 1/200 of Western names do
- Most follow a pattern that has survived to the present
 - ▶ *-nen* added to a root word that is etymologically a personal name
Jhalembinen < **Jhalempi*, *Seikkinen* < *Heikki*
 - ▶ also some animal names: possibly the byname of an ancestor, a house name, or a totem name
Karhuinen < *karhu* 'bear', *Kiiskinen* < *kiiski* 'ruffe'

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Bynames in the data



- 'Other' bynames include
 - ▶ occupational names: Páll Seppá turuinen, Per Olsson Smedh 'Smith'
 - ▶ descriptive: Hendrih Suripá 'Big-Head'
 - ▶ pre-Christian personal names: Laur Kaukapáiuá
 - ▶ animal names: Hendrih Wehápy 'Little Grouse'
(cf. Madz Pý 'Grouse' 1552, Sen. Jfopy 'Big Grouse'
at the neighbouring farm 1561–62)

- A few people have just a given name
Michel, hustru Karin, hendrih

Eastern vs. Western name systems



Conclusions

- Clear systemic difference
 - ▶ in the West, given name + byname, usually patronymic
 - ▶ in the East, given name + family name

- Eastern family names very common, close to 90 %

- Western family names very rare, 0,5 % – but
 - ▶ some non-locative bynames also found in more than one generation
 - ▶ some farm names derived from bynames

Eastern vs. Western name systems

Conclusions



- Possibly cultural differences
 - ▶ Eastern slash-and-burn agriculture needs family names
 - ▶ Western farming culture can do with locatives

- Possibly cultural loan
 - ▶ Western Finland had closer ties to the Swedish-speaking provinces

- Two distinct (although related) naming systems in late medieval Finland

Thank you



hanf
you

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