

TOPONYMS

As an Environment for a User of Names and an Object for the Researcher of Names

Marja Kallasmaa

During the last decades, onomastics has gradually been engaged in the study of proper names as a part of the linguistic environment. Resultantly, the name user's viewpoint has more and more become an object of study. From a broader perspective, it may have resulted from a paradigmatic change in the human sciences: the evolutional or developmental approach has remained in the background, having been replaced with functional research. I have already noted elsewhere that linguistic opportunities are limited and researchers have often proceeded from political essence while constructing etymologies: e.g. in Finno-Ugric linguistics, Paul Ariste's views according to which, while etymologising Estonian place names, appellative matches should first be searched for in Estonian dialects, have been the starting point to date. In case no match can be found there, the vocabulary of closely related languages, i.e. in Balto-Finnic languages, and next the vocabulary of the farther kin languages should be searched. Indo-European languages should be the last resort. I have classified this approach as a political decision, as during my 20 year-long study of farm names, I have reached the conclusion that the toponyms of ancient farms, which cannot easily be submitted to etymology, are personal names which have, through folk etymology, repeatedly been subjected to reinterpretation. Consequently the phonic forms of the names may have undergone dramatic changes so that mere linguistic phonic laws yield no results whatsoever. At the FU congress in Tartu in 2000, it was repeatedly mentioned that new patterns of speech and meaning emerge upon the contacts of different languages (Marja Kallasmaa, Anatoli Kuklin, Jouko Seppänen, and in a more broader sense, also Kalevi Wiik).

A man living in a particular environment, such as a certain landscape, develops a habit and also a need to organise, classify and structure his sur-

roundings. Any sensible human behaviour results in such organisation; in this paper, we shall examine linguistic organisation. Giving proper names is one stage of linguistic organisation. From the philosophical standpoint, it can be argued whether a general name stems from a proper name or vice versa. I would leave it to the philosophers to draw the boundary between them, and would just refer to the option that at a certain stage, there never was such a boundary. In other words, at least according to the modern viewpoint, the boundary depends on the background. Let us consider a Northern Estonian farm, a comparatively small unit, as a background. In this particular system where, due to its small size, only one of each object classes was represented, *Jõgi* ('river'), *Mägi* ('hill'), *Koppel* ('paddock'), *Kaasik* ('birchwood'), *Saat* ('meadow') operated as proper names. While taking a village as a background, those would obviously require a compound name, where -river, -hill, -paddock, -birchwood and -meadow would be the determinants of such a compound name (Pall 1997: 19, cf. Kallasmaa 1992: 75; 2000: 71). Nevertheless, considering the whole Estonian language-area as a background, a question relating to the name boundary also emerges in case of some two-part compound names such as: *Tagakoppel* ('backpaddock'), *Vanakaasik* ('old birchwood'), especially if a compound word combining the same components is available in the common language. Additional problems emerge in relation to the fact that the place name file at the Estonian Language Institute usually does not explain which background the informant had had in mind, since the earlier collectors did not realise the relevance of such information. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish retrospectively whether the informants were thinking in the village or farm perspective: a term name *Samblik* (Lichen, denoting a bog) has been registered in Saaremaa, but as late as in 1798 Mellin's atlas gives *Kaisersamliko Soo* as the name of this place. Thus it seems that the part of the toponym which is usually shortened in use has been maintained to date. Only the determinant has been retained in the term name *Sapat* (wood): in Saaremaa, cf. in 1796 *Waitzehre Sappat*. Cf. in a dialect, an appellative *sapat*: *sapati* 'thick young pinewood' (Kallasmaa 1996: 368).

Onomatologists have often been criticised for turning to personal names as a spare anchor when facing problems in etymologising. I want to emphasise that a personal name often serves as a basis for the place name, as ownership is a widespread denomination principle. Calculations based on German data show that about 13% of all names have been assigned on the basis of that principle (Nau-

mann 1972: 38). Assigning names on the basis of location is even more widely spread, covering some 31% of all cases (Naumann 1972: 38). With farms in Estonia, those denomination principles often coincide. Provided the farm was undivided, it is usually impossible to establish whether any such small object has been named after ownership or location: has it been owned by the farmer, or has it been in the farm's territory or in its vicinity? In case of coincidence, $13 + 31 = 44\%$ of all names could contain a personal name, including a farm name originating from a personal name.

Two-part compound names form the main class in the Estonian name inventory, with the following linguistic formula: K1Nom/Gen + K2Nom/Gen, where K = a nominal (e.g. lake name *Niitjärv*, village name *Saadjärve*, names of city districts *Mustamäe* and *Õismäe*). In real life, nevertheless, clear-cut cases are rare.

1. A new name for a new object can be derived from a two-part common name by adding a new determinant to the genitive of the name such as *Niitjärv* > *Niitjärveoja* (K1Nom + K2Gen + K3Nom).

2. A new name can be derived from a two-part name by supplementing a branching attribute, the latter being usually *Uus-* ('new'), *Uue-* ('new'), *Vana-* ('old'), *Suur(e)-* ('big'), *Väike-* ('small') or *Üla-* ('upper'), *Ala-* ('lower'): *Uue-Karjaküla* ('new cattle village'), *Vana Pärnu maantee* ('old Pärnu road'), *Suur Munamägi* ('big egg-hill'), *Väike Munamägi* ('small egg-hill'), *Väike-Nõmmküla* ('small moor wick'). The formula is HNom/Gen + (K1Nom/Gen + K2Nom), while the type where, due to historical development, the determinantless attributive part of the name with a branching attribute is present, is especially wide-spread among settlement toponyms: *Uue* ('new')-*Kariste*, *Uue-Saaluse*, *Uue-Varbla*, *Uue-Virtsu*, *Vana* ('old')-*Antsla*, *Vana-Jõgeva*, *Vana-Kariste*, *Väike* ('small')-*Õismäe*. Formula H + K1Nom or H + (K1Nom/Gen + K2Gen).

3. The settlement names could have lost the determinant due to frequent use, e.g. *Järna*, *Niidu*, *Metsa* can be used as farm names without a determinant, as can be done with the names of towns such as *Tartu*, *Paide*, *Jõgeva*. Formula K1Gen.

4. A so-called term name *Saat* ('meadow'), *Laks* ('meadow'), as well as a name derived from a personal name, *Piur* ('small island'), having a similar formal structure as the names above, can rarely be found; formula KNom.

A question emerges instantly: which is the background system applied in relation to the above formulas? I have demonstrated earlier that in the Estonian language and in Estonian conditions, a village is the most appropriate background. A village as a territory and a group of people constitutes a certain natural unity in Estonia. Naturally, treating a village as a definite unity remains, at least to a certain extent, conditional and collusive. By no means could one conclude that the names used as proper names in a farm would in some way be "less proper" names compared to the toponyms on the village level. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that there are names which are place names without any alterations both on the farm and village levels. Such place names, often based on some half-forgotten dialectal word, are usually more widely known, taking a village or manor name as an attribute: *Kuhu nõuas*, *Kasti lahjuke*, and *Purtsa oidrik*. The spelling depends on whether we wish to emphasise the qualities of a proper name of the second component or not, the formula being either HGen + K1Nom or, if based on a different analysis, K1Gen + K2Nom which is derived from the basic formula. Or in our case, formally: HGen + K1Nom = K1Gen + K2Nom.

Each existing and frequently applicable toponym forms, in its turn, a base for a name pattern. We can say that the name patterns available in a language form a basis for the whole inventory of names, while the latter forms a certain patterned structure. The biggest blunder frequently made is the opinion that the inventory of names or the pattern comprised by the inventory of names coincides absolutely with the pattern of geographical landscape, while in fact those two, i.e. place names and objects of landscape, are substantially displaced towards each other. The linguistic conservatism of the toponyms is underlined frequently, while the general conservatism of the inventory of names is neglected, which may be extremely humane. Although only an object important to man is given a name, a certain time shift exists. Thus, our toponyms still reflect the agricultural society. Upon denomination, people use the words which are frequent in their daily proceedings. Thus, a farmer's world is unveiled in the toponyms of an agricultural country. When landscape is pictured as a pattern, and another pattern formed of place names is placed above the former, the majority of the differences results indeed from the value systems of man, the user of names. To put it in other words: when reconstructing a landscape according

to place names, we will have a totally different landscape compared to the one we are actually facing: we will have a landscape significant for culture.

References

- K a l l a s m a a, Marja 1992. Variatsioon ühe legendi põhjal. – *Keel ja Kirjandus*, no. 2, pp. 71–77
- K a l l a s m a a, Marja 1996. *Saaremaa kohanimed I*. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Instituut
- K a l l a s m a a, Marja 2000. *Saaremaa kohanimed II*. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Instituut
- N a u m a n n, Horst 1972. Struktur und Funktion der Elemente in der Mikro-toponymie. – *Namenkundliche Informationen*, no. 2, pp. 32–39
- P a l l, Valdek 1997. *L'em'ni'e*. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus