

A STUDY ON THE GIVEN NAMES OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN NORTH KARELIA FROM THE 1920S TO THE 1950S

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A study on the given names of Orthodox Christians in North Karelia from the 1920s to the 1950s

Abstract: The aim of this research is to study the name-giving tradition of Orthodox Christians in North Karelia, Finland. According to old tradition, parents should give their baby only one name, which should be based on the Bible or a canonized person's name. The main questions refer to what kinds of changes have taken place in names and name-giving tradition and what reasons are behind them. This research deals especially with two periods, the 1920s and 1950s, because it seems that the tradition to give only one name remained till the 1920s, after which the practice of giving several names became common. However, when the evacuated Karelians settled down after the Second World War, statistics recorded a temporary increase in the number of Orthodox people with one name.

Keywords: onomastics, given names, Orthodox name-giving, North Karelia, Karelians.

It was somehow confusing to note that some of my own relatives had only one given name. Other relatives had two, or even three names. The difference seemed to be connected with one's religious denomination. It became obvious that those who had only one given name were Orthodox Christians. The next problem arose when trying to find in the calendar of the Orthodox Church the right day to celebrate the name. It used to be a saints' memorial calendar; first names found a place in there only in the 1970s. These questions regarding the differences in naming started to interest me during my Finnish language studies, and that was why I chose as the subject for my Master's thesis "The naming system and the first names in the Orthodox Parish of Joensuu" (2008). In that research, the focus was on a single parish, Joensuu. Although there were many interesting findings, some questions remained unanswered.

The aim of this research is to study the name-giving tradition of the Orthodox Christians, especially the aspects of choosing and giving names in North Karelia. The main research questions refer to what kinds of changes have taken place in the names and the name-giving tradition, and what reasons are behind them.

In the beginning, regardless of the religious sect, all children received only a name. This practice started to change during the 18th century. Nowadays, it is customary to give two or three names: only a few get a single name. But still, according to the old tradition, parents should give their baby only one name, which should be based on the Bible or a

canonized person's name. In most cases, the root names are from Latin, Greek or Hebrew: *Johannes* < *Jochanan*, Hebr. 'Jahve is merciful', *Maria* < *Mirjam*, Hebr., and *Mariam*, Gr. 'a wanted child' (Vilkuna 2001). Eero Kiviniemi (2006: 261) shows that up to 70% of given names among Finnish men could be derived from biblical names or names of holy people.

During the first decades of the last century, the rising national spirit made the Finnish people change their old foreign family names to Finnish, but the shift in ideology also had an influence on the given names. National romantic names and other names in the Finns' own language, such as *Väinö*, *Toivo*, *Aino* and *Hilja*, became very popular (Kiviniemi 2006: 276–279). See the table at the end of the paper.

It seems that the tradition of one given name remained till the 1920s, after which the practice of using several names accelerated. However, when the evacuated Karelians settled down after the Second World War, statistics recorded a temporary increase in the number of Orthodox people with one name. The Second World War forced 400000 Finnish people to leave their homes and move from Karelia to the other parts of Finland; among them there were two-thirds of the Orthodox people of Finland, 55000 members of the Church (Koukkunen 1979: 143). This research deals especially with these two periods, the 1920s and 1950s, and the given names that were recorded during that time in North Karelia.

Geographically, this research covers the most eastern parts of current Finland: Ilomantsi, Joensuu, Eno, Nurmes and the so-called border Karelia, which nowadays is a part of Russia. There, Impilahti, Korpiselkä, Salmi, Suistamo and Suojärvi were parishes with a majority of Orthodox inhabitants. In particular, the people evacuated from Suistamo and Suojärvi found their new homes in the region of Joensuu and Nurmes. However, a small amount of comparative data has been gathered in Athens, because the old Greek names of Christians should be found also in the names of the Orthodox Christians in Finland.

At the moment, the quantitative data contains information about 4000 people; this number is approximately half the amount of the given names. Likewise, the qualitative material must be increased. To interview people, some of whom are over 90 years old, is very challenging. Although the statistics can tell how many different kinds of names exist, only human beings can tell why a particular name was chosen.

| Favourite given names among Orthodox Christians in Karelia and all Finns 1920–1925 | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|------------------|---|---------------|
| North-Karelia, Joensuu + Ilomantsi | | Border-Karelia, Salmi as an example (N1+N2=2070) | | Nationwide | |
| Girls | Boys | Girls (N1=995) | Boys (N2=1075) | Girls | Boys |
| <i>Anna</i> | <i>Weikko</i> | <i>Maria</i> | <i>Aleksandr</i> | <i>Aino</i> | <i>Veikko</i> |
| <i>Tyynne</i> | <i>Väinö</i> | <i>Klavdia</i> | <i>Nikolai</i> | <i>Eila</i> | <i>Erkki</i> |
| <i>Hilja, Maria</i> | <i>Toivo</i> | <i>Julia/Juulia</i> | <i>Pavel</i> | <i>Aune</i> | <i>Pentti</i> |
| <i>Martta</i> | <i>Onni</i> | <i>Anna</i> | <i>Mihail</i> | <i>Anna</i> | <i>Eino</i> |
| <i>Wieno</i> | <i>Hannes, Yrjö</i> | <i>Vera/Wera</i> | <i>Alvian</i> | <i>Kerttu</i> | <i>Toivo</i> |
| Number of inhabitants in 1939: in Ilomantsi altogether – 12554 (Ort. 4171) in Joensuu altogether – 5971 (Ort. 2888 / 1933) | | Number of inhabitants in Salmi in 1939: Orthodox men – 4211, women – 4283, Lutheran men – 809, women – 692. Altogether 9995. | | Number of inhabitants in the entire Finland in 1940: Orthodox – 70209 (1,8%) Lutheran – 3730789 (96,0%) | |

- Biblical names: *Anna, Maria, Martta; Hannes, Mihail, Nikolai, Pavel*
- Names based on saints or holy people: *Aune, Julia/Juulia, Kerttu, Klavdia, Vera/Wera; Aleksandr, Pentti, Yrjö*
- Native names: *Toivo* ('hope'), *Weikko/Veikko* ('brother')
- Finnish mythology: *Aino* ('only'); *Wäinö*
- Characteristic: *Hilja* (translation < Lat. *Placidus*), *Tyyne* ('calm'), *Wieno* ('gentle')
- Others: *Eila* (< Nor. *Eili*; Ir. *Eileen* < ? *Helena*); *Alvian* (< Lat. *Albus*), *Eino* (< Germ. *Enewald*), *Erkki* (< Scand. *Airik, Eyrek*), *Onni* (translation < Lat. *Felix*, Gr. *Makarios*)

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