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Saami Village Names in the Kola Peninsula

According to archeological data, man began inhabiting the Kola Peninsula as early as the Mezolithic Age, in the 7th–6th millennia B.C., after ice had retreated and, subsequently, reindeer moved northwards. The noted Russian archeologist N. N. GURINA holds the view that man initially penetrated the Kola Peninsula from the north-west and the south (1977: 5). In her opinion, the closest ancestors of the Saami did not appear in the Kola Peninsula before the 2nd half of the 1st millennium B.C. “In the whole Trans-Polar area, this was the period that saw the development of individual cultures that interacted with the culture of neighbouring tribes to a certain extent. Hunting and fishing tools became more sophisticated, seafaring advanced while contacts with neighbours from the west were maintained, especially in the north-west of the peninsula. At the same time, distinctive cultural features strengthened and the population was consolidated by the influx of related tribes from the south (Karelia), who were pressed to move northwards by invaders coming from deeper south” (GURINA 1977: 8).

That the Saami had once stayed more to the south and the east of the Kola Peninsula is evidenced by the enormous layer of Saami substratal toponyms in Finland (ITKONEN 1920), in Karelia (KERT 1960, 1997, LESKINEN 1967), and in the Archangel’sk province (MATVEEV 2001).

It seems rather unlikely that the Saami were indigenous to the Kola Peninsula as the territory features several toponyms that are clearly of non-Saami (substratal) origin (KERT 1977, 1981).

The Saami language occupies a special place in the Uralian family, since about the third of its whole vocabulary, as pointed out by TOIVO ITKONEN (1948), does not have any correspondences in the other Uralian languages. It is undoubtedly true that languages developing in isolation will evolve words without correspondences in the languages of the genetically related family. In Saami, however, such items make up the basic layer of the vocabulary. They reflect vitally important concepts of the surrounding world as well as human psyche. Built into the structures of Saami toponyms, it is these lexemes that are the most representative of Saami substratal toponyms (cf. our study “The Adaptation of Saami Toponyms by Russian and Related Languages” in Volume 4a of *Onomastica Uralica*).

Since K. B. WIKLUND (1896: 10) hypothesized the Finno-Ugric language having been borrowed by the Proto-Saami, their origin has been an issue of de-



bate for over a hundred years. For a more detailed discussion of this debate see M. KORHONEN's Johdatus lapin kielen historiaan [”Introduction to the History of the Saami Language”] (1981: 22–28). We give preference to the theory of the Proto-Saami replacing their language, which means that the Saami and the Baltic Finns (Karelians, Finns, the Vepse, Estonians and others) were not genetically related peoples.

Saami toponymy is based on geographical lexis, which is partly due to the socio-economic framework of their way of life. The socio-economic framework as well as religious and cosmogonic beliefs are essential to the formation of toponymy. The traditional occupations pursued by the Saami were reindeer breeding, fishing and hunting. They required good abilities of orientation in the area, knowledge of the habits of animals, of places for hunting and fishing and an ability to apply all this knowledge in the process of economic activity. That is why the landscape, flora and fauna play a very important role in the formation of Saami toponymy.

The scenery of the Kola landscape is rather specific. In its territory there are about 21 thousand rivers, whose total length amounts to over 60 thousand kms; the number of lakes and swamps can be put well over 100 thousand and 13 thousand respectively. Its flora and fauna are also rich and varied: there are over 2000 species of plants mosses and lichens, more than 220 species of birds, 32 species of surface mammals and 22 species of fish (Geografia).

The Saami's religious and cosmogonic beliefs were also peculiar and found their reflection in the toponymic lexis.

A subtle distinction of landscape details is typical of the Saami vocabulary. Thus, there are about twenty lexemes denoting various water objects. More than thirty words are used to refer to hills, the choice being determined by considerations of configuration, presence of vegetation, height and other features (KERT 2001).

Several toponyms were derived from anthroponyms, because the majority of pastures, places for fishing constituted private property. In the process of their historical development and in the natural conditions that they had to learn how to master, the Saami evolved a characteristic type of economy and a unique social organization, the so-called *sijjt*.

The formation of Saami toponymy was also influenced by the season-dependent annual cycle of economic life. It was the Finnish scholar and ethnographer KUSTAA VILKUNA who observed the annual nomadic cycle of a Saami family from the old village Songel'sk. The members of the community divided into seven kins. Each kin had its own leader or senior, who was the oldest in the kin. All the territory of the community was divided between



these families into seven plots. In April the senior of the kin together with his wife and married sons loaded their goods and chattels, young children and sheep on a sledge and set out on reindeer-back along the established snow crust roads for their spring outpost, where there was also a dwelling place. Here the deer fattened grazing on good moss. Before for the calving period the men angled for fish under the ice and hunted for birds of passage. In May they sought out fish-lakes and caught sig, a kind of salmon, the fish were later dried. The men also hunted for wild deer. In July they rowed over to the big lake. In the mean time the deer were let loose grazing. Fishing continued till September. In late October–early November, when the lakes began to freeze and the earth had been covered with snow, they again loaded all their chattels on sledges and started off to the mossy area where the deer had calved. It was also the period that the deer were in heat. They spent November and December there, went out hunting, bred the deer, mended their fishing tackle for the winter and arrived back at their winter village only at the end of the year. Reindeer were used to transport fish and meat reserves when the period of hard frozen snow set in (VILKUNA 1970). The nomadic cycle depended not only on the natural environment and period of time but also on the biological characteristics of the objects of economic life (deer, fish, birds and beasts). It goes without saying that these features of the annual economic cycle came to be reflected in the toponymy, too.

As is well-known, the lexicon of any language consists of two classes: appellative and onymic. Appellatives designate objects whereas onyms name them. The semantic, lexical and grammatical features of each class of the vocabulary is determined by their function. Toponymic lexis is partly onymic. The differences between appellatives and toponyms become apparent in their semantics as well as principles of nomination, word formation models, peculiarities of adaptation, characteristics of nuclear and peripheral zones of the area that the toponyms in question cover and the ways their components are linked (KERT 1989, 2002).

The formal structure of Saami toponyms is similar to that of Finno-Ugric languages. A toponym consists of a head or term of nomenclature that refers to the object and an attribute to it. Both the head and the attribute can comprise two or more components.

According to their structure, Saami toponyms fall into simple, suffixed and complex classes. At the appellative level there are certain syntactic structures that turn into compounds when toponyms are formed, which means that syntactic structures of different types are transformed into compounds at the level of toponyms. Such structures usually contain deverbal nouns, adjectives or numerals (KERT 1991).



The structure of toponyms meaning village-type settlements corresponds to the general rules that define the structure of Saami toponymy of the Kola Peninsula. Deviations can be observed, to a certain extent, in the selection of the vocabulary.

The material analysed is taken from TOIVO ITKONEN's definitive "Koltan- ja kuolanlapin sanakirja" [Dictionary of Koltta and Kola Saami] (1958 = Itk.). The Saami toponyms of the Kola Peninsula are rather fully represented in it. It is important to note that the Saami communities whose names are recorded disappeared a long time ago. As a scholarship holder of the Finno-Ugric Society, T. ITKONEN spent considerable time in 1914 collecting Saami dialectal material in the Kola Peninsula. The other source of the material used is taken from Volume I of the "Географический словарь Кольского полуострова" [Geographical Dictionary of the Kola Peninsula] (1939 = GeogrSlov.).

The process of how toponymy emerges or, to be more exact, of how a new toponym is adapted to the established toponymic system is subjected to universal rules concerning both the structure of the given toponym and the semantics of its components (either still having a meaning or having already lost their internal form). Names of newly emerged locations are also "built" into the toponymic system in accordance with the surrounding landscape relief and other extralinguistic factors. The components of toponyms seem to be added in the following order: for example there exists a geographical object such as "river" bearing the name *Arsjogk* (*ars* + *jogk* 'river'), on which a temporal summer camp is set up. This will be called *Arsjogksijjt* (*ars* + *jogk* + *sijjt*), in which *arsjogk* is the attribute, *sijjt* is the head. Further additions are possible, if necessary. In Saami toponymy there frequently occur items with four components.

The toponymy of village settlements has some specific features in comparison with objects of other types. Firstly, village names make up but a small portion of the total mass of toponyms of the Kola Peninsula. Secondly, the structural diversity of toponyms is limited to a certain extent by the strict functionality of objects to be named. Thirdly, suffixation as a word formation model of toponyms is scantily represented in Saami. Neither adjectival constructions, nor phrases with deverbal nouns are used to form toponyms denoting village settlements. These factors have predetermined the emergence of only two types of village toponyms: simple and complex.

Simple toponyms include:

- 1) appellatives that have preserved their exact meaning, e.g. *Keunges* (< *keunges* 'waterfall'), *Lavna* (< *lavvn* 'peat'), *Nišk* (< *niššk* 'the beginning of a waterfall or of a river flowing out of a lake');
- 2) proper names: *Eina* (cf. the proper name *Eina*);



- 3) words that can be etymologized with a certain degree of probability, like *Juonni* (cf. *juonni* 'stripe'), *Orre* (cf. *orre* 'be found, situated');
- 4) words that have lost their lexical meaning: *Nellim*.

Complex toponyms are divided into two-component and three-component ones. Toponyms with two components: *Joll-sijjt*, *Lumbes-sijjt*, *Kordeg-sijjt*, *Njavv-sijjt*, *Nurt-sijjt*. Some of these toponyms underwent ellipsis, e.g. *Kordeg sijjt*, from *Kordeg-jogk-sijjt*. Toponyms with three components: *Ars-jogk-sijjt*, *Erre-jauraš-sijjt*, *Pakke-suarv-sijjt*, *Ponje-tierrm-sijjt*, *Ruv-maenne-sijjt*, *Tsirt-paka-sijjt*.

The lexicon of toponym components mostly consists of appellatives denoting types of water objects, as Saami settlements were, as a rule, established on rivers and lakes. The lexemes, naturally, are all attributes, since the head of complex toponyms is always the same — *sijjt*. The most commonly used names can then be subjected to ellipsis.

What follows is a list of the most frequently occurring lexical classes. Hydronymic lexis is represented by: *jogk* 'river', *jaur* 'lake', *jauraš* 'pond', *lumbes* 'lake with a river flowing out of it', *n'avv* 'quick current', *keunges* 'waterfall' and others. Relief elements: *muottk* 'isthmus, neck of land', *tierrm* 'hillock', *suelo* 'island'. Flora, fauna: *piets* 'pine', *suerrv* 'dry pine', *pah'k'e* 'excrescence on a tree', *lavvn* 'peat', *kuoll* 'fish', *pienne* 'dog', *raud* 'loach', *vales* 'whale', *err* 'water-worm', *čuenn* 'goose'. The following items are used as lexemes motivating a name: *joll* 'round', *pijj* 'tall', *nurrht* 'east', *vuerjal* 'west', *n'oll* 'small barn', *kuedt* 'a type of Saami hut'. The word *tsoart* 'devil' is undoubtedly connected with beliefs. A significant number of lexemes are substratal ones or their etymology is not convincing enough.

Adaptation of Saami toponyms by Russian

Owing to their specific features and compared to other semantic classes, toponyms denoting village settlements are especially important and meaningful from a social aspect. That is the reason why the degree of adaptation of this category to the borrowing languages is the highest in the interaction between the toponymic systems of different languages.

The wholesale occupation of the Kola Peninsula by Russians unfolded between the 13th–18th centuries. It is a matter of course that the names of the biggest community settlements were adapted to and by Russian. The names of summer settlements were not borrowed so frequently, as the seasonal migration of the Saami was an organic part of their way of life and did not affect Russian interests. Investigating the process of how Saami toponymy was acquired by Russian one should emphasize the fundamental difference



between the two systems. In Russian toponymy, the nomenclature term that denotes an object does not belong to the toponym structure, e.g. *озеро Гусиное* (in the Trans-Bajkal region), whereas in Saami, as in all the Finno-Ugric languages, such terms of nomenclature do form a part of the toponym structure, e.g. *Tshuenn-javvr* (lit. 'goose lake').

The variety of Russian toponymic types underlied by the specific history of Russian–Saami contacts emerged as a result of the assimilation of Saami toponymy by Russian. The most widely spread device of acquisition is the acceptance of the sound envelope of the foreign word. In this case the borrower does not know the meaning of the given word because it is not needed, the basic function of the word being the identification of the object in space, e.g. *Лавна* (cf. *lavvn*), *Кола* (cf. *kuoll*), *Мотка* (cf. *muettk*), *Ровденга* (cf. *ruvvd*). Words of foreign origin are adjusted to Russian phonetic and wordformation patterns *Норенский погост* (cf. *norres*), *Печенгский погост* (cf. *peats*), *Понойский погост* (cf. *pienne*), etc. There is a rather wide range of so-called semi-calques in which it is only the nomenclature term referring to the class of the object that is translated: *Паз-река* (river), *Пул-озеро*, *Нот-озеро* (lake) and others. In the material surveyed there is only one example of a Saami name having been translated into Russian: *Niššk* > *Зашеек*. It is not at all rare in Finno-Ugric toponymy that parts of the human body are used in a figurative sense to name geographical objects. The Russian version of a toponym that clearly preserves the appellative meaning is either a translation from Saami or a reflection of the original sound pattern. If the meaning of the word the toponym is based on has not come down (substratum), its sound pattern is used. An example of adaptation bordering on false etymology is represented by the borrowed settlement name *Соловарака* from *Suelo-jaur-sijjt* (cf. *suelo* 'island'). As there was a shortage of salt in the North, it was distilled in salterns. The Saami word *suelo* was associated by Russians with *соль* 'salt' and *vaara* with *варить* 'cook'.

Doublets, i.e. objects named by parallel Saami and Russian names fall into a special category. The occupation of the Kola Peninsula by Russians was an uneven process. In places where there were close cultural and economic links (marriages, commodity circulation, etc.), which, naturally, promoted the mutual acquisition of the interacting languages, adaptation was dominated by either the translation of a word or by the takeover of its sound pattern. On the other hand, Russians named objects in their own way if such cooperation was missing. Thus, the Saami settlement *Keunges* was named *Борис-Глеб* by Russians when a church was built there (the Saami were converted to orthodoxy). Further examples of autonomous denominations: *Ars-jogksijjt* ~ *Дальний Семиостровский погост*, *Kordegksijjt* ~ *Вороньинский*



погост. Researchers are puzzled by the Saami name *Jofkui*, *Jovk* and Russian *Иоканьга*. In the toponym *Иоканьга* Saami *jogk* 'river' and the toponymic affix *-ньга* can be detected clearly.

It seems to be appropriate to mention that Russian official documents distinguished *Лопь* 'Lapp (old name of the Saami)' *Кончанская*, *Лопь Терская*, *Лопь Лешая* 'wood-goblin' or *Дикая* 'wild' (GeogrSlov. 55–56).

Recorded information about the first Saami-Russian contacts dates back to the 14th century in Russian historical sources. For example, the will of Lazar Muromskij, founder of the Murom monastery (used to be situated on the shore of Lake Onega, 25 kms away from Besov Nos 'the devil's nose') has the following passage: "А живущие тогда именовались около озера Онега »лопяне« и »самояд« — страшливые сыродцы близ места сего живяху..." 'those who were living there were called »Lapps« and »self-eaters« around Lake Onega — there were formidable raw food eaters living near that place' (YAGODKIN 1918: 10). The Kola Peninsula and its northern shore Murman was known to Russians as early as the 13th c. "The contract charters of this century between Novgorod and the dukes of Tver' usually mention 'Tre', i.e. Терский бепер 'shore' in the list of the rural districts belonging to Novgorod, and one mention is made of Kola, although the edition is somewhat doubtful (Заволоцье Коло Перемь Тре...)." The first Russian colonists began to penetrate the Kola Peninsula in the 14th–16th centuries (PLATONOV 1923: 1). This is the time that names of Saami communities of the Kola Peninsula are first mentioned: *Ловозеро* (1574), *Поной* (1570), *Екостровский погост* (1574), *Бабино* (1608), *Еконгский погост – Иоканьга* (1620). As far as the present situation is concerned, the enormous social, economic and cultural changes in the life of the Saami of the Kola Peninsula have resulted in some of the toponyms having ceased to function as tools of social and economic life and their having turned into cultural-historical relicts.

A short etymological list of Saami settlement names

Ahkel-sijjt (GeogrSlov. 17) < *ahhk* 'wife, woman', *sijjt* 'churchyard, village in Saamiland'

Ars-jogk-sijjt (Itk. 967) < *arsted* 'hang', *jogk* 'river'

Erre-jauraš-sijjt (Itk. 969) < *err* 'water worm', *jauraš* 'pond'

Jokka-redt-sijjt (Itk. 972) < *redt* '(river) bank'

Joll-sijjt (Itk. 972) < *joll* 'round'

Juonni (Itk. 973) < *juonni* 'stripe'

Keunges (Itk. 977) < *keunges* 'waterfall'

Kolm-porrt-sijjt (Itk. 981) < *kolmo* 'three', *perrt* 'hut'

Kolma-jaur-sijjt (Itk. 981) < *jaur* 'lake'



- Kuoll-jegge-sijjt* (Itk. 984) < *kull, kuell* 'fish'
Kuottem-jaur-sijjt (Itk. 978) < *koatt* 'hut, cottage'
Lavna (Itk. 987) < *lavvn* 'peat'
Lumbes-sijjt (Itk. 988) < *lumbes* 'lake with a river flowing out of it'
Mualk-jaur-sijjt (Itk. 993) < *mualhk* 'curve, bend'
Muetk-sijjt (Itk. 994) < *muettk* 'isthmus, neck'
Nišk (Itk. 998) < *niššk* 'waterfall; point where a river flows out of a lake'
Nurht-sijjt (GeogrSlov. 90) < *nurrht* 'east, eastern'
Nurt-sijjt (Itk. 996) < *nurrt* 'east'
N'avv-sijjt ~ *N'avvk* (Itk. 997) < *n'avv* 'rapids'
N'oll-jegge-sijjt (Itk. 997) < *n'oll* 'small granary'
Orre (Itk. 1000) < *orre* 'to be found'
Pakke-suarv-sijjt (Itk. 1001) < *pahke* 'excrescence on a tree', *suerrv* 'dry pine-tree'
Peatsam-sijjt (Itk. 1003) < *piets* 'pine-tree'
Pienne (Itk. 1004) < *pienne* 'dog'
Pijje-kintuš (Itk. 979) < *paj* 'topmost, tall'
Ponje-tierrm-sijjt (Itk. 1006) < *ponnje* 'twist, roll', *tierrm* 'hillock'
Raud-jaura-sijjt (Itk. 1009) < *raud* 'barren mountaintop'
Ristottem-sijjt (Itk. 1010) < *risst* 'cross'
Ruvd-maenne-sijjt (Itk. 1012) < *ruvvd* 'iron'
Siurež-varr-sijjt (Itk. 1016) < *varr* 'hill'
Suelo-jaur-sijjt (Itk. 1018) < *suelo* 'island'
Tallv-jofkui (Itk. 973) < *tallv* 'winter'
Tallv-jofkui-sijjt (Itk. 1020) < *tallv* 'winter'
Treffan-sijjt (Itk. 1022) < *Treffan* 'Trifon'
Tsirt-paka-sijjt (Itk. 1024) < *tsoart* 'devil', *paka* 'hillock'
Tšueni-jogk-sijjt (Itk. 1029) < *tšueni* 'goose'
Tšuhk-suel-sijjt (GeogrSlov. 32) < *tšuhk* 'chest, box'
TšuoHPam-sijjt (Itk. 1029) < *tšuoHPe* 'cut, hew'
Vales-sijjt (Itk. 1032) < *vales* 'whale'
Vuamm-sijjt (Itk. 1035) < *vuamm* 'old'
Vuerjel-sijjt (Itk. 995) < *vuerjal* 'west'

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