

The Åland Islands question – Names, politics and name policies

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The Åland Islands or Åland (Swedish: *Åland*; Finnish: *Ahvenanmaa*) is an archipelago and a region of Finland, near Sweden, lying at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia in the Baltic Sea. It is autonomous, politically neutral and demilitarised. The autonomous status of the islands was affirmed by a decision by the League of Nations in 1921. As an outcome of the Åland crisis the League determined that the islands should remain under Finnish sovereignty.

The sole official language of the region is Swedish, which is the mother tongue of 88% of the population. Finnish is the first language of some 5% of the islanders, and around 7% of the population speak some other language as their mother tongue. The Åland Islands place names are mostly Swedish, but the early settlement history has also produced some Finnish names, such as the best-known examples of *Ahvenanmaa* as the name of the archipelago and the region, and *Maarianhamina* (Swedish: *Mariehamn*), the name of the capital city.

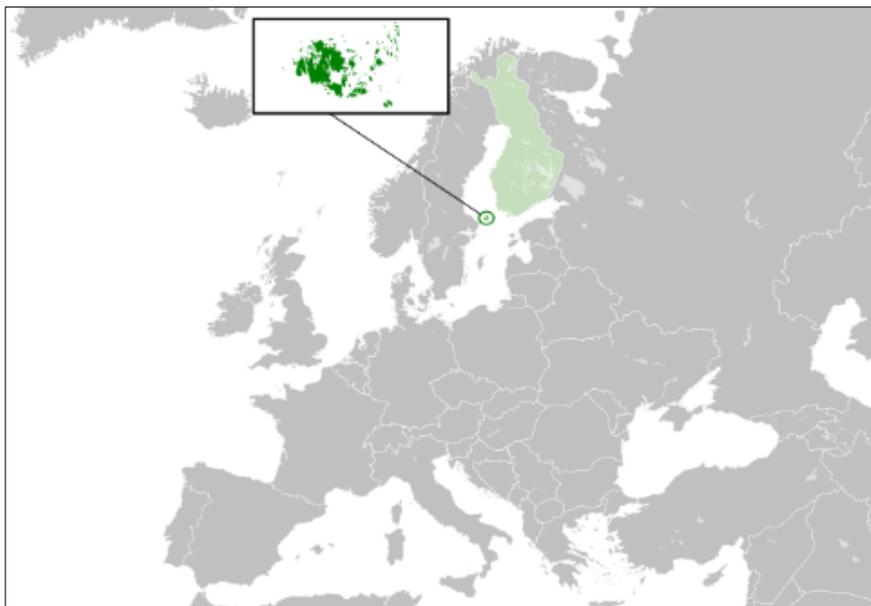
My presentation deals with Åland Islands place names and their use in official contexts in Åland and elsewhere in Finland. I will also address nationwide recommendations on the usage of foreign-language place names in the Åland Islands. This is connected to the, at times fierce, debate in 2012–2013 on the language and cultural heritage of geographic names on maps in relation to the Act on the Autonomy of Åland and the Language Act of Finland.

INTRODUCTION

The Åland Islands or Åland (*Åland* in Swedish, *Ahvenanmaa* in Finnish) is an archipelago and a region of Finland, near Sweden, lying at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia in the Baltic Sea. The islands have a population of about 29,000. The sole official language of the region is Swedish, which is the mother tongue of 88% of the population. Finnish is the first language of some 5% of the islanders, and around 7% of the population speak some other language as their mother tongue.

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Figure 1. Location of Åland. Dark green for Åland, light green for mainland Finland



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

As a designation, *the Åland Islands question* mirrors how the issue was conceived and talked about nearly a century ago. This was in the context of the debate on the international and political position of the Åland Islands following the First World War. The meaning is still the same in the Finnish and Swedish terms of this period (*Ahvenanmaan kysymys* in Finnish / *Ålands frågan* in Swedish). In English, as in many other languages, the events are now mainly known as *the Åland crisis*. The period and the preceding history can also be seen in today's politics of language and names in the Åland Islands.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ÅLAND ISLANDS QUESTION

As a consequence of the Treaties of Tilsit in 1807, signed after the European wars of 1789–1807, Russia and Sweden waged the Finnish War in 1808–1809. In the Treaty of Fredrikshamn, which was signed in 1809 to end the war, the Åland Islands were annexed to the Russian empire as part of Finland, breaking the centuries-old union with Sweden. In the peace negotiations Sweden sought to retain Åland under Swedish sovereignty, and the islanders petitioned to be annexed to Sweden, but Russia would have none of it.¹

The 1815 Congress of Vienna, which tackled the issue of Europe's new borders, did not question the Åland Islands arrangement. The Russian empire built fortifications on Åland, but during the Crimean War² (1853–1856) the Anglo-French troops destroyed

¹ Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 22–25; Bramstång 1982: 73; Komulainen 2005: 19.

² The battles of the Crimean War fought off the coast of Finland are known as *Oolannin sota* in Finnish. The name *Oolanti* is a Finnish adaptation of the Swedish name *Åland*. (Slotte 2007, *Ahvenanmaa*).

the Bomarsund fortress built by the Russians. After the war, the Treaty of Paris laid out in 1856 that the Åland Islands should remain demilitarised. The treaty was signed not only by Russia, France and the United Kingdom, but also by Austria, Prussia, Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire. When he heard of the peace negotiations, the Swedish king Oskar I implored the French emperor Napoleon III to annex the islands to Sweden. The king's argument was that the Åland Islands had not been part of Finland in ancient times: before the islands were annexed to Sweden, they were among the most important ports of the seafaring Vikings.³

While the geopolitical position of the Åland Islands was now internationally settled, the Svecoman cause – which towards the end of the nineteenth century flew the political and ideological flag of a Swedish-language identity in Finland – followed the leadership of the linguist A.O. Freudenthal in upholding an Åland variant of the Swedish nationalist movement. In the aftermath of the chaotic February Revolution of 1917 in Russia, the nationalist Åland Islanders took measures to have Åland annexed to Sweden. In August in 1917 – about three months before Finland declared independence from Russia – a meeting was held in the Åland Islands to discuss the annexation. Preparations for this meeting had been made in April already.⁴

The Swedish Riksdag had concluded as early as 17 May 1916 that the Åland Islands question should be resolved to meet Swedish security interests. In 1917 the Swedish king Gustaf V requested that the Germans occupy the Åland Islands in order for the islands to be handed over to Sweden after the end of the World War. Towards the end of December 1917 – three weeks after Finland had declared independence – more than 7000 Åland Islanders (96% of those eligible to vote) signed a petition to the Swedish king, asking for the region to be annexed to Sweden.⁵

In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, the Russian military stationed on Åland grew increasingly lawless. After the breakout of the Finnish Civil War in January 1918, the Åland Islanders started to make plans to expel the Russian military, turning to Sweden for help. Unbeknown to the Finnish government, Sweden sent troops to Åland in February 1918 to help the islanders' cause. This and the related measures taken by the Swedish authorities have been interpreted as an attempt to cut the islands loose from Finnish sovereignty on humanitarian grounds.⁶ In addition to the Russian military, the islands were also a base for a host of Finnish Red Guards, members of the Åland voluntary Protection Corps, and troops deployed by the Finnish White Guards. On 6 March, Åland was occupied by German troops, and the Swedish forces returned home.⁷

Even after this, between the spring of 1918 and the spring of 1920, Sweden and the Åland Islands separatists joined forces to have the islands annexed to Sweden.⁸ The person who came to be the front man of the Åland Islanders was the journalist and civil activist Julius

³ Komulainen 2005: 19–20.

⁴ Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 37–38; Komulainen 2005: 30–31.

⁵ Komulainen 2005: 31–36; Spiliopoulou 2009; Salminen 1987: 126; Bramstång 1982: 73–74.

⁶ Compare this to Voionmaa 1919: 255.

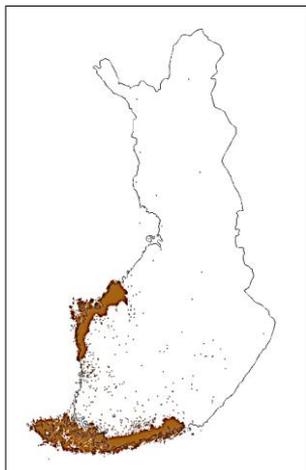
⁷ Komulainen 2005: 36–44. See also Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 38–41. – In 1918, Finland was in the throes of a civil war, with White Guards and the Red Guards as the main parties.

⁸ Komulainen 2005: 45–49.

Sundblom. On 31 January 1919, in the Paris Peace Conference, Sundblom was presented with an opportunity to make the position of Åland part of the European agenda.⁹

The Åland Islanders, advocating the Swedish case, leaned on ethno-political arguments. Their recourse were The Fourteen Points outlined by the President of the United States Woodrow Wilson (8 January 1918) on national sovereignty.¹⁰ What Sweden sought was first and foremost her political-military security, while Finland invoked her sovereignty as an independent nation and refused any pleas for a referendum on the annexation of the Åland Islands to Sweden. In the Finnish eyes, the Åland inhabitants were part of the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland rather than a separate ethnic group, whereas the Swedish government saw the islanders as a population group of their own.¹¹ The Swedish-language population have lived on the west and south coasts and in the southwestern archipelago of Finland since the Middle Ages, and the Swedish place names of Finland are concentrated in these areas.

Figure 2. Swedish-language place names in Finland in 2007



Source: Suutari 2007: 12.

Finland was, however, ready to meet the Swedish security interests and to leave the islands demilitarised.

The Allied Powers – the winning coalition – were reluctant to resolve the matter in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which put an end to the war, nor was the case closed in the Paris Peace Conference, either. The issue was referred to the League of Nations towards the end of 1919, and Finland started to prepare legislation on the autonomy of the Åland Islands passed by the parliament on 7 May 1920. The autonomy was not sanctioned by the islanders, and Julius Sundblom declared in the *Åland* newspaper that the inhabitants had now seceded from Finland.¹²

In June 1921, the Council of the League of Nations concluded that the sovereignty of the Åland Islands belonged to Finland. The international Åland Convention on the military neutralisation of the region was signed on 20 October 1921, and the Autonomy Act for Åland was enacted in 1922.

What was significant in terms of language politics was the fact that Swedish was laid down as the sole official language of the region and that local authorities were required to have a full command of the language. The treaty guaranteed the Swedish security interests and the military neutrality of the Åland Islands, whereas Finland was granted sovereignty over the province. The Åland Islands secured not only linguistic rights but was also given autonomy and international guarantees for demilitarisation.¹³

⁹ Salminen 1987: 126.

¹⁰ Spiliopoulou 2009: 195–197, 200; Salminen 1987: 126.

¹¹ Uggla 1919: 15–16; Ålandsfrågan 1920: 72–73, 116–117; Pekkarinen 2008.

¹² Selén 1987: 125; Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 41–43.

¹³ Komulainen 2005: 52–54; Selén 1987: 127–128.

The resolution of the Åland Islands question was a compromise. The resolution did not entirely follow the high-minded principles of international law, but rather reflected the political circumstances: Finland's recent independence and the resultant Civil War, Europe's fear of Bolshevism, the uncertainty of the Russian situation and the fear among the winning nations of the world war that the resolution might encourage the separatist endeavours of their own national minorities.^{1 4} At the same time, the resolution of the Åland crisis made it possible for Finland to join the League of Nations on 16 December 1920.

The Åland Islands question was intricately linked to the balancing of the books after the First World War. The political map of Europe had changed a great deal: three empires had collapsed, and eight new independent states had emerged in their former territories. Not all of them were straightforward nation states, for many had significant national and ethnic minority populations.^{1 5}

ÅLAND ISLANDS: ON THE NATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND AND THE ORIGINS OF PLACE NAMES

The settlement of Åland is known to have been influenced from many different directions within the Baltic Sea area, especially from Scandinavia as early as the Bronze Period.^{1 6} The medieval population was also markedly Scandinavian. This influence had grown stronger during the Viking Age in around the tenth century, when the region had about 3000–6000 inhabitants.^{1 7} In the Viking Age, the Åland Islands can be seen as part of the cultural sphere based around Lake Mälaren. At the time, the state of Sweden was only beginning to take shape.

No burial sites have been discovered from the following century, which has led to a hypothesis that there was a gap in the settlement history and that during this period the archipelago served either as the seasonal hunting grounds of the central regions of the south of Finland or it was more permanently settled by Finns.^{1 8} Starting from the end of the crusades – the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries – the region became the home for a host of new inhabitants from Sweden in particular. It was this influx at the latest that made the region firmly Swedish-speaking. This period most likely gave birth to the oldest extant Åland place names in Swedish.^{1 9} The era of the crusades is the oldest Swedish-language stratum that has been found.^{2 0}

^{1 4} For example, Selén 1987: 127–128.

^{1 5} Selén 1987: 125, 127.

^{1 6} Lavento 2016: 141–142, 169–170, 178, 199–200.

^{1 7} Raninen – Wessman 2016: 264, 281, 286–287, 291.

^{1 8} Raninen – Wessman 2016: 299–301, 339.

^{1 9} At around the same time, Swedish settlers found their way to mainland Finland, making much of the Finnish west and south coast Swedish-speaking. There are still plenty of Swedish speakers along this coastal strip, and the old place names are Swedish.

^{2 0} Hellberg 1987: 6, 244–295.

Most Å land Islands place names are Swedish, but the early settlement history has also produced some Finnish names. There are at least 20–30 names^{2 1} or clusters of names among the Å land place names now extant and found in old records which can be identified as being of Finnish origin, and additionally over 40 possibly Finnish names. Also, eight village names with the prefix of *Finn-* are proof of Finnish settlements.^{2 2} The places with a name of Finnish origin are mainly located in the northern and eastern parts of mainland Å land and the surrounding archipelago.

Several of the names with a Finnish origin refer to central sites named at an early stage, so we can presume that the names date back to the time of the crusades at the latest. This is when the names are presumed to have been given by Finnish hunters and fishermen from the mainland or by the Finnish population residing on the islands already before the eleventh century. The names could not have been preserved without contacts between the two language groups, so we can assume that either there were Finnish settlers before the eleventh century among the population of Scandinavian origin or among the Swedish population who settled in the region during the crusades. It is likely that the demographic and cultural forces quickly made the population in the archipelago unilingual, that is, Swedish-speaking.^{2 3}

For example, the name of the province, *Åland* in Swedish and *Ahvenanmaa* in Finnish, appears as early as 1250 (*Mare Aland*; 1648 *Ahwenan maan*). The meaning of the name is unclear, as is the language where it comes from. According to one interpretation, the name carries the Proto-Norse word **ahva* for ‘water’, which would make **Ahvaland* into ‘waterland’. In the Finnish language, *ahva* would refer to the name of the perch, *ahven*. It has also been suggested that the Finnish name could be the original designation. The beginning of the word would have become an *å* in accordance with how phonemes have changed in the Swedish language, while the latter half of the word, the Finnish *maa*, would have been translated as *land*.^{2 4} In any case, the Finnish name, too, has been used for centuries.

Some of these Å land names of Finnish origin were identified in the nineteenth century already.^{2 5} They were also mentioned early on in the planning phase for the report of the fact-finding commission of the Council of the League of Nations, **but the commission did not find it overly relevant to dwell on ancient history. Instead, they wanted to focus on the events since 1809.**^{2 6}

^{2 1} Granlund 1982; Hausen 1927; Huldén 1982: 95–102; Huldén 2001; Modéer 1937; Pitkänen 1985: 16; Zilliacus 1989.

^{2 2} The names are found among the 300 village names and the more than 100 natural sites mentioned in Åland Islands records by the year 1600. There are very few names of Finnish origin in the more recent strata.

^{2 3} Pitkänen 1985: 370.

^{2 4} Freudenthal 1868: 26–27; Slotte 2007, *Ahvenanmaa*.

^{2 5} Freudenthal 1868: 25

^{2 6} Voionmaa 1919: 239–240; *Ahvenanmaan kysymys* 1921: 15. – Voionmaa listed the following among the names of Finnish origin: *Jomala*, *Jumalaö*, *Tosarby*, *Simskåla*, *Ledsår*, *Koskenpää*, *Jurmo*, *Jurmoström* and *Jurmoklubb*.

Only the name of the capital *Mariehamn* / *Maarianhamina* has administrative roots, going back to the founding of the city in 1859. Both names are original, as the city was named in both Finnish and Swedish at the same time. Finland was part of the Russian empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy, and the name was chosen in honour of Maria Alexandrovna, wife of the then Tsar Alexander II. The second half of the name (*hamn* in Swedish, *hamina* in Finnish) denotes a port.^{2 7}

In the debates wielded in 1918–1920 on whether Å land was part of Finland or Sweden during the Middle Ages, the Swedes also argued that the wide open sea *Skiftet* (< Swedish *skifta* ‘to split, cut into half’;^{2 8} Finnish *Kihti*) would have represented the border between the Å land Islands and Finland already before the administrative reform of establishing fiefdoms in the fourteenth century. The Finns countered that Skiftet had rather been a sea route. **Nor did the fact-finding commission of the League of Nations find this area to be a distinct geographical border.**^{2 9}

When the Swedes started to annex the area currently known as Finland as part of the Swedish realm in around 1150, this ‘eastern land’ (*Österland* in Swedish), later called *Finland*, most likely also incorporated the Å land Islands.^{3 0} And when in the course of the fourteenth century the eastern parts of the Swedish realm began to be administered as a unitary area, the Swedes established nine fiefdoms in Finland. One of them was the Kastelholm fief (*Kastelholma* in Finnish) on the Å land Islands.^{3 1} Å land remained a part of Finland both during the Swedish and the Russian reigns. – During 1918–1920, when a resolution was being negotiated on the position of the Å land Islands, Swedish historians held that Å land had been a region separate from Finland both in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern era, directly subordinate to the Swedish kings. For their part, Finnish historians argued that the islands were most likely a part of Finland as early as the twelfth century. Also, based on the records, the Å land parishes belonged to the Diocese of Turku and were subordinate to the fief of Turku by the 1320s at the latest.^{3 2} **The fact-finding commission of the Council of the League of Nations found that the Å land Islands had been a part of Finland at least since 1634.**^{3 3}

A SEQUEL TO THE ÅLAND ISLANDS QUESTION: THE NAMES DISPUTE OF 2011–2013

The Å land Islands question did not go away even after its resolution, raising political temperatures also at the national level until the 1930s. In the minds of individual people, the question lingers on even today: not everyone is willing to accept or understand the decisions made in the 1920s. For example, Finnish-speaking online forums continue to

^{2 7} Slotte 2007, *Maarianhamina*.

^{2 8} Slotte 2007, *Kihti*.

^{2 9} Ålandsfrågan 1920: 104–107; Hermansson 1920: 7; Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 6.

^{3 0} See also Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 15–17 and Ålandsfrågan 1921: 8–9.

^{3 1} Kari 2002: 290, 295; Schüek 1952; Vahtola 2004: 90.

^{3 2} For example, Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 15–18, 59; Voionmaa 1919: 241–242; Hermansson 1920: 11; Bonsdorff 1920: 87–112; Uggla 1919: 4; Tunberg 1919; Ålandsfrågan 1920: 82–83, 220–227. – Turku (*Åbo* in Swedish) was the former capital of Finland.

^{3 3} Ahvenanmaankysymys, p. 18–21.

feature debates both on the events of 1918–1920 and the position of the Å land Islands in general. These debates are mainly wielded by extremist nationalists.

A different kind of sequel to the Å land question was the dispute in 2011–2013 on the Å land Islands place names. The issue caught fire when Google Maps published a map where the names of the Å land Islands and Mariehamn (the administrative base of Å land) appeared only in Finnish, as *Ahvenanmaa* and *Maarianhamina*. Offended, the Local Government of Å land pled the Constitution of Finland and the Act on the Autonomy of Å land^{3 4} and proposed to the National Land Survey of Finland that all place names on the Å land Islands appear only in Swedish on the maps of Finland and that the Finnish place names *Ahvenanmaa* and *Maarianhamina* be removed from all such maps. The aim was thus to remove the Finnish names on the Å land Islands also from international maps and registers.

The National Land Survey of Finland responded, indicating that as a national actor it would continue to display the place names on its maps with the variants currently in use. If an object has a name in both Swedish and in Finnish, the name shall first appear in the majority language in a bilingual municipality, but it is possible to display a name in the other language even in a unilingual municipality, if the name is commonly used. The few Finnish names of the Å land Islands would therefore not be removed from the maps. In 2012 the Å land Chamber of Commerce filed a complaint with the Parliamentary Ombudsman, proposing the removal of Finnish names and that the autonomy of Å land be extended to cover also the maps belonging to the jurisdiction of the Land Survey of Finland.

Decision

The Parliamentary Ombudsman gave his decision on the matter in September 2013. The decision serves as a guiding principle, because it pertains to the national production of maps in an officially bilingual country and in that country's specific area which is monolingual in accordance with its own language act and an autonomous status. In addition to the Language Act and the Act of the Autonomy of Å land, the matter has linguistic and historical repercussions: how to act in cases where the official language of the region is not the same as the language of established geographical names; how to deal with those established geographical names which have become names of administrative areas; what is the relationship between the Finnish and the Swedish names in terms of the history; do the Finnish place names on the Å land Islands have the right to live on as Å land place names; and is it possible to continue to use established Finnish names of places on the Å land Islands in official Finnish-language contexts in mainland Finland – such as in emergency notices, weather reports, maps and registers, and so on?

After a thorough investigation the Parliamentary Ombudsman found that the National Land Survey of Finland had acted lawfully in publishing the place names also in Finnish. The National Land Survey is the only government body which has the statutory duty to produce national maps, the Å land Islands included. In performing this duty it shall

^{3 4} Act on the Autonomy of Åland.

follow, among others, the Language Act and the Act on the Autonomy of Å land, and guarantee the fundamental rights and the human rights as laid down in the Constitution.^{3 5}

The Ombudsman also said that names on maps not only reflect the linguistic circumstances of a geographical location but also convey what a certain place is called in both national languages, even if that region were unilingual. As the Finnish names of *Ahvenanmaa* and *Maarianhamina* are old established place names, their use cannot as a rule be banned or restricted – not even by pleading the Act on the Autonomy of Å land or interpretations of this act. According to the Ombudsman, one must distinguish between the justified existence in general of the Finnish variants of the Swedish place names on the Å land Islands and the case-based context where these names are actually used.

The decision makes it clear that the Act on the Autonomy of Å land has not stipulated and indeed cannot stipulate on the contents of the Finnish language. Neither can one restrict the use of Finnish names in Finnish administrative decisions and legal texts.^{3 6}

ON THE FINNISH POLITICS OF LANGUAGE AND NAMES

The Å land Islands question is one of the events that have had a bearing on the principles of the Finnish politics of language and names in bilingual matters.^{3 7}

Finland has a population of about 5.5 million people. Of these, around 89% are Finnish speakers, while around 5% speak Swedish as their mother tongue. According to the Constitution of Finland and the Language Act, Finnish and Swedish are, on an equal basis, Finland's national languages and official state languages. The only exception is the Autonomous Province of Å land, where Swedish is the only official language. A separate act applies to the Saami language.

According to the Language Act, all public notices and documents given by the authorities to the public have to be written in the local language in unilingual areas and in both languages in bilingual areas. The authorities shall also safeguard the country's linguistic cultural heritage and promote the use of both national languages. Also, nothing is to stop unilingual municipalities and authorities, either, from issuing information in a language other than that of their official remit.

Maps and atlases published on Finland in Finland are intended for nationwide use. In bilingual areas, names are displayed on maps, road and street signs, and signs of a similar nature in both languages, the majority language being placed first. In unilingual areas, the names in other languages are also marked on national maps if they are in actual use.

^{3 5} eoam 580/2012.

^{3 6} As Finnish legislation is always passed in both Finnish and in Swedish, the names *Ahvenmaa* and *Maarianhamina* appear in many Finnish legal texts, such as *Ahvenanmaa* in the very name of the Act on the Autonomy of Åland (*Ahvenanmaan itsehallintolaki* in Finnish).

^{3 7} See also Bramstäng 1982: 75.

Figure 3. The language distribution of Finland in 2015

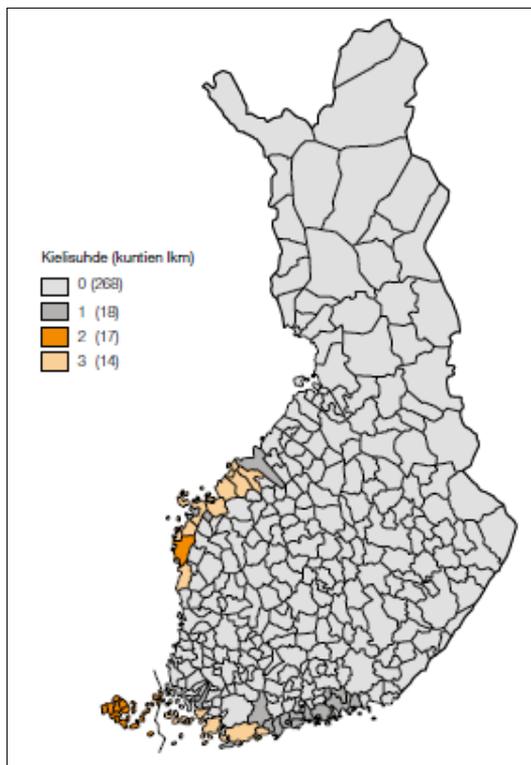


Figure 4. Main cities on the map of Finland. National Land Survey of Finland



Source: Statistics Finland 2015, p. 26-27.

- 0 = Unilingual Finnish-speaking municipality
- 1 = Bilingual municipality with Finnish-speaking majority,
- 2 = Unilingual Swedish-speaking municipality
- 3 = Bilingual municipality with Swedish-speaking majority.

Names are no different from other words; they are equally part of a language. Which name is used of a certain place in a given language is a matter for the users and language planning or standardization of that language. For example, it is up to the users of the Swedish language to decide which names are necessary to exist in Swedish, while the Finnish users will similarly decide on the names in their own language. Neither can assume that established names – even unofficial ones – be removed from the other language. When geographical locations have different names in different languages, this is not a problem, as the name will be chosen according to the language used.

ÅLAND ISLANDS PLACE NAMES ON THE MAPS OF FINLAND

It is the duty of the National Land Survey of Finland to maintain a register of the place names of the whole of Finland, the Åland Islands included. The basic map of Finland lists 11,767 place names from the Åland Islands.^{3 8} These are displayed in Swedish or

^{3 8} Geographic Names Register 2016.

as adapted into the Swedish language. Eleven names have a Finnish variant, and three names are written entirely in Finnish.

The Åland Islands place names on maps are part of an established body of place names documented through cartographic and linguistic fieldwork. The names are included in the Geographic Names Register (GNR), a digital database of place names. As a rule, established place names cannot entirely follow the distribution of different language speakers within a municipality nor the borders of the different communities. Places have been named as and when there has been a need for a name, and the names given by the first settlers have been adopted by the new residents as such or in a borrowed form. This has produced historical strata over hundreds, even thousands of years where the language of the names cannot always be identified.

If a place on the Åland Islands has a name both in Finnish and in Swedish, the Swedish name appears on the map first. The maps and registers of the National Land Survey therefore display the region first in Swedish – as *Åland* – and then in Finnish – as *Ahvenanmaa*. The names of the administrative city of the region are displayed in the same order: *Mariehamn* in Swedish, *Maarianhamina* in Finnish, and also the sea name *Ålands hav* (Swedish) or *Ahvenanmeri* (Finnish).

The Finnish names have been preserved, as they are used nationally in the Finnish language both in speech and in official documents. They are also used by the Finnish-speaking residents of the Åland Islands and the tourists visiting the region.

Figure 5. Finnish names on the Åland Islands. National Land Survey of Finland



Figure 6. Åland on the map of Finland. National Land Survey of Finland. *Itämeri* (Finnish) or *Östersjön* (Swedish) ‘east sea’ – the *Baltic Sea* in English – is displayed with the Finnish name first on the map of Finland.



NAMES ON MAPS AND IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS PUBLISHED IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE

The language legislation of Finland makes no mention of the use of place names in languages other than Finnish or Swedish. Many unilingual administrative areas, such as municipalities, have an official name in both languages, and when drafting documents, one has to use the name in the language of the document. Problems may arise when it is necessary to use other languages – as in brochures, reports and maps intended for international use. If the same object has two official names and one wants to present both, one has to choose which to mention first. Another problem is that, due to the nature of the text, one may not want to repeat both names, and a question arises as to which would be the most appropriate.

Recommendation of the Language Boards^{3 9}

In January 1997, the Finnish and the Swedish Language Boards of the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland discussed the use of place names in Finland that occur in texts in different languages. As the equality of the national languages is a key principle in the Finnish Constitution, the Boards gave the following recommendations:

1. In Finnish, Finnish place name forms are to be preferred; in Swedish, Swedish name forms are to be preferred; and in Saami, Saami name forms are to be preferred.
2. In foreign languages, names of unilingual areas (municipalities) should appear in the form they have in the official language of those areas (for instance, *Iisalmi* in Finnish of a city in eastern Finland; *Åland* and *Mariehamn* in Swedish), unless there are no other established names in the languages in question. In bilingual areas, the names in the majority language should be preferred (such as *Helsinki* and *Turku* in Finnish; *Nykarleby*, *Pargas* and *Raseborg* in Swedish.)

This donor-recommendation is intended for translators and editors in Finland. It applies to public names, such as the names of rural and urban municipalities, counties, regions or provinces, other administrative units, and streets and roads. Furthermore, it is only meant for current documentary texts and is intended to help the translators' work in particular.

CONCLUSION

While place names are highly relevant in terms of identity, they were not on the agenda when the Å land Crisis was being resolved and the significance of old cultural values and linguistic and ethnic origin was being debated.^{4 0} As the Act on the Autonomy of Å land does not mention the preservation of hereditary Å land place names, those defending the special status of the Å land Islands in the 2010s were given the opportunity to make the language used in place names into a question of identity politics. Similar questions may also arise in the future, as Finland lacks legislation on the giving, upkeep and preservation of place names.

^{3 9} Toponymic guidelines, Finland 2016.

^{4 0} For example, Aalandfrage 1918: 50; Ålandsfrågan 1920: 57; Ahvenanmaankysymys 1921: 51–52, 57.

Because the ethnic and cultural origins of Å land Islanders were not decisively resolved in the Å land Crisis at the end of the First World War, the seeds of division were allowed to grow. It is also extremely hard to come to a definite conclusion about the first settlers of any region, for the world keeps changing. A good compromise is a satisfactory option.

Even if the Å land Islanders opposed the autonomy and wanted to be annexed to Sweden,^{4 1} the Act on the Autonomy of Å land has ensured that the region has lived in peace for decades. The Act has secured the preservation of the Swedish language and the related culture as well as the constancy of hereditary place names, which are almost entirely Swedish. At the same time the Swedish-speaking regions in mainland Finland have witnessed the advent of a growing Finnish population and the emergence of Finnish parallel names to such an extent that the Swedish names have in places been overtaken.

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^{4 1} Salminen 1987: 126; Ålandsfrågan 1920: 132–139.

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