

Panel discussion

Sirkka PAIKKALA*

I would still like to pay attention to the fact that names are integral part of any language like any other words. When we speak our native language and use our endonyms, we are aware of their semantic contents and connotations. These names are carriers of culture which is not necessarily known or fully understood by speakers of other languages. Transboundary features may have several endonyms. Each of them has a meaning, which is tied to its own culture and language.

When one starts to speak another language, one should also start to use names (endonyms and exonyms) of that language. When speakers of foreign languages use names of features within the borders of one's own country or language community, they can use both endonyms and their own exonyms. For example, the Finnish exonym for the sea between Korea and Japan, *Japaninmeri* (*Sea of Japan*), was adopted into the Finnish language as a direct translation from European atlases and geographical textbooks by 1860 at the latest — in other words, at a time when national awakening was sweeping across Europe. In Finnish eyes, *Japaninmeri* has been and is “the sea located far away somewhere in the direction of Japan”. The genitive in the name (nominative *Japani*, genitive *Japanin*) indicates direction and location rather than possession.

In terms of what functions names have and how they change when names are translated, I find the concept of *international name* or *koinonym* most interesting. This term, discussed by PETER JORDAN, refers to “a name for common use.” When an international organisation, such as the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) or the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) opts for a particular name for international use, the chosen name is typically just a label to be used by the international community. It helps people to identify a certain place. It does not question the existence of any endonym. The “koinonym” *Baltic Sea*, for example, will remain *Itämeri* in Finnish and *Östersjön* in Swedish, both meaning literally ‘east sea’. In the case of *Åland Islands* (Swedish; in Finnish *Ahvenanmaa*), the English language refers solely to the Swedish name.

* Senior Specialist, Institute for the Languages of Finland, Finland.

CONTENT OF NAMES: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY NAMES

When speaking about the contents and connotations of names, we may ask if a name chosen for international use is any more the same name as it was in its source language. In terms of *onomastic recursion*,¹ the fact that a name acquires another function has repercussions for the interpretation of the meaning and connotations of the name. We need to trace the content of the name backwards only to the stage where the name had another function. A loan translation may represent the original name lexically, but its history only starts at the point of translation. The content of a name is tied to the time when it was born.

So, an international name may not have the same content as the source name (the endonym). It means that we can examine “international names” as entirely or partially devoid of the meanings and aspects underpinning the endonym. Seen from this perspective, an endonym is a primary name, while international names are secondary names. We could therefore say that *East Sea* is not any more a Korean name and *Sea of Japan* a Japanese name but both could be called secondary English names. There are many similar cases elsewhere, for example the case of the Baltic Sea.

OLD AND ESTABLISHED NAMES

In the case of *East Sea / Sea of Japan*, the name chosen for international use has also been justified by how old or established the name is. In Europe the oldest recorded name of the present-day Baltic Sea is *Ostarsalt (East Sea)* used by Danes in 808.² This name has since been established as translations in most Germanic languages in which it is still in use. Into Finnish the name has been translated from Swedish.³ The Latin name *Balticus* was recorded by Adam of Bremen in the eleventh century.⁴ In the seventeenth century this name and its variants had become the dominant name of the sea in many languages. And thanks to its widespread use, its English form *Baltic Sea* has established itself into international use and is included also in the IHO publication S-23, *Limits of Oceans and Seas*.

THREE LAYERS OF NAMES

Geographical names are much more than mere linguistic elements. As ISOLDE Hausner said here in her presentation: “All geographical names hold a story, be it a cultural-historical one or a nature-bound one”. Names have been saddled with connotations related to their content, history or use. Names carry values and valuations. Some of them are shared, others are not; some may be controversial and cause disputes. Would it be possible to leave history in the original names? They would thus form the primary layer of geographical names. Translated or modified names would then form the second layer and the so-called international names – koinonyms – the third layer.

¹ Šrámek, Rudolf (1990) Zur onomastischen Rekursion, p. 39–52.

² Ehrensvärd – Kokkonen – Nurminen (1995), p. 18; Svenskt ortnamnslexikon (2003), p. 393.

³ Paikkala (2015), p. 92

⁴ Ehrensvärd – Kokkonen – Nurminen (1995), p. 22.

HOW TO FIND AN INTERNATIONAL NAME?

I am not expert in the *East Sea / Sea of Japan* dispute. At the risk of appearing naïve, I will, however, make a proposal.

The name of the sea between Korea and Japan is a matter not for Korea and Japan alone. How the sea is called is also a matter for the international community, bearing in mind that the Korean and Japanese arguments need to be heard, collected and respected. There should be a neutral body to compare and evaluate the arguments. This procedure would serve as a basis for an international resolution. After the approval of the resolution there should be no perceived winners or losers, only those content with and committed to the decision, as PEDER GAMMELTOFT discussed in the case of *Skagerrak*.

REFERENCES

- Ehrensverd, U. – Kokkonen, P. – Nurminen, J. (1995). *Mare Balticum. The Baltic - two thousand years*. Helsinki: Otava, John Nurminen Foundation.
- Paikkala, S. (2015). Perception on Sea Names and Marine Region Names in the Vicinity of Finland. In *Sea Names: Heritage, Perception and International Relations. Proceedings of the 21th International Seminar on Sea Names. Helsinki, Finland, 23-26 August 2015*. Seoul: The Society for East Sea.
- Šrámek, R. (1990). Zur onomastischen Rekursion. In: *Studia Onomastica VI, Namenkundl. Informationen, Namenkundl. Informationen, Beiheft 13/14, Leipzig 1990*, pp. 39–52.
- Svenskt ortnamnslexikon* (2003). Ed. Mats Wahlberg. Uppsala: Språk- och folkminnesinstitutet (SOFI).
- Terra (1969) = *Terra 81, Paikannimimnumero* (toim. Kerkko Hakulinen). Suomen Nimiarkisto ja Suomen Maantieteellinen Seura. [Place-name issue [ed. Kerkko Hakulinen). The Name Archive of Finland and Geographical Society of Finland]. A list of Finnish exonyms (pp. 60–93). Helsinki: Suomen Maantieteellinen Seura.