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AN INHERITED NAME AS THE FOUNDATION OF A PERSON'S IDENTITY: HOW THE MEMORY OF A DEAD PERSON LIVED ON IN THE NAMES OF HIS OR HER DESCENDANTS

Sofia Kotilainen

Abstract

A personal name has always played a central role in the formation of an individual's identity. In addition to the surname, the forename also defined his or her place within the family community, which for most people was the most important target in the identification process, especially in the early modern period. The identities of the persons in rural families were also to a great extent based on personal names inherited from forebears and the images thus created. In this article, I examine to what extent the naming practices of the population in the hinterland Finnish countryside and the identities created by them were connected with ancestors. The study spans a quite long period, from the eighteenth right up to the mid-twentieth century. The inherited names that were given to children symbolized the family connection between the deceased and later generations. For example, the choice of a name in an emergency baptism was affected by the parents' fear that their baby might perish. And if an older child of the family died, it was possible to give a later one an inherited name that had been vacated in the family with the passing away of the deceased child. These namesake names carried the memory of both the ancestor and the child who had perished at an

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early age. The deceased could in this way continue their lives symbolically in the forenames of later born namesakes.

Introduction

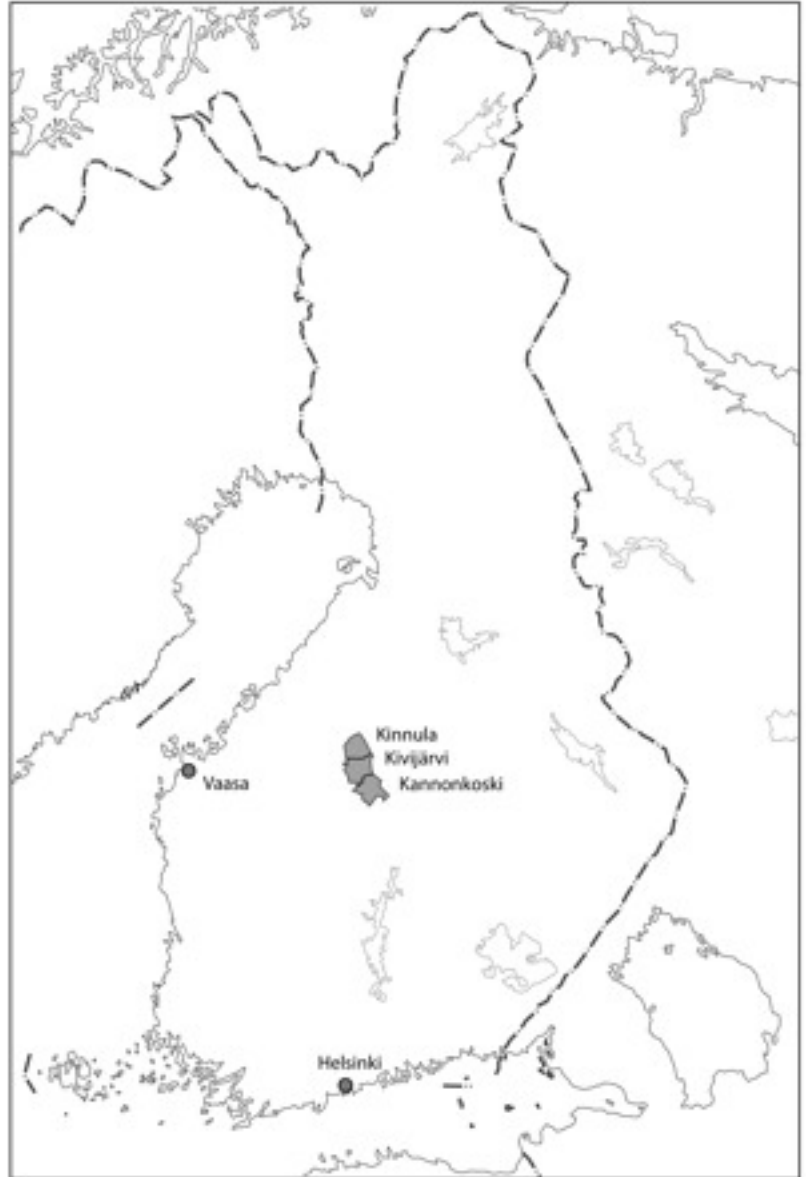
In a traditional rural parish, the death of an old person was a natural part of the course of life, and it affected the whole community: it was an event at which the members of the family and the rest of the immediate community were present. Only in the modern period was death gradually limited more and more to the private sphere of life (Ariès 1983[1977], 18–22, 559–560, 569). Death was a familiar visitor to families in the Central Finnish countryside right up to the mid-twentieth century as the majority of dying persons awaited their departure at home. Even at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the corpse of a deceased person lay on a wooden slab in a room of the house (for example, the master of the household was laid out in his own chamber) or in a barn until it was taken to the church for burial. (SKSÄ KKA 1. Kannonkoski 2 N, Kinnula 4 N, Kivijärvi 2 N, 9 N, 12 N and 13 N.) The way death was experienced changed quite slowly in small countryside communities. However, a small child's death was always a very sad and even frightening experience that brought its parents face to face with fundamental questions (for a more detailed discussion of the feelings of parents about the death of a newborn baby, see Pentikäinen 1990, 178–182, 189–190; Pollock 1985[1983], 131, 134; Sulkunen 1995, 118–119). It also crucially affected the naming of the younger children of the family.

It is important to study what kind of significances and ideas were attached to the naming event in the past because these mentalities were very long-lasting, and they have also affected the formation of 21st-century naming practices. In this article, I examine to what extent the naming practices of the population of the hinterland Finnish countryside were connected with deceased generations and how the identities of family members were formed through the inherited names of these ancestors. In former times, birth and death overlapped in many ways in the naming practices of rural people. I therefore ask how a deceased person continued his or her life in the forenames of descendants and how they in turn were identified as descendants of their ancestors. I also consider to what extent the researcher of onomastic history can perceive signs of respect for the memory of past generations in the choice of forenames and a commitment to the traditions of the family. In this article, I examine only forenames

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although the families studied also used patrilineal surnames (SUKU). The main focus of my examination is the practice of naming a child after a dead sibling.

The example local community of my micro-historical study is the parish of Kivijärvi in Central Finland (see map), where I have examined the naming of baptized children from the beginning of the eighteenth century up to the 1950s. Kivijärvi was a small rural parish, where the number of inhabitants increased rapidly during the nineteenth century, from about 400 inhabitants in 1750 to a thousand in 1800, about 2700 in 1850 and around 6000 inhabitants in 1910. In 1950 there were just under 2800 inhabitants in Kivijärvi, and in the municipalities of Kannonkoski and in Kinnula, which became independent from it at the beginning of the century, a little over 6300 inhabitants altogether (Kotilainen 2008, 363–364.)¹ With regard to the namesakes of (deceased) relatives, the results of the research can be to a great extent generalized to apply to any similar rural Evangelical-Lutheran parish in inland Finland in that



Map: The old parish of Kivijärvi (including the later parishes of Kannonkoski and Kinnula] is located in Central Finland. (Drawn by Jari Järvinen.

period, even though Kivijärvi was, as a result of its location and its sources of livelihood, a fairly

¹ The population of Finland in 1750 was about 421,500; in 1800 about 832,700; in 1850 about 1,636,900; in 1910 about 2,943,400; and in 1950 about 4,029,800 inhabitants. Statistics Finland, population statistics, www.stat.fi.

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remote and traditional rural locality, where most of the innovations of modern society arrived slowly in the course of the period studied.

The most important sources for the study are the church archives of local parishes,² and in particular the baptismal registers in them. Utilizing a genealogical method, I have collected very extensive collective biographical databases with a population of about 9000 persons. Furthermore, I have analyzed the records of each of the approx. 4500 baptisms of the descendants of the families examined (the Kotilainens and the Hakkarainens) and compared them with the baptismal records of all the approx. 25,000 children who were baptized during the period studied in the area of Kivijärvi. (SUKU.) The first mentions of emergency baptisms in the baptismal records of the parish of Kivijärvi are from the 1750s (Provincial Archives of Jyväskylä, archives of the parish of Kivijärvi, records of baptisms 1737–1959). For the people of the countryside, there are generally no written sources such as personal diaries or letters relating their thoughts as parents during the process of naming a baby. Although the document sources do not tell us directly about the ways of thinking of the rural name-givers, we can, however, draw conclusions about them with the help of collective biographical databases.

It is necessary to employ a genealogical method in a study of onomastic history like this one because it provides more exact information about the criteria involved in the choice of names. The reasons for giving a particular name can be found within the wider context of the clan if we extend the study of family networks beyond the nuclear family. A genealogical approach provides information about the significance of maternal relatives in particular in the choice of names for children (for more details on sources, collective biographical research and the genealogical method, see Kotilainen 2008; Kotilainen 2011).

The relationship between personal names and identities

The concept of identity can be defined in many ways. In connection with naming, identity generally refers both to a person's understanding and conception of him- or herself and to his or her social

² In addition to Kivijärvi, see also the archives of the Viitasaari, Kinnula and Kannonkoski parishes. My research area, Kivijärvi, was a chapelry belonging to the parish of Viitasaari until 1858. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the congregations of Kinnula and Kannonkoski became independent from Kivijärvi. Since 2007 Kannonkoski and Kivijärvi have belonged to the mother parish of Saarijärvi as chapelries.

identity as a member of a communal group like the family or the kin. In the latter case, the members of the same group are connected by a common cognomen or surname. In the early modern period in particular, people's identities were usually still formed through the close interaction between individuals and their immediate communities. It has been proposed that the individual's social identity strongly affected his or her position in the community, not only during the early modern period, but also later, when the modernization of society was gradually beginning (Hall 1999, 20, 22, 30; Fornäs 1998, 287; see also Goffman 1982[1959], 13–19). However, even in earlier times the patriarchal power that existed in early modern society and the hierarchical relationship between the sexes had not been realized within families in any absolute way, and likewise the power relations between the different generations were in reality much more complex (Karonen 2002, 12, 14–17).

The persons examined here did not themselves use the concept of identity at all, but their worldview was nevertheless affected by the idea of how they were identified in relation to the rest of the community and how they were recognized as part of it (van Gennep 1960, 62; Kotilainen 2008, 79–85; Vilkuna K 1958). One central way in which this was done was through the use of personal names. In this respect, names acted as cultural symbols. Local and situation-bound significances could be attached to them, and through these the nomenclature shaped in advance the communal image of the bearer of a particular cognomen or surname even if this person was only a child (Kotilainen 2008, 284–299). To a certain extent, the same also applied to the established forenames in a family that were passed on as an inheritance from one generation to the next.

Globally, the most common social norm governing the choice of names has consisted in giving a baby a name handed down within the family, mainly the name of a grandparent. According to oral memory, the Scandinavian custom was that only the name of a dead member of the family (most commonly that of a grandparent) was given to a child, who was then believed to inherit the characteristics or disposition of his or her namesake. Giving the name of a living relative would have detracted from this person's good fortune as it correspondingly added to that of the younger namesake. And especially in the case of grandparents, it may have been thought that the blessing and luck received by the oldest members of the family would in this way be transferred to the newborn baby. (See e.g. Hagberg 1949, 30; Vilkuna A 1989[1959], 118–119.)

There would seem to have been many kinds of religious and social functions attached to the choice of names of ancestors. For example, namesakes might have been thought to hold certain responsibilities towards each other when both of them, for example a grandparent and a grandchild, lived in a certain community at the same time. They may also have been thought to possess similar characters. It was perhaps possible to perceive in the child family traits or a resemblance to a forebear, after whom the parents then might wish to name him or her. (Forsman 1894, 18; Saarelma-Maunumaa 2001, 195–196.) Behind this way of thinking can be perceived an ancient Finno-Ugric belief about the soul, according to which a child who receives an ancestor's name also inherits his or her persona or soul (Forsman 1894, 16–19; Pentikäinen 1990, 24). This then was the case when a child was named after a dead relative. The child thus named was in this way symbolically connected to the earlier bearer of the name. It was believed that when for example the first-born boy in the family was given his grandfather's name, the latter would in some way continue his life in the new member of the family. Even though the belief had spread into Scandinavia in the pre-Christian era, it continued to exert an influence later. It has been assumed in earlier research that in Finland, too, the relics of such naming traditions can be perceived right up to the twentieth century. (Alford 1988, 76–77; Janzén 1947, 35; Kiviniemi 1982, 129–131.) For example, in Finland in the olden days, it was said that a child would turn out like his or her namesake (e.g. Vilkuna A 1989[1959], 118). In Kivijärvi, by contrast, a child was given a forebear's name on the basis of an already existing resemblance; this practice still existed even at the beginning of the twentieth century according to local oral memory. “*Well, even when it was just a little one, they started to say, if the child was a girl or a boy, now we'll call him or her this and ...*” (SKSÄ KKA 1. Kannonkoski 4 N, Kivijärvi 2 N.)

The above mentioned conceptions of the early modern beliefs and mentalities that regulated naming, were, however, based mainly on oral memory accounts that were mainly used as a source in ethnological research rather than on the systematic empirical use of written documents as sources. However, with the help of extensive collective biographical databases, for example, and by utilizing the genealogical method, it is possible to examine to what extent traditional beliefs any longer influenced naming practices from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries and were realized in it in practice.

In the context of the local community of Kivijärvi, I use the term “early modern period” to refer to the time before the very late nineteenth or early twentieth century. However, defining the move from the pre-modern to the modern era is more complex and needs to be considered case-specifically in the different fields of everyday life, i.e. with reference to social, economic and cultural changes, which did not take place simultaneously in remote rural communities as they did in the larger towns of nineteenth-century Finland (see also Kotilainen 2008, 110–111). However, the slow crumbling of the traditional and more collective worldview had by the turn of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries generally advanced so far that individuality began to determine the mentality of the inhabitants of the countryside. The “collective subject” had changed into an individual consciousness separate from the rest of the community. (Hartikainen 2005; Kaukiainen 2005, 180–183; Vilkuna K H J 1996, 71–73.) A collective biographical examination of naming practices can reveal in a more realistic way how kinship and family networks still affected naming practices during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

As a long-term phenomenon, modernization affected mentalities and local naming practices only gradually, and it is difficult to perceive any exact transition points (Braudel 1980[1969], 27). The advent of the modern era slowly ousted the old conception of time, which had been governed by the agrarian way of living, but it was not totally obliterated even as late as in the 1950s (Peltonen 2004, *passim*; Vilkuna K 1998[1950], *passim*). The process also created breaks and deviations in the naming culture of the families examined. The progress of modernization was by no means linear, and the change saw overlapping practices from both periods, discontinuities and partial returns from the new culture to the old one before the practices of the modern era permanently established themselves in everyday life. An examination of family life can show how for individual persons the transition from the old class society to the modern civic society was in many ways connected with the family and the safety network that it provided (e.g. Markkola 1994, 8–11, 124–125, 226–229; Kerkelä 1996, *passim*). But for people who were born in the countryside, the clan community served as a concrete focal point right up to modern times. A person's family background continued to be of significance, and it was still possible to rely on the help of family members in many matters even though a person's national identity had become a focus of identification alongside the local sense of affinity with family and its own particular culture. With regard to naming, the study of family networks has shown that the transition may even have increased the significance of family connections in the life of individuals in

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the local community of the modern era (see e.g. Sabeau 1998, 370–371). Thus it is interesting to examine to what extent the modernization process ultimately changed identities that were based on naming.

Even in the early modern period it was still common among the Swedish (and also the Finnish) peasantry for some first-born sons of families to be given their grandfathers' names in the traditional way and some daughters correspondingly to be named after their grandmothers. It was irrelevant whether the grandparents were still alive or not. However, it has been thought that the name-givers were careful not to name the children after persons who had been sickly or who had met with a sudden death. (E.g. Modéer 1964, 86–87.) In the families of Kivijärvi, one cannot perceive any cases where illness or sudden death reduced the popularity of an inherited name, at least from the eighteenth century on. However, it seems that an “unnatural” death was more significant in the case of adults or young people, since many children in the immediate family inherited the names of infants who had perished through illness. (SUKU.) Usually the high infant mortality increased the number of births: when a child was still-born or perished soon after birth, it was common for the mother to get pregnant again sooner than if the child had survived (Kaukiainen 1973, 112; Lithell 1988, 83–86). The new baby was welcomed as a replacement for the dead one, even though it could not totally make up for the loss.

Infant mortality declined decisively albeit slowly from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries in Finland, and this affected the practice of naming children after relatives or dead siblings. However, infant mortality was, like mortality generally, very low in the region of Kivijärvi in the latter half of the eighteenth century compared to the rest of Finland (Turpeinen 1987, 284), and thus fewer emergency baptisms were required. Until to the middle of the nineteenth century, the mortality of infants and small children remained high in Finland, and thus at least some of a family's children could be expected to perish before reaching adulthood. Even so, infant mortality remained lower on average in Central Finland than in Finland as a whole. On the other hand, a major change took place from the 1860s on, when infant mortality increased in Central Finland. (Laitinen 1988, 69–77; Laitinen 1999, 156–166; Lithell 1981; Markkola 1986, 80–82; Turpeinen 1987, 289–322, 377–392; Turpeinen 2001.)

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In the 1750s and the 1760s, nearly a quarter of all Finnish infants died before they were one year of age. Mortality decreased from 20 to 15 per cent in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although there were significant regional differences. This cannot be explained by economic reasons alone in that infant mortality was high even in prosperous regions. Several scholars have claimed that the main reason for the fluctuation lay in different childcare practices, such as the feeding of infants. As late as the early 1890s, out of a thousand infants over 140 died during their first year of life, while in the first decade of the twenty-first century only three or four per mille perished. There were still regional differences in infant mortality rates right up to the 1960s. At the beginning of the twentieth century, infant mortality continued to be higher in the towns than in the countryside, which was caused, among other factors, by the cramped living conditions in towns and by weak hygiene, which increased the danger of infectious diseases. From the 1910s on, the effect of socio-economic factors on infant mortality increased, and the death rate decreased most rapidly in economically prosperous areas, while in the poorest areas of central, eastern and northern Finland it was higher than elsewhere in the country. Modernization first affected the mentalities and procedures connected with pregnancy, parturition and infant care in more southern parts of Finland. The development was partly affected by the fact that the birth rate also decreased earlier in southern Finland and in towns than in the rest of the country. The differences between the areas began to level out only after the 1960s. (Koskinen & Martelin 2007, 210–213.) Infant mortality was lower in Kivijärvi during earlier periods than elsewhere in country, but with the advent of the modern age it was an area with the highest infant mortality. Therefore, the study of naming practices in the long term up to the 1950s in this remote rural area is interesting and important.

In early modern society, the past influenced the present through traditions. People's thinking was strongly focused on the past, but at the same time they sought to make the future more predictable with the help of traditions since it was possible to repeat established practices in the same way as their ancestors had done. This was facilitated by the communal memory, through which information about the ways of the past were transmitted to later generations (e.g. Connerton 1989, 17, 21–23). However, the information was not conveyed as such; rather the past was reconstructed continuously on the basis of the present according to what matters communal interests regarded as significant to emphasize at any particular time. The practice of giving inherited names shows that the social control, which emphasized tradition, also extended strongly into everyday culture.

Naming a child after a dead sibling

Because infant mortality was high in former times, a younger child might well be given the forename of a sibling who had died earlier (Lithell 1988; Smith 1985, 546). This phenomenon can be called “necronymic naming”. However, the concept is a little misleading in the sense that often this inherited name originally came from an adult, a representative of an older generation of the family (see e.g. Sabeau 1998, 166; Sondén 1959, 271). This practice was partly affected by the custom of giving children inherited family names, and also by the locally restricted nomenclature available in the early modern period: the name-givers did not really have much choice because the total number of names of Christian origin that were traditionally used was small (SUKU).

Previous research has maintained, mainly on the basis of oral memory and oral narratives collected in written form in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century that there existed two different traditions of naming children after dead persons in Finland. According to this theory, in eastern Finland it would not have been regarded as desirable to name an infant after a dead sibling. In western Finland, on the other hand, this was a customary practice. The border between these two practices is considered to have been located in central Finland (see Vilkuna A 1989 [1959], 120). The crucial question is whether one can attempt to explain mentalities merely by means of material based on oral memory connected with naming. How far back does oral memory reach as a source and does it take in the whole local community? It would seem that in this respect oral history also needs to be supplemented by the sources and methods of empirical historical research.

The distribution of cultural phenomena and the transfer of new influences from one culture to another were discussed in Finnish ethnological research in earlier decades (e.g. Sarmela 1993, 28–31). Western Finland has traditionally been regarded as more civilized than the eastern side of the country, and differences in people's mentalities have also been explained by cultural differences (Junkala 1998, 106). The strict classification of the cultural practices of different communities within separate western and eastern spheres of culture has subsequently been criticized (Junkala 1998, 101–106; Lehtonen 2005, 12–16; Löfström 1998, 37–43). For example, while the separation between western Finland and eastern Finland holds true to some extent (it was, for example, influenced by differences between the

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Lutheran and Orthodox religions), the sharp cultural division and separation into eastern Finnish and western Finnish spheres have been criticized because they have partly been consciously produced by means of research in ethnology and folklore (Junkala 1998, 101–106).

However, an empirical study of the baptismal records in the church archives shows that a situation of separate naming cultures no longer existed at least from the seventeenth century on; on the contrary, it was possible for a child to be given the forename of a dead sibling on both sides of Finland throughout the period examined here (SUKU; see also several other Finnish genealogies, e.g. Miettinen 1990; Miettinen 1998; Moilanen 1994; Piilhti 1999; Putkonen 1996). The naming of a child after a dead relative was not as such in any way exceptional, as one can see from the naming of children after deceased grandparents. On the other hand, it was unusual for there to be two living children with the same name in one family because in that case both identities were based on the same name. Certainly, there were nearly always namesakes among the kin, and they also existed in different generations of close relations. Indeed, during the early modern period, such namesakes were more the rule than exceptions. However, sibling namesakes would have been too close to each other to fit into the same family circle at the same time, although in the course of the nineteenth century, when it became common to give two forenames to children in the countryside, the same middle name, which was not however a name of address, could be given to two siblings. However, there were no full namesakes alive at the same time among the brothers and sisters of the families studied in Kivijärvi. (SUKU.) Death was the critical factor that allowed the close connection between two siblings and their identities.

The preservation of grandparent's names in the family was considered more important than the avoidance of a dead child's name because of the bad luck that this might bring. For example, the giving of the forename of the master of the household as an inheritance to his grandchildren served as a way of ensuring that his memory would be preserved for posterity (see also Kotilainen 2011, 53–54). During the early modern era, on average six children were born in the families examined here, although by no means all of them survived to be adults. Thus, in one sample family, three of the boys were baptized with the name “Matti” (the name was written in the parish registers in its Swedish equivalents “Mats” or “Matt”), but none lived to adulthood. Four of Johannes Kotilainen's and his spouse Liisa Kinnunen's eight children were boys and four were girls. The first Matti was born to them in 1799 but

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died before the age of three. The second boy named Matti was born in 1805, but he did not live for a long time either. Similarly, a third son who was baptized Matti in 1810 died before he was one year old. The Mattis had a brother named Henrik, who survived to be an adult. He was named after his maternal grandfather. (SUKU.)

On average, the namesakes of dead brothers and sisters constituted five per cent of all the baptized children during the first part of the nineteenth century in the parish of Kivijärvi and at the end of the period studied here one to two per cent. During the whole period, altogether 128 children (about three per cent) of the descendants of the families examined were baptized with the names of dead siblings. There does not appear to have been any significant differences between the sexes in this respect, although a greater proportion of the girls, about 7–11 per cent, bore the name of a dead sibling. This is due partly to the fact that they were given two forenames more often than were boys. (Provincial Archives of Jyväskylä, archives of the parish of Kivijärvi, records of baptisms 1737–1959; SUKU.)

Thus it was not so very common to name a child after a dead sibling, and the gradual decrease in infant mortality reduced yet further the number of those who were namesakes of a predeceased brother or sister. However, it was considered important to keep these namesake names in the family because they were also names inherited from earlier generations. It seems that even in the modern age the local clergy saw no reason to try to prevent this kind of naming practice. What makes the practice of naming children after dead siblings especially interesting is the fact that 82 per cent of all the namesake names shared by siblings in the period studied were at the same time names inherited from other relatives as well. Among the boys, 75 per cent of namesake names were inherited names and among the girls 89 per cent. They were mainly the names of uncles, aunts and cousins, and they were, of course, already in common use in the families and had originally come down from earlier generations. The number of inherited names among namesake names taken from deceased siblings decreased from the end of the nineteenth century on. (SUKU.)

For example, in the crofter family of Paul Nykänen and Maja Stina Kinnunen in Kivijärvi two of the boys baptized in the 1870s received the names of dead brothers, but only one was an inherited name. Even so, in the twentieth century 86 per cent of all the names taken from dead siblings were still also

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inherited names in the family. (SUKU; cf. Nieminen [1985, 160], who also has noted that inherited names constituted the majority of the namesake names of children who were named after their dead siblings in both clerical and peasant families.) Thus, when the family once gave an inherited name to a child, and if that child died, they strove to keep the name in the nomenclature of the family by giving it to another child who was born later (see also Ulrich 1991[1980], 152).

It is interesting that the families examined here did not in any way fight shy of giving the forename of a dead child to a later born sibling, and this was particularly true before the available selection of forenames increased towards the end of the nineteenth century. They considered it important to preserve the inherited family names in the nomenclature of new generations as well. If the eldest children died, their parents were keen to give their inherited names to later born children so that the names would survive through a new generation. The name-giving in a way involved replacing the dead child with the sibling who received his or her name. This did not represent any lack of feeling; rather the namesake name carried not only the memory of an ancestor but also that of the child who had perished young and who might thus continued his or her life symbolically through the sibling. This is indicated by the fact that the custom still flourished when the giving of inherited names was otherwise in decline.

The importance attached to giving inherited names by the people of the former times can be seen from the fact that families strove to give an inherited name to as many descendants of the same ancestor as possible. For example, three of the children of Pål Hakkarainen and Walborg Hämäläinen gave the name "Walborg" to their own firstborn daughters. Of these, Staffan Hakkarainen's and Walborg Liimatainen's first daughter Walborg, who was born in 1765, died under half a year old. The girl had most probably been named after her paternal grandmother but also after her mother. The next daughter to be born received an inherited name after her maternal grandmother, but the third daughter was again named Walborg. Likewise, Greta Hakkarainen, who was married to Eskil Leppänen, named her firstborn daughter Walborg. Eskil's mother got later her own namesake. And Maria, the sister of Staffan and Greta, and her husband Olof also named their first daughter Walborg. This Walborg Pölkki, who died at the age of five, further gave her name to a later born sister. (SUKU.)

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However, one can ask whether it was regarded as more important to preserve the inherited name at all costs in the family, or whether the deceased child him- or herself was so missed that the name was felt to be worth keeping. A daughter called Maria was born to Staffan Hakkarainen after the death of the first Walborg, and it was only the following daughter who was again named Walborg. The sister of Staffan, Maria Hakkarainen, on the other hand, gave this name to the next daughter who was born immediately after her first daughter's death. (SUKU.) Thus the behaviour of the Hakkarainen family offers no direct answer to the question. Particularly in the eighteenth century, it would seem that people considered it important to preserve the memory of grandparents with namesake names, with the result that there were grandchildren of the same name in the families of nearly every descendant (e.g. Ulrich 1991[1980], 151).

On the other hand, the custom of naming later born children after predeceased siblings survived up to the middle of the twentieth century, at a time when the giving of inherited names was already decreasing noticeably. For example, in the family of Heikki Hakkarainen and Leena Sohvi Kotilainen, two daughters were baptized Alma, the first in the 1870s and the second in the 1880s; the latter was evidently her elder sister's namesake, since the name had not previously been used in the family but was a fashionable name at that time. (SUKU.) In this case, the name served as a token of the first child, when she could no longer be physically reached. It embodied a memory of the dead child,³ in other words, as a linguistic expression it was in a way the only concrete thing that was left of her. It was as if in this way the dead child continued to live at a symbolic level through her namesake sibling.

Naming as a form of as protection in emergency baptisms

By using a genealogical method, one can observe that the name choices of country people often had a distinct purpose. This becomes particularly apparent when one examines unforeseeable naming situations, which are more apt to reveal the norms that existed in local culture and particularly the

3 However, according to Sabeian (1992, 207) the giving of a dead child's name to a later-born sibling can also indicate that the dead child passes quickly into oblivion because his or her name now always refers to the younger sibling, who replaces him or her in the name-givers' minds at that time. Sulkunen (1995, 114) sees the birth of a new daughter as a source of compensation and comfort for the loss of an older sibling. Thus the naming of a new child after a dead one represented not only a remembrance of the latter but also gratitude for a new life to replace the lost one.

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conflicts related to them: these would not draw one's attention in the same way when normal naming practices are studied. In the study of mentalities and micro-history, it has been customary to examine exceptional individuals or events in the past. Naming practices in exceptional circumstances were contrary to normal forms of behaviour, but in consequence they also tell us about the usual practices of communities and the mentalities behind them (Ginzburg 1996, 193; Levi 2001[1991], 113; Markkola 1996, 8–16). For example, the exceptionally urgent naming of a child in an emergency baptism constituted an unforeseeable naming situation, even though the parents might have thought about the name of the new baby beforehand. The fundamental motives of their thinking were also revealed in these hurriedly made name choices.

The term “emergency baptism” itself suggests the suddenness and unexpectedness of the situation. It may have been a kind of safety measure if the child seemed very weak and was not expected to survive until the actual baptismal day. In such a case, the parents may have had to make a decision on the child's name sooner than otherwise would have been necessary. However, a decision on the giving of emergency baptism let alone the name was not made as a matter of course. The name might also often include significances which the immediate community knew and gave to persons or events that were important to it. The names given to those who received an emergency baptism were not always traditional ones, and frequently forenames previously unused in the family were also given. For example a son born in November 1854 to a farmer's son called Anders Linna received the name “Samuel” in an emergency baptism. This forename did not appear among his immediate kin or his ancestors, nor was it the name of the emergency baptizer or the witnesses to the baptism. Samuel was the eldest son of his parents, but he did not receive his forename from his grandfathers or their fathers, even though his sisters had been given inherited family forenames. (SUKU.) Parents did not always wish to christen an infant in an emergency baptism after his or her grandparents, and they might, as in the case of Samuel, resort to a biblical name. The name had its origin in the Old Testament. It was of Hebrew origin and signified “heard by God” or “requested from God” (Vilkuna 2005[1976], 204). However, it is not sure whether the agricultural population of Finland would have been aware of the etymology of the name. In any case, the boy perished as a small baby (SUKU).

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The naming of a newborn baby was tightly bound up with membership of the congregation especially before the twentieth century. From the point of view of the church, an unbaptized child was in danger of perdition (e.g. Lempiäinen 2004, 20). Moreover, in the popular thinking of former times, until it was named a child was unprotected and vulnerable to evil powers. The child was regarded as in some way “deficient”, and only through naming and baptism did it obtain the full rights of membership of the community. (Douglas 2004[1966], 118–119; Keinänen 2003, 116–118; Kotilainen 2008, 200–202.) The naming of a child was indeed a part of his or her so-called communal and social birth.

The parents' first choice of name in an emergency baptism might have been an inherited name of the family. This was not always possible because the child might have a living sibling of the same sex who had already been given the “hereditary” name. However, it was very typical that a child who received an emergency baptism got his or her parent's name; such was the case of Henric Kotilainen, the first-born son of Henric Kotilainen, and Maja Stina Hakkarainen, born in 1846. The parents might even resort to using the name inheritance of the family doubly. For example, Lena Johanna Kotilainen, who received an emergency baptism in 1866, inherited her mother's mother name Leena. In addition, her father's forename was Johan[nes], so she may have received her middle name after him. (SUKU.)

The parents placed their hope in the notion that the inherited names would serve to protect a child who received an emergency baptism. This can be deduced from the fact that for a long time up to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the majority (on average nearly 60 per cent) of those who received emergency baptisms in the families examined were given inherited names. For about 20 per cent of those who received emergency baptisms, the existence of possible namesakes among their relatives remains unknown. The number of boys who received an inherited name was slightly higher than that of the girls. Over time, there was a decrease in the number of inherited names used in emergency baptisms: until the 1840s three out of four children thus baptized received an inherited name, and the figure was still about 55 per cent in the 1870s. Even in the 1950s approximately 45 per cent received inherited names. In emergency baptisms, children were more often named after their parents than their grandparents. (SUKU.)

The naming of children who received emergency baptisms tells both of the parent's expectations for the

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future and also of the means to which they resorted in the naming process at a time of distress. Through their choice of forename they sought a connection with past generations. Naming a child after his or her parents or grandparents points to an old tradition. The parents sought thereby to symbolically transfer something belonging to the persona of a forebear to the child, perhaps in the hope that a name received from a parent might give the child a new lease of life. In an emergency baptism, the child got a name and an identity and thereby also became a part of the immediate community. The naming of a child in an emergency baptism constituted a choice that had far-reaching implications, laying as it did the foundations not only for the child's future course of life but also for the eternal journey of his or her soul.

Death and the name heritage of preceding generations

The worldview and identity of people in the early modern period were structured by kinship relations because it was through the definition of kinship that people were not only socialized into their immediate community but also identified as members of a strictly organized social hierarchy. In all ages an inherited family name has played an important part in the shaping of a person's identity. Particularly in the pre-modern age, a personal name also made rural people a part of a clan community and defined their place in it. In the agrarian society of former times, the traditions of the family were respected. The networks between relatives also formed an economic and social safety net on which a person could rely. Inherited names were also associated with a feeling of the continuity of the family and traditions. That is why it was important to name a child after his or her grandparents because in the name-givers' world view it bound a child and his or her future into the enduring immaterial heritage of the family.

The practices of naming did not change sharply in the shift from the early modern to the modern period, and many interacting cultural layers from different periods continued to influence naming practices in an essential way. The relics of ancient practices and beliefs were preserved to some extent right up to the twentieth century. A more exact analysis of local naming practices using a variety of document sources and collective biographical databases shows that, with regard to inherited names at least, the modernization of naming practices took place slowly. They were affected not only by the

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local living conditions of the community but also by the complex and asynchronous effects of the modernization of society.

In the name choices for children of former times one can perceive signs of respect for the memory of earlier generations and of a commitment to tradition, although people also experienced a desire to introduce fashionable new names. A deceased person continued his or her life in the forenames of descendants, even for several generations, because the names inherited from not only grandparents but also uncles, aunts and cousins were used again for namesakes in later centuries. In principle, the inherited names of the family which are given in twenty-first-century Finland themselves also represent this same desire to respect the heritage of deceased generations.

On the other hand, the objects with which the namesakes of ancestors identify themselves will be quite different in the twenty-first century than in the traditional countryside community of former times. Even so, the name-bearer's mere awareness of the heredity of his or her name has always created a unique additional dimension to his or her identity: the notion that another person in the family already has previously borne this same name. In addition, this realization is very often probably accompanied by a consideration of whether the namesake forebear might have been in any way similar to the name-bearer and whether he or she had anything else in common with his or her descendant apart from the name alone. In this sense, the deceased continued to live as long as the memory of their existence was preserved in the minds of their descendants. And at the same time, the descendants were encouraged to further pass on the inherited names of the family down to their own children.

Sources:

Archival sources:

Genealogical database (SUKU):

Collective biographical data concerning the Hakkarainen and Kotilainen families, who lived in the Kivijärvi area, have been compiled mainly from documents in the archives of the parishes of Kannonkoski, Kinnula, Kivijärvi, and Viitasaari. These comprise records of baptisms, marriages and funerals; confirmation records and records of unconfirmed

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children; migration records and demographic statistics. The oldest archives of the parishes of Viitasaari and Kivijärvi are stored in the Provincial Archives of Jyväskylä.

The research extends from c. 1730 to 1960. Compiled by Sofia Kotilainen.

Finnish Literature Society (SKS), Folklore Archives (KRA), Helsinki

Recorded archives (SKSÄ)

The Archives of Ecclesiastical Folklore (KKA)

General survey of ecclesiastical folklore (survey no. 1):

Kannonkoski (interviewer Esa Tuomaala 1975)

2 N man, b. 1898

4 N woman, b. 1887

Kinnula (interviewer Kristiina Hakkarainen 1974)

4 N woman b. 1887

Kivijärvi (interviewer Esa Tuomaala 1975)

2 N woman, b. 1892

9 N man, b. 1884

12 N woman, b. 1912

13 N woman, b. 1898

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