

The Presentation of Saami Place-Names on Swedish Maps during 100 Years

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Abstract

My essay is a critical view of the process of standardizing Saami place-names on the official maps in Sweden. The starting-point of the essay are the Saami place-names that were first published on the ordnance maps at the end of the 19th century, from 1895 and onwards. I also describe the linguistic examination regarding the publication of the later topographical and economic maps in the 1950's, 1960's and onward. In the conclusion of the essay I comment on the decision taken by the National Land Survey of Sweden concerning the presentation of the Saami place-names in their different varieties, North, Lule, Ume and South Saami, on the official maps.

On the 5th of July 1732, the Swedish scientist Carl von Linné arrived at Kvikkjokk, or Hyttan, as the place was called at that time, on his "Iter Lapponicum". He writes: "Travelled to Hyttan [‘smelting-house’]. On our way we first arrived at an isthmus ... immediately after I caught sight of an elliptical rather high mountain whose name was *Kassavare*. Close by was the mountain of *Tavvevare* that had two streams, both of which from the uppermost peak fell entirely down from the cliff of the mountain, quid? [‘why’]" (1957: 108f). Linné left Hyttan on the 6th of July, and after having travelled further towards the northwest, he writes in his diary that he does not know whether he is in Africa or in Asia (1957: 110).

As we can see, Linné uses the name *Hyttan*, which is the primarily Swedish name for the place that today is called *Kvikkjokk*. While the previous name *Hyttan* was connected to the silver mining at the place, the present name *Kvikkjokk* is the Swedish version of the Lule Saami place name *Guojkkajåhkå* which means ‘brook with rapids’, an earlier name for the brook Gamajåhka, on whose banks the settlement developed. The Saami place name *Húhttan* for the settlement is known since the 1660's, while there is a record of the name *Quickjock* from 1671 onwards. The Swedish name of today is originally Saami, while the Saami name is of Swedish origin (SOL 2003: 178).

The ordnance map

Representatives of the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden arrived at Kvikkjokk and started their field work there about 140 years after Linné had visited the place. Using as a starting point the old maps and reconnaissance material of the Survey Office, from the 1870's onwards, concerning the area of Kvikkjokk, the aim of my paper is to show my impression of how the work with the Saami place names was carried out by the Geographical Survey Office, and later on by the National Land Survey of Sweden.

The Saami place-names and their spelling on the national maps have been discussed ever since the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden published the first general maps of the mountain area of northern Sweden in the 1890's. The Geographical Survey Office of Sweden started its field work in the northernmost parts of Sweden during the 1870's and the 1880's, and in their task

they also included the collection of place names. There is not any information about the knowledge of the Saami or Finnish languages amongst the field workers, but we can perhaps assume that it was not too extensive. Neither is it known who the Survey Office consulted concerning the spelling of the names.

The criticism of the presentation of the Saami place-names would primarily come from one person, K.B. Wiklund. From 1894 Wiklund took office as teacher in Finno-Ugric languages at the University of Uppsala, and became professor there in 1909. In the yearbook of *The Swedish Touring Club 1895* Wiklund published the article "Some words on the writing of Laplandish place-names", in which he took offence at the principles, that as far as he was concerned had been the guide when one had chosen to spell the names as it had been done on the new ordnance maps. The shortcomings that he pointed out were of different kinds. For example, the names were spelled in a different dialect, or language variety, than the one predominant one in a certain area. The South Saami and Lule Saami forms were mixed with each other, and sometimes the South Saami forms were used when Lule Saami forms would have been expected. Wiklund also discussed how to present the vowels o, u and å in the correct way. The criticism was also directed against the conjugating of Saami verbs, and the use of voiced and unvoiced plosives, that is b, d, g when the expected would have been p, t, k, and how the spelling of the place-names wholly excluded certain occurring sounds in the language.

According to K.B. Wiklund, "there is no other alternative than writing every single Saami place-name as it is pronounced on the spot" (1895: 23).

The article ends with a list consisting of the names that according to Wiklund were wrongly spelled on the ordnance map.

The majority of the ordnance maps that were published from the 1840's and onwards never seem to have gone through any linguistic examination. That this however was a necessity became clear both to cartographers and field workers at the turn of the last century. In the year 1902, the Royal Swedish Place-name committee had been established, and its foremost purpose was to scientifically study and publish official reports concerning Swedish place-names. The head of the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden saw a possibility in this association to get advice and support concerning standardization of the place-names on maps; co-operation between the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden and the place-name committee was established in 1903 (Mattisson 1993: 12f.).

In a publication from 1910, entitled *The Saami and Finnish place-names at Kiruna and Torne träsk*, Wiklund once again commented upon the subject concerning the spelling of the Saami place-names. He explained his position and principles in the question of how by rights, Saami place-names should be written. He also discussed the contrast between Finnish names on the one hand and Saami names on the other, and furthermore whether Finnish place-names should be discarded in favour of Saami place-names. It seems as though he held a common distrust in whether Finnish place-names really were being used in the Torne träsk area, and he pointed also at direct mistakes in the representation of the names. But, he considered, "the Finnish name[types] /[had]/ been strongly adopted, not only on the maps but also in all sorts of official documents and in the Swedish language, and for that reason is it now generally not possible to replace them in favour of the Saami place-names in areas where Finns are permanently living" (1910: 5). He also pointed at the difficulties of bringing about name changes in the right direction: "Once the names have been printed in a map, they are sacred and inviolable. 'It is printed', and then it is true, and therefore many get annoyed at attempts at trying to gain a correction in all these inaccuracies" (1910: 6). In his article he also pleaded for an extensive recording of Saami place-names.

After Wiklund had published the article *The Saami and Finnish place-names at Kiruna and Torne träsk* in 1910, early 20th century discussions ceased on how to present place-names in

minority language areas on maps. It is nevertheless interesting to note that K.B. Wiklund's criticism in the yearbook of 'The Swedish Touring Club' in 1895 seems to have gone unheard at the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden, at least when it comes to the ordnance map covering Kvikkjokk. On the 17th of November 1932, a reprint of this map was published, on which for example the road net was modified, but nothing was done to rectify the inaccuracies that had been commented on in Wiklund's article 37 years earlier. In fact only the spelling of the name Qvikkjokk with a "q" had been changed to Kvikkjokk with a "k", and the designation *Jokkmokks kommun* (municipality) had been added to the map sheet.

The reason for this is attributed to the use of engraved copper plates as the basis for the printed maps, which effectively made frequent modifications of the ordnance maps almost impossible. If modifications were still made, it was not the spelling of the place-names that were looked after first. The maps for which field work was carried out during the 1870's, and which were published in the 1880's and 1890's, remained – except for different types of imprints for water and roads – to a large extent unchanged until the field work on the new topographical map reached the mountain area nearly a century later.

The topographical map

The discussions that preceded the publication of the new topographical map covering the mountain area will in principle not be mentioned in this context. However, I will mention that the apprehension about how the Saami (and also Finnish) place-names would turn out in print in 1962, rather immediately led to a conference in Luleå concerning Saami and Finnish place-names on the general maps. The conference was initiated by the county governor of the province of Norrbotten. At the conference there were representatives for example from the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden, the Place-Name Commission, the Association of Swedish Lapps, the Swedish Touring Club, and the Swedish communications offices. A working team, put together during the meeting, got the task to work on the question concerning the Saami orthography. The team cooperated with the Place-Name Commission and the Geographical Survey Office, and in April 1963, the guiding principles concerning the spelling of the Saami place-names on the general maps were agreed upon. The modified Lule Saami orthography that was the result of the work by the team was from then on to be called "map orthography", and two of its main principles are:

1. One and the same orthographic system shall be used over the entire Saami-speaking area.
2. The map shall be readable by an average Swede without any knowledge of the Saami language (Mattisson 1993: 20).

As soon as the principles were agreed upon as to how the Saami place-names were to be written on the general maps, the examination of the names that had been recorded in connection with the field work could also begin. For the present map sheet on *Kvikkjokk*, the linguistic examination of the names recorded in connection with the fieldwork was carried out by place-name scholars at the Swedish Place-Name Archive and adjusted into the correct spelling.

The topographical map covering the Kvikkjokk area was published in the scale 1:100 000, while the place-name examination was based on the scale 1:50 000, but was never printed.

The presentation of the place-names on the map was strongly criticized immediately after its release at the turn of the year 1969/1970. The critics came from a rather unexpected authority, namely the Institute of Plant Biology at Uppsala University. In a letter entitled "Commentary on the place-name presentation on the map sheet 27H Kvikkjokk" two representatives from the Institute of Plant Biology at Uppsala University took offence at how the names on the new map sheet had been distorted in comparison to the former established names on the earlier ordnance map (Dahlskog and Rydén 1969). The correspondence between the institute and the Survey

Office is interesting to study in so far as the discussions concerning the presentations of the names almost totally ignore the philological arguments, but on the whole concentrates on preservation of the older traditional name forms.

In this correspondence it seems as if the institute would have had access to some form of final manuscript of the map, since in the above mentioned letter, the institute criticizes the corrupt names already on the 20th of December – about a week before the map was finally printed. According to this letter the representatives of the institute also tried to establish contact with the examiner at the Place-Name Archive, but failed in their attempt.

In the letter the institute among other things comments on the final elements *-jåkkå* ‘brook’ and *-tjåkkå* ‘mountain’. The institute’s representatives recommend the spelling *-jokk* and *-tjåkkko*, since the spelling *-jåkkå* is almost identical with *-tjåkkå*, and it would be necessary to be able to separate them from each other when reading a map covering this mountain landscape. The correction of the spelling was commented on as follows: “Shall the consideration to the presentation of a correct Saami language carry more weight than the legitimate demands for a readable and an easy comprehensible map from an overwhelming non-Saami speaking majority?” (Dahlskog and Rydén 1969: 1). The representatives considered that corrections generally should be avoided. Name changes could lead to accidents, and it is therefore only in exceptional cases that one should change the names on important natural formations. One of the representatives also pointed out that the area of Kvikkjokk had been a Swedish agricultural area for 300 years, and that there had always been close contact between the citizens of Kvikkjokk and the Saami population. The culture in the village and the area was however Swedish, and had always been so. According to the representative, the correct name custom should follow the custom of the citizens of Kvikkjokk, since it is they who had created and made use of the names. It is also unnecessary to re-create entirely Saami name forms that maybe had never existed, and in any case did not exist now. “Such a procedure is all right when fossils are to be reconstructed, but now it is a question of putting names on a map that shall guide people in the right direction” (Dahlskog and Rydén 1969: 1). The letter ends with a list of fully 70 names that the institute considered necessary to be changed, excluded or introduced in a subsequent edition of the map. This however was not enough. Once the map had been printed and published in January 1970, the representative of the institute returned with renewed criticisms in a letter of the 16th of March 1970. The final elements *-jåkkå* and *-tjåkkå* make it impossible to separate mountains from streams. These suffixes had to be changed into *-jokk* and *-tjåkkko*. The fact that the Survey Office used different colours when presenting the names did not seem to have any impact on the critics. The representative insisted that name changes were dangerous and he finished the letter with: “Saami name forms are unnecessary. The inhabitants of Kvikkjokk and Årrenjarka are better authorities concerning their place-names than the Saami that occasionally pass by in the area” (Dahlskog 1970a: 5). In a new letter from the 17th of March it appeared that the two representatives also had discussed the name question with an artist born in Kvikkjokk. By this time, yet another person from the institute of Plant Biology got involved in the examination work (Dahlskog 1970b). The correspondence between the institute and the Survey Office continued during 1970 and seems to have resulted in the Survey Office deciding to make a reprint of the map sheet *Kvikkjokk*. In October 1970, the new names from the list mentioned earlier sent in by the Plant Biology institute were examined by the Place-Name Archive. A compilation made by the Survey Office before the reprinting of the map shows that in total, 110 names were changed in some way. The spelling of 22 names was changed; 37 new names were added, 33 names were rearranged in the map, 12 names were deleted due to inaccuracy and for 6 names, there was not enough room on the map. The reprint of the map sheet *Kvikkjokk* from April 1970 was in circulation until September 1984, when the second edition was published; this time as *Mountain Map Kvikkjokk*.

The Mountain Map

In 1974, the National Land Survey Board joined with the Geographical Survey Office of Sweden to form the National Land Survey of Sweden, and it was the National Land Survey which at the end of the 1970's decided to publish a new topographical map of the Swedish mountain area. In the middle of the 1970's, the Saami place-names once more caught the eye of the Saami organizations in Sweden and Norway. The Nordic Sami Institute and the Sami Language Advisory Council in Kautokeino contacted the respective governments in Finland, Norway and Sweden by letter. The question was among other things the preservation and use of Saami place-names, and both the National Land Survey of Sweden and the Swedish Place-Name Archives commented on the letter. One of the main questions was the introduction of the North Saami orthography on national maps. In the light of the United Nations resolution of 1972 concerning place-names in minority language areas and after consulting the Swedish Place-Name Archives, the National Land Survey considered that the new orthography would be used in connection with future revisions of names and maps covering the area in question (Mattisson 1993: 24).

In March 1980, the National Land Survey decided that the Saami place-names should be revised in connection with partial updates of the topographical maps covering the mountain area, and this implied that the new North Saami orthography would be introduced within the North Saami area (Mattisson 1993: 28). Massive numbers of critics were even now not long in coming. The County Administration of Norrbotten considered that the Saami place-names were important for Norrbotten, and that profound changes of the names would create difficulties for tourism and the mountain rescue service among other services. The name usage must be in accordance with the common linguistic usage in the county, and while the majority of the inhabitants in Norrbotten are not Saami-speaking, the County Administration took it for granted that the spelling of the names and the letters be adapted to the need of common map users. They totally rejected the use of the North Saami different special letters/graphemes such as č and š. The National Land Survey decided, with these critics in mind, to submit a proposal concerning the orthography change to a number of organizations and authorities. Among them were the municipality of Kiruna, the County Administrations of Norrbotten and Västerbotten together with the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, the most outspoken of the critics. They thought that the National Land Survey had not taken the local map users into consideration, but the decision was based entirely on linguistic circumstances. The County Administration wanted the economic consequences of the orthography change to be investigated. The debate concerning the North Saami orthography continued orally as well as in writing, and meetings on the matter were held in Gävle, Kiruna and Luleå. At a meeting in Gävle in 1983, it was acknowledged that the previous three years of discussions had had no influence at all on the strongest opponents which were the municipality of Kiruna and the Swedish armed forces, represented at this meeting by the Military Command of Northern Norrland. They ventured to question if the decision in the orthography matter had legal status, and whether the National Land Survey had not misunderstood the recommendations from the United Nations. The solid opposition by the armed forces against the new orthography led to them threatening to publish their own map, something that was not accepted by the County Administration. The problem was solved with the presentation of parallel names on the maps. Through the writing of the new Saami name under the old one, the map user would see how the Saami name was written while at the same time the familiar older "map orthographic" form could also be seen (Mattisson 1993: 28f).

On the 23rd of June 1983 the National Land Survey came to a final decision concerning the presentation of the North-Saami place-names

All of the settlement names should be represented in the form as follows the first edition of the topographical maps (the older map orthography).

All the other names of nature features in the North Saami language should be written in the acknowledged new North-Saami orthography adopted in 1978.

The geographical names of natural features that are to be found on the older ... topographical map and for which the old and the new orthography obviously differs, both forms should be presented parallel..., at which special consideration is taken with the change of the initial letter and the special letters č, š and ž (Mattisson 1993: 31f.).

This decision did however not reconcile the armed forces. Their colonel made a special statement that all of the names must be readable with letters from the Swedish alphabet, and that newly added Saami place-names must also be presented in parallel with the old map orthography. They even thought that the National Land Survey should consider publishing two separate editions of the topographical maps covering the mountain area, one with the old orthography, and one with the new orthography (Mattisson 1993: 32).

It was however not possible to stop the development concerning the presentation of the Saami place-names, and the decision made by the National Land Survey was the first step towards a complete revision of Saami place-names presented on the general maps.

The first map with the new North Saami orthography, *301 Abisko*, was published in December 1983. This map was provided with information about the new orthography, as well as explanations of frequent Saami last elements in the place-names together with pronunciation information. As usual, this map of course also received criticism. In a contribution in the magazine *I alla väder* (In All Weathers), published by the Swedish Mountaineering Club, a representative for the Swedish Touring Club persisted in the Tourist Board's opinion that the introduction of "new letters and sounds" on maps would cause errors in the spelling as well as in the pronunciation of names (Mattisson 1993: 36).

The Lule Saami orthography was decided by consensus in 1983 by the Norwegian and Swedish Lule Saami group, and in 1988 the National Land Survey of Sweden discussed the question concerning Lule Saami orthography within the Lule Saami area. The matter was sent to no less than 47 different authorities. Interesting was that opinions now seemed to have changed in a very radical way; 46 of the authorities considered that Lule Saami orthography ought to be introduced on the general maps. Only the local government of Jokkmokk rejected this introduction. The National Land Survey of Sweden came to a decision concerning the introduction of the Lule Saami orthography on the 22nd of December 1988 (Mattisson, 1993: 44f.).

As the new decisions concerning the presentation of Saami place-names on the general maps were adopted, it seems as if the discussion about the pace of progress faded and calmed down to some extent. During the 1990's the discussions concerning the presentation of the Saami place-names on the general maps nevertheless continued, principally by the military authorities. Like the beginning of the 1980's, these discussions led to the ceasing of publication of the new maps covering the northernmost parts of Sweden. As late as December 1994, a representative of the Swedish army opposed that "Swedish orthographic" names on the map sheets Murjek and Pålkem had been changed almost totally into "Saami orthographic" names. "This revision, which is a unilateral deviation from an arrived agreement, has been carried out without confirmation from the armed forces". Strictly speaking: The Saami orthography should be inserted with a divergent colour, the most suitable being red, in order not to disturb the readability of the map. This text should also be possible to be removed, if necessary (Söderberg, 1994).

On the 15th of June 2001 came the final decision on the presentation of Saami place-names, when the National Land Survey of Sweden decided as follows:

Saami place-names, including the varieties North Saami, Lule Saami, Ume Saami and South Saami, will be presented with their correct orthography in the Place-Name register.

The older Swedish constructed spelling will henceforth be stored parallel in the Place-Name register.

The Saami place-names will be presented in the national maps according to purpose and field of application and with consideration of cartographic principles.

The linguistic examination of the Saami place-names will be executed in the same way as the place-name examination otherwise.

In connection with this new decision concerning Saami orthography, the earlier decisions that regulated the presentation of Saami place-names were invalidated.

From 2007 the National Land Survey of Sweden has begun an even closer co-operation with the Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research, and with the language consultants at the Saami parliament, in order to further improve the presentation of the Saami place-names on the general maps covering the entire Saami area.

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