

## Verena Altenburger (Vienna): Gender in First Names in Finland

### **Preface**

In this treatise on gender in first names in Finland I deal mainly with the results of Eero Kiviniemi's research, published in 2006 in his book *Suomalaisten etunimet*, and complement it with my own research, also taking into account Anne Saarikalle's and Johanna Suomalainen's book on first names from 2007 called *Suomalaiset etunimet – Aadasta Yrjöön*, the internet site <https://192.49.222.187/Nimipalvelu> and a few other sources listed in the references. Since the topic of my dissertation is about the first names of children with Finnish and German-speaking parents, I chose to investigate more deeply the field of first names. Already during the research for my dissertation, the gender of Finnish first names turned out to be quite difficult to understand for people not well acquainted with the Finnish language. Yet, the same problem also exists for Finnish people themselves. I will now give an overview of the different groups into which Finnish names can be divided – regarded from a structural, a semantic, and an etymological point of view.

### **A Boy's or a Girl's Name?**

The system of first names, at least nowadays, includes the fact that women's and men's names differ from each other. Since 1946, the Finnish law on names forbids giving a boy's name to a girl and vice versa, which is also the rule in the other European countries. However, in Finland it often occurs that first names are used for both women and men. If, for example, we take the first names Inge and Elvis, we see that Inge – a woman's name in German-speaking countries – is officially a man's name in Finland, but is actually being given more often to women: till now it has been given to 118 men, but to 300 women in Finland. Elvis is a man's first name, but was also given to a girl in a single case – in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of knowing the gender of a first name has concerned almost exclusively new Finnish first names: In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of new Finnish first names increased at a large rate within a comparatively short span of time, so that the name givers had to learn quickly to which sex the new names corresponded.

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<sup>1</sup> Saarikalle, Anne; Suomalainen Johanna: *Suomalaiset etunimet – Aadasta Yrjöön*, Gummerus Kirjapaino OY, Jyväskylä, 2007, [www.vaestorekisterikeskus.fi/Etunimihaku](http://www.vaestorekisterikeskus.fi/Etunimihaku)

The difficulty in knowing the gender of the first names lay in the fact that there simply were no common rules or distinguishing marks as there are in other languages.

However, in the course of time the use of some first names changed as regards gender: up to 1967 the first name *Lahja* ('gift') was given to both sexes, although preferably to females, but afterwards it was given only to girls. The first name *Sulo* ('charm, grace') was also given to both genders until 1939, preferably to men. After 1939 only boys were given this name.

Starting in 1883, a list of men's and women's first names has appeared in the Finnish calendar, but has existed in the almanac of the university of Helsinki only since 1950, after the enactment of the law regulating the giving of first names and the publication of the name day calendar. For that reason it is no surprise that the stabilisation of the Finnish first names concerning gender took so long.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first name *Kaino* ('shy, modest') was used for both men and women, its use being distributed almost evenly between the sexes, with a slightly higher percentage of men. Nevertheless, it was officially declared to be a woman's name in 1947.

Often, the appearance of a first name either as a man's or a woman's name is a regional characteristic. About 50% of men named *Kaino* and 64% of men named *Vieno* ('gentle, mild, calm'; also a name used for both sexes) were born in the former province of Turku and Pori. So apparently people regarded those two names as female in general, and only in these special areas were the names thought to be male.

Between 1965 and 1981 there existed 119 first names in Finland that were given to one sex in general and at least ten times to the other sex. There were 18 names given to the opposite sex more than a hundred times, and the number of names given to the opposite sex more than a 1000 times was three: *Kaino*, *Vieno* and *Rauni*. Here is a list of the distribution of some first names amongst the two sexes between 1965 and 1981, where the first names were given to the other sex more than a 100 times:

First name	Men	Women
<i>Oma</i> ('own')	59 %	41 %
<i>Hille</i>	40 %	60 %
<i>Ensi</i> ('first', 'next')	38 %	62 %
<i>Muisto</i> ('memory')	68 %	32 %
<i>Varma</i> ('self assured')	20 %	80 %
<i>Rauni</i>	15 %	85 %
<i>Vieno</i> ('gentle, calm')	14 %	86 %

Other first names used for both sexes, but with a smaller percentage (1% – 9%) of uses for the other sex are: *Soini*, *Tuovi*, *Sulevi*, *Sointu*, *Eeli*, *Lahja*, *Armi*, *Oiva*, *Onerva*, *Sulo*.

With the enactment of the law regulating the giving of first names in 1946 it was officially determined which sex a first name belonged to. The Ministry of Justice asked the Finnish association of literature (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*) to publish this list, and in 1947 a 92-page long volume of first names was published by Hannes Teppo and Kustaa Vilkkuna. In the list there are 900 first names; twice as many as in the first names' calendar of those days. This publication solved the problem of not knowing a name's gender only partially. Unfortunately, the list did not

really facilitate the registration problems concerning the most infrequent Finnish names that remained mostly unknown. Generally, people used lists that were much shorter than the official almanac. The law regulating the giving of first names did not change the former use of giving names. For example, *Kaino* was accepted more often as a boy's name than a girl's name in the 1950's, although being officially a women's name.

From the beginning to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the situation changed. The female and male names had already been "learned" and new Finnish first names were not created or developed that much any more. The names that were given to both sexes at least ten times since 1960 are only 11:

Name	Men	Women
<i>Tuisku</i>	44 %	56 %
<i>Oma</i>	56 %	44 %
<i>Kaino</i>	58 %	42 %
<i>Misa</i>	73 %	27 %
<i>Nikita</i>	73 %	27 %
<i>Venni</i>	83 %	17 %
<i>Ariel</i>	93 %	7 %
<i>Vieno</i>	5 %	95 %
<i>Mirka</i>	2 %	98 %
<i>Rauni</i>	2 %	98 %
<i>Hanne</i>	0,5 %	99,5 %

The names equally used for both sexes decreased and the number of the names given to the opposite sex is very low nowadays. The problem is therefore much smaller than before, but it still exists.

## Structural Characteristics

First of all, one must keep in mind that in Finnish first names there is not a single characteristic at all to indicate the name's gender. Instead, the names can be split up into smaller groups that have a certain structure in common. Also, since a large part of first names used in Finland are of foreign origin, one can make use of the relevant foreign characteristics. For example, first names with an o at the end are more clearly men's names in a lot of European countries. Women's first names with an o at the end occur so rarely that only a few Finnish first names of this type are still in use, e.g. *Aino*, *Kaino*, *Marjo*, *Pirjo*, *Pirkko*, *Sisko*, *Vieno*, *Vuokko*, *Kielo*, *Muisto* and *Siro*.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in earlier days some of these names could be also given to men, because the ending o was very typical of men's names.

<sup>2</sup> Editor's note: Note that these names have different etymological origins. *Aino*, the name of a character in the national epic *Kalevala*, was coined by Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the *Kalevala*, on the basis of the word meaning 'the only one'. *Kaino* 'shy, modest', *Sisko* 'sister', *Vieno* 'gentle', *Vuokko* 'anemone', *Kielo* 'lily of the valley', *Muisto* 'memory' and *Siro* 'graceful' have become women's names due to their semantics, while *Marjo* (< Maria, Margareta?) and *Pirjo/Pirkko* (< Birgitta) are traditional nickname forms of popular women's names.

In the same way, the ending *a* is more typical for women's first names in most of the European languages. However, this cannot be made a rule for Finnish first names or first names given in Finland in general, because there are quite a number of men's first names that also have an *a* as an ending. To demonstrate this, I give a list of male first names ending with *a* from Anna Saarikalle's and Johanna Suomalainen's book *Suomalaiset etunimet – Aadasta Yrjöön: Ilkka, Attila, Elia, Erkka, Esa, Pekka, Jukka, Gösta, Iikka, Ilja, Jaakkima, Jaska, Jirka, Jorma, Jooa, Joona, Joosua, Jousia, Juha, Juhana, Jusa, Kaleva, Konsta, Kuisma, Kustaa, Luka, Miika, Miikka, Mika, Misa, Miska, Mitja, Niila, Nikita, Noa, Nooa, Ola, Oma, Oula, Petja, Pirkka, Reima, Samppa, Sampsa, Saska, Turkka, Tuukka, Uula, Veikka, Vesa, Visa*.<sup>3</sup>

### Groups of names with the same structure

In many cases sound structures alone make people assume that names of similar structure belong to the same gender. Therefore, there are series of similarly structured names in which either only men's or only women's names appear.

Examples for this are the following for women:

*-iju: Paiju, Taiju, Keiju, Meiju, Teiju*

*-iina: Iina, Liina, Miina, Niina, Riina, Siina, Tiina*

Examples for groups of names with the same structure for men are:

*-eetu: Eetu, Beetu, Feetu, Peetu, Reetu, Seetu, Veetu*

*-tro: Atro, Jatro, Jetro, Petro, Mitro, Otro*

Another group of names however, the one ending in *-enne* that have two syllables, can be given to both sexes – a fact which already contradicts the hypothesis “same structure, same gender”: *Enne, Henne, Lenne* and *Renne*. The same holds true for names ending in *-enni*: *Henni, Lenni* and *Venni*. However, such names are generally rare.

On the other hand, there can also be a clear division into men's and women's names within the same group, for example in the group of names ending in *-eemi*: *Eemi, Seemi* and *Reemi* are men's names, while *Feemi, Neemi* and *Meemi* are women's names. Or, within the group ending in *-nnu*, *Annu, Nannu, Sannu, Sennu, Nennu* and *Ninnu* are women's names, whilst *Jannu, Ennu, Lennu, Vennu, Kinnu, Jonnu* and *Junnu* are only men's names.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Editor's note:* This group, too, includes names of different etymological origins. There are men's names from the Bible (*Elia* and its Russian variant *Ilja*, *Joona*, *Joosua*, *Mii(k)ka*, *No(o)a*), Scandinavian (*Gösta/Kustaa*, *Ola/Uula*), Sámi (*Niila*, *Oula*) or Russian/Slavic names or name variants (*Kuisma*, *Luka*, *Mis(k)a*, *Mitja*, *Nikita*, *Petja*) and other internationalisms (*Attila*), but also Finnish hypocoristic forms (*Esa* < *Esaías*, *Iikka* < *Iisakki*, *Jaska* < *Jaakko/Jakob*, *Juha(na)/Jusa/Jukka* < *Johannes*, *Pekka* < *Pietari/Petrus*, *Samppa* < *Samuel*, *Turkka* < *Turo*), ancient Finnish names (*Jousia*, *Kaleva*) or neologistic names with suitable semantics (*Oma* 'own', *Reima* 'brisk', *Vesa* 'sapling').

<sup>4</sup> *Editor's note:* Names ending in *-nnu* are typically perceived as nicknames and very rarely used as official given names. In this case, gender assignment is often purely accidental (I know of at least one case when *Lennu* was used as a nickname for *Helena*).

## The Name's Meaning

There is a tendency of regarding a name as female or male depending on the meaning of the name. If first names derived from the Finnish language had been created only nowadays, the names and their belonging to a gender might be a lot different. For example the name *Sulo* ('sweet, charming; charm, grace'), which has established itself as a man's name, *Vieno* ('gentle') – also used for men sometimes, although rarely – and *Kaino* ('shy, modest') – almost equally used for both sexes – would seem female names at first glance, due to their meaning. But why are the names *Aate* ('thought'), *Armas* ('beloved') and *Valo* ('light') given preferably to men? Their meaning does not bear an obvious preference for one gender or sex.

If new Finnish names were created nowadays, the process of name giving would probably be the same as it was before: The names would be given to both girls and boys at the beginning, and afterwards a gender preference would develop by itself. Yet, it is also difficult to make such a preference disappear, if we already have an association of a name with one of the two sexes. If we take the name *Tuisku* ('storm', 'snowstorm')<sup>5</sup> as an example, we see that this name was first given to a girl in the twentieth century, but has afterwards been given to both girls and boys, while the giving to girls is predominant:

### Tuisku

Year(s)	Men	Women
1900-19	0	1
1920-39	0	0
1940-59	1	3
1960-79	4	2
1980-99	39	59
2000-07	47	58
2008	1	1
Total	92	124

<sup>6</sup>

Other Finnish first names chosen for both sexes at least twice from 2000 to 2004 -in addition to the names mentioned already – are: *Ilo* ('joy'), *Kuu* ('moon'), *Kuura* ('frost'), *Paju* ('willow'), *Runo* ('rune'), *Tuli* ('fire'), and *Utu* ('fog').

## Different Interpretations of a First Name's Gender

The uncertainty whether a first name be female or male can also stem from various interpretations of the name's origin. *Nata* can be seen as the short version of *Natalia* (female) or *Natanael* (male). *Nilla* is the colloquial variant of the woman's name

<sup>5</sup> Editor's note: Note that *Tuisku* may also be perceived as a nickname variant for various women's names beginning with *Tu(i)-* (*Tuija*, *Tuire*, *Tuula*, *Tuuli(kki)*...). There is also a semantic relatedness with *Tuuli* 'wind'.

<sup>6</sup> <https://192.49.222.187/Nimipalvelu>, 30. 4. 2008

*Gunilla*, but in the Saami language it is an abbreviation of the man's name *Nikolaus*. As is shown by these two examples, abbreviations of first names, which are generally used as nicknames, may apply to both genders, depending on what original name they are derived from.

Sometimes names with similar structures or foreign names with structures similar to Finnish names can bring about confusion or misunderstanding concerning their gender. For example, the name *Mirka* – a woman's name in the Czech Republic and in Poland – was at first understood as a man's name in Finland, although in Czech and Polish there is even a male counterpart to *Mirka*, namely *Mirko*. The reason for this confusion probably was that *Mirka* has the same structure as other men's names that are popular in Finland: *Jirka* and *Kirka*.<sup>7</sup> Yet, those two names are not typically Finnish names, but have a Slavonic origin.

Also, nicknames or abbreviations that are taken over from other countries or languages can lead to misunderstandings concerning gender. To a lot of people it may be a surprise that *Vanja* (or *Vania* or *Wanja*) is a woman's name in Sweden, but is used for both men and women in Finland as well as in Germany. In Russian it is a nickname, which stands for *Ivan* (male) or *Ivana* (female) and accordingly is used for both sexes, but in many other countries *Vanja* is simply a woman's name, since it is similar to other women's names of Slavonic origin: *Anja*, *Tanja*, *Tonja*, *Senja*...

Here are three other exemplary names used for both sexes, with different ways of explanations why they should belong either to the male or the female gender:

After the success of Luc Besson's film "La femme Nikita" (1990), some Finnish parents named their daughters *Nikita* - after the heroine of the film. Before, the name *Nikita*, derived from the ancient Greek men's name *Niketas*, was almost exclusively given to boys. Apparently, the famous politician of the Soviet Union in the 1950's and 1960's, *Nikita Khrushchev*, did not mean anything any more to the people who decided to give this name to their daughters in the 1990's. A reason for giving this name to girls could also be that *Nikita* resembles other girls' names with the same structure, the ending *-ita*, as, for example, in *Evita*, *Anita*, *Juanita* or *Marita*. Yet, there are still more men than women with the name *Nikita* in Finland.

The second example is the name *Kim*. It was taken into the Finnish name-day calendar in 1995 as a man's name and also appears as a man's name in the Finnish-Swedish and the Swedish name-day calendar, because in these countries *Kim* used to be the abbreviation of *Joakim*. In English-speaking countries *Kim* is also a man's name in the first place, but its origin is a different one: Some people gave the name *Kim* to their children because of the novel "Kim", written in 1901 by Joseph Rudyard Kipling and adapted for the screen in 1950 and 1984<sup>8</sup>, where the name appears as an abbreviation for *Kimball*. For other people, *Kim* was, and still is, the short form of *Kimberly*, the name of a South African diamond city. The name *Kim* became rare as

<sup>7</sup> Editor's note: In fact, *Jirka* (given to 153 men and 1 woman) and *Kirka* (given to 29 men) are not particularly "popular in Finland". *Kirka*, officially used only in or after the 1960s, was made "popular" by the Finnish rock singer of Russian descent, Kirka (officially: Kirill) Babitzin (1950–2007). *Jirka* might be a combination of this structural model and the Czech name *Jiri* (recte: *Jiří*), which became well known in Finland thanks to Czech ice-hockey players and other famous sportsmen and also fits in with the structure of many other boys' names popular in the 1960s and 1970s (*Jari*, *Kari*, *Ari*, *Lari*, *Jyri*). Note that word-initial *ji-* is practically unknown in Finnish words and thus gives the name a slightly foreign flavour.

<sup>8</sup> [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kim\\_%28Roman%29](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kim_%28Roman%29), [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudyard\\_Kipling](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudyard_Kipling), 1. 5.



a men's name after some time and came into use again as a woman's name. Its popularity as a woman's name probably developed due to the popularity of the actress Kim Novak, although this name, by the way, is only a stage name – her real first name is Marilyn. Yet, there are still more men than women with this name in Finland. The peak of its popularity both for men and women was from 1960 to 1999, with 5063 men and 230 women named Kim.<sup>9</sup>

The name *Manna* is given, rarely but almost equally, to both boys and girls. Eero Kiviniemi's explanation for this is that *Manna* was accepted as a boy's name in a small middle northern area of Finland (Reisjärvi, Haapajärvi, Nivala) between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There, it served as the abbreviation of the names Immanuel and Mauno. In the 1940's, the name *Manna* started to be given to girls, too, as the abbreviation of girls' names beginning with *Ma-*.

Especially concerning the rare names of foreign origin, the probability for them to appear as boys' as well as girls' names makes it important to consider the choice of the name very well. The following list of first names includes a large part of the names of foreign origin that are being given to both sexes:

*Adi, Ami, Ana, Angel, Alva, Alve, Alvi(a), Asla, Aulo, Aure, Auri, Bela, Caro, Carol, Chris, Daniele, Dominique, Donald, Eedi, Eeri, Eeti, Emile, Ervi, Esra, Gay, Ila, Jael, Jamie, Jo(o)a, Juhanna, Juli, Kay, Krisse, Lee, Lenni, Lenny, Mario(n), Michele; Nikola, Nicol(a), Nika, Nike, Nikki, Nicky, Noor, Sani, Pori, Pami, Petruska, Rai, Raune, Reine, Reini, Reita, Ruu, Sandy, Sani, Sasja, Sassa, Seri, Soni, Tini.*

Confusion can also be caused by the similar sound, which is based on producing new names by inventing variations of already existing names. In Finland and Estonia, *Aala*, *Aale* and *Aali* are nicknames for men and women whose names start with *A*. *Aale*, a name often given in the north of Finland, became an official men's name at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and not much time later its use as a girls' name in the south of Finland decreased. Apart from very few exceptions, this name has been in use only for men. The rare name *Aali* was made official for both sexes at the same time as *Aale*, but has not been used any more since 1994.<sup>10</sup> *Aala*, also a very rare name, came into existence some time later than the other two, and is also possible for both men and women.

*Rauni* is usually a woman's name (85%) and the rare name *Rauna* is strictly a woman's name. Besides these two names there is also *Raune*, the rarest of the three names, used altogether 26 times for men and 38 times for women.<sup>11</sup>

*Raine* (< *Rainer*) is nearly always a man's name, its variation *Raino* has only been given to men. The name *Raini*, though, is a woman's name in most cases.

These names came into use at about the same time: between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but since there were so many similar sounding variations of the name, it is not surprising that particularly names ending with "i" or "e" were used for men and women likewise.

<sup>9</sup> <https://192.49.222.187/Nimipalvelu/>, 1. 5. 2008

<sup>10</sup> <https://192.49.222.187/Nimipalvelu/>, 1. 5. 2008

<sup>11</sup> <https://192.49.222.187/Nimipalvelu/>, 1. 5. 2008

## Characteristics in First Names of Finnish Origin

Giving names to children shows very well what different qualities we consider boys/men or girls/women to have. Of course, the initial stage of the name's appearance and the time in which the name established itself play a role. If we take *Lahja* we see that it officially appears as a man's name in a first names' calendar from 1883. The reason for this seems to be that at that time Finnish names started to replace Latin names, whose meanings were translated: the male name *Donatus* (lat.: 'the gifted') was translated into *Lahja* ('gift').

## Flowers and Nature

Names taken from flowers are very often women's names. Generally there is no confusion with the use of such a name, and it is clear that it belongs to a girl or a woman – there are only very few exceptions. The most popular names of this group are: *Kielo* ('lily of the valley'), *Kukka* ('flower'), *Lemmikki* ('forget-me-not'), *Lilja* ('lily'), *Orvokki* ('violet' or 'pansy'), *Ruusu* ('rose'), *Terttu* ('umbel'), *Vanamo* ('twinflower')<sup>12</sup> and *Vuokko* ('anemone'). This also happens in other languages, from which the Finnish language took some names into the first names' calendar: *liris*, *Iris*, *Jasmin*, *Linnea* ('twinflower', *Linnaea borealis*)<sup>13</sup>, *Rosa* and *Viola*.

To be fair, there is also one boy's name that relates to a flower, namely *Kullervo*, a Finnish rhododendron.<sup>14</sup> Yet, when giving this name, people probably think more of the character of the Kalevala named Kullervo than of the rhododendron.

Bushes, other plants, and fruit also tend to be women's names. Such kind of names in the name-day calendar are *Kanerva* ('heather'), *Onerva* (?), *Ritva* ('leaf branch'), *Taimi* ('seedling'), *Varpu* ('branch', 'bush') and *Virpi* ('branch')<sup>15</sup>.

There are also widely interpreted names, as, for example, *Marja* ('berry', also < Maria), *Minttu* ('peppermint', originally < *Miina* < *Vilhelmiina*), *Selja* ('elder', originally < *Cecilia*), *Valma* (? < *valmu* 'poppy') and *Vilja* ('grain', 'cereal', ~ *Viljo*)<sup>16</sup> and Germanic *Wilja*). Other common names are e.g. *Kirsikka* ('cherry'), *Kaisla* ('reed', 'rush'), *Niini* ('bast'), *Oras* ('seed') and *Angervo* ('creambush')<sup>17</sup>.

Of these names only *Oras* appears as a man's name in the name-day calendar from 1929 to 1949, although it is said to be a woman's name in Pentti Lempiäinen's book about first names (*Suuri etunimikirja*, 1999). *Angervo* also occurs as a man's name at first, but the persons to whom the name were recently given are women. The old name *Silmu* ('bud') is usually given to girls, and also *Omena* ('apple'), rarely used as a first name, has been given to 19 girls from the 1960's on.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.20000-names.com/flower\\_names\\_02.htm](http://www.20000-names.com/flower_names_02.htm), 1. 5. 2008

<sup>13</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linnaea>, 1. 5. 2008

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.mm.helsinki.fi/users/avainola/rhodo/cultivars.htm>, 1. 5. 2008

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.baby-vornamen.de/Maedchen/V/Vi/Virpi/>

<sup>16</sup> Editor's note: *Viljo*, a derivative of *vilja* 'grain; plenty, bounty' was first introduced in the Finnish calendars as a native counterpart of the Greek *Polycarpus*. *Vilja* can also be regarded as the feminine variant of *Viljo*, without any direct connection to the word *vilja*.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/52265752@N00/337490323>



## Trees

Names of trees are scarcely given as first names, for the same reason as other words referring to nature do not or only hardly appear as first names – they are used as surnames, and the law regulating the giving of first names forbids giving surnames as first names. This is why trees' names that may be used as first names (e.g.: *Jalava* 'elm', *Koivu* 'birch', *Kataja* 'juniper', *Saarni* 'ash tree', *Tammi* 'oak tree') are exceptions and are given only rarely, so that there is nothing to be analysed or said about a connection of these names to one gender or the other.

Only the names of some deciduous trees are clearly dedicated to women: *Paju* ('willow'), *Pihla(ja)* ('mountain ash'), *Raita* ('goat willow'), *Tuomi* ('alder buckthorn')<sup>18</sup> and the latest ones: *Pinja* ('pine tree') and *Kastanja* ('chestnut tree').

There does not seem to be a rational reason why the names *Kaarna* ('bark'), *Naava* ('usnea') and *Pihka* ('resin') are given to girls, and the name *Visa* ('birch') to boys. A reason for the name *Naava* to be used for girls might be its meaning in Hebrew: 'beautiful'.<sup>19</sup> *Havu* ('spruce-needle') is almost exclusively given to boys.

## Country and Terrain

Terms for country and terrain also are rare due to the law on names, because they are very often used as surnames. However, *Kivi* ('stone') and *Kallio* ('rock') are accepted and given almost only to boys. The girls' name *Pii* is not necessarily meant to refer to its meaning ('pebble'), but it has the same structure as the rare girls' name *Tii*. Also, *Kulta* ('gold') exists only as a women's name.

## Phenomena of Nature

Another interesting type of first names are the names connected to phenomena of nature. *Tuuli* ('wind') established itself as a girls' name, given that already similar sounding common girls' names as *Tuulikki* and *Tuula* had existed before. *Pyry* ('snow storm') was accepted as a boys' name at the same time, although it happened to be given also to some girls. Also the rare name *Myrsky* ('storm') tended to be regarded as a men's name at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still today, although it has been given to a few girls nowadays.

Today the number of women with the name *Tuisku* ('snow storm') is higher than that of the number of men, although the ending *-sku* usually belongs to men's nicknames, such as *Osku* or *Vesku*.<sup>20</sup>

The rare name *Salama* ('lightning'), proposed already in 1864 and present in the name-day calendar from 1929 to 1949, is said to be a woman's name. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the name was possibly added to similarly structured names like *Salma*, *Salmi*, *Salme* and *Salome*. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, *Salama* was mostly given to baby boys.

*Sade* ('rain') became popular as a women's name at the same time during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as its rhyme name *Jade*. Probably the female British singer named Sade in the 1980's sparked the popularity of the name.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dict.cc/deutsch-englisch/Faulbaum.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.babynames.com/name/NAAVA>, 28. 8. 2008

<sup>20</sup> Editor's note: Female nicknames in *-sku* do appear (*Ansku* < *Anna/Anne/Anu* &c; *Tinsku* < *Tiina*...).

Another name that became popular quickly during the recent years is *Lumi* ('snow'), which from the very start was considered a girl's name, and was given to boys only 3 times.

The new first name *Kuura* ('hoarfrost') was mostly given to boys, which was also the case with the name *Talvi* ('winter') about 100 years ago. Later, mostly girls were named *Talvi*, some perhaps because of the similar woman's name *Talvikki*.<sup>21</sup> The names *Kevät* ('spring') and *Suvi* ('summer') are only given to girls. *Kaste* ('dew'), *Usva* ('fog'), *Utu* ('haze'), *Ruska* ('turning of colours of leaves in autumn') and *Säde* ('ray') are mostly used for girls, while there is no apparent reason why they should not be boys' names.

## The Starry Sky

The gender of names taken from the starry sky varies. Men's names are for example *Otava* ('Big Dipper') and names of ancient mythology: *Jupiter*, *Orion* and also – but rarely given as first names – *Mars* and *Merkurius*. *Sirius* ('the brightest of all fixed stars')<sup>22</sup>, a rarely given name in Finland, is given to twice as many girls as boys. In the past few years, the name *Aurinko* ('sun') was accepted as a first name and has mostly been given to girls. The name *Tähti* ('star') is also given mostly to girls and has been given only to two boys so far. *Kuu* ('moon') is also new as a first name and has been given 15 times to girls and 7 times to boys. *Wega* or *Vega*, the name of the brightest star of the northern hemisphere<sup>23</sup>, is only given to girls, while the rarely given name *Venus* surprisingly – since Venus is the goddess of love and the very symbol of womanhood – has also been given to two boys up to now.

## Animals

In Finnish first names old expressions for animals appear as well. This is equally true for last names, which is why the already mentioned law on names does not approve of all these names as first names. In today's name-day calendar we can find *Ohto* and *Otso* (both meaning 'bear') as a counterpart to the Swedish *Björn* and *Osmo* ('glutton'). The words *kerttu* ('little bird') and *terttu* ('umbel', 'grape'), which appear in compound words (e.g. *leppäkerttu*, 'ladybird') of the animal kingdom, originally were first names. *Kerttu*, for example, has been in use as a first name since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is derived from the German name *Gertrud* – it is given to girls (only one man ever was named *Kerttu* in 1982<sup>24</sup>)<sup>25</sup>.

*Kiuru* and *Leivo*, both meaning 'lark', are known as old Karelian last names. While *Kiuru* has been given to a total of 15 girls, *Leivo* has altogether been given to 16 boys. This preference – *Kiuru* for girls, *Leivo* for boys – seems to be of no particular origin – the only statement I found as an explanation for the difference between *Leivo* and *Kiuru* is that 'Leivo is a more poetic version for Kiuru'<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Editor's note: *Talvikki*, derivative of *talvi* 'winter', is the name of a flower as well: round-leaved wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia*).

<sup>22</sup> Bertelsmann Lexikon Band 9, 1977, p. 121

<sup>23</sup> Bertelsmann Lexikon Band 10, 1977, S. 221

<sup>24</sup> <https://192.49.222.187/Nimipalvelu/>, 3. 5. 2008

<sup>25</sup> Saarikalle, Anne; Suomalainen Johanna: *Suomalaiset etunimet – Aadasta Yrjöön*, Gummerus Kirjapaino OY, Jyväskylä, 2007, S. 191

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.proz.com/kudoz/finnish\\_to\\_english/education\\_pedagogy/847663-leivo.html](http://www.proz.com/kudoz/finnish_to_english/education_pedagogy/847663-leivo.html)

In the Finnish name registration centre on the internet ([www.vaestorekisterikeskus.fi](http://www.vaestorekisterikeskus.fi)) about 150 first names referring to animal names can be found. Their original language is not always Finnish, however; for example *Hai* ('shark' in Finnish) seems to be a Chinese name, according to Kiviniemi. Half of these names are unique with very rarely found endings and given to only about five people. Some seem to be suitable first names and the only reason why they have not become popular are probably the name law restrictions. In most cases the names of this group are given to girls.

## ***Names without Gender***

A new interesting, genderless type of name that could be used during pregnancy while not yet knowing the baby's sex, was created by the Dane Anders Morgenthaler in his TV-series called *KatjaKaj og BenteBent*, which consists of 26 five minute-long serials. The series started in 2001 and was shown in many different countries. In Finland, the title of the series was *KatjaKai ja AimoAnna*, while the English version was entitled *JenniferJohn and BritneyBob*.

The series was named after the two main characters whose names and figures were a great success in the northern countries. The figures looked very different – one was tall and thin, while the other one was short and a bit chubby – but both were sexless, just as their names, which was the biggest reason for their success.