

# Formation of Estonian Farm Names

Marit Alas, Tiina Laansalu, Peeter Päll  
Institute of the Estonian Language

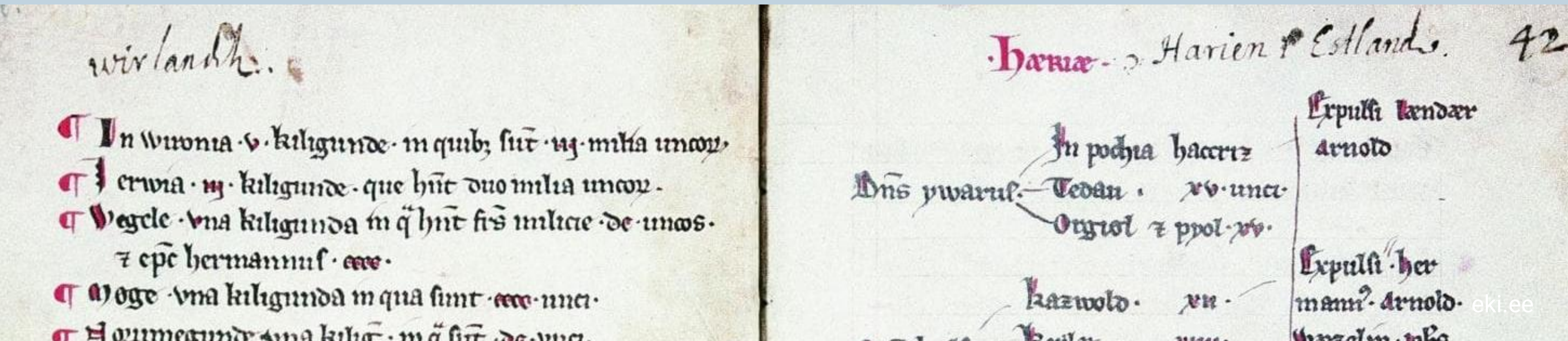


Farms have been the basic economic unit of the peasantry.



## How old are Estonian farm names?

- The earliest settlement names appear already in the *Liber Census Danie* (ca. 1241)
  - *Rækævæ* (modern *Rakvere*), *Mekius* (*Mäe*)



Farms are mentioned in the records from the 16th century.

byname + first name

Farm names 1648

- Otsa
- Perdie
- Jahni
- Ustallo

Specification derer unter dem  
Lauen, und wie hoch Selbige nach  
in der Gaabenzahl ange-

Witthe Sackfer Befindt.  
gehaltenen Inquisition, und Revision  
setzt worden Numb.

Verfasser und Gaue Pahmann	Perbitte des Mannen von 15 bis 60 Jahren				Kinder alt und unter 15 Jahren			
	Otsa	Perdie	Jahni	Ustallo	Perdie	Jahni	Ustallo	Ustallo
Witthe Sackfer.								
1/4 Nordima Turri Mart	1		1		2	1		
1/4 Otsa Turri	1		1		2	1		
1/4 Perdie Siem		1		1			1	1
1/4 Subse Turri Hans	1		1		2	2		
1/4 Jahni Andres	1		1		2			
1/4 Jahni Hans	1		1		3	2		
1/4 Perdi Hans Joanno		2	1		2	2	1	
1/4 Andresi Jahni Mart	1	1	1		2			1
1/4 Nichere Maddise Turri	1		1		2	2		
1/4 Ustallo Mart	1		1		3	1		
1/4 Perdi Hans		2		2	1	5	1	1
1/4 Proso Hans	1		1		2	1	1	1
33/4 Transport	9	6	10	3	25	17	4	4



# Main origins of Estonian farm names

- Peasants' bynames (*Allika, Otsa, Mäe*)
- Peasants' Christian names (*Mardi, Jaani, Madise*)
- Combinations of bynames and Christian names (including the patronym: *Suurematsi, Vanamardi, Mihklihansu*)
- Old place names (especially scattered farms: *Ihuvere*)
- Various common nouns denoting
  - field of activity (*Sepa* 'smith')
  - origin (*Harju* 'from Harju region', *Muhu* 'from Muhu island')
  - personal characteristics (*Laisa* 'lazy', *Väike* 'small')
  - nature vocabulary (*Jõe* 'river', *Ranna* 'shore')
  - names of buildings (*Veski* 'mill', *Silla* 'bridge')
- More recently: surnames (*Kaalu* < surname *Kaal*; *Toome*)

# ” Developments of some farm names in two villages 1725–2008 (Rapla parish)

## Jalase village:

*Otza Hans* > Otsa

*Hanso Mart* > Hansumardi

*Simo Jürri* > Siimu

*Lepparo Tönnis* > Lepparu

*Otti Jurre Tönnis* > Oti

*Reino Mart* > Reinu

*Hietagose Jahn* > Hiietse

*Clause Mart* > Laose

*Lehsa Jahn* > Leesa

*Mujahio Ado* > 0

## Hagudi village:

*Ranna Jack* > 0

*Wirro Michell* > 0

*Hanso Ado* > 0

*Rebbasse Siem* > Rebase

*Nohr Jahn* > 0

*Weike Jahn* > 0

*Thoma Jahn* > 0

*Kubias Jahni Jürgen* > 0

*Stallknecht Mart* > 0

(now farms Allika, Jaagu, Jürijaagu, Mihkli, Otsa, Tõnsu, Uuehindreku, Uustalu)



# Changes in farm names throughout the ages

## **Until the 19th century**

- when the owner changed, the family name / farm name may also have changed

# Changes in farm names throughout the ages

## The 19th century

- The clearer distinction between farm and family names came with the giving of surnames from 1822 to 1835
- Farm names were changed in many places in connection with the parcelling of farms (relocated farms often got a new name)
- The manor often aspired to the uniqueness of farm names in its territory (including modifying the names, *Aadu* > *Aadukandi*, *Neo* > *Neotoa*, *Neorehe* > *Rehe*)
- Farm names were changed also when buying farms in perpetuity
- In the late 19th century, many new farms were created when the manors were divided up. For naming the new farms, usually nature vocabulary (*Kase* 'birch', *Lepiku* 'alder grove') and sometimes abstract words (*Rõõmu* 'joy') were used.



# Changes in farm names throughout the ages

## The beginning of 20th century

Land reform (1919), the land of the manors was distributed among the new settlement farms

- Former manor buildings

Keskvere manor > Keskvere village

*Aida* 'granary', *Rehe* 'threshing barn', *Keldri* 'cellar'

- National romantic names

*Kungla* (mythical place name), *Vabaduse* 'freedom'

- Compound words with nature vocabulary

*Kaljumäe* 'rock + hill', *Lillepõllu* 'flower + field'



# Changes in farm names throughout the ages

## The occupation period (1940–1991)

- The official status of the farms was diminished and the use of farm names faded out.
- The concept of farms were not recognized, a new name model emerged:  
personal name + *maja* 'house' (*Reinu maja*)

## Restoration of independence 1991

- With the return of farms to former owners, the question arose whether the former farm name marks the farmhouse where the new residents live, or rest of the farmlands returned to the former owners.

*Rakvere* (LCD ca. 1241) (land parcel) > *Elupuu* ('Thuja' farm name)



# Parallel farm names

- **Before the parcelling of farms // after the parcelling of farms (19th to 20th century)**

*Atusmäe // Jüri*

*Jaanimardi // Matsu*

- **In manor records and cadastral documents (16th to 19th century) // vernacular use**

*Revali // Aaduhansu*

*Mikkori-Miku // Alttoa*

- **Official names // vernacular names (19th century)**

*Hiie // Toomarahva*

*Kadaka // Kapsaaugu*

*Raudsepa // Sepa*

- **Official names // surnames**

especially in those areas where official farm names were not used in everyday speech



# Vergi village parallel farm names (20th century)

Vergi k. 17  
 Talud: Nr. skeemil:  
 Ankrü = Kauge = Sepa =  
 = Triki 20  
 Heinälase = Trubergi 17  
 Kallebruni = Vanapere 13  
 Kauge = Ankrü = Sepa =  
 Hlj Vergi

Vergi k. 20  
 = Vergi kool 16  
 Priiki = Ankrü = Kauge =  
 = Sepa 20  
 Trubergi = Heinälase 17  
 Turuofa = Uustalu 7  
 Uustalu = Turuofa 7  
 Hlj Vergi

Vergi k. 23  
 Kärniidu = Leemetsi 6  
 Leemetsi 3  
 Leemetsi = Kärniidu 6  
 Leemetsi = Oja 2  
 Liiva = Türpsali 12  
 Männiku = Steinbergi 9  
 Hlj Vergi

Conclusion

