



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects

Registration number, Östersjöstiftelsen: **S2-20-0020**

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Project title: Language Unity and Diversity in the Administrative Writing of the Swedish Baltic Empire

1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

The aim of the project was to study the varying and changing multilingual scribal practices that were used to render oral Finnish-language court proceedings into written Swedish legal prose in the Swedish realm during the Swedish Great Power era (1611 –1721). This era coincided with an emerging national language ideology, aspirations for unifying the Swedish language by standardization, and a large-scale judicial reform — the establishment of appellate courts. In this period, court writing developed from short memorial notes for mainly fiscal purposes to meticulous accounts documenting the administration of justice for posterity. Through a case study in language-mixing in rural lower-court protocols from parts of the empire where Swedish was not the main spoken language (Finnish-speaking areas), the project also aimed to explore issues of universal significance: the rise of language standardization and the emergence of national language ideology in multilingual settings during what has been called “the age of discovery of language”.

The main outcomes of the project thus far is three papers. One is published, a second one is in print and a third one is in preparation and will appear in a forthcoming volume (2025) in collaboration with the research project Kaski, funded by the Kone foundation, and published by Mouton De Gruyter in the series Studies in Language Change. The papers focus on different aspects of multilingual court writing in Sweden during the 17th century. They are presented below in order of appearance.

The first paper studies bilingual geographic descriptions in 17th century court records from Northern Finland. In cases dealing with ownership of small land patches, such as fields or forest areas, the descriptions of properties are often given in Finnish even though the prescribed language of court writing was Swedish. Three main issues are explored: 1) the semantic content and grammatical form of embedded Finnish segments, 2) the way in which Finnish segments are embedded into the Swedish frame grammar 3) explanations for bilingual writing practices in the court records. The data of the study is assembled using the card index of court records (Tuokko) at the Finnish national archives from a sample area comprising parts of Northern Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and southern Lapland. The historical backdrop and linguistic setting of the study is described, and the professional conditions and identities of early modern court scribes is discussed. The study shows that Finnish is mostly used for describing and localizing land patches, while Swedish is used for measuring and categorizing properties for fiscal purposes. Scribes also mostly avoid superfluous bilingual grammatical marking (such as combining Swedish prepositions and Finnish case-endings) when embedding Finnish adverbial expressions. It is argued that this restricted use of Finnish is a way for the scribes to compromise between the conflicting formal requirements of court writing (use of the Swedish language) and the requirement that the records be truthful and comprehensive. Leaving key information in Finnish



embedded in the Swedish records ensured that it was not lost in translation. The main result of this study is the novel description of a well-established and functional system of multilingual writing during the 17th century in which the societal diglossia between Swedish and Finnish is exactly matched by the division of labour between these languages in court records dealing with land ownership.

Paper number 2 studies builds on the results of the previous study in two main ways. First, it aims to control the results of the previous paper with a different type of segment in the court records: represented speech. Second, it aims to track the diachronic development of the previously outlined multilingual administrative writing in Sweden during the 17th century. The source material for this study consists of lower-court records from Finnish-speaking areas of the Swedish realm c. 1620–1700. The court system in Sweden was reformed in 1614 with the establishment of appellate courts that scrutinized the sentences passed by lower courts. Court records were written in Swedish, the official language of administrative writing of the period, but certain segments, notably represented speech, could be rendered in Finnish. This required textual mediation between the prescribed Swedish language of the court protocol, and the non-standard spoken Finnish in the courtrooms. The aim is to examine the embedding strategies, retention patterns, and textual mediation in the multilingual writing of 17th-century Finnish court scribes. The results show that Finnish is retained for especially pertinent or untranslatable witness statements. Segments are sometimes mediated by flagging, apologetic hedging, translation and clarification in Swedish. The use of Swedish translations is rare at the beginning of the period, but at the end of the 17th century, the use of parallel Swedish translations and clarifications to Finnish items increased. It is argued that this increase is due to the imposition of autocracy in 1680 and a concomitant push towards monolingual Swedish uniformity within the entire realm. In addition to the primary material of court records the paper also presents metalinguistic comments and mentions of linguistic issues in correspondence between the appellate courts and lower courts. The results show that any guidance on language choice or comments on multilingual writing is missing until the very end of the 17th century. The picture that emerges is of a rising national language consciousness during the era of autocracy in late 17th century Sweden. This consciousness manifests itself in the changing and more restricted practices of multilingualism in court writing.

The third study will discuss the use of visual means of mediating the use of multiple languages in court writing, namely script-switching in connection to language switching in Swedish 17th century court writing. The default language of these court records was Swedish, and the default script was the Neo-Gothic cursive script, widely used in the Germanic language area at the time. However, scribes would often switch to the italic script for a variety of purposes. Proper names, both toponyms and anthroponyms are frequently rendered in the italic script. The same goes for Latin or Romance language segments, such as loan-words or fixed Latin expressions or quotations from canonical law. In Swedish court records from Finnish-speaking areas the italic script was sometimes also used to render Finnish-language segments. This contrasts with the practice in contemporary printed books, in which the Frakturschrift was used for both Finnish and Swedish. In monolingual Finnish manuscripts from the early modern period the same Neo-Gothic cursive script was also used for both Swedish and Finnish. Previous research has shown that different script types of the Latin alphabet were to a high degree language specific. The court records thus constitute an exception to the rule of writing Finnish in the Neo-Gothic (and Fraktur types). It seems, then, that the script switching itself performs some semiotic work in Swedish court records. I will analyse this script switching both as a



phenomenon particular for the Swedish context and relate the findings to a pan-European macro-patterns. I will also discuss how script-switching relates to textual and linguistic mediation of other-language items as presented in the earlier studies outlined above. The results from the visual analysis will complement the results from the textual and linguistic analyses of the previous papers.

2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline

The detailed study of the interplay between two vernaculars in historical court writing is novel and will contribute to the already rich literature on code-switching between Latin and European vernaculars in historical court writing. The Finnish-Swedish early modern linguistic scenario has been somewhat neglected in international scholarship and papers 2 and three, published in English will hopefully fill this research gap.

3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

In addition to the interplay between Finnish and Swedish in the Circum-Baltic area, a novel comparison has been made in papers 1 and 2 to the status of indigenous and administrative languages in the Baltic provinces, Finland, and the Finnish forests. The case studies have been related to earlier research into language use and swedification in the Baltic provinces, especially Livonia and the city of Narva.

4. New research questions that the project has led to

The project has led to the discovery of systematic multilingual practices in Early Modern Swedish court writing. It remains to be studied to which extent such multilingualism is utilized in other administrative sources of the time, for instance ecclesiastic or fiscal documents. The project has been conducted in close collaboration with the Finnish Kaski-project on the role of town scribes as agents of linguistic change in early modern Sweden. The role of individual scribes and a biographically informed study of their language use and choices would be highly desirable. A question that has arisen is to which extent the multilingual practices in rural courts are similar in urban areas in which other languages than Swedish is spoken, for instance the presence of German in town records in Stockholm, or Estonian and Latvian in Reval and Riga in the Baltic provinces for that matter. Records within the Swedish realm, but outside Sweden proper should also be studied more closely since these areas have an even more complex constellation of vernaculars and official languages than the core areas of the realm. Finally, the Swedish-Finnish language constellation should form the basis of comparative studies in court writing in other multilingual areas in Early Modern Europe, such as the Romance-Germanic border areas of Central Europe.

5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

Below a list of publications and speaking appearances are listed:

Project publications:

Blomqvist, Carl Oliver 2022c: ”’dhen Quarn som wedh Sataman saaren korffuan etelän puolen saaren rannalla ähr wpbygdh’ – Flerspråkiga lägesbeskrivningar i 1600-talets finländska domböcker”. Aikauskirja Genos 4/2022: 194–208.



Blomqvist, Carl Oliver (in print) "Finnish reported speech and Swedish reiterations in 17th-century court records". *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics*.

Blomqvist, Carl Oliver (to appear): "Script and language switching in Early Modern Swedish court records" in Harry Lönnroth & Theresia Pettersson (eds): *Town Scribes as Mediators of Literacy in Early Modern Sweden*. Mouton De Gruyter.

Other papers published during the project:

Blomqvist, Carl Oliver 2021: "En nyidentifierad Birgittauppenbarelse på fornsvenska". I: *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift 2021*, vol. 121, p. 131–134.

Blomqvist, Oliver 2022a: Review of: Britta Olrik Frederiksen (red.), *Dansk editionshistorie 2. Norrøn og gammeldansk litteratur (2021)*. *Maal og minne 1/2022*, p. 175–185.

Blomqvist, Carl Oliver 2022b: *Heliga Birgittas texter på fornsvenska. Bok 9. Revelationes Extravagantes*. Stockholm: Runica & Mediaevalia. Blomqvist, Carl Oliver 2023: "Kodväxling och interferens: lågtyska inslag i svenska 1500-talsbrev". *Maal og Minne 2/2023*, p. 1–34.

Conferences and workshops:

March 2021: *West Norse and East Norse Manuscripts in the Digital Age*, Uppsala universitet (workshop speaker).

November 2021: *Svenska språkets historia 16*, Lunds universitet, conference paper.

March 2022: *Personnamn och migration under medeltiden och tidigmodern tid*, Institutet för språk och folkminnen (Uppsala), workshop speaker.

June 2022: *HiSoN*, Universidad de Murcia, conference paper.