Finnish

Standardization of Finnish orthography: From reformists to national awakeners

Taru Nordlund

0. Introduction

This article examines the standardization of Finnish orthography, concentrating on the two periods of rapid development: the 16th and the 19th centuries. The first part discusses the role of the Western Church at the early stages of written Finnish: conversion to Christianity and especially the Lutheran Reformation in the 16th century set the foundations for the usage of Finnish as a literary language. To provide a background to the standardization of orthography in the 16th and the 19th centuries, the spelling system of Modern Finnish is introduced in section 2. The following sections 3–5 discuss the orthography of the earliest writings and provide some examples of the problems that the first writers were faced with. The second external trigger for the evolution of Standard Finnish was European nationalism, which had reached Finland by the beginning of the 19th century. This era was characterized by a strong desire for nation-building, which was linguistically reflected in the process of standardization with its often heated debates about the “authenticity” or “purity” of the language. In section 6, aspects of 19th-century spelling are discussed. In most respects, the orthography of 19th-century Finnish resembles that of Modern Finnish. However, there were some debates on orthography that clearly reveal the nationalistic aspirations of the time. At the end of the article, one of these debates is discussed in more detail.
1. The role of the Western Church in the early stages of literary Finnish

1.1. Traces of written Finnish in medieval Finland

In the 12th century, the Catholic Church stretched its northernmost point of influence to Finland. However, the language used by the Church, Latin, had no tradition in Scandinavia. It is therefore difficult to estimate how much of the religious message of the Church was meant to be taught to the people, and more importantly, how much of this message was actually understood. Even though the language of the Church was Latin, it has been speculated that some Finnish must have been used in the Mass and in everyday parish life, even in Catholic times (Maliniemi 1955: 82–112).

Before the Reformation, no documents exist in written Finnish. However, the statutes of the Synods shed some light on the linguistic situation in medieval Finland. These statutes explicitly set down the most important doctrines and teachings that were to be explained for the people in their own language. The Synods of 1441 and 1492 are especially important in this respect. These Synods, including as their delegates the bishops of Turku, Maunu Tavast and Maunu Särkilahti, ordered that the basis of popular education should be established in the vernacular: particularly, the *Pater Noster*, the *Credo*, the *Ave Maria* and the *Modus Confitendi* should be translated into the vernacular (*in linguam maternam*), read aloud at church every Sunday, and written down to ensure that their wording remained stable enough to be learned by the people.\(^1\) It is also clear that the sacraments that involved some kind of interaction with the parishioners, for example communion, baptism and marriage, must have been partly in Finnish. Thus, even though no written documents in Finnish exist from the late Middle Ages, it is probable that these early ceremonies moulded the language for religious uses and later formed the basis for the literary use of Finnish (Maliniemi 1955: 82–112).

1.2. The Reformation

As stated above, the earliest printed texts in Finnish date from the first half of the 16th century. The history of the standard written language has its origins in translations of the Bible and other religious texts into vernacular Finnish, the language of the common people. The reformers set to work, with Latin, German and Swedish orthographies as their models.
The first authority on Finnish orthography (often described as “the father of written Finnish”) was Mikael Agricola, bishop of Turku and the best-known figure of the Finnish Reformation. In 1536, Agricola was sent to Wittenberg to study the doctrine of the Reformation under Luther and Melanchthon. No doubt, Agricola and other young students from Finland were sent to Germany with the intent of translating the Bible into Finnish. And indeed, Agricola lived up to these expectations and became a pioneer in the cultivation of Finnish in written form, by translating no less than 2500 pages, including an ABC-book (an early catechism), the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament, a book of sermons and several other books to be used by ministers. Agricola worked methodically, and he usually used several sources in Swedish, German, Latin and Greek to create a Finnish text that was adapted to the Finnish context. Agricola’s texts can be understood by a modern speaker of Finnish, with a small amount of training in his spelling. Apart from those of Agricola, Finnish texts from the first part of the 16th century only exist as a few isolated manuscripts, and after Agricola, almost a hundred years’ silence in written Finnish followed. This was probably due to the impoverishment of the Church, caused by royal policies. The first edition of the whole Bible appeared in Finnish in 1642 (Heininen 2007).

Sections 3 and 4 discuss features of Agricola’s orthography. To provide some background information for this, basic features of Modern Finnish orthography are introduced in the next section.

2. The orthography of Modern Finnish

Modern Finnish has almost a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes: each grapheme corresponds to one and the same phoneme, and each phoneme corresponds to one and the same grapheme. As a result, Finnish orthography uses almost as many graphemes as there are phonemes in the language.²

Table 1. Phonemes and graphemes of Modern Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phonemes</th>
<th>corresponding graphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/, /y/, /æ/, /ø/³</td>
<td>/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/, /y/, /æ/, /ø/³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/d/, /h/, /j/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/</td>
<td>/d/, /h/, /j/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/n/, /ŋl/, /p/, /t/, /s/, /t/, /v/</td>
<td>/n/, /ŋl/, /p/, /t/, /s/, /t/, /v/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are very few exceptions to the phoneme-grapheme correspondence. There is only one phoneme, the phoneme /ŋ/, which does not have a grapheme of its own. And indeed, the phoneme /ŋ/ is not a full phoneme, insofar as it only ever appears as a long sound, and always as a result of morpho-phonological alternation in inflectional forms, e.g.,

(1) lanka [laŋka]⁵  
‘thread, wire or string’

langa-t [laŋŋa-t]  
‘thread, wire or string’ + PL

Another feature of spoken Finnish that is not represented in orthography is so-called consonantal reduplication. After certain morphological categories, the initial consonant of the following word is lengthened: that is, in the written form, a word ends in a vowel, even though a word-final consonant is pronounced. If followed by a vowel, a glottal stop is pronounced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>writing</th>
<th>pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tule_tänne</td>
<td>[tulet tænne]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘come-IMP. 2.S. here’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lapsille_leluja</td>
<td>[lapsillel leluja]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children-ALLAT, toys-PART.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘toys for the children’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mennä_ elokuviin</td>
<td>[mennæʔʔelokuviin]⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go-INF. movies-PL.+ILLAT.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to go to the movies’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consonantal reduplication has its explanation in phonological history. At an earlier stage, the consonants /k/ and /h/ were used in word-final position in several morphological groups (e.g., *tulek tännek ‘come here’). In the spoken language, the final /k/ or /h/ was assimilated with the first sound of the following word. The final /k/ and /h/ were lost in most dialects, but as a relic from older days, the consonant is even today realized either as a gemination of the following consonant, or as a glottal stop (see examples above;
Consonantal reduplication has no counterpart in the writing system. At the end of this article, 19th-century attempts to standardize the notation of this phenomenon in Finnish orthography will be examined.

3. The orthography of the earliest writings in Finnish

3.1. Foreign models

As there were no manuscripts written in Finnish before the 16th century, the closest models for writing were Swedish, Latin and German texts. Until 1809, Finland was part of Sweden, and in addition to Latin, Swedish was used in writing. Typologically, Finnish differs from most European languages, and thus the earliest writers faced some serious problems in the standardization of its orthography.

Table 3. Agricola’s discrimination of vowels in different positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>initial syllable</th>
<th>final syllables</th>
<th>Modern Finnish: all syllables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caatua</td>
<td>loppun</td>
<td>kaatua, loppuun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to fall’</td>
<td>‘till the end’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, there were phonological distinctions that should have been made in orthography, but were not, as there were no suitable models for them in other languages. An example of this is the marking of long vowels. For lack of a model (at least, a systematic one) in other languages, the marking of long vowels was at first very sporadic. In Agricola’s works there was, however, a difference between the initial syllable and the final syllables of the word. Originally, Finnish used to have long vowels in the first syllable only, and thus all the long vowels in the final syllables are secondary. They arose as a result of contraction (e.g., *talohon > taloon ‘into the house’). In the initial syllable, Agricola often used two letters to mark long vowels, even though marking with only one letter was also possible. In the final syllables, Agricola usually used one letter only (Häkkinen 1994: 174, Lehtikoinen and Kiuru 2001: 62–63, Rapola 1965: 54–55).

As we shall see in section 4.1., Agricola’s tendency to use just one letter in final syllables may have been influenced by the phonological system of
the south-western dialects of Finnish where all long vowels in final syllables are shortened.

The second feature of orthography probably influenced by the source languages is the tendency to create hypercorrect distinctions, that is, the earliest orthography sometimes represented phonological features of the model languages, features that Finnish did not necessarily share. An example of this is the variation in the marking of the phoneme /k/, which in Finnish is a palatal or velar stop. In early written texts, the notation of /k/ often followed the models of Latin and Swedish. When /k/ preceded a front vowel, the grapheme <k> was used, and the grapheme <c> often (but not always) preceded a back vowel. The orthography thus reflected the pronunciation of Medieval Latin (and Modern Italian). When preceding the vowel /u/, the grapheme <q> was sometimes used for /k/, which was also a Latin tradition. And when /k/ preceded the vowels /e/, /æ/ or /ø/, the grapheme <ki> could sometimes be used, which in turn reflected Swedish pronunciation (cf. Modern Swedish känna [çenna] ‘to know, to feel’) (Lehikoinen and Kiuru 2001: 65). However, it is important to remember that Agricola’s writings (and those of his contemporaries) always show a great amount of (so far unexplained) variation in all these cases.

Table 4. Unexplained variation in Agricola’s works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricola</th>
<th>Modern Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lukea</td>
<td>lukea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read-INF.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to read’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caunis</td>
<td>kaunis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘beautiful’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kieula</td>
<td>keula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘bow (of a ship)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quin</td>
<td>kuin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conj.) ‘as, like, that’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. The phoneme /d/ – an orthographic loan

The phoneme /d/ is not part of the phonemic system of any Finnish dialect. It was introduced into Standard Finnish in the 19th century as an orthographic loan from Swedish. In Agricola’s orthography, the graphemes <d> or <dh> were used for the voiced dental spirant [ð]. The model for the or-
thography came from Swedish, which used a similar orthographical convention for a similar type of spirant sound (see Zheltukhin, this volume). In Swedish, /ð/ developed into /d/ in the 17th century, and the orthography changed accordingly. Consequently, the orthographic variant <dh> disappeared from Finnish texts, and, in the 1642 Bible, only the grapheme <d> was used to note [ð]. The spirant sound then started to disappear from spoken Finnish as well, and as the spirant gradually fell out of use, the pronunciation of <d> as [d] (as an apico-alveolar voiced stop) spread. Thus, a new phoneme was added to the phoneme system of Finnish, mainly after the written model (Lehikoinen and Kiuru 2001: 74–75).

Until 1809 Finland belonged to the Kingdom of Sweden, and all authorities, officials, priests, and teachers either came from Sweden or were educated in Swedish. It is therefore understandable that the pronunciation of /d/ did not cause any trouble for the Swedish-speaking intelligentsia (who had the same sound in their own language), but it proved to be extremely difficult for the Finnish-speaking people. Thus, it is no surprise that this “newcomer” was the source of a heated debate in the nationalistic language reform in the 19th century, as will be shown in more detail in section 6.

4. Some traditional and less-traditional explanations for the variation in the earliest texts

4.1. Diatopic variation: Features of south-western dialects in 16th-century writings

Since the city of Turku (Åbo) on the southwest coast of Finland was the capital city until 1812, Standard Finnish developed primarily out of south-western dialects. South-western features are particularly clearly seen in the texts of the earliest writers. As mentioned above, even the marking of long phonemes in final syllables with single vowels in Agricola’s writings could have been a feature from the south-western dialects. In these dialects, all long vowels in final syllables are shortened (cf., e.g., Rapola 1965: 70):

(2) ehtoo ‘evening (a dialectal word)’ > ehto
[monta] kertaa [many-PART] time-PART. > [mont] kerta
As stated above, apart from Agricola, only a few short and isolated manuscripts exist from the first half of the 16th century. One of these is The Gospel Book of Upsala, a manuscript that consists of 31 pages of texts from the Gospels and the Epistles. This manuscript has a lot of variation in the marking of long vowels, but it does not display the discrepancy between the marking of the initial and the final syllables as seen in Agricola’s texts (Penttilä 1932: 41–43).

Another feature in Agricola’s orthography that probably reveals diatopic variation is the marking of geminate nasals and liquid consonants. As stated in section 2, double consonants have a phonemic status in Finnish, and in Modern Finnish spelling they are always written with two letters. In the earliest writings, the marking of geminates shows a lot of variation.

However, even though the spelling of geminates was unstable, Agricola’s tendency to write, in particular, double nasals (mm and nn) and liquids (ll and rr) with only one letter seems to suggest that this is not pure coincidence. This tendency can be observed in the Gospel Book of Upsala as well. Indeed, the spelling of geminate nasals and liquids is especially complicated because of a regional south-western feature: in these dialects, these geminate nasals and liquids were shortened after a long vowel or a diphthong, or when preceded by a syllable that did not have main stress:

(3)  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{aalot} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{aalot} \quad [\text{geminate } l \text{ shortened when preceded by a long vowel}] \\
\text{wave}–\text{PL} & \quad \text{‘waves’} \\
\text{annamme} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{annonce} \quad [\text{geminate } m \text{ shortened when preceded by a syllable with no main stress}] \\
\text{give}–\text{IND.1.PL} & \quad \text{‘we give’}
\end{align*}
\]

In Agricola’s texts, the spelling is systematic enough to suggest that the words written with one letter would have been pronounced as short, and therefore the variation seen in the spelling of geminate nasals and liquids can partly be explained as diatopic. In addition, some cases seem to be lexically governed, so that there are morphological categories or words where spelling with one letter is much more usual than in others (Lehikoinen and Kiuru 2001: 82–83, Penttilä 1932: 80–81).

Of course, we cannot know for certain exactly what served as a model for Agricola in his marking of long vowels in final syllables or of geminate nasals and liquids. In all probability, the spelling was guided both by foreign models and the influence of south-western dialects. And of course, we do not know the intentions of the early writers themselves: was it their in-
tention to reflect spoken language, to indicate that the vowels in the final syllables were really pronounced as short, and geminate consonants as single consonants? Or did they want to follow models from other languages? If so, then why did they sometimes use long vowels instead of short ones? There was no written standard for 16th-century Finnish, a standard that would have led to the emergence of a non-variant form. As to some variables, we will probably just have to come to terms with the idea that there is no ultimate solution in understanding the variation, and no one single way of interpreting the texts.

4.2. Are there other explanations for variation?

Apart from diatopic variation, Agricola’s spelling shows diachronic variation. One example of this is the spelling of the spirant sound [γ] that was used as a weak grade variant of [k]. It has been stated that the spirant /γ/ was disappearing from Finnish in the 16th century, and the varying pronunciation is probably revealed by the variation in spelling (see e.g., Häkkinen 2007: 70):

Table 5. Agricola’s spelling variants for [γ]

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;gh&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;g&gt;</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roghan</td>
<td>algusta</td>
<td>luØen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food-GEN</td>
<td>beginning-ELAT</td>
<td>read-IND.1P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘food’s/of the food’</td>
<td>‘from the beginning’</td>
<td>‘I read’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several studies have pointed out the variation to be found in Agricola’s different works, for example, the translations of the New Testament from earlier and later stages of his career. Surprisingly enough, no systematic research on Agricola’s works has yet been carried out. A morphosyntactically coded database of Agricola’s works is being prepared at the moment, and the first critical edition of Agricola’s works, an edition of the ABC-book, his first printed text, was published in 2007 (see Häkkinen 2007). Along with the database, new insights on diaphasic variation in Agricola’s works will hopefully appear in the future.

Recently, a suggestion has been made concerning the role of printers, typesetters and typography in general on Agricola’s spelling (see Perälä 2007: 10–40). Agricola’s works were printed in Stockholm, since the first
printing house in Finland was opened only in 1642. However, Agricola had a personal representative in Stockholm, who supervised the printing, and he himself also often visited the printing house. Therefore, it has been assumed that the correctors of the printing house – who probably did not know Finnish at all – did not play a significant role in his spelling (Heininen 2007: 158–163, Perälä 2007: 29). Perälä (2007: 20) has pointed out that the typography in Agricola’s works closely resembles the works of the printing houses in Northern and Central Germany, and especially the books of Luther printed in Saxony.

Some variation in the early spelling could be explained by the general practices of the printing houses (Perälä 2007: 29). To cut down expenses, 16th-century works were printed in a dense and compact form. The printing surface was ideally very homogeneous and the margins straight. The printers did not want to use wide spaces between words to attain this. Rather, it is possible that the lines were made straight at the expense of orthography: a large number of sounds in several words could be written with either one or two letters, for example *hedelmä / hedhelme* ‘fruit’, *perkele / perchele* ‘Satan’. In addition, abbreviations and typographic ligatures (e.g., æ) were also used. It is noteworthy that the variation between short and long sounds could also have provided printers with options to treat the layout of the page. A typographical approach of this kind is certainly in resonance with current views on the variation in vernacular texts from the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period elsewhere in Europe (see for example Voeste 2008).

5. The development of orthography in the successive editions of the Bible

Quite a lot of the orthographical variation seen in the texts of Agricola and his contemporaries was regularized in the first translation of the Bible into Finnish in 1642. From this time onwards, the standardizers apparently aimed at a one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. In Agricola’s writings, there were still many cases where a single grapheme had several functions. In the first edition of the Bible, the graphemes <q> and <ki> disappeared for the notation of /k/. However, the distinction between /k/ preceding a front vowel (noted with <k>) and that preceding a back vowel (noted with <c>) subsisted until the end of the 18th century. The spelling of long vowels in final syllables remained unstable until the

Until the 19th century, successive editions of the Bible served as an authority for the standardization of orthography. Each committee or editor appointed to this work made slight improvements in the orthography. In practice, variation decreased and phoneme-grapheme correspondence became the norm. Towards the turn of the 19th century, opposition to “foreign” letters increased, for example <g> used for [k] after nasal or liquid consonants as in *hengi* (today *henki*) ‘spirit’, <c> or <x> used for [ks] as in *caxi* (today *kaksi*) ‘two’. This anticipated the beginning of the nationalistic aspirations, and led to lively debates on Finnish orthography in the first decades of the 19th century.

Towards the end of the 18th century, and especially along with the Bible translation of 1776 (the so-called *Old Church Bible*), orthographical innovations were usually to be found in profane literature. Religious writings fell behind, and the Bible, which in the early stages of standardization used to function as a precursor for all innovations, now became archaic, too “sacred” to be manipulated at all. However, this applied to syntax and vocabulary more than to orthography, phonology or morphology. This was the situation up until 1992, which saw the latest translation of the Bible into Modern Finnish. This change in attitudes also reflects a change in translation strategies, as the strategy of faithful translation gave way to more functional approaches.

6. The 19th century: Nation-building reflected in the standardization of orthography

6.1. Introduction to 19th-century Finland

As mentioned above, literary Finnish was at first mainly based on the western dialects. However, along with the political and ideological climate of the 19th century, the dialectal basis of Standard Finnish became wider and more democratic, as eastern dialects started to have their impact as well. In the 19th century, the official status of Finnish changed; in 1863 Finnish was decreed to have equal status with Swedish, and towards the turn of the century – slowly but gradually – it became a fully-fledged cultural language that was used, for example, in education, administration, culture, science and literature.
The nationalist movement had a variety of linguistic effects. Old (Standard) Finnish was greatly influenced by Swedish, and 19th-century scholars tried to purify Finnish by ridding it of Swedish loanwords and grammatical structures borrowed from Swedish. On the orthographical level, the phoneme /d/ was attacked on the same basis. In the 1810s to 1820s, there was heated debate on the phoneme /d/ and its orthography (see, for example, Mielikäinen 1996). The most radical writers wanted to abandon /d/ altogether and replace it with its dialect variants. In original Finnish words, /d/ only appears in word-medial position, as a weak grade form of /t/ in consonant gradation. In dialects, /d/ is not used, and there are several variants of the weak grade form:

Table 6. Diatopic weak-grade forms of /t/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strong grade</th>
<th>weak grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>pata</em> ‘pot’</td>
<td><em>padan</em> (Standard Finnish) ‘pot-GEN’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>paran</em>/<em>palan</em> (western dialects) ‘pot-GEN’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>paØan</em> (eastern dialects) ‘pot-GEN’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the debate at the beginning of the 19th century, the phoneme /d/, as well as the grapheme <d>, remained in Standard Finnish. What were the reasons for this?

Firstly, abandoning the grapheme <d> and using its dialect variants would have caused variation in the writing, as there were several different variants in different dialects. At the same time, the dialect basis of Standard Finnish was under discussion: some writers wanted to increase the eastern elements in the standard. Therefore, there was no consensus on which dialect form would be chosen – in fact, in this debate, nobody even suggested that only one dialect variant could be chosen for the standard.

Secondly, and more importantly, <d> remained in the orthography, as it had already become a marker of “civilized speech”. As mentioned before, Swedish had been the language of the educated classes and the intelligentsia, and only towards the end of the century did Finnish gradually become the official cultural language. During the standardization process, many Swedish-speaking people chose to speak Finnish, and it also became possible to have a higher education in Finnish. Even though the national-romantic ideology of the time highly valued Finnish dialects and rural living, the language of the Finnish-speaking peasantry as such could not have served as a model for the language of the educated classes. Thus, the dialect
variants of \(<d>\) were not accepted by the educated classes, being too “provincial”. And as there originally was no standard educated spoken Finnish – the language being only spoken by the common people – even the ideal of the proper way to speak came to be very close to written Finnish. In a way, spoken Standard Finnish was carefully constructed and artificial, not based on the dialect of a politically and culturally influential region, as is the case for the spoken standard in many other European languages (e.g., London English or Parisian French). This has affected – and promoted – strictly normative attitudes on both written and spoken Finnish up to the present day (Mäntynen 2003: 32–39, Paunonen 2006: 44–47).

6.2. 19th-century attempts to standardize consonant reduplication:

An example of etymological spelling

I will next look at attempts to standardize the notation of the so called consonant reduplication (see section 2) into Finnish orthography: that is, attempts to create a system that would represent this phenomenon in writing. This is an example of an attempt to create etymological spelling: the explicit marking of consonant reduplication in writing was thought to reveal an older and more original stage of the language.

As explained in section 2, word-final /k/ or /h/ was earlier used in many morphological categories. In final position, before a pause, it was lost (*veneh > vene ‘a boat’). In the western dialects, the final consonant was lost earlier than in the eastern dialects, probably before the 14th century, well before Agricola’s texts. In some eastern dialects, the final /k/ or /h/ is still heard in final position. In the word-boundary position, between two words, the final /k/ or /h/ was assimilated with the following consonant, and before a vowel, it was pronounced as a glottal stop (cf. table 7).

In the earliest known texts, the morphological categories that ended with a /k/ or /h/ normally end in a vowel. There are sporadic occurrences of consonants in some words (e.g., pereh ‘family’, mod. Finnish perhe) and for example in the allative case (talollen\textsuperscript{10} talo-ALLAT, ‘to the house’). The assimilated form only appeared in writing before clitic particles:

(4) \(\begin{array}{ll}
\text{pojalle} & \text{kk} \\
\text{pojalle} & \text{kin} \\
\text{boy-ALLAT} & \text{+ a clitic particle} \\
\end{array}\)

‘to a/the boy as well’
Table 7. Word-final /k/ and /h/ in different phonological environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>example</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>result of sound change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[tuleeko veneØ]</td>
<td>final, before pause</td>
<td>loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come-IND.PRES.3.S.-QUES. boat ‘Does the boat come?’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[venet tulee]</td>
<td>before a consonant</td>
<td>assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boat                 come-IND.PRES. 3.S. ‘a/the boat comes’</td>
<td>(between two words)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[veneš vaja]</td>
<td>before a consonant</td>
<td>assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘boat shed’</td>
<td>(in compound words)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[veneʔ ᆞehtii]</td>
<td>before a vowel</td>
<td>glottal stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boat                 arrive in time-IND.PRES.3.S. ‘a/the boat arrives in time’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, in the earliest texts, consonant reduplication is only occasionally marked. If marked, it only appears within a single word, that is, assimilation is never taken into account in writing if it appears between two separate words (Karemo 1971: 10–67).

The earliest grammars did not mention consonant reduplication at all. It was not until the 19th century that this phenomenon started to arouse interest on the whole. During the first half of the 19th century, several different proposals were made to create a notation for consonant reduplication in Finnish orthography: for example, the letters <h> and <c>, as well as different types of diacritics were suggested for this purpose (Karemo 1971: 68–119):

Table 8. Suggestions for the notation of consonant reduplication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>suggested form</th>
<th>author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sanoh</td>
<td>Renvall (1826)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanoc</td>
<td>Lönnrot (1841)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanok</td>
<td>Gottlund, e.g., (1829)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sano’</td>
<td>von Becker (1824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sano’</td>
<td>Varelius (1845)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the mid-1840s, a debate about consonant reduplication and its orthography flared up. In his textbook on natural sciences, *Enon opetuksia luonnon asioista* [The uncle’s teachings about matters of nature] (1845), Antero Varelius used the sign ‟ after a word to indicate consonant reduplication. As the following page of his book shows, consonant reduplication was – and still is – a frequent phenomenon in Finnish:

I. Peloutuksista pimiästä.

![Figure 1. A page of Varelius’s book *Enon opetuksia luonnon asioista* (1845: 5)](image)

Varelius used his notation very systematically, both in final position (before a pause) and between separate lexemes. As was to be expected, Varelius’s text provoked criticism from other writers, which resulted in heated discussion in newspapers. Varelius used the notation in his own works until 1851. He also received some support from the newspaper *Suometar*, a pro-Finnish newspaper founded by Varelius and some of his friends in 1847. However, Varelius’s proposition did not catch on, and he finally gave it up himself (Kaasalainen 1988, Karemo 1971: 120–126).
Why was the notation suggested by Varelius not accepted? Firstly, there was (and still is) a lot of variation in the distribution of consonant reduplication in different dialects. Some dialect speakers recognized the system, but for others, consonant reduplication might have been less of a recognized phenomenon. Even today, consonant reduplication is stronger in some morphological categories and phonological environments, and weaker in others. There is regional variation and even idiolectal variation. It is easy to see that the notation would have been difficult and complicated for many speakers of Finnish, especially people with no linguistic training to help to identify the relevant categories. Indeed, some opponents pleaded the ignorance of the “peasantry”: it would be unnecessary to complicate texts that were mainly directed at uneducated people, as Varelius’s textbook was.

Secondly, from the early texts on, the final consonant may have appeared sporadically in writing in certain words, in the allative, and before the clitic particles, that is, within a single word. However, no sign of the marking of the geminate between two separate words can be seen (Karemo 1971). Even those 19th-century writers who had no formal education and who were minimally exposed to written language do not have a trace of this phenomenon in their manuscripts. Some self-educated eastern writers do have single lexemes that end in -/k/ or -/h/, or words with clitic particles written with a geminate, but there is no sign of the geminate between two separate words. Most speakers of Finnish today probably do not recognize consonant reduplication in their speech. It is subconscious. Either it did not receive a notation in orthography because it is subconscious, or, it is subconscious because it is not represented in writing. Whatever the explanation, the independence of the single word, at least in writing, was too strong for a phenomenon that appears between two words to become a part of standard orthography (Nordlund 2007).

Last, but not least, it was pointed out that the notation Varelius suggested would be “messy” and difficult for printing houses. Printing would be slow and prone to misprints. Suitable printing letters did not always exist. For example, as can be seen in figure 1, the sign that came to be used in Varelius’s own book bore more of a resemblance to the number 6 <> than to the apostrophe <’> that it was meant to be.

The final point to make is that, despite the obvious difficulties, why was it so important for some 19th-century writers to design notations for consonant reduplication? The answer probably lies in the attitude towards the Finnish language in general. The norms of Standard Finnish were consciously built in the 19th century, and the national-romanticists readily saw Finnish as a genuine, pure, original, and a beautifully symmetrical lan-
language. The marking of the final /k/ and /h/ would in a way represent the older and fuller form of the language. The older stage of the language would be systematically reconstructed if the elements that had been lost were represented by a specific sign in the writing. This was a scientific attitude towards language, and it reflected the growing interest in the study of Finnish. More than orthography, however, 19th-century debates were usually concerned with morphology. There were debates such as: which ending should be chosen for the inessive case in Standard Finnish? Is the Finnish negation verb a real verb with full inflection, or a particle that is not conjugated (see Laitinen 2004)? Thus, for Varelius and others who suggested notations for consonant reduplication, it was probably less important to have a one-to-one correspondence between pronunciation and writing than to preserve a morpho-phonological feature of older times (Laitinen 2004, Nordlund 2004, Nordlund 2006).

7. Conclusion

The role of the Western Church was essential in the initial stages of the development of literary Finnish. Some traces of religious uses of Finnish can be seen in Catholic times but it was the Reformation that started the history of written Finnish properly, with the idea that everyone should have a chance to familiarize himself or herself with the religious message in his or her own language. The earliest writings in Finnish show a lot of variation in spelling. This is partly explained by the foreign models of writing that did not always do justice to the phonological system of Finnish. Diaphasic variation is also usual, and due to the political and cultural situation in late medieval Finland, especially features of south-western dialects appear. Very rarely-used south-western features were removed from the spelling along with the first edition of the whole Bible in 1642, and during the 19th century, the dialect basis of Standard Finnish became broader as several eastern features were accepted for the standard.

An electronic morpho-syntactic database of Mikael Agricola’s works has just been prepared, and in 2007, the first critical edition of his works was published (Häkkinen 2007). These projects will hopefully lead to thorough research on the variation seen in Agricola’s spelling, especially the diaphasic variation in his own works that is for the most part unexplained. No doubt, the morpho-syntactic database will also open several new vantage points on variation, for example, the role of typography and printing on the spelling and the process of writing in late medieval Finland.
Notes

1. An early variant of the *Pater Noster* in Finnish is found in the *Cosmography* of Sebastian Münster, printed in 1544. This variant includes features of eastern and Bothnian dialects, and supposedly dates from the Catholic period (Häkkinen 1994: 80).

2. A conventional view is that there are 21 phonemes in Finnish: 8 vowels and 13 consonants. In Standard Finnish, all the vowels and most of the consonants have long variants, that is, double vowels or double consonants, *geminates*. The sounds [b], [f], [g] and [ʃ] do not appear in original Finnish words, but only in loan-words.

3. The phoneme /æ/ is an open front unrounded vowel (as in the English word *hat*) and the phoneme /ø/ a close-mid front rounded vowel (as in the French word *deux* ‘two’).

4. The following notation is used: the notation /k/ refers to the phonemic level, [k] reflects pronunciation, the phonetic level, and the notation <k> is used to indicate the graphemic level.

5. As shown in this example, the phoneme /n/ is always pronounced homorganically with the following velar or bilabial stop. In this case, /ŋ/ does not have a status as an independent phoneme, but it only functions as a phonetic variant of /n/ in certain environments.

6. The <ʔ> is the sign of a glottal stop.

7. In addition to the shortening of the vowel, there are other phonological changes in this phrase as well. These are also typical for south-western dialects.

8. The conventional way to periodize the history of Standard Finnish is as follows:
   – before 1540 *Early Finnish*
   – 1540–1810/1820 *Old Finnish*
   – 1810/1820–1870/1880 *Early Modern Finnish* and
   – from 1870/1880 onwards *Modern Finnish*.

9. Apart from a small area on the south-western coast where it is considered to be a language-contact feature from Swedish.

10. The allative case ended either in a phoneme /k/ or a phoneme /n/. The allative with the ending -*llen* was used in Finnish texts until the 20th century, however, always along with the allative that ended in a vowel, which is the present day norm.

11. The earliest grammars of Finnish date from the 17th century. At first, grammars were mainly directed towards the Swedish-speaking authorities and officials in Finland. Descriptive grammars and grammar books for the instruction of Finnish as a mother tongue only appeared in the 19th century.

12. There are at least two obvious exceptions to this. The 18th-century lexicographer, folklorist and writer, Christfrid Ganander, used the final -k in his collections of folklore, as well as the 19th-century scholar and writer Carl Axel Gottlund, who aimed to use some kind of eastern Finnish dialect in his writings.
13. Suggestions have been made that the variation could partly be explained by the fact that there were several authors working on the translation of the Bible, along with Agricola. However, no systematic study has been made of this so far.

References

Primary sources

Becker, Reinhold von
1824  *Finsk Grammatik*. Åbo: Bibel-sällskapets tryckeri.

*Biblia*

*Biblia*
1776  *Biblia, se on: koko Pyhä Raamattu, suomexi alku-ramattuin hebrew ja grekan jälkeen wastauudesta ojettu: esipuhetten, lukuin sisällepitoen, yhtäpitävästen Raamatun paikkain osotuxen, ja lisättyin registerein kanssa 1776*. [Biblia, i.e. the complete Holy Scriptures, translated into Finnish from the Hebrew and Greek original versions of the Bible. With a foreword, marginalia, concordance and index 1776]. Turku: Frenckell.

Gottlund, Carl Axel
1829  *Otava eli suomalaisia huvituksia, osa 1* [Ursa Major or Finnish di-versions, part 1]. Tukholma [Stockholm]: Norstedt.

Häkkinen, Kaisa (ed.)

Lönnrot, Elias

Münster, Sebastian
Description of Finland: http://s1.doria.fi/helmi/bk/rv/fem970026/)

Renvall, Gustaf
Varelius, Antero
1845 *Enon opetuksia luonnon asioista* [The uncle’s teachings about matters of nature]. Helsinki: J. Simelüksten perillisten tykönä. (http://ia700404.us.archive.org/13/items/wrlennp/wrlennp.pdf)

**Secondary sources**

Hakulinen, Lauri

Heininen, Simo

Häkkinen, Kaisa

Kaasalainen, Erkki

Karemo, Kaarina

Karlsson, Fred
1983 *Finnish Grammar.* Helsinki: WSOY.

Laaksonen, Kaino, and Anneli Lieko

Laitinen, Lea

Lehikoinen, Laila, and Silva Kiuru
Maliniemi, Aarno

Mäntynen, Anne

Mielikäinen, Aila

Nordlund, Taru

Nordlund, Taru

Nordlund, Taru

Paunonen, Heikki
2006  Vähemmistökielesty variiovaksi valtakieleksi. [From a minority language to a varied dominant language.] Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston suomen kielen ja kotimaisen kirjallisuuden laitos.

Penttilä, Aarni

Perälä, Anna
Rapola, Martti

Sulkala, Helena, and Merja Karjalainen

Voeste, Anja