

### **On the origins of Codex Westh**

The birth of Finnish literacy is largely the product of the spread of the Reformed faith, which triggered a demand for Finnish language religious texts. The first printed Finnish texts were prepared by Mikael Agricola who can be considered as the establisher of Finnish written culture and his works as the first written sources of Finnish language. However at the end of the 1800s, a collection of manuscripts not yet studied was discovered and it came to be called as Codex Westh after its former owner. The uniqueness of the manuscript lies in the fact that certain parts of it were proven to be older than Agricola's works and it also contains a part (the book of Urbanus Rhegius) the only Finnish translation of which is included by this volume only.

It is a considerably difficult task to find out about the origins of this codex, because it does not contain any kind of clue regarding its author, its place of origin or its copyist, only some seals of the owner. Codicological studies have tried to isolate the individual texts within it and the quality of the paper has been studied to find the place of origin, but the results did not turn out to be relevant. The various kinds of handwritings can be distinguished within the codex, but there are no references on to whom they may belong. With the help of the seals in the book and on the basis of some library inventories of the era, the journey of the codex was successfully mapped from Rauma, Westh's place of residence to the library of the University of Helsinki, where it can be found today.

The manuscript is made up of 144 pages of text, 122 of which are in Finnish. The volume also contains some Swedish and Latin texts. The largest texts within the book are: a church handbook; the only Finnish translation of a German reformer's, Urbanus Rhegius's book on spiritual guidance; and the description of a church service. Furthermore, the codex also contains some Finnish and Swedish church songs, prayers and a guide for various diseases. Part of the book is identical with Agricola's certain works on similar topics, but Codex Westh also contains some sections that are not mentioned by Agricola or that describe an older church ritual compared to the one in Agricola's work.

Although the existence of the codex was already known at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, very few studies have been published about it. Mainly

scholars of church history studied the descriptions of church services and the musical scores of church songs in it. In 2012, Kaisa Häkkinen and her students published the whole text of the codex in a printed format, but no linguistic study has been published about the full text up until this point.

*Keywords:* *Codex Westh, Mathias Johannis Westh, Mikael Agricola, Finnish literacy*

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