

The first Finnish Bible translators

Translating the Bible to national languages has begun in the 16th century as an effect of reformation. The first Finnish Bible translations were also published this time. The most well-known Finnish Bible translator is Mikael Agricola, „the father of literary Finnish”, however, many others helped him accomplish his work. In this paper, I am introducing those who have contributed to the birth of the first Finnish Bible translations or even presumably participated in the translating process.

I divided this era to three periods. The first period (1527–1531) includes those who didn't translate themselves but nevertheless contributed essentially to the birth of translations: Martinus Skytte, the first protestant bishop of Finland, Petrus Särkilax, the first protestant teacher of the cathedral school of Turku, Johannes Erasmi, the headmaster of the school in Viipuri and Bertil, a vicar of Pernaja. The second period (1531–1557) includes the first Finnish students who had the opportunity to study in Wittenberg and who presumably made translations themselves: Thomas Francisci Keijoi, Canutus Johannis, Simon Henrici Wiburgensis, Martinus Teit and Mikael Agricola. Lastly, Ericus Eriki Härkääpää and Paulus Juusten belong to the third period (1557–1575) as they also took part in translating but represented a younger generation. In my study I am presenting the remaining information about these people, their life and work. Regarding the life of second and third periods' translators, some similarities can be detected. They had all been to Wittenberg where they studied directly from Melanchton and Luther (the following generations didn't have this opportunity as Luther died in 1546 and Melanchton in 1560).

Besides this, they all held church positions and were in the cathedral school of Turku as student, teacher or headmaster (or all). Nevertheless there are also differences regarding their place of birth, family background or age: Canutus Johannis was from Rauma, Agricola from Pernaja and Juusten from Viipuri. Agricola's family consisted of farmers but Juusten was from bourgeois ancestors and the age difference between Johannis and Härkääpää (and Juusten) was approximately 15 years.

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