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Scholarly Editing as a Dissertation Topic: Philological Perspectives on Documentary Editing in Theory and Practice

Harry Lönnroth

Hopefully, we are going towards a time when the extraordinarily important task of editing source texts will be met by greater appreciation than today, but, above all, by greater attention.

–Henrik Williams¹

Background²

The doctoral dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Scandinavian Languages that I duly defended in public at the University of Tampere, Finland, was a so-called philological edition³ for the period of 1678–1695 of the judgment book of the town of Ekenäs,⁴ a Swedish-speaking town in southern Finland.⁵ The scholarly edition includes philological com-

¹Henrik Williams, “Namn och bygd i norra Möre i ljuset av ett diplom från 1458” [English summary: “Names and settlements in northern Möre illuminated by a charter from 1458”], *Namn och bygd* 86 (1998), p. 78. All translations from Swedish are mine.

²A revised version of the opening address or *lectio praecursoria*, delivered at the University of Tampere, Finland, December 2, 2006. Harry Lönnroth, *Ekenäs stads dombok 1678–1695. I: Rättsfilologisk studie av en 1600-talshandskrift* (s.l. 2006a) [Abstract: *The judgment book of the town of Ekenäs, 1678–1695. Vol. I: A legal-philological study of a 17th century manuscript*]. Harry Lönnroth, *Ekenäs stads dombok 1678–1695. II: Filologisk utgåva med kommentar och register* (s.l. 2006b) [Abstract: *The judgment book of the town of Ekenäs, 1678–1695. Vol. II: A philological edition with commentary and indices*]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation in Scandinavian Languages at the University of Tampere, Finland. <http://acta.uta.fi/english>

³By the term *philological edition* I mean a scholarly edition that is “philologically reliable, i.e. can be used as a philological source by philologists”. Lönnroth 2006a, p. 28.

⁴The Finnish name of the town is Tammisaari.

⁵The doctoral dissertation will be published by the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters in 2007. <http://pro.tsv.fi/fvs>

mentary and indices for persons, places, subjects and cases. It constitutes a legal-historical document, which, I hope, will prove to have a long lasting philological and historical source value in both the Finnish and the Scandinavian perspective.⁶ Before I go on to discuss in greater detail the scholarly edition as dissertation topic in Chapter 4 in the light of my own experiences as a philologist and as an editor, I will briefly present the two volumes of this doctoral dissertation in Sections 2 and 3.

Court Records and Legal Philology

The first volume of the dissertation focuses on the original manuscript of the judgment book of the town of Ekenäs 1678–1695 from a legal-philological point of view. The volume also serves as an introduction to the scholarly edition, published in the second volume.

Court records are among the most valuable sources for many branches of historical science (e.g. cultural, economic, legal and social history) as well as philology and historical linguistics (e.g. dialectology, onomastics, historical pragmatics and sociolinguistics). Linguistically the data are characterised by a high level of dialogicity and spoken interaction in writing. It is of the utmost scientific and societal importance that court records be available for scholarly research in the form of scholarly editions of a methodologically and theoretically high standard.

The chief purpose of the dissertation was to produce a philological edition of the judgment book with commentary and indices. The aim was twofold. First, I wanted to conduct a legal-philological investigation of the seventeenth century manuscript and its genesis (Volume I). Second, I wanted to produce a philological edition of the original manuscript with critical apparatus (Volume II). Part I of Volume I includes six main chapters: 1. The judgment book as a philological and historical witness; 2. *Constitutio textus* –from manuscript to edition; 3. Manuscript in focus–textual history and diplomatics; 4. Scribes in seventeenth century Ekenäs–status, origin and identity; 5. Judgment book, scribes and palaeography; and 6. Conclusion. Part II of Volume I contains seven appendices and seven plates with samples of different hands, seals, and watermarks.

⁶Finnish court records are also fruitful in international comparison. See for example Raisa Maria Toivo, *Mother, Wife and Witch. Authority and Status in Court Record Narratives in Early Modern Finland*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation in Finnish history, University of Tampere, Finland (s.l. 2006).

The palaeographical analysis showed that the documents were written by eleven main scribal hands and two minor hands. Of the eleven main hands three could be identified; both minor hands could be identified. The official city scribes in Ekenäs seldom took care of the renovation of the judgment books; this seems to have been the task of the clerks. The subsequent annotations made by the scribes and the assessors in the Court of Appeal in Turku, Finland, are also discussed briefly in the legal-philological part of the first volume.

The edition is the first philological edition and the first to be presented as a doctoral dissertation in the history of the discipline of Scandinavian Languages in Finland. Moreover, archival records, for example those written in Finland in Swedish during the so-called Early Modern Swedish period (1526–1732), have seldom been edited and analysed by Scandinavian scholars (cf. documentary editing vs. editing of literary texts).

The Philological Edition with Commentary and Indices

The second volume of the dissertation contains a philological edition of the judgment book of the town of Ekenäs for the period 1678–1695. There has not previously been any source text that meets scholarly criteria. The original manuscript is stored in the Finnish National Archives, Helsinki. The years 1682–1683, 1685 and 1687 are missing. The judgment book has been edited and transcribed diplomatically with commentary, i.e. critical apparatus, and supplied with indices. The edition also contains one manuscript appendix (an addendum in the judgment book for the year 1684) and two excursuses (extracts from two other legal-historical documents in the Finnish National Archives). The edition with appendix and excursuses (part I) is followed by complete indices of persons, places, subjects and cases (part II).

The reports of the proceedings, originating from the magistrates' court of Ekenäs, are so-called renovated judgment books (transcriptions), edited and revised locally and then sent to the Court of Appeal in Turku for revision. The original drafts of the minutes for the seventeenth century are no longer extant.

The judgment book of the town of Ekenäs for the period 1623–1675 has been edited earlier by Emmy Hultman.⁷ The years 1635 and 1676–1677 are

⁷Emmy Hultman, ed., *Ekenäs stads dombok 1623–1660* [*The Judgment Book of the Town of Ekenäs, 1623–1660*] (Ekenäs-samfundets skrifter I:1, Helsinki, 1913). Emmy Hultman, ed., *Ekenäs stads dombok 1661–1675* [*The Judgment Book of the Town of Ekenäs, 1661–1675*] (Ekenäs-samfundets skrifter I:2, Helsinki, 1924).

missing. Her editions are nowadays also available in electronic form.⁸ However, Emmy Hultman's editions, like many other editions in Finland from that time, are outdated and do not meet the international standards of modern philology and textual scholarship.

Editing as an Academic Dissertation

The dissertation consists of two scientifically equal volumes. Volume I is a scientific monograph containing a legal-philological study of the judgment book from the seventeenth century; Volume II is a scholarly edition of the established original text. Surprisingly, as mentioned above, the dissertation is the first of its kind in the history of Scandinavian Languages in Finland. The reasons for this merit consideration. I therefore address this subject here by discussing the scholarly edition, in particular the philological edition, as a dissertation topic. The discussion may hopefully reveal something of the status of source editing, especially of the status of philological editing, in our language departments and also in other university departments.⁹

The introductory chapter to my dissertation also includes a rationale for the scholarly edition as a valid and demanding form for a doctoral dissertation and here I develop that theme. The fundamental idea is to encourage young scholars—but also their supervisors—to undertake an editing project as a dissertation topic. This is important for three reasons. First, it is important to ensure not only the quality but also the quantity of philological endeavour in the Nordic countries in general and in Finland in particular. This can in turn lead to an increased academic dialogue between editors and enhance their professionalism. Second, there are very good reasons to increase the editing of Nordic, especially Finnish, original documents and to publish them in scholarly, annotated editions. By so doing, one not only contributes to the growing need in historical research for reliable and accessible sources, but also to the needs of the historically oriented audience. In this respect one must consider the users and the medium of editing, such as the relationship between book editions and electronic editions. Third, it would be desirable for an editor to try to contribute to the development of text philological and

⁸Emmy Hultman, ed., *Ekenäs stads dombok 1623–1675* [*The Judgment Book of the Town of Ekenäs, 1623–1675*]. Electronic edition by Harry Lönnroth. Tampere: Tampere University Press, ePublications, 2005. <http://tampub.uta.fi/tup/951-44-6392-7.pdf>.

⁹Some disciplines and departments have for many reasons preserved the word “philology” in their names. For example, I started my research in Scandinavian Languages (until 1994 Nordic Philology) in the fall of 2000 at the Department of Philology II (from 2001 the School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies).

edition philological theory and the critical text method. In this case much remains to be done, for instance, with respect to the editing of Early Modern Swedish texts.

As Professor Odd Einar Haugen of the University of Bergen, Norway, has pointed out, philology as an academic discipline has existed for over 2000 years.¹⁰ The nineteenth century especially has been called the century of philology. Against this background it is somewhat surprising that text philology has never really made a breakthrough in Finland. This becomes clear when one looks at the history of the academic discipline.¹¹ As Professor Christer Laurén of the University of Vaasa, Finland, writes in his review of my dissertation manuscript, “the renewed interest in language history among Scandinavian scholars dealing with East Nordic texts with great slowness has come to the area of philology.”¹² The Swedish language historian Elias Wessén already made students and researchers aware that “grammar and language history always have to be connected to the study of texts.”¹³ Unfortunately, that is no longer necessarily the case. The risk today is that young scholars are rather unpractised in working with historical texts—in original or in transcript—that they are studying from a given theoretical perspective. By this I do not mean that “philology” is the opposite of “theory.” Rather, I would like to suggest that beyond *linguistic* knowledge one should also have *philological* knowledge. A basic course in language history is not enough for a historically oriented pragmatician or sociolinguist. An editorial project can serve as a fruitful interdisciplinary forum for students because it actualises many other disciplines within Scandinavian Languages and neighbouring fields; for example, language history, onomastics and dialectology, but also textual research in general.

When I started to prepare this paper, I gained confirmation for my assumption that the literature on scholarly editions as dissertation topics in

¹⁰Odd Einar Haugen, “Fem argument mot filologien” [“Five Arguments against Philology”] (*Den fornordiska texten i filologisk och litteraturvetenskaplig belysning* [“The Old Norse Text in the Light of Philology and Literature”], ed. by Kristinn Jóhannesson, Karl G. Johansson & Lars Lönnroth, Gothenburg Old Norse Studies 2, 2000), p. 17.

¹¹See *Nordistikens historia i Finland* [*The History of Scandinavian Languages in Finland*], ed. by Harry Lönnroth (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2004).

¹²Christer Laurén, “Utlåtande om FM Harry Lönnroths avhandlingsmanuskript” [“Review of the dissertation manuscript by Harry Lönnroth, M.A.”]. Faculty of Humanities, University of Tampere, 2006 (unpublished). My translation from Swedish.

¹³Elias Wessén, *Svensk språkhistoria I. Ljudlära och ordböjningslära* [*Swedish Language History. Vol. I: Phonology and Morphology*] (Nytryck i nordiska språk – NNS 4, Stockholm, 1955/1995), p. 5. My translation from Swedish.

the Nordic countries and even in an international perspective is very scarce. The Scandinavian editors have relatively seldomly reflected on their own field and their own choices at scientific conferences, in journals, and, above all, in their editions. The absence of reflection is of course most regrettable with respect to the education of professional editors.¹⁴ The American documentary editor Mary-Jo Kline points in her book *A Guide to Documentary Editing* that documentary editors must plan and organise their research thoroughly and in good time.¹⁵ It is often a question of a very long-range examination and careful planning, she writes. It is also not motivated appropriate to invest limited resources in just any text. Because planning is so important, the importance of theoretical and methodological literature on scholarly editing increases. It is then easier for a postgraduate student to avoid pitfalls, even though this will never be totally successful. Therefore in my dissertation I also have a pedagogical goal, i.e. I have wanted as a philological editor to record my own thoughts and solutions as explicitly as possible for fellow researchers interested in the editing of court records from the seventeenth century.

As a starting point for my discussion below, I have chosen two statements by two mediaevalists, one of whom is a Scandinavian philologist (in fact, he is a runologist, not an editor), the other a British historian. As a representative of Scandinavian scholarship I have chosen a statement by Professor Henrik Williams of the Uppsala University, Sweden. As a representative of Anglo-Saxon scholarship I have chosen a statement by Professor Emeritus P.D.A. Harvey of the University of Durham, United Kingdom. They write unaware of each other, but they have much in common when they argue for the existence of textual criticism.

4.1. The Philological Perspective

In his article “Namn och bygd i norra Møre i ljuset av ett diplom från 1458” Henrik Williams presents perspectives, among other things, on the editing of sources. However, he is mainly concerned with the use of source editions for onomastic research. According to Williams publications of a “source nature” are very seldom reviewed in detail in historical and linguistic journals.¹⁶ He evinces the following reasons. First of all, a text edition is

¹⁴For example the Scandinavian association for textual scholarship, *Nordiskt Nätverk för Editionsfilologer*, has not succeeded in filling this gap.

¹⁵Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2nd ed., 1998), p. 33.

¹⁶Williams, p. 66.

seen “as compilatory rather than as analytical in its nature.” Nor are there many who are able or willing to undertake the task of reviewing, which “can become as time-consuming as editorial work itself.” What I think is the most interesting fact from a linguistic point of view is that, according to Williams, it is regarded to be “fully acceptable not to check an example by oneself in the original if it has been published in a diplomatarium.” He continues that there is “every reason to critically review the published parts and at least do spot checks and check readings and identifications of place names.” In this respect the criticism concerns especially Scandinavian researchers of onomastics, but also other linguists who sometimes tend to neglect this fundamental source critical fact.

The academic credit is a factor that to a considerable extent directs the choice of dissertation topic. Williams writes—and I believe that this is probably the most important factor for the future of editing at our universities—that the editing of sources has not generally been given the same scientific status as, for example, the writing of monographs.¹⁷ However, according to the author, this assumption lacks all scientific basis. He presents the following three arguments in support of his view on the status of scholarly editing.

First, one has to at least admit that editing of texts and other publishing or compiling of sources often is of a greater public benefit within a discipline than many articles in scientific journals. If they who work toward making important sources available do not get proper appreciation for their work, there lies a risk that they get tired or at least that no new researchers are tempted to get involved with this kind of a task.

Second, the scientific standards that are needed for a proper source edition are many times underestimated. The level of critical analysis is often as high as in scientific dissertations, and the demands of profound knowledge of a material and the control of close related fields are often set higher.

Third, it is unsatisfying that source editions are silently considered of uniform quality, all equally well suited for building the basis for a scientific work within a closely related field in future.¹⁸

I understand these three points of view in the following manner. The first argument can be seen as a *benefit* argument, i.e., the question of the social relevance of research. The second argument can be seen as a *science* argument,

¹⁷Williams, p. 66.

¹⁸Williams, p. 66.

i.e., philological science as a science in its own right. The third argument can be seen as an *awareness* argument, i.e. the need for critical reviewing of editions and discussion of what makes an edition “scholarly.”

The Historical Perspective

The other scholar that I want to discuss in this connection is P.D.A. Harvey, a member of the British Academy. He concludes his book *Editing Historical Records*, which, as far as I know, has not attracted any attention in the Nordic countries, with a discussion of editing historical documents in the British Isles.¹⁹ His argument can also be seen against the background of the Scandinavian circumstances of today. Harvey writes that the scientific status of the editing of sources in the British Isles over many years “quietly and steadily” has been raised from the depths in which it had ended for over a hundred years. He argues that editing is needed for the development of historical knowledge of all kinds. The thing that philology at the very bottom deals with is history or language in history. Harvey believes that this work demands a high scientific level, creativity, professionalism, and “due reverence for the actual text”; a statement that he has borrowed from the British antiquarian Joseph Hunter (1783–1861). Harvey underlines that the skills that editing requires are in many respects the same as those needed for writing historical monographs. However, according to him, what separates the two activities from each other is that the editing of texts has another goal and different underlying philosophy.

The common denominator for Harvey and Williams is that they think that the editing of historical documents deserves greater attention but also requires greater critical awareness when it comes to the difference between “good” and “bad” editions. This is not only the case at universities, but also, among others, in learned societies, where editing is often dictated by commercial, not scientific, considerations. However, I want to argue that scholarly editing “merits” attention only if the editors themselves try to do their best; editions should be as good as possible for their actual purpose and users. They must self-critically demonstrate in word and deed that their work is important, as well as scientifically and socially relevant. In fact, the fault is not always with the reader if editing is not appreciated. Quality and visibility are keywords for the development of the discipline. I want to stress the distinction between text philology and edition philology. The former deals

¹⁹P.D.A. Harvey, *Editing Historical Records* (London: The British Library, 2001), p. 97.

with the analysis of the manuscript, the latter with the creation of the edition. One has to pay attention to both sides of the coin to produce a truly scholarly edition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I comment on a persistent prejudice often associated with text and edition philology. I will put it succinctly because prejudices in general have no place in science. An argument often evinced against philology is lack of so-called linguistic relevance. The linguistic relevance must, however, be understood within a wider perspective than before. A philological edition—if edited “by the book”—is an edition that can be used for linguistic purposes, in other words, it is linguistically relevant. Whether an edition is philologically reliable or not will be decided by the scientific community. In addition, it is important to recall that linguistic special studies can also be published separately in other connections, for example in professional journals of many kinds.

A central part of philological education is that one is, among other things, aware of the development of different meanings and varying readings in old manuscripts. Editing and commenting on manuscripts, however, always leaves room for uncertainty. When all is said and done with respect to philology—as the Norwegian philologist Helge Jordheim has put it—it is “the science of reading.”²⁰ One learns to read, interpret and understand old texts and handwriting best by a long philological and language historical education, a task that in no way is favoured by today’s fast pace of studying. The methodological skills are of fundamental importance. The interdisciplinary perspective is natural, it need not be separately emphasized. Scholarly editing is a field where philologists and historians can collaborate. The role of theory has become more important in recent years, but this role cannot obscure the control of the “traditional” methods (e.g., palaeography). Hereby the border crossing between the “old” and “new” philology will be actualised. The fast electronic development also enables new solutions (e.g., electronic editions and electronic corpora), even though most researchers will in all probability prefer a traditional book edition to a hypertext on a computer screen.

What I have been arguing in this paper has above all been about philologically oriented edition philology, but the same also applies to literary ori-

²⁰Helge Jordheim, *Lesningens vitenskap. Utkast til en ny filologi* [*The Science of Reading. An Outline for a New Philology*] (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001).

ented edition philology (critical and popular editions). Without correct editions the literary and cultural heritage will not be passed on to future generations. Edition philology has, in other words, an important cultural and national task. In Sweden the series “Svenska klassiker utgivna av Svenska Akademien”²¹ partially takes care of this task. In Finland the situation is not as good as in Sweden; we lack, for example, text critical editions of the great names of Finnish literature such as Aleksis Kivi (1834–1872) and Väinö Linna (1920–1992). However, the situation is gradually improving. Without reliable sources we cannot, for example, ask the interesting question of the intention of the author. It would be desirable that the discussion of whether one can present a scholarly edition as the highest academic dissertation eventually would fade into oblivion. The main thing is that the postgraduate student in his dissertation shows, as it is written in the requirements, “independent and critical thinking within his own field of research.”²²

²¹“Swedish Classics published by the Swedish Academy.”

²²*Humanistisen alan jatkotutkinto-opas 2006–2007 [A Guidebook for Postgraduate Studies in the Humanities, 2006–2007]*. Faculty of Humanities, University of Tampere. <http://www.uta.fi/tiedekunnat/hum/opintoasiat.html>