

The roles of Rasmus Rask and Gustaf Renvall in the publishing and editing of Christfrid Ganander's *Nytt Finskt Lexicon*

Elina Palola & Petri Lauerma

After his visit to Finland in 1818, Rasmus Rask organized the publication of Christfrid Ganander's *Nytt Finskt Lexicon* (MS 1786–1787) with the financial help of Russian patron Nikolay Rumyantsev. The dictionary was edited by Rask's Finnish teacher Gustaf Renvall. This article shows that despite Renvall's abridgements, the dictionary retains archaic expressions.

1. Rasmus Rask and Finland

The famous Danish scholar Rasmus Rask (1787–1832) was one of the founders of comparative linguistics. His studies in Germanic and Nordic languages formed the basis for the understanding of sound correspondencies between related languages. Rask also studied several other languages, among them Finnish and Lappish, finding them unrelated to Indo-European languages. Wanting more material for his comparisons he visited Finland as a part of the long trip that eventually led him through Russia to places as distant as Caucasus and Ceylon. (On Rasmus Rask e.g. Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd 2000:159–164.)

Rask came to Turku in March 1818. He was in Finland for only a month but managed to meet many eminent Finnish scholars and inspire them to study Finnish language and mythology. At first Rask started to take Finnish lessons from Gustaf Renvall (1781–1841), who at that time was adjunct (associate professor) of history and docent of Finnish language. Rask's notes from these lessons formed the basis of his own unpublished Finnish grammar (Lauerma 2019). When Rask expressed interest in Finnish vocabulary, he was shown the unpublished manuscript of Christfrid Ganander's *Nytt Finskt Lexicon* (1786–1787) as the only available major source. (On Rask's trip to Finland see Ekman 1899:21–23; Korhonen 1986:24–25; Lauerma 2005:125; Häkli 2017:10–12.)

2. Christfrid Ganander and his dictionary

Christfrid Ganander (1741–1790) was, alongside Henrik Gabriel Porthan (1739–1804), one of the most significant Finnish representatives of the humanistic sciences in the end of the 18th century. He was born in Haapajärvi and worked as a chaplain in Rantsila from 1775 to 1790. He published many works, such as scientific articles, a collection of riddles and fairy tales, a book of pharmacy and also one of animal diseases. Ganander is also called the father of comparative religious studies in Finland on the basis of his *Mythologia Fennica* (1789), a reference book of Finnish mythology. Above all, he is remembered as a dictionary writer, an investigator of the Finnish mythology and a collector of traditional poems. (Nuutinen 1997:IX, XII–XIII; Häkkinen 1998:634–635; Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd 2000:41.)

The most important of Ganander's works is his comprehensive dictionary *Nytt Finskt Lexicon*, which was the most complete dictionary up to that day. The dictionary is very wide with 35 122 entries and over 180 000 occurrences of Finnish words. In addition to the Finnish entry, it usually includes a note of the part of speech and the Swedish or Latin equivalent or definition. Example sentences are presented also in Swedish, and often in Latin and German, too. Furthermore, Ganander gives the entries clarifying synonyms as well as equivalents in dialects and other languages. (Nuutinen 1997:IX–X, 2000:351.)

The dictionary is not only linguistically significant, but it is irreplaceable as an information source about the literature, tradition and mythology of its time. It includes references to old Finnish literature, of which a great deal was destroyed in the Great Fire of Turku in 1827 or otherwise disappeared. (Häkkinen 1998:635; Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd 2000:41.)

Ganander systematically gathered vocabulary from the literature of his time. He also had the material gathered by his grandfather Henrik Hiden with whom Ganander lived after his father's death in 1752. Ganander describes the use of the words with an abundance of examples and gives a great amount of vernacular vocabulary in his dictionary. The dictionary is also said to be the first etymological Finnish dictionary because of its etymological explanations. (Häkkinen 1998:635; Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd 2000:40–41; Kilpiö 2011:131.)

The first impetus for Ganander's dictionary was the need to complement the dictionary of Daniel Juslenius (1676–1752), printed in 1745. Porthan and Ganander started the work together, but Porthan soon handed over his materials for Ganander to use and Ganander continued the work on his own. After finishing his work, Ganander sent his thick pile of manuscripts to Porthan to check in 1789, a year before his death. Porthan was completely surprised by the magnitude of the work. He thought that Ganander's work was not yet ready for publication

because of the old etymological views and inadequate dialect materials, among other reasons. Porthan was planning to complement and correct the dictionary, but the work was never finished. Thus, the manuscript was not printed, but it ended up in the university library, where Rask came across this work. (Ekman 1899:19–20; Nuutinen 1997:IX–X; Häkkinen 1997:25, 1998:635; Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd 2000:40–41; Romppanen 2001:133–137; Lauerma 2005:124.)

3. Financing and editing plan emerges in St. Petersburg

Rask had not forgotten Ganander's dictionary when he continued his journey from Finland to St. Petersburg, where he spent more than a year. The most important person Rask met in St. Petersburg was count Nikolay Petrovitsh Rumyantsev (1754–1826), a great patron of sciences, who had been in eminent positions as diplomat and still had political interests. Rask suggested to Rumyantsev that a Finnish dictionary based on Ganander's manuscript should be compiled and published, and proposed Renvall as the editor for this work. Rumyantsev accepted the plan, because he thought that the publishing of such a work would strengthen the position of Finnish and its affinity to other Finno-Ugrian languages which were all mainly spoken in Russia. At the same time this would lessen the impact of Swedish, which was the language of Finland's previous rulers. (On Renvall's plan and Rumyantsev's role in it see Elmgren 1874:27; Ekman 1899:33–37; Korhonen 1986:25; Lauerma 2005:125; Häkli 2017:12–14.)

From Renvall's letters we can follow the process of Rask persuading him to accept the post of editor, and see some of Rask's ideas concerning the dictionary, like the alphabetical order of words. But it was Renvall who turned down Rask's ideas of writing Finnish front vowels with Danish and German letters and marking vowel quantity with diacritics instead of doubling the letters. (Ekman 1899:37–39; Lauerma 2005:126; Häkli 2017:21–22.) The choice of languages used in the dictionary became a bigger problem. Ganander had used Swedish and Latin when explaining the meanings of Finnish words, but Rask thought that Latin would be adequate for the use of foreign scholars. Renvall emphasized that Swedish would be essential for the use of dictionary in Finland. As a compromise German was accepted as third language in the dictionary. (Ekman 1899:38; Lauerma 2005:126; Häkli 2017:21.)

Renvall started his editorial work already in 1818, practically alone, as he had wished, but getting relatively little new lexical material from other scholars (Elmgren 1874:28; Korhonen 1986:25; Lauerma 2005:126–127). The project took quite a long time, because he had other occupations and there were many omissions and changes to make in the contents.

4. From Ganander's manuscript to Renvall's dictionary

Though Renvall's dictionary became trilingual, it was not possible to translate all the nuances of Ganander's Swedish definitions and expressions into German, especially since Renvall had to shorten the German definitions. Therefore, the main language for the word articles from Ganander became Latin. (Hakulinen 1967:99.)

The new dictionary was meant to be a compact, cleaned-up version of Ganander's manuscript. Renvall omitted a large amount of Ganander's lengthy explanations from the articles as well as examples regarding word use and literature quotes. It is also known that Renvall removed a large number of Ganander's entries and phraseology during his editorial work. Renvall left out especially unusual derived words, expressions he considered dialect and descriptive words and loan words. (Hakulinen 1967:99–100.) The following observations are based on the material which Palola – one of the authors of this article – collected for her dissertation (2009).

4.1. The omission of certain poetical expressions

Ganander has often included in his dictionary so called coinages, poetisms, temporary constructs, only because of a single line of a folklore poem. One example is *pilkooma*, which Ganander (1997 s.v. *pilkooma*) has accepted as an entry into his dictionary, and for which he has given the meaning 'gash' without any mark of poetism. He provides with the entry *pilkooma* examples *pikomata*, *pilkkomata* 'without doing any harm, any damage' and explains that these words are used in poems. I have not found any examples of the word *pilkooma* 'gash' in the folklore poems or in other old texts including the old Finnish dictionaries. It would seem that Ganander has made the entry *pilkooma* solely because of these very rare examples *pikomata*, *pilkkomata* 'without damage' in folklore poems, without any evidence of the noun *pilkooma* 'gash'. (See Palola 2009:185.) It seems that Renvall has recognized such items and omitted them.

Other coinages from Ganander that Renvall has not continued to use include *herankarva* 'otter' and *sirakainen* 'bear', for example. Both of them are very rare, even in folklore poems. Ganander has noted that these coinages are used in poems, yet still he has chosen to accept such kinds of words as entries into his dictionary. There are also some coinages that both Renvall and Lönnrot (in his dictionary compiled 1866–1880) have accepted from Ganander's material, even when such coinages have been marked as being poetisms.

Ganander provides the poetic noun *torikainen* 'bear' together with *sirakainen* in his dictionary. *Sirakainen* is not included as an entry in any of the dictionaries apart from the one by Ganander, and neither Renvall (1826) nor Lönnrot (1958)

mentions it in connection with *torikainen*. Their opinions were probably based on Ganander's dictionary. No other traditional poems use *sirakainen* or *torikainen* meaning 'bear'; only a poem in the Arwidsson-Bergh collection (SKVR), which is a parallel text to Ganander's poem, includes the verses *siwun käyfwyk sirakainen, kaufwas karfwas tårikainen* 'go away you Sirakainen, go far away you Torikainen', which Ganander (1997 s.v. *sirakainen*) gives in his dictionary.

The nouns written down by Ganander may be based on genuine traditional poems even though other examples are difficult to find. It is possible that Ganander had some information that other people did not write down and did not possess after him. In any case, how Ganander, Renvall and Lönnrot mention, *sirakainen* and *torikainen* are both poetisms, temporary constructs, and not actually names for a bear, at least not in language other than poems. They are nevertheless semantically justified and genuine; they have simply not been retained in any other literary monuments of the Finnish language. It is interesting that Renvall, and subsequently also Lönnrot, have accepted *torikainen* (also *tarikainen*) but not *sirakainen*.

Renvall was critical towards the eastern dialects, although later he did accept some features of these dialects (Renvall 1837:24–26; Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd 2000:124, 144; Lauerma 2005:137–141). This may have affected especially the omission of expressions from the folklore poems, as most of these were from the areas of the eastern dialects.

Ganander's dictionary has examples of very rare and complicated reflexive forms, which Renvall seems to have omitted completely from his own version (see Palola 2009:139–141). In the reflexive forms there is a specific suffix that shows that the action is directed to the subject (Penttilä 1963:214). Renvall shunned the reflexive forms in other than poetic language use, too, and even publically objected to their use (Renvall 1837:25–26; Lauerma 2005:137). It is particularly interesting that his own attitude towards language and language use is also strongly reflected in the editing work of Ganander's manuscript.

4.2. The preservation of rare expressions and false interpretations

Renvall has been praised for how well and critically he has chosen and organized the most essential word articles for his collection from Ganander's work, which has been described as illogical (see Rapola 1962:69; Hakulinen 1967:99–101; Häkkinen 1998:635–637). However, it is possible to find such rare words and expressions in Renvall's dictionary from Ganander's materials that have not been found in other sources, as well as some of Ganander's questionable interpretations.

One of the most valuable legacies of Ganander's dictionary for the posterity is the fact that he happened to record such rare language use that has not survived

anywhere else (see Palola 2009: 84, 140, 191, 236). Renvall has copied this kind of materials into his dictionary. For instance, he has taken the very rare form of the Finnish negation clitic *kAAAn* ‘neither’, namely *nak*, and included it in his dictionary and called it a Savonian equivalent of clitic *kAAAn* (see Renvall 1826 s.v. *Nak, Näk*; Palola 2009:80–84). Renvall’s example *ei minullanak* ‘neither have I’ cannot be found in any other sources, as it is probably based on a quote from Ganander’s dictionary (Palola 2009:80–84).

Regarding vocabulary, Renvall has kept some rare expressions and their special meanings that Ganander has used. These include for example *kaiha*, *kaihi* as in ‘evil’ and *kävyn kanta* as in ‘a poor person, beggar’. (See Palola 2009:141–143.)

Renvall has in some cases continued to use Ganander’s interpretation in an edited form, though it seems to be uncertain. In his entries Ganander often cites old folklore examples, which he explains. In particular, he interprets the world of folklore: what the line meant in its place (or context) in the poem and the world older than his own. On the other hand, he sometimes explains a line in a very concrete manner even if it has a metaphorical meaning regarding spells, for instance. (Palola 2009:240–242.)

It would seem that Ganander has accepted some entries into his dictionary, even if the only evidence we have found of this kind of words is from the language of the old poems. For instance, Ganander (1997) has an entry *käyteliä* which has the forms *käyteliäk*, *käyteliäs*, for which he gives the meaning ‘someone which is creeping’. He provides an example of using this noun in a poem and notes that within its context it has a meaning ‘lizard’. It is remarkable that Ganander has not marked the noun *käyteliäk* as a poetism, even if he gives an example where this word is used in a poem. There might be a difference. Renvall (1826 s.v. *käyteliäs*) explains that *käyteliäs* in poems means ‘something which is creeping, for example a lizard or a snake’. It is significant also, that Renvall has not accepted the form with a final *k*, which seems to be a mistake by Ganander. (See Palola 2009:201–203.)

There are also incorrect materials that both Ganander and Renvall seem to have accepted. For example, Ganander (1995:79) notes in his *Mythologia Fennica* that in old poems a mythic oculist called Munnu occurs. Renvall (1826) has an entry *munnu*, with a meaning ‘healer’. However, *munnu* is the incorrect interpretation of incorrectly copied lines of a poem, when *Nunnus Ilman tyttäriä* ‘Nunnus the daughter of the Air’ has been copied as follows: *Munnu silmän tyttäriä* ‘Munnu the daughter of the Eye’, which Ganander gives in his dictionary as an example of the entry *munnu* ‘deastri’ (see SKVR XV:120–121; Palola 2009:110–111). It seems that Renvall’s critical approach here, regarding Ganander’s materials, has failed, and future sources have an incorrect citation when describing the Finnish language. That is, even if Renvall has edited Ganander’s interpretation somewhat.

By continuing the use of that Ganander's very rare material, Renvall has made it possible that these rare words and expressions and their meanings have appeared in future works and thus influenced the description of the Finnish language in dictionaries and grammatical works.

5. Publication and later history

Renvall published his edition – which was named *Lexicon Lingua Fennicae, Suomalainen Sanakirja* – in two parts. Some copies of the first part were printed in 1823, but its preface and the second part of the dictionary were not completed until 1826 (Toivonen 1938). The book got a fairly good reception, only the German descriptions of meaning were criticized. Unfortunately, in the following year 1827 the main part of the edition was destroyed in the fire of Turku. (Elmgren 1874:28–29.) By a lucky coincidence the manuscript of Ganander's dictionary was saved, because Renvall had forgotten to return it to the library (Hormia 1961:112). Though Ganander's original dictionary was not published until the 20th century (as a facsimile edition in 1937–1940, and as a thoroughly edited printed edition 1997), Renvall's publication nevertheless guaranteed that a significant part of Ganander's work continued its life as material for later dictionaries.

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Elina Palola (chapters 2 and 4)
Ph. D., researcher
Finnish language, University of Oulu
elina.palola@oulu.fi

Petri Lauerma (chapters 1, 3 and 5)
Ph. D., senior specialist,
docent in Finnish language
Institute for the Languages of Finland
petri.lauerma@kotus.fi