



DEATH PSALM

Finland in the 1150s: the national saint Bishop Henry is murdered – but how, and by whom? Can digital humanities help solve Finland's oldest murder mystery?



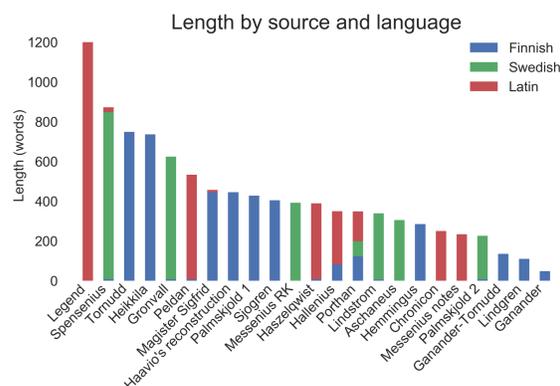
* More about our methods:



WITNESSES

22 texts about the life and death of St. Henry: in Finnish, Swedish and Latin, both in verse (Death Psalm of Bishop Henry) and in prose.

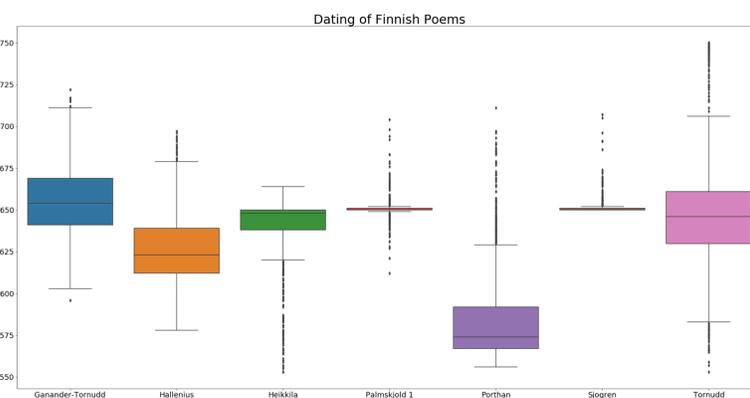
Known datings between 1280s and 1892, mostly from 17th and 18th centuries.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

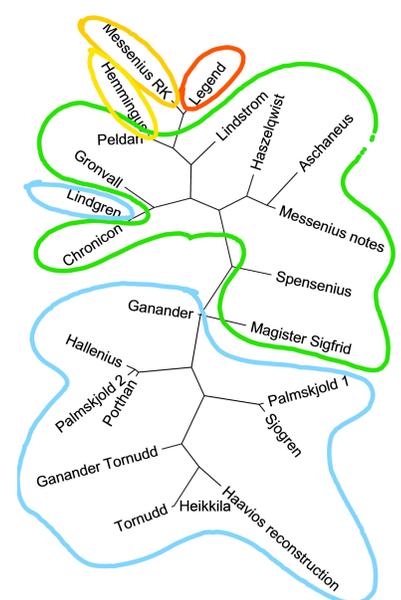
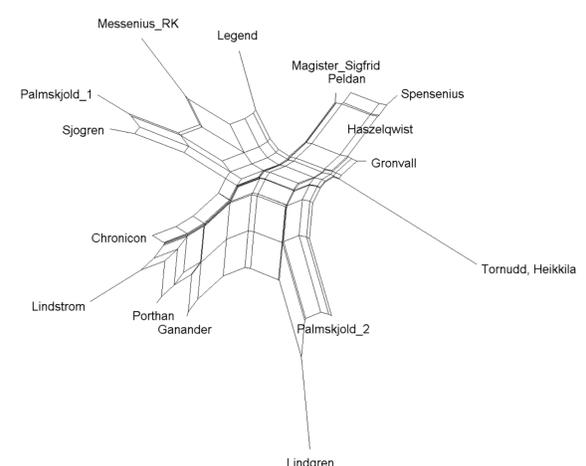
Thematic and historical relationships of different sources?
Possibilities for dating the uncertain sources?

Historical evolution of the tradition?
Relevance of older interpretations?



METHODS*

- Encoding the contents of the sources
- Phylogenetic methods
- Text classification for dating



MAIN FINDINGS

Interlinking traditions: Vernacular oral (blue) and Latin literary (red) traditions are clearly different strands, yet with many contacts. Later learned prose texts (green) rely on the Latin tradition and some features from oral traditions.

Historical evolution: Tracing development and persistence of certain motives needs more work with stemmatology of individual scenes. A time-consuming stemmatological analysis on the level of individual features is needed, but the road to success has been paved.

Dating the sources: Very tricky due to both the layered character of the sources and the individual and varying orthographies in old literary Finnish. The most enigmatic and historically layered manuscripts show the most variety. Big surprise: the version associated to Porthan bears features possibly relating to 16th century?

Evaluating earlier research: Reconstruction of the contents of the *Death Psalm* by Martti Haavio (1948) relies heavily on only some versions. Aesthetic and poetic preferences vs problems of presentability?