

## SEPPO TAPIO SUHONEN (1938—2010)

Seppo Tapio Suhonen, professor of Finnic languages at the University of Helsinki (1978—2001) and former president of the Finno-Ugrian Society died on Monday, September 13.

Seppo Suhonen was born on May 16, 1938 in Iisalmi, in the Northern Savo district, in a farmers' family. After graduating from the Upper Secondary School in Iisalmi (Iisalmen Lyseo) in 1958, he studied Finnic linguistics, phonetics, and Finnish and comparative folklore at the University of Helsinki. Already as a student he showed his potential as a future researcher. He published several articles, including one on the formants of the Votic vowel /*ɛ*/ in "Virittäjä" (1963), which to this day remains the only instrumental phonetic study of this language, and another article together with a fellow student on Votic riddles and proverbs. During his studies he also worked as an assistant lecturer in phonetics both in Helsinki and Turku universities. Together with professor Lauri Posti he prepared for print a book of Votic field-notes by E. N. Setälä (—*Memoria saecularis E. N. Setälä* 27. II. 1964 (MSFOu 135)). This cooperation of a professor and a student combined with the fact that Seppo Suhonen's graduation thesis dealt with Livonian phonology, shows that Lauri Posti considered him as a possible future candidate for his post. Lauri Posti's own doctoral dissertation had been on the main traits of Livonian historical phonetics.

Seppo Suhonen defended his doctoral dissertation "Die jungen lettischen Lehnwörter im Livischen" (MSFOu 154) in October 1973. This study on newer



Latvian borrowings in Livonian begins with a short overview of the Latvianization of Livonians, and includes a discussion about the age of newer Latvian borrowings and the criteria of identification of such borrowings, including ways of distinguishing between borrowings from Literary Latvian and Livonoid Latvian, and between borrowings of Latvian words of German origin and words of German origin. His commented list Latvian loanwords in Livonian includes 2534 items. Problems of Latvian influence in Livonian were dealt with also in his book "Lähisukukielten muoto-oppia ja lainasuhteita" (Castrenianumin toimitteita 9, 1974), where Latvian calques and

semantic borrowings and influences in the usage of the dative case in Livonian are studied. This book also gives an overview of the reflexive conjugation in Finnish, Lude, Veps, and Livvi (or Aunus) Karelian as well as phonotactics. In 1976, his book "Liivin kielen näytteitä" (Castronianumin toimitteita 5) with a selection of Livonian texts recorded in 1971 from Pētõr Damberg, one of the ideologists of the Livonian literary language, was published.

On becoming the professor of Finnic languages at the University of Helsinki, Seppo Suhonen initiated important changes in the teaching of Finnic languages. After the retirement of the permanent lecturer in Estonian, the teaching of Estonian was taken over by a visiting lecturer from Estonia. Subsequently, Suhonen achieved the expansion of the teaching staff by a visiting lecturer of Estonian literature and culture, and a visiting professor of Estonian language and culture. This way, in addition to the instruction of Finnic languages also instruction of Estonian language and culture was provided. This change has given an opportunity for several professors and lecturers from the University of Tartu to teach Estonian to Finnish students, and to do research in the well-equipped libraries of the University of Helsinki. The University of Tartu acknowledged Seppo Suhonen's work by electing him an honorary doctor of the University of Tartu.

After becoming a professor, Seppo Suhonen's research interests remained Finnic-oriented, despite being mostly focussed on language contacts in three language contact areas. The first of these areas includes that of Livvi, Lude and Veps. Seppo Suhonen studied Finnish loanwords in Livvi Karelian (Karjala-aunuksen suomesta kulkeutuneista sanoista. — Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 58, 1978), adaptation of Russian borrowings (5 624 words) in Lude (Venäläislainojen mukautumisesta lyydiin. — Laatokan piiri. Juhlakirja Heikki Leskisen 60-vuotispäiväksi 10. 10. 1990, Helsinki 1990), and Russian sentence constructions in Veps (Vepsäläis-venäläisiä lauserakenteita. —

Systeemi ja poikkeama, Turku 1993). Another important contact area studied by Seppo Suhonen was western Ingermanland, where he was particularly interested in Votic. Having studied the main features of so-called Kukkuzi Votic, Suhonen decided that being historically Votic Kukkuzi represents Ingrian from the descriptive point of view (Wotisch oder Ingrisch? —Dialectologia Uralica, Wiesbaden 1985). He also carefully identified phonetic features characteristic of Ingrian and Finnish in late borrowings of Votic (Zur Identifizierung der jungen Lehnwörter im Wotischen. — Lyökämme käsi käthen, Amsterdam 1985), and Russian influences in Votic (Über Art und Umfang russischen Einflusses im Wotischen. — Finnisch-ugrische Sprachen zwischen dem germanischen und slavischen Sprachraum, Amsterdam 1992).

Seppo Suhonen was the first Finnish linguist who became interested in the complicated connections between Finnish and Coastal Estonian, spoken on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland (Über die Beziehungen zwischen dem Finnischen und estnischen Küstendialekten. — Explanationes et tractationes Fenno-Ugricae in honorem Hans Fromm, München 1979) and by the descendants of Coastal Estonian resettlers from Kuusalu in the Swedish-speaking environment in Kabböle on Finland's southern coast (Eine estnische Sprachinsel in Finnland. — Lingua Posnaniensis XXIII, 1980).

From 1989 Seppo Suhonen participated actively in the preparation of the three volumes of the Finnic language atlas "Atlas Linguarum Fennicarum" and was the editor-in-chief of the first volume. The last volume of the atlas was given to the publisher in October this year.

Seppo Suhonen was not only as a linguist. He held the position of the secretary (1975–1983) and the president (1991–2000) of the Finno-Ugrian Society, the most important organization in the field of Finno-Ugristics. This demanding job required a lot of time and extremely good organizational skills. At the same time he was also a board member of several other institutions, including Tug-

las Society, the Estonian Institute in Finland, and the Curatorium of the University of Tartu. Seppo Suhonen was deeply interested in people and cultures; he had numerous friends and acquaintances among Estonian cultural figures. One of the main outlets for his interest in cultures were his activities as a friend of Setos, the easternmost South Estonian group whose territory went under the Russian power in the 9th century. Setos are Orthodox and their unique culture is very different from that of other Estonians or Russians. Together with Paul Hagu, Seppo Suhonen edited the Seto epic "Peko", 7939 verses sung by Anne Vabarna in 1926 and 1927 (Snellman-instituutin julkaisuja. A-sarja 18/1995,

Kuopio), and together with Tuija Saari-  
nen a book about the history and culture  
of three Orthodox ethnic groups: Skolts,  
Karelians and Setos (Koltat, karjalaiset  
ja setukaiset. Pienet kansat maailman  
rajoilla (Snellman-instituutin julkaisuja  
A-sarja 19/1995, Kuopio)). He translated  
the Seto epic Peko into Finnish (SKST  
1082). He also acted as the president of  
the Society of Friends of Setos (Setu-  
kaisten ystävät-yhdistys).

Seppo Suhonen's personality, his  
work, and initiatives will always have  
an important place in the memory of  
his numerous colleagues, friends and  
students. *Linguistica Uralica* commemo-  
rates him as one of the former members  
of its advisory board.

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