

IN MEMORIAM: TUOMO TUOMI 1929—2011



The life of Professor Tuomo Tuomi, so full of work and achievement, ended on 24 November 2011 in Helsinki. As the director of the Finnish Dictionary Fund (*Sanakirjasäätiö*) and, later, of the Research Centre for the Languages of Finland (*Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus*) Tuomo Tuomi ably carried the responsibility for great projects of collection, research and lexicography. He initiated innovative approaches, such as application of data processing in storing language data as well as in dictionary and atlas work. In addition he found time and zeal for various cultural hobbies.

Tuomo Tuomi was born on 26 October 1929 in Kouvola. His school years and youth was spent in Seinäjoki, Southern Pohjanmaa. His interest for Finnish studies brought him to Helsinki, where he lived for the rest of his life. His work on the vocabulary of Finnish dialects was awarded the degrees of Candidate of Philosophy in 1958 and Licentiate of Philosophy in 1965.

Tuomo Tuomi's life acquired a fresh sense of direction and purpose in 1966, when Lauri Hakulinen, the then Head of the Dictionary Fund, employed him as archive secretary and lexicographer. That is when he simultaneously delved into various aspects of what was to become the central work of his life, i.e. collecting and storing dialect material and compiling dictionaries. This was supported by his earlier fieldwork experience gained while collecting the vocabulary of northern Central Finland; this also served as material for his Licentiate dissertation, which received the highest mark.

The Finno-Ugric community came to know Tuomo Tuomi at the Second Finno-Ugric Congress held in Helsinki in 1965, where he as Executive Secretary was responsible for managing the event together with Esko Koivusalo. This was also the beginning of life-long friendships with Estonian linguists. The congress was a magnificent success, while the organisers served as unofficial consultants for several later congresses.

In 1966 Tuomo Tuomi was appointed Director of the Dictionary Fund and chief editor of Finnish dialect dictionaries. The main task of the Fund, at that time, was collection and storage of vocabulary. Immediately, Tuomi managed to secure a long-time special funding for additional collection of Finnish dialect lexis, thus providing for four collecting projects carried out in the late 1960s. In the 1970s the collecting effort was continued in the form of monthly expeditions to different places in Finland. After that the main attention of the Fund was turned to dictionary work.

The first editor instructions and sample entries for a Finnish vernacular dictionary had been published in "*Virittäjä*" as early as 1948–1950. In his new capacity of chief editor Tuomo Tuomi started holding weekly Board meetings aimed at compiling detailed editor instructions and training lexicographers. Experience and knowledge must have also

been found from the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland as in 1968 cooperation was launched with Estonian colleagues working on "Eesti murrete sõnaraamat" (Dictionary of Estonian Dialects). New editor instructions for the Dictionary of Finnish Dialects were published in 1977 (2nd edition 1988). Those were supplemented by "Suomen murteiden sanakirja. Johdanto" (1989) by the Chief Editor.

Tuomo Tuomi was among the first humanitarians who took interest in the possibilities of data processing. One of the projects he headed involved storing the entry words of "Nyky-suomen sanakirja" on magnetic tape, thus making them computer-accessible. In 1972 (2nd ed. 1980) "Suomen kielen käänteissanakirja" was published by the Finnish Literary Society. This served as the source for the most part of the Finnish material contained in the 12-language international database "Language Synergetics" maintained at the University of Trier, Germany. Together with Pauli Saukkonen he was in charge of the Finnish part of that database at the end of the 1980s.

From 1971–1980 Tuomo Tuomi was the chief editor of "Virittäjä". With his background of dialect and lexical studies he had no prejudice against any new trend in linguistics and so they flourished on the pages of the journal. He even grew so fond of journalism that, in the late 1980s, he founded "Kieliposti", which was later incorporated in the journal "Hiidenkivi".

The most notable period of Tuomo Tuomi's working life began in 1976, when he was appointed Professor and Director of the Research Centre for the Languages of Finland. The newly founded centre, which hosted a dozen projects and subdivisions, funded from different sources and differently managed, was manned by 73 people. The running of such an institution which was housed not only in several buildings in Helsinki downtown but also in Turku, was not an easy task. Tuomo Tuomi's great ambition was to emphasize the role of language cultivation as public service, to launch

publishing, to employ data processing, to enhance research and diminish the proportion of collecting and storing information, and to set up common offices.

Tuomo Tuomi's close personal contacts with Estonian linguists date back to the 1960s. His directorship brought continuous co-operation with the Institute of Language and Literature, Tallinn, and a brisk exchange of researchers. Also, there were common research interests with the University of Tartu, including old literary language. The Soviet–Finnish scientific and technological cooperation enabled mutual visits of scholars of Finnic as well as of more distant Finno-Ugric languages. Those visits were of great importance for Mordvin, Mari and Mansi dictionaries. Owing to Tuomo Tuomi's art of negotiation and diplomacy there was never a break in the routine of research trips. Seeing the necessity and needs of data processing Tuomo Tuomi fought the bureaucracy with enough success to procure computers for Estonia, Karelia and Hungary in the revolutionary period of the early 1990s.

However busy with administrative tasks, Tuomi never neglected the dialect dictionary, his life's most central obligation trusted to him by the last Board of the Dictionary Fund, consisting of Lauri Posti, Lauri Hakulinen and Kustaa Viljuna. Its first volume of about 1000 pages was published in 1985, to be followed, in close succession, by the next three in 1988, 1992 and 1994, respectively, all under Tuomi's leadership. Since the very beginning the dictionary was designed as a computer-based system, first with an eye to printing and research, yet the web version currently in progress also owes a lot to Tuomi's providence.

Another dialect project initiated by Tuomi was a series of publications of Finnish samples "Suomen kielen näytteitä", meant for research and as supplement for the dialect dictionary. The series represents 100 hours of tape recordings from different Finnish dialect areas provided by the Finnish National Sound Archive (in total, 50 fascicles and over 5000 pages, recorded during 1978–2000).

One of Tuomi's favourite approaches was mapping the areal distribution of dialect words, which turned out to be the alpha and omega of his research activities. The idea of a Finnic Atlas was born at an Estonian-Finnish-Karelian symposium held in Petroskoi in 1979. Elected to lead the atlas project, Tuomi's tenacious effort made it a cooperation project between Finland and USSR, the implementation of which started in 1987. This meant that for the following three decades, Estonian, Karelian and Finnish linguists studied not only in their own institutions, but exchanged, now and then, weekly visits to discuss the state of the art. This routine resulted in a three-volume "Atlas Linguarum Fennicarum" (1994, 1997, 2010).

When professor Tuomo Tuomi retired in 1994, not resting on his laurels, though, he could look back on his achievements and results with satisfaction. The Research Centre for the Languages of Finland, amiably called Kotus, had grown into a research pool which was over a hundred

strong. It had become an institution with its own joint working space, stable economic basis, and efficient administration; it had developed its own information systems, its collections were turned into databases in an ever increasing tempo and its publishing activities were lively. Although Kotus was still standing on a firm Fennistic ground, considerable changes had taken place in its domain and emphasis. Language planning had grown stronger, minority languages received due attention, collection of specific language material had turned to modern usage, routine archive work was taken to the minimum, while what was most important, Kotus had secured a firm position among the Finnish scientific institutions.

For his merits, Professor Tuomo Tuomi was made a Commander of the Order of the Lion of Finland and awarded the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana of Estonia. He received honorary doctorates from the Universities of Joensuu and Turku.

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