



Reino Kero

* 2.3.1939 † 25.6.2020

REINO KERO, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Turku, died on 25th June 2020 at the age of 81 years. He had spent the whole of his academic career on research and teaching at that university, having gained a doctorate there in 1974 with a thesis on the early Finnish emigrants to North America. He had also occupied numerous important positions in the university administration, including a term of office as Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities. Kero had been a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters since 2001.

Reino Kero made an extensive contribution to research into Finnish migration history, amounting to some ten books, scores of papers for journals in various languages and also more popular writings. He played a key role in the large-scale general history project for the study of migration that began in the mid-1960s, and his doctoral thesis in population history, *Migration from Finland to North America in the Years between the United States Civil War and the First World War (1974)*, raised him at once to a prominent position in the international community of migration scholars by virtue of his methodological approach and thorough treatment of the

topic. Crucial factors in this were the unique quality of Finnish population records and that fact that he was one of the first migration historians to employ computer technology in his research.

Kero summarized the findings of his decades of research into this topic in two major volumes published in Finnish: *Suureen Länteen. Siirtolaisuus Suomesta Yhdysvaltoihin ja Kanadaan* ("The Great West. Migration from Finland to the United States and Canada", 1996) and *Suomalaisina Pohjois-Amerikassa. Siirtolaiselämää Yhdysvalloissa ja Kanadassa* ("Finns in North America. Immigrant Life in the United States and Canada", 1997). He was also a pioneer in the study of the migration of Finns from North America to Soviet Karelia in the early 1930s, with his *Neuvosto-Karjalaa rakentamassa. Pohjois-Amerikan suomalaiset tekniikan tuojina 1930-luvun Neuvosto-Karjalassa* ("Building Soviet Karelia. Finns from North America bringing Technology to Soviet Karelia in the 1930s", 1983).

Alongside his studies of migration, Reino Kero also published more general encyclopaedic works such as *Uuden maailman jättiläinen. Yhdysvaltain historia* (Giant of the New World. A History of the United

States” together with Auvo Kostiainen and Keijo Virtanen, 1991) and *Intiaanien Amerikka* (“The America of the Indians”, 1986). His interests were wide-ranging, however, as they also included economic history, the history of technology and pre-history.

Reino Kero was involved in training a generation of researchers who produced around ten doctoral theses, more than 60 MA theses and hundreds of other publications. He was able to see for himself as an ASLA Fulbright scholar in 1966–67, when touring the parts of North America where Finns had settled, that there was a wealth of interesting material available all over that enormous continent.

The work of collecting this vast amount of original material and recording it on

microfilm and in other formats that began in the late 1960s yielded a valuable body of data on the history of Finnish migrants to distant parts of the world, both North America and elsewhere. This amounted to many tens of metres of shelving containing archives, about 500 rolls of microfilm and hundreds of printed publications, the majority of which have now been transferred to Turku University Library. Some of the original material has also been digitalized.

The University of Turku archives of the Finnish migrations are a treasury of material for use by researchers from both Finland and abroad, and copies of some of the collections in these archives have been passed on to universities and research institutes in the United States and Canada.

*Obituary by Auvo Kostiainen
and Keijo Virtanen*

Photo: Eero Kuparinen