



## Päiviö Tommila

\* 4.8.1931 † 18.11.2022

Juhani Päiviö Tommila was born in Jyväskylä on 4 August 1931. His father Eero Tommila was a college lecturer and from 1944 Professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of Helsinki, and his mother was mathematics teacher Salli Tommila. Päiviö Tommila went to school first at the Jyväskylä Lyceum, then at the Helsinki Real Lyceum. His childhood home sparked his interest in statistics and his passion for photography and philately as a hobby. However, Tommila decided to pursue studies in Finnish and general history. Like many other history students, he chose Finno-Ugric ethnology and political science as his subsidiary subjects. Young Tommila performed his military service in the Niinisalo garrison in western Finland.

Tommila followed the traditional career path from writing a commissioned history to working in academic positions. He started out by writing a history of the Nurmijärvi parish, and then worked as assistant of Finnish and Scandinavian history at the University of Helsinki for six years (1959–1965). During his time as assistant, Tommila earned his PhD in 1962 with a doctoral thesis entitled *La Finlande dans la politique européenne en 1809–1815*. The opponent was Professor Jaakko Suolahti

and the custodian Professor Eino Jutikkala. Back then, it was still common for professors in the same department to be opponents. In the same year that he obtained his PhD, Tommila became Adjunct Professor of the chair of Finnish and Scandinavian history. Tommila spent eleven years (1965–1976) as Professor of Finnish History at the University of Turku and the next 18 years (1976–1994) at the University of Helsinki.

By the 1990s, Päiviö Tommila had become an influential professor of Finnish history, shown for instance by the title of Academician of Science, granted to him in 2004. Professor Tommila's administrative career gained momentum from his extensive work experience at the universities of Turku and Helsinki in the period from 1967 to 1992. This career was crowned by his rectorship at the University of Helsinki 1988–1992. His close connections to science associations further consolidated his position in academia. He was active in the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters where he was elected as a member in 1970. Tommila was also a prominent member of the Finnish Society of Science and Letters, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Finnish Union of University Professors, the

Estonian Institute in Finland and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies.

Professor Päiviö Tommila's research career was built on three pillars: thorough research on the press and local histories and the history of historiography. His first study on the press dates back to 1963 (*Suomen lehdistön levikki ennen vuotta 1860*, "The circulation of the Finnish press before 1860"). Even before then, he had published local histories, namely *Nurmijärven pitäjän historia* ("The history of the Nurmijärvi parish", 1958–1959), and later *Jyväskylän kaupungin historia* ("The history of the city of Jyväskylä", 1970–1972) and, following a research project, a collection entitled *Muuttuva kylä* ("The changing village", 1980). With his work, Tommila modernized the 1930s local history research tradition. The third pillar of Tommila's published works was his interest in the history of science, as exemplified in *Suomen historiankirjoitus* ("Finnish historiography", 1989), which became widely used as a textbook.

It was in these areas of interest that research groups led by Tommila published the results of their large multivolume projects in the years 1979–2002: *Suomen kaupunkilaitoksen historia 1–3* ("The history of the Finnish city institution"), *Suomen kulttuurihistoria 1–3* ("The cultural history of Finland"), *Suomen lehdistön historia 1–10* ("The history of the Finnish press") and *Suomen tieteen historia 1–4* ("The his-

tory of Finnish science"). These reference works based on academic research have been found useful by several generations of students and researchers up until the present day. Professor Tommila's research portrays a strong urge to pass on the tradition of historical research to new generations of researchers: this is particularly evident in his works on local history, the period of Finnish autonomy (1809–1917) and the history of historiography.

As an active observer of social movements, Tommila not only produced research, but also wrote about 400 articles for periodicals such as *Kotiseutu*, *Suomalainen Suomi*, *Valvoja*, *Uusi Suomi* and *Kanava*. Tommila's last work (2011) concerns his father's family region in Merikarvia, Satakunta. Tommila's roots in Satakunta in western Finland were important to him, as was his summer house in Kustavi archipelago. Tommila was married to mathematics teacher Seija Tommila (née Kilpi, 1931–2017) and they had five children. In the last year of his life, Tommila lived in a nursing home, but was in good health and enjoyed the company of his 15 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Professor Päiviö Tommila passed away in Kauniainen at the age of 91 on 18 November 2022. Tommila provided instruction and guidance to a wide group and multiple generations of history students. We remember his service to historical research and Finnish science with gratitude.

*Maria Lähteenmäki*

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