

# Pentti Virrankoski

\* 20.6.1929 † 20.8.2023



Professor Pentti Virrankoski was born in Vancouver, Canada, on 20 June 1929, and died in Turku on 20 August 2023 at the age of 94. He grew up in Kauhava and graduated from the Kokkola Lyceum in 1948. He first studied chemistry at the Helsinki University of Technology, but switched to history after one year. He graduated as Master of Arts from the University of Helsinki in 1953, majoring in Finnish history. In 1963, he defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Myyntiä varten harjoitettu kotiteollisuus Suomessa autonomian ajan alkupuolella* (“Finnish Domestic Handicrafts Producing for the Market in the Early Part of the Period of Autonomy”). In the preface to his doctoral thesis, he mentioned that the history of Finnish domestic handicrafts had been a source of fascination for him for a long time.

Two years after his doctorate, Virrankoski was appointed Associate Professor of Finnish History at the University of Turku in 1965, and Professor in 1979, a chair he held until his retirement in 1992. In recognition of his research, he was conferred the title of Honorary Doctor by Åbo Akademi University in 1988. He received the Gustaf III Prize from the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland in the same year and the

Axel Hirsch Prize from the Swedish Academy in 1996. He became a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1979.

As a professor, Pentti Virrankoski studied and supervised research primarily on the economic and social history of Finland under Swedish rule. His main project, which he started with Professor Päiviö Tommila, focused on rural craftsmen in Finland under Swedish rule. Virrankoski outlined his thoughts on the history of ideas in his 1986 biography *Anders Chydenius: demokraattinen poliitikko valistuksen vuosisadalta*. As portrayed by Virrankoski, Chydenius was a politician inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment and pietism, whose economic views were widely connected to 18th century social debates. In his work, Virrankoski describes how Chydenius was opposed to legal economic monopolies and defended the freedom of trade, following the lines of early liberals in France and Sweden. On the other hand, Chydenius acknowledged the lack of political rights especially among the working population. The commendable study was also published in Swedish under the title *Anders Chydenius: demokratisk politiker i upplysningens tid* in 1995.

Pentti Virrankoski wrote his primary testament as a historian in the peace of his retirement years, a history of Finland in two volumes, *Suomen historia 1–2*, published in 2001. At over one thousand pages, the work constitutes an overview of the

history of our country, spanning from pre-historic times to the 20th century. In addition to key political, cultural and economic events, the volumes shed light on the history of lifestyles and the everyday and the experiences of individual people.

*Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen*