

Marja Leinonen 1946–2019

Ulla Marja-Leena Leinonen was born on 16 January 1946 in Varkaus, Finland. She was originally a researcher and expert in the Slavic languages, and subsequently also in the Finno-Ugric and Baltic languages, who spoke and translated the languages she studied.

Marja Leinonen was so fascinated by the Russian language and general literature that, after having completed a correspondent's degree at the Helsinki School of Economics in 1967, she decided to pursue these subjects at the University of Helsinki. She obtained her Master of Arts degree in 1975 and her Licentiate degree in 1979, and earned her PhD in 1983. Her doctoral thesis on aspect in Russian, entitled *Russian Aspects, "temporal'naja lokalizacija" and Definiteness/Indefiniteness* (*Neuvostoliittoinstituutin vuosikirja* 27, 1982), has received a great deal of international attention.

Marja Leinonen began her academic career at the University of Helsinki, where she worked for three years as a lecturer in general linguistics. Following this, in 1981, she went to work at the University of Tampere, serving first as a lecturer in general linguistics and then, starting in 1985, as a professor of Slavic philology. Leinonen's career as a professor lasted until 2004. During that time, she led four projects funded by the Academy of Finland. She was also a Docent at the Department of General Linguistics at the University of Helsinki (appointed in 1983). Leinonen retired early from her position in Tampere, leaving behind the university bureaucracy and dedicating herself to science as a free researcher.

Marja Leinonen focused on comparing the sentence structures of Finnish and Russian and on the features of spoken Russian. She initiated the study of the oral history of Russians in Finland, with a particular emphasis on Russian evacuees from the Karelian Isthmus. Under her guidance, a number of theses were produced on the topic. Leinonen's own socio-historical studies shed light on language contacts and on the traditions and everyday history of Russians in Finland. Leinonen was co-editor of the publication *Russian Life in Finland 1917–1939: A Local and Oral History* (2001), for which she also compiled materials. Her monograph *Impersonal sentences in Finnish and Russian* was published in 1985. The Russian-based

vocabulary in Helsinki slang was another one of Leinonen's interests, and she explored the topic in her inauguration lecture in 1986. Leinonen also authored a history of the Russian society of merchants in Helsinki, *Helsingin venäläinen kauppiasyhdistys r.y. 1918–1988*, which was published in 1991.

In the 1990s, Leinonen began to develop an interest in the Finno-Ugric languages, first acquiring skills in Komi under the guidance of a native-speaking teacher. After retiring, she delved into research on the Komi language and later also Estonian. Her interest in Komi took Leinonen on conference and lecture trips to Syktyvkar. In cooperation with key researchers from the Komi Republic, she prepared and published a variety of studies, including an investigation of the Komi conjunction *da* together with Valentina Ludykova (“Конечное слово *да* в коми языке с ареально-типологической точки зрения”, *JSFOu* 89, 2001), a study of evidentiality with Evgenij Суранов (“Эвиденциальность в коми (на материале модального перфекта)”, *Linguistica Uralica* XLV, 2009), and a paper on the Komi essive structure with Galina Nekrasova (“The Komi answer to the essive question”, *Typological Studies in Language* 119, 2017).

Language contacts between Russian and Komi, especially the influence of Russian on Komi syntax, were key subjects of Leinonen's research. She explored these themes in her articles “Influence of Russian on the Syntax of Komi” (*FUF* 57, 2002), “The russification of Komi” (*Slavica Helsingiensia* 27, 2006) and “Russian influence on the Izhma Komi dialect” (*International Journal of Bilingualism* 13, 2009). Her article surveying the multifunctionality of Komi possessive suffixes, entitled “Omistussuhteen ulokkeita: komin possessiivisuffiksien ei-possessiivisista funktioista”, was published in 2006 (*JSFOu* 91). Leinonen also studied the research history of the Finno-Ugric languages and peoples of Northern Russia more broadly. Her twenty articles on Komi account for one fifth of the more than a hundred articles she published throughout her career. Some of these also appeared in congress proceedings in the Komi Republic, and her articles on Anders Johan Sjögren's Komi-related correspondence were published in the Komi journal *Art* (2009: 3, 4).

Marja Leinonen was also an archival researcher. She diligently translated and published her archival findings – ethnographic and linguistic studies and travel reports on northern regions – in a variety of works, including “Kuolan niemimaan filman-saamelaiset” (*JSFOu* 92), “Perceptions of identity among speakers of Finno-Ugric languages in Russia as

recorded by Finnish scholars, 1816–1860” (Michael Branch (ed.), *Defining Self*, Finnish Literature Society, 2009) and *D. N. Buharov: Matka Lapissa syksyllä 1883* (Finnish Literature Society, 2010). She contributed to the A. J. Sjögren project led by the National Library of Finland and Michael Branch by transcribing Sjögren’s journals for the library’s online publication and by compiling a table of contents for the microfilms commissioned from Saint Petersburg, which would prove very useful for research. The world of Sjögren scholarship lost two researchers within a week of each other in summer 2019: first Leinonen, then Branch.

During her retirement years, Leinonen focused not only on the Finno-Ugric languages but also on learning and studying the Baltic languages. She was particularly interested in the language contacts that had taken place in the Baltic region. She compared the Latvian, Estonian and Finnish genitives, as well as the use of the partitive in Lithuanian and Finnish (“Lithuanian partitive genitive and Finnish partitive in existential sentences” in *Contacts between the Baltic and Finnic languages*, UH 7, 2015). Leinonen is also known as a translator of Latvian literature into Finnish; she co-translated the anthology *Jānis Rainis: Se pysyy, joka muuttuu*, which was published in 2016. In addition, her translations of poems and prose have appeared in the cultural publications of the Rozentāls Society (*Rozentāls-seuran Kulttuurikirja*). Leinonen was also a member of the Finnish-Latvian Ziemeļmeita choir, with whom she performed in several countries, including the Baltic States and the United Kingdom.

Along with choir singing, Leinonen was an avid painter. She was a member of Hyart, the faculty art club of the University of Helsinki, whose traditional spring exhibitions gave Marja’s friends an opportunity to get to know her artistic side. An amateur ornithologist, she was particularly fascinated by the birdlife of Estonia.

Marja Leinonen was involved in the activities of many associations. She served on the editorial board of *Scando-Slavica* (1988–2004), the board of the Linguistic Association of Finland (1995–1999, including two terms as Chairperson) and the board of the Nordic Association of Linguists (1995–1999). Leinonen was also a permanent member of the Finno-Ugrian Society.

Marja Leinonen demonstrated her perseverance as a researcher until the very end: even on her sickbed at the beginning of June, she was thinking about a new research topic. However, her disease progressed rapidly, and she passed away on 8 June 2019 in a hospital in Helsinki.

The passing of a multifaceted all-round researcher and beloved friend was felt by many. This is evidenced by the obituaries published in *Helsingin Sanomat*, *Virittäjä*, *Idäntutkimus*, *Scando-Slavica* and the Komi-language newspaper *Komi mu*.

Мед сылы муыс лоас байдӱг гӱн кодъ небыдӱн! ('May the earth be as soft for her as a willow grouse feather.')

Paula Kokkonen