

Heikki Ylikangas

recipient of the Academy Award 2009

Professor Heikki Ylikangas is a quite exceptionally widely read historian and leader of public debate, who was professor of legal history and Roman law in the Faculty of Law at the University of Helsinki in 1978–1992 before being appointed professor of Finnish and Scandinavian history in the Faculty of Humanities, a position that he occupied from 1992 to 2000. He was a research professor with the Academy of Finland in 1996–2001.

While in the Faculty of Law he created a system of postgraduate training that gave rise to a powerful school of legal history, which still represents one of the faculty's strengths and objects of pride in international terms even today. His influence was felt in the Faculty of Humanities largely through his research, which almost without exception aroused lively discussion.

Ylikangas has focused his research mostly on the history of violent crime and

the turning points in Finnish history, especially during the wars of the 20th century. His books *Nuijasota* (The War of the Clubs, 1977), *Tie Tampereelle* (The Road to Tampere, Finlandia Prize for Non-Fiction, 1994), *Tulkintani talvisodasta* (My Interpretation of the Winter War, 2001) and *Romahtaako rintama* (Will the Front Give Way? 2007) have all proved highly controversial. In addition to these non-fiction works, he has also written plays, which have been performed at the National Theatre and Helsinki City Theatre, for example.

Heikki Ylikangas is by far the best-known Finnish historian as far as the general public is concerned. He is highly adept at popularizing his ideas and finding the core of each issue that he discusses. During his retirement years he has continued his active research career and his astute observations on matters of importance to society.

Jukka Kekkonen