

Notes on the contents

■ The theme of the Historical Journal 1/2009 is Consumption and Saving. The theme is discussed in seven articles and columns.

In their article “Himotut ja halveksitut kulutustarvikkeet. Uusien kulutustottumusten vaikutukset suomalaisiin maalaisyhteisöihin 1800-luvun loppupuolella ja 1900-luvun alussa” (“Consumer goods – craved for and despised. The effect of new consumption habits in Finnish rural communities in the late-19th and early-20th centuries”), Kati Mikkola and Lau-

ra Stark maintain that new kinds of consumption habits defying traditional habits and hierarchies gained ground in the Finnish countryside from the late-19th century onwards. How did the new values and attitudes brought on by consumption habits affect the internal relationships of social groups and, for their part, lead to a transition in the power structures of both peasant families and estates?

In her article “Siirtolaisnaiset kuluttajina 1700-luvun Jamaikalla” (“Immigrant women as consumers in Jamaica in the 18th century”), Anna Sundelin discusses women’s consumption habits in 18th century Jamaica. By studying wills, it is possible to find out about the use of artefacts owned by women, and to analyse what kind of value they gave to their possessions in general.

In her article “Säädynmukaisen yllisyyden maailma. Aristokratia ja kuluttaminen 1700-luvulla” (“The world of estate-specific luxury. The aristocracy and consumption in the 18th century”), Johanna Ilmakunnas maintains that luxury objects, dresses and residences were a part of the estate-specific way of life and consumption in the 18th century. The Swedish aristocracy was willing to spend considerable amounts of financial resources on the cost of luxurious living. Through their way of life the aristocracy consciously wanted to demonstrate and consolidate their position as the leading elite in the country.

In her article “Edistyksen markkinoilla. Sähköistä sivistystä, onnea ja lumousta Chicagon maailmannäyttelyssä

vuonna 1893” (The Progress Fair. Electric civilisation, happiness and enchantment at the Chicago World’s Fair 1893”), Taina Syrjämaa examines the intertwining of World’s Fairs, belief in progress and consumer culture. The discussion focuses on the presentation of electrical devices at the Chicago World’s Fair. In the debate of the time, electrical devices were associated with technical and material progress that both gave the right to consume and the demand for it. On the other hand, emphasising the magical and experiential qualities of electricity was simultaneously very important. The article shows how goods were connected with and affected the material community in a variety of ways, even before the physical object became part of the everyday life of a consumer.

The change of consumption habits in the West in the 1950s applied not only to both the quantity and quality of consumption but also to attitudes towards consumption. Closely connected to this change process was the increasing participation of women in the world of work. In her article “Tarpeet, halut ja moraali. Naisten ansio-työ ja kulutusasteiden muutokset Suomessa ja Länsi-Saksassa 1950-luvulla” (“Needs, desires and morals. Women’s gainful employment and changes in attitudes towards consumption in Finland and West Germany in the 1950s”), Ida Salminen examines links between these two phenomena in Finland and in West Germany.

Finland only became a genuine consumer society following post-war modernisation.

The most fervent period in the development was the 1960s. The decade was also the time of the rapid spread of television. Jukka Kortti’s article “Televiisio 1960-luvun suomalaisen kulutusmentaliteetin rakentajana” (“Television as the creator of the Finnish consumption mentality”) discusses the role of the television in the construction of the consumption mentality in Finland during the structural change of the 1960s. The subject is examined particularly through the models provided by the experience of television and television advertising.

In their article “Suomalainen säästäväisyys. Säästäväisyyden puhuvat suomalaisissa kuluttajaelämäkerroissa” (“Finnish frugality. Ways of speaking about frugality in Finnish consumer biographies”), Kaisa Huttunen and Minna Lammi examine the ways in which Finnish consumers talk about frugality. How do Finns turn themselves into frugal consumers, how do they talk about their frugality and with what events, activities and discussions do they associate frugality? The consumer biographies discussed do not so much talk about the pleasure of consumption; it rather appears that frugality is still a core virtue in Finland. However, its meaning has changed.

In her column “Johtolankoja kaikkein köyhimpien kulutuksen historiaan” (“Clues to the history of consumption of the very poorest”), Marjatta Rahikainen discusses the history and research of consumption of the very poorest.

(Translation: *Valtasana Oy*)