

Notes on the contents

■ The theme of issue 3/2009 of the Historical Journal is the use of history. Editors Juhana Aunesluoma and Pilvi Torsti have sought to create a series of articles that is as diverse as possible in order to shed light on the varied use of history during different periods and in different research frames. The keywords for this themed issue are the politics of history, the politics of memory, coping with the past, history culture, and historical awareness.

In his article “Tiloja, linjauksia, retoriikkaa – historiapolitiikan ulottuvuuksia” (“States, policies, rhetoric: The dimensions of the politics of history”), Jouni Tilli examines the relationship between history culture and the politics of history. By analysing culture as a state and politics as a function, Tilli shows how you can approach the various dimensions of the politics of history from a political studies perspective. The article makes use of discussions about the Continuation War as an example.

In addition to privileges, city law, custom and collective memory formed the cornerstones of urban administration during the pre-modern period. In her article “Menneisyys argumenttina esimodernissa kaupungissa” (“History as an argument in the pre-modern city”), Piia Einonen examines how historical argumentation permeated the entire urban community in all administrative and political discourse, as both rulers and citizens would use history for their own ends. A city’s history and the actions of its forefathers formed a framework against which events were interpreted and weighed – and, when necessary, even appealed to in the name of the good of the city.

Historical examples were common in Roman literature. Their use also played a crucial role in oratory. Cicero, a master orator, made diligent use of history. In her article, “Yhteiseksi tehty menneisyys – kulttikuvat ja historia Ciceron Verres-puheissa” (“Creating a shared past: History and cult images in Cicero’s orations against Verres”), Marja-Leena Hänninen looks at how Cicero’s speeches against Verres can be understood as political dialogue and examines what they tell us about the use of history and methods of remembrance in Ancient Rome.

The still-prevalent notions concerning the early years of the Valamo Monastery were formed on the basis of very diverse sources indeed. The compilation of the history of Valamo in the 19th century is a fascinating example of both ‘constructing’ the past and how the principles and values of the age in which a history is written can be reflected in the finished work. Kati Parpei’s article, “Venäjän vanhin luostari – miten Valamolle kirjoitettiin historia” (“Russia’s oldest monastery: How a history was written for Valamo”), is based on her soon-to-be-published doctoral thesis.

The history of the German navy from the late 19th century to the end of the Second World War offers an illustrative example of how history can be used. Grounds for strengthening the fleet and reasons to justify Tirpitz’s naval strategy were drawn from history. If history had not offered grounds for strengthening the navy, then history would have been rewritten, says Aleksanteri Suvioja in his article “Historian käyttöö Saksan laivaston vahvistamiseksi ja puolustamiseksi 1890-luvulta vuoteen 1945” (“The use of history in strengthening and justifying the German navy from the 1890s to 1945”).

Simo Leisti’s article “Kamppailu henkilökultti-käsitteen sisällöstä Neuvostoliitossa” (“The struggle over the content of the cult of personality in the Soviet Union”) indicates that historical writing in the Soviet Union was politically and ideologically too important to be left to mere historians. Controlling historical accounts appeared to be a key aspect of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’s attempts to justify the prevailing system. Although the history of historiography in the Soviet Union is an account of the political control of science, this is not the whole truth. The struggles over the politics of history experienced during the Brezhnev period are an indication that historical researchers also tried to oppose the way Soviet leaders used history.

In December 2008, Alexander Nevsky, Pyotr Stolypin and Joseph Stalin were voted the ‘greatest Russians’ in a poll carried out on Russian national television. If anything, the three winners of the ‘Face of Russia’ poll exemplify the new keynotes among the current powers that be rather than any understanding of history held by the Russian public, says Marina Vituhnovskaja-Kaupala in her article “Venäjän valta ja media menneisyyttä rakentamassa” (“Power and the media: Constructing Russia’s past”).

Culture and history provide the material on which ethnicity is built. Nika Potinkara’s study of “Kulttuuri ja menneisyys etnopolitiisina resursseina” (“Culture and history as an ethnopolitical resource”) examines how a Saami ethnicity founded on museum exhibitions is linked to current struggles over land rights.

Katalin Miklóssy’s column handles the value of traumas in historical politicking.

(Translation: AAC Noodi Oy)