

Notes on the contents

Marko van den Berg and Pilvi Torsti have edited a theme issue on history consciousness. All the articles are interlinked by the concept of history consciousness. However, the range of the articles is very wide – from political history to different micro-level phenomena and conceptions related to the past of ordinary people. Our history consciousness is based on a myriad of sources, and the different types of articles strongly reflect that diversity, and the variety of different histories.

In his article dealing with historical thinking as a tool for understanding oneself, Markku Hyrkänen shows that historical thinking acts as a tool for understanding oneself by addressing significant historical information in the present. The question of whether we still can learn from history can also be answered by analysing the function of historical thinking.

In his article, Henrik Forsberg discusses whether death by starvation can be seen as a patriotic deed and focuses on the last years of starvation in Finnish written history culture in 1870–1900. Approximately 6–7% of the Finnish population died in 1866–1868 during a crop failure as there was a shortage of food, which caused epidemics. It was essential to the formation of

the nation and anchoring the national ideology how quickly the national meaning of the trauma could be explained in the rapidly changing society or alternatively, not to talk about it at all.

Where did the ordinary people in the 19th century obtain a basis for their history conception in an era when only a small amount of popular history literature had been published. The article by Kaisa Kau-ranen and Anna Kuismin discusses the chronicles of Efraim and Kustaa, two ordinary men from the 19th century, who prepared annuals, year-based history presentations. A tailor from Laitila and a crofter from Joroinen, respectively, used the local tradition and several written sources as a reference. Their chronicles are interesting examples of how the generations before the establishment of the folk school became active writers upon their own initiative in Finland.

The article by Marianne Junila focuses on the civil war as remembered by schoolchildren in the autumn of 1918 and discusses the impact of the war on the history consciousness of schoolchildren. In the autumn of 1918, after four months of the end of the civil war, schoolchildren in Tampere were assigned to remember the events and their personal experiences during the civil war. In the previous spring, they had witnessed ruthless urban combat and the capturing and execution of the Red Guards after the victory of the White Guards. How did the schoolchildren perceive the war? What term did they use to refer to the war? What did they think the war was about? Who were the parties to the war?

The debate on wars and their meanings has mainly been at the level of a societal story and the participants have included researchers, journalists and politicians. But is it possible to form an overall idea of what citizens think of wars? Pilvi

Torsti focuses on the conceptions of those at 15–79 years of age regarding the 1918 war and the wars during the Second World War in Finland. The article deals with the multidimensional war perceptions of the Finns, based on the material compiled in the History Consciousness in Finland research project that consists of survey material representing the Finnish population and interviews with respondents selected from among those who took the survey.

Boys are interested in war. Previous generations have familiarised themselves with the them through comic strips, plastic assembly kits and films. The youngest generations have learned about war through different virtual games and live role playing. Jukka Rantala discusses war as a product of history culture and the background and possible impact of its enchantment on the attitudes of young people.

The integration of those evacuated from Finnish Karelia has commonly been regarded as a success story. In fact, this history conception that describes adaptation can be called a story of good adaptation. Heli Kaarina Kananen discusses the emergence of the adaptation story, the identity of those evacuated and the identity production concerning them.

“Generation” is a popular concept that is also considered to be capable of explaining history. Conceptions on the significance of generations are based on theories created in the early 20th century regarding the social generation. In her article, Katja-Maria Miettunen discusses theories related to remembering the past and establishing a generation on the interface between remembering the past and research in light of generation ideas concerning the 1960s and asks what the significance of the generation is in the history conception of the era and also more generally in history consciousness.