

Notes on the contents

■ Finns are proud of their reputation as a well-read nation, and a high literacy rate has indeed a long tradition in the Nordic countries. Writing skills, however, began to be taught more generally as late as the late 19th century, and with the common elementary school system, it became a basic skill for all citizens. With the development of popular education in the 19th century, the question of writing skills became a popular topic for debate, and both the gentry and common people voiced a strong opposition against the general teaching of writing skills. Ilkka Mäkinen discusses how and why opposition was so strong in his article “Kirjoitustaidon leviämisen herättämiä epäluuloja 1800-luvun Suomessa” (Suspensions against the spreading of writing skills in 19th-century Finland). Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen discusses the standard of writing skills in Finland before the introduction of the elementary school system in her article “Suomalaisten kirjalliset taidot autonomian kaudella” (The writing skills of Finns during the autonomous period).

Pilvi Torsti's column “Yksi kieli kolmella nimellä?” (One language with three names?) discusses how the writing of history that supports the modern day has been required, on

the one hand, to create national unity, and on the other hand, to strengthen the national identity as separate from others. From the perspective of a nation's history, such ideas of romantic nationalism have usually involved emphasizing the national language.

From the fourth century onwards, the Roman Empire witnessed a period of Christian persecution that has not received wider attention: namely, the persecution of others by Christians. This show of force was targeted at non-Christians, Jews, and other Christian groups labelled as heretics. The theme is discussed in two articles in this issue. In his article “Kristittyjen vainojen legitimointi vuosina 303–312” (The legitimisation of persecution by Christians in 303–312), Markus Mertaniemi shows that as a rule, Christians were not persecuted in the Roman Empire. When persecutions took place, this was not in an ideological vacuum. To the contrary, the non-Christian elite and political leaders attempted to justify the persecution through various arguments. Mertaniemi discusses this reasoning, particularly from the perspective of Greco-Roman religions and rhetoric.

Maijastina Kahlos sheds light on the attitudes of clerical writers to religious oppression in the fourth and fifth centuries in her article “Kirkolliset kirjoittajat ja uskonnollinen painostus Rooman val-

takunnassa 300–400-luvuilla” (Clerical writers and religious oppression in the Roman empire in the fourth and fifth centuries).

Israel-Jakob Schur was an esteemed orientalist born in Helsinki. His doctoral dissertation was not, however, accepted at the University of Helsinki in 1937. Simo Muir explains the phases of Schur's doctoral dissertation process, introduces the people involved, and discusses the motives behind why the thesis was rejected in his article “Israel-Jakob Schurin väitöskirjan hylkääminen Helsingin yliopistossa 1937. Antisemitismä, kielikiistaa ja henkilöintrigejä” (The rejection of Israel-Jakob Schur's doctoral dissertation at the University of Helsinki in 1937. Antisemitism, language disputes, and personal intrigues.)

In his article “Suomen kartanlaitoksen viimeinen kukoistuskauti” (The last golden age of the Finnish manor system) Viljo Rasila describes the demise of the Finnish manor system that took place in stages after the Second World War and particularly the settlement of Karelian refugees. Manor houses gradually became smaller in size, and some disappeared altogether. The typically large staff of country manors was reduced in size, to all but disappear towards the end.

(Translation: *Valtasana Oy*)