

## Notes on the contents

■ It has often been said that the Baltic Sea is the most badly polluted and, at the same time, the most protected sea in the world. It is no wonder that the environment of the Baltic Sea deteriorated so badly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since approximately 85 million people live in its catchment area. International endeavours to protect the sea began during the Cold War, with the Helsinki Convention in 1974. Today, the concern over the state of the Baltic Sea unites people in the nine countries around it. Yet, there is virtually no research into the history of the pollution and protection of the Baltic Sea.

The University of Helsinki is the first one in the Baltic Sea region to study the environmental history of the Baltic Sea, adopting a cross-disciplinary approach. The theme of the present *Historical Journal* (1/2007) is to present the results of this research.

Sari Laurila's article "Itämeren ympäristötutkimus Suomessa ennen 1960-lukua" (Environmental research in the Baltic Sea in pre-1960s Finland) discusses how the study of the history of natural sciences has, in Finland, focused

on studying pure nature and the development of related teaching. Research into the pollution of the environment and the awareness of it are seldom touched upon, and only as an aside rather than as a main topic. Laurila addresses the lack of history in environmental studies and focuses in her articles in the early stages of the study on the pollution of the Baltic Sea and Finnish water systems.

Paula Schönach's article "Vantaanjoen suojeluyhteistyö toisen maailmansodan jälkeen" (The protection of the Vantaanjoki river since the Second World War) describes how the pollution of the river drove Helsinki into a water crisis, which could only be solved through a novel form of collaboration that involved all the municipalities within the river's catchment area. Schönach discusses the conflicts arising from different uses of the Vantaanjoki river and the early stages of its protection from the perspective of cross-municipal cooperation.

People often pay attention to changes in their immediate environment. Elina Luotonen's article "Merikarvian saaristorannikko paikallisessa ympäristöteitämyksessä" (The Merikarvia coast and archipelago and local environmental awareness) describes the environmental changes that have taken place in the Oura Archipelago in

Merikarvia, a municipality in Western Finland, since the 1930s from the perspective of the local recreational fishermen.

Tuomas Räsänen and Simo Laakkonen's article "Suomen ja Neuvostoliiton ympäristöyhteistyön alkuvaiheet" (The early stages of environmental cooperation between Finland and the Soviet Union) discusses the cooperation between Finland and the Soviet Union, which was launched in 1968 and the main goal of which was to chart the pollution of the Gulf of Finland and the factors leading to it and its prevention.

The topic of Yrjö Haila's column "Ympäristön moninaiset merkitykset" (The many meanings of the environment) is the meanings and problems in environmental history and policy.

Anne Ollila's article "Suku-puoli – merkkejä ja merkityksiä" (Gender – signs and meanings) analyses the various interpretations of the construction of gender in gender history. According to the recent interpretations, gender is seen as a model or mode of operation that is produced within a cultural and historical context and which has nothing genuine or original about it. This view offers new challenges to historians.

(Translation: *Valtasana Oy*)