Notes on the contents

The theme of the *Historical Journal* 4/2012 is biographical research. It contains five articles highlighting different aspects of biographical research and the various methodological approaches.

The hero of the 1905 general strike, Johan Adolf Kock – ringleader of the Sveaborg rebellion and an "anarchist" and "class traitor" – lived an extraordinary life. How can we understand and interpret the twists turns and events in individual people's lives? Antti Häkkinen's article "Johan Adolf Kock, elämänkulkuanalyysi ja historia" (Johan Adolf Kock: Life course analysis and history) introduces the basics of life course analysis and its use and methodological potential in analysing individual lives.

Like its international counterpart, the activists of the women's movement in Finland in the time of autonomy understood the significance of biographical writing for feminist culture and the politics of history. In her article "'Mainioita naisia' – pienoiselämäkerrat autonomian ajan historiapolitiikassa" (Incredible women: Biographies in the politics of history in Finland's period of autonomy), Tiina Kinnunen discusses the political nature of biography writing and examines what kind of emphases were placed on the life stories of the select figures and what kind of female ideal these descriptions helped shape.

Maria Garvolia, the main subject in Ritva Kylli's article "Maria Garvolia – elämä tarinoiden takana" (Maria Garvolia: The life behind the stories), was a vicar's daughter who married two vicars and whose life story has become a legend reiterated in books and research. The life story of Maria (1740–1808) resonated with the intelligentsia of the Romantic era in the early 19th century as well as with the nationalistic Finns in the early 1900s. But when observed in the light of 18th century sources, with the aim of doing justice to the person herself, the question remains: who was she really?

The position of artist biographies has been as solid as the commonplace presumption in these biographies of the independence and integrity of the artist's creative self. In the past few decades this point of departure has been critically examined through rethinking the history of authorship, the Western genius cult and the role of the artist. In his article "Yksilö ja historia taiteilijaelämäkerroissa" (The individual and history in artist biographies), Jukka Sarjala discusses the history of the romantic artist myth, the current challenges in compiling artist biographies and the opportunities that have opened up for academic biographical research as the concepts of the active subject and personality as something unique are being questioned.

Anna Sivula's article "Historian esitys kytkee eletyt paikat ja esineet kulttuuriperinnöksi" (Historical presentation links places and objects of real life to cultural heritage) discusses a project in which the Satakunta Museum asked students of the Degree Programme in Cultural Production and Landscape Studies at the University Consortium of Pori to produce short biographies on women of Pori and to contribute to an exhibition based on these biographies. Anna Sivula supervised the students, who compiled biographies of 19th century figures and describes in her article how biographical historical presentation was translated into a representation of the past in the form of a museum exhibition.

In her article "Pieni ihminen ja kansatiede" (Ordinary people and ethnology), Hanna Snellman discusses the application of biographical research in ethnology. As a discipline, ethnology has throughout its history focused on the everyday lives of ordinary people, but the method in which people's subjective experiences have been dealt with has varied in different periods and according to different scientific trends.