

English abstract

Nälkävuodet (The Hunger Years) refers to the Finnish famine of 1867–1868 and to the most austere phase of the 1860s subsistence crisis. During these years the mortality rate reached nearly eight per cent of the population of the Grand Duchy of Finland. This volume examines the exceptionality and significance of the crisis, setting it in longer-term perspectives in Finnish history. Moreover, it outlines the focal points of previous research tradition and the historiography of the Finnish 1860s famine.

The individual chapters of the volume employ both qualitative and quantitative methods. The chapters use a large and diverse variety of source materials, including archival records, contemporary correspondence, newspapers, literature, and a wide range of statistics on weather, agriculture, trade, and economy.

The chapters contribute to our understanding of the famine in relation to climate and weather, as well as the state of Finnish agriculture and its development from traditional grain-based production to a dairy and forest economy. The outcomes of the famine are also discussed with regard to the impact of both contemporary political thought and the Finnish governmental structure, and in relation to the contradictions caused by the elite's campaigns for new food substitutes against the traditions of the people.

Furthermore, the chapters examine the representations of the famine. The views of the international press and contemporary media are addressed, as are the depictions created in the developing Finnish literature during the later years of the 19th century.

On the whole, the volume provides a novel and critical approach to improve our understanding of the last peacetime famine crisis in the Western-Europe.