

The construction of the 'other' through private stories: Japan in the travelogues of Estonian seamen, as published in Estonian newspapers during the second half of the 19th century

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Abstract. The chapter concentrates on analysing representations of Japan in the travelogues published in Estonian newspapers, as seen by Estonian seamen during the second half of the 19th century. In Estonia, the private experiences mediated in travelogues were the sole source of access to geographically distant regions (education system sources were marginal). Analysing travelogues enables us to study the ways in which the media reflects the tensions between the globalising scope of seafaring and the media, which frames the national prism. The chapter aims to answer the research questions: What are the thematic emphases when constructing Japan in Estonian newspapers? What (im)mediated national or other cultural references are used to 'translate' travelling experience in the private stories of Estonian seamen for Estonian readers? What linguistic-textual techniques are used when trying to make private travel experiences understandable for Estonian readers? Methodologically, the elements of narrative analysis are used in this chapter. The results of the analysis indicate that when presenting geographically distant Japan, cultural emphasis was the preferred theme in private stories (for example, religion, customs, everyday life). The analysed travelogues use linguistically diverse techniques when 'culturally translating' Japan for Estonian readers (for example some phrases in Japanese are given without translation). Several Estonian national references are used to explain events that happened during the journey (for example mentioning the Estonian national epic). In sum, travelogues from Japan published in Estonian newspapers are inherently modern; the domination of private spatial practices over representations indicates on-going time-space compression and the singularity of the journalistic genres during the second half of the 19th century.

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Introduction

This chapter originates from the cultural-geographic perspective (for example Tavares & Le Bel 2008), according to which representations of places in the media do not only convey the socio-cultural reality of a specific era, but also use certain semantic practices that contribute to the creation of the discourses represented. We assume that the initial place representations were foremost constructed via the private perspectives of mobile individuals.

The chapter studies media representations and the development of cultural-geographic relations in the second half of the 19th century using the example of Estonia and Japan. The empirical basis of the chapter is travelogues about Japan written by Estonian seamen and published in the Estonian media. On the one hand, the period analysed is marked by the Estonian national cultural revival (including the publication of Fr. R. Kreutzwald's national epic *Kalevipoeg*) and the emergence of Estonian nationalism. On the other hand, it is also characterised by Japan's opening up to the West during the Meiji period (1868–1912), during which Japanese society made the transition from the isolated feudalism to its modern form. Such an empirical emphasis enables us to focus on the construction of Japan as the 'other', asking for example how private experiences became externalised and made public. We assume that analysing the private stories of Estonian seamen mediated in Estonian newspapers enables us to look for some characteristics of emerging Estonian national identity. One of the sources of and motivations for constructing spatial meanings like territorially bound national identity, was the emerging mobility experience, inherent to modernity (Harvey 2006 [1990]). Print technology was a major component that helped to share and mediate personal mobility experiences and create the imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation (Anderson 2006). In both cases, mobility experiences shared privately or publicly in the print media helped form the national identity through shared cultural constructions (Fish 1982) or through national narratives that relied on the language of metaphors to help transfer the cultural symbols of various communities (Bhabha 2000).

The representation of Japan and its image in the West has been studied by several authors from different perspectives. Jean-Pierre Lehmann (1978), who has studied the period from 1860 to 1905, shows that the image of Japan was anything but homogeneous in the articles that appeared in several publications in Great Britain. However, many international studies indicate that historical travelogues assert contemporary power relations and the individual level of civilisation of the author's country of origin (George 2009). Studies of Japan's

image¹ as seen from the Western perspective have revealed the stereotypical nature of the representations, which are temporally relatively stable (Lehmann 1978; Wilkinson 1990; Littlewood 1996). For example, Ian Littlewood (1996), drawing on material ranging from 16th century travelogues to recent advertising campaigns, points out that many images are actually recycled versions of existing stereotypes. Endymion Wilkinson (1990), who has conducted a comprehensive review of the historiography of image building as it relates to Japan since the first contacts with the Occident, shows in his observations that the mutual images have remained largely unchanged during this period. According to Thomas Pekar (2003), one of the ever-present discourses presented in the travelogues is the image of the Japanese woman being a mysterious doll-like creature (the imagined *geisha*).

Unlike international studies, previous Estonian historical studies of media representations have concentrated on shorter time periods and focused on general analysis of the geographic dimension (for example, Kann 1966; Maaring 1968; Malkov 1968; Pohla 1969; Ummelas 1977), dealing with specific, narrowly defined regions (Hiimaa 2006) or on the development of travelogues as a journalistic genre (Mallene 1957). However, the cultural dimension dominating in these international studies, as well as the nature of the representations and the role of the individuals and private stories in constructing the place representations – both other cultures and own national belonging – has not previously been analysed in Estonia. In this chapter we concentrate on analysing the textual and linguistic means of representing the ‘own’ and ‘other’ national groups. In addition, the analysis enables us to study the characteristics of used journalistic genres and the personal resources of information of the authors, by which their cultural and geographic experiences were affected, that were used to make the ‘other’ culturally understandable for the Estonian readers in the context where geographic knowledge was relatively limited.

The empirical basis of this chapter are two travelogues written by Estonian seamen in the 19th century: naval officer Jüri Jürison’s travel story (published in *Eesti Postimees* 1868–1869) and captain M. Michelson’s travel story (published in *Olevik* in 1896 and 1900). On the basis of these travelogues we aim to answer the research questions: What kind of thematic emphases are used to construct Japan in the travelogues of Estonian seamen at the end of the 19th century? What kinds of national and cultural reference are used in the private stories of Estonian seamen to make their travel experience understandable to Estonian readers? And what kind of linguistic and textual devices are used to ‘translate’ these private stories for the audience? A more detailed explanation of the analysed texts is given in the next sections, as well as an overview of spatial contacts in the 19th

century. The main body of the chapter consists of an original empirical analysis of the travelogues. The chapter ends with a discussion that provides answers to the abovementioned questions and interprets the empirical results.

Spatial contacts in the 19th century

Estonians' spatial contacts with various world regions in the second half of the 19th century were limited and mediated. In this period contacts were with regions geographically closer to Estonia that were more accessible, although country people were generally characterised by relatively low mobility.² Prior to this, in the 16th and 17th centuries, religious literature was the primary source of knowledge about Asia and Africa (Klaassen 1995). The first geographical reviews were only published in the late 17th century and the subject of geography was introduced to schools in the early 18th century (Paatsi 1993). Although the 1739 Bible had previously been hailed as a masterpiece of Estonian Afro-Asiatic studies – since it included Middle Eastern place names as well as the names of local fauna and flora and historical figures – it turns out that its role as a mediator of knowledge of Asia was quite modest: its records are fragmented, its facts confused with mythology and its translations distorted in places (Klaassen 1995; 1988). By the turn of the 19th century foreign lands became more accessible to Estonians as educational writing, maps and calendars began to be published.

However, it was the print media that adopted the role of primary source of information on various geographical regions. Great importance has been attached to newspapers as providing cultural enlightenment in the 19th century (Peegel 1969) and are compared to books in their function and significance (for example using journalistic materials as a source of factual information in compiling textbooks).³ In addition, the textual structure of early geography textbooks and the geographical narratives published in newspapers resembled each other to some extent, both being presented in the form of descriptions of facts. The first newspaper to be published, *Marahwa Näddala-Leht* (1821–1825), exhibited a relatively broad scope of geographical news items in its first few years of publication, although domestic news was covered in a more systematic and thorough manner (Maaring 1968). Articles were dominated by local news from Estonia (34%),⁴ Europe (33%) and Russia (24%); Asia (5%), Africa (1%) and the Americas (1%) were represented in references and short descriptions.

The geographical scope of the later *Missioni-Leht* (1858–1862) was even broader due to the newspaper's special focus on the personal experiences of missionaries (Pohla 1969): events from Estonia (24%), Europe (27%) and Asia (21%, mainly India) were covered in a comparable amount; less attention was paid

to news from Africa (9%), the Americas (6%), Australia (1%), foreign islands, etc. (8%), and foreign place names and names of natural objects (for example rivers, a total of 4%). Newspaper coverage of geographically remote areas was sporadic, with the focus tending to be on individual islands seen during voyages than on entire countries, or was related to the newspaper's thematic sphere of interest (for example Japan was mentioned once, while in other parts of Asia missionary work and descriptions of missionary work were given, as with the example of India).

Similarly to the previously analysed newspapers, the geographical scope of the somewhat later *Tallorahwa Postimees* (1857–1859) (Malkov 1968) was dominated by local news items from Estonia, Livonia and Courland (around 37% over a three-year period) and about as much again from Europe (39%); there were fewer references to Russia (11%), but more references to Asian countries (7%; various years saw Japan mentioned 1 or 2 times; Africa, the Americas and Australia each received less than 2% coverage). As before, these were mainly messages or short descriptions; longer overviews of foreign lands or peoples normally appeared in publications covering missionary activities.

However, the geographical descriptions published in newspapers (for example *Missioni-Leht*) were more attractive to readers, being based on eyewitness accounts, and more persuasive to readers than those in geography textbooks. It was these accounts in newspapers – first in the form of short descriptions; later as travelogues with clear genre characteristics (Peegel 1955) – that served as the primary source of geographic knowledge for Estonians in the second half of the 19th century. For these reasons this chapter concentrates on private stories from the Estonian seamen who for the first time mediated the 'other' through cultural references and in this way enabled culturally and geographically distant regions to be brought closer to Estonian readers, who could, through cultural comparison, participate in the public construction of Estonians' own national affiliation.

The travelogues of Estonian seamen

This chapter analyses the construction of the image of Japan in the Estonian print media, based on the travelogues of Estonian seamen. The source data is the travelogues of two Estonian seafarers, Jüri Jürison and M. Michelson, whose letters were published respectively in 1868 and 1869 in the *Eesti Postimees* newspaper and in 1896 and 1900 in the *Olevik* newspaper. This chapter analyses, first and foremost, the individual stories in the travelogues that touch upon Japan (n=31).

The travelogues under analysis were written during a period of editor-centric journalism (Aru 2010). In addition to the early geographical descriptions written or translated by editors in the first half of the 19th century, the second half of the century saw the first tentative attempts at travel writing. Although the first longer travelogues were published in newspapers during the same period,⁵ it is Jürison's travelogue from *Eesti Postimees* that is generally considered to be the first example of the travel writing genre in Estonia. Unlike the other earlier writings (missionary stories), the analysed texts are not as heavily influenced by Lutheran ideology⁶ and have a more personal touch to them. Apart from later travelogues,⁷ the authors are not well-known public figures. Rather they are educated seamen who speak a number of foreign languages and are interested in subjects like literature and language. While there is ample information on Jürison's background – he was an educated navy officer who spoke Russian and German and had previously translated Russian poetry – information on Michelson is scant and we can only make assumptions as to the scope of his spatial experiences and his level of education. However, Michelson's travelogues on the Far East, published at the turn of the century, no longer stood out, since several travelogues about Asia had been penned by Estonians by this point (for example Andres Saal's account of Indonesia (1899) and Eduard Bornhöhe's of Palestine (1899)). On the one hand, Michelson's style is much more neutral and his judgements more reserved than those of Jürison 30 years previously. On the other hand, it can be concluded that Michelson took more interest in Japanese books and legends: for example he describes keenly viewing a religious book displayed in a Buddhist temple. He also purchased a Russo-Japanese dictionary in order to find similarities between the Estonian and Japanese languages, which he believed to be kindred languages. While Jürison visited major Japanese ports like Nagasaki, Yokohama and Hakodate, Michelson also stopped, in addition to Nagasaki, Kobe and Hakodate, at smaller hot spring resorts, such as Mogi, Unzen, Ōmura and Obama during his holiday. This chapter is therefore based on the assumption that due to prior contact with the common people, varied cultural contacts and an interest in cultural and linguistic matters, these travelogues serve as a means with which to analyse the mediation of first-hand personal experience of a place to newspaper readers. Analysing the travelogues by Jürison and Michelson enables us to study genre-specific devices used in the Estonian print media, the thematic construction of the 'self' and the 'other' and the process of mediating personal experiences of a place in the second half of the 19th century.

In studying the travelogues, some elements of the sociological narrative method (van Peer & Chatman 2001) were applied, in which the focus was on analysing the activities, events, factors and evaluations presented in the narratives.

The analysis builds on the interactivity of travel writing as a story (Gubrium & Holstein 2009), i.e. the chapter examines private interpretations present in the travelogues in the context of the authors' personal travel experiences, Estonian society and the expectations of the target audience. As might be expected of travelogues, the focus is also on the authors' function as agents – their personal experiences of a place and the individual devices used to 'interpret' cultures when creating thematic representations. The results of the analysis are presented in three sections. Short excerpts from the respective travelogues are quoted to substantiate the conclusions that are drawn.

Analysis results

Hereby the main analysis of the results is presented in three sections: thematic emphasis, (im)mediated spatial references and linguistic textual techniques used when 'translating' Japanese cultural experience for Estonian newspaper readers. The generalisations made by the authors are illustrated with examples from the travelogues. The quotations from the travelogues are differentiated from the rest of the text with quotation marks. References to the particular newspaper sources referred to in the analysis are included in the brackets.

Thematic emphasis

Analysis of the results indicates that for thematic emphases, cultural themes dominate in Jürison's and Michelson's travelogues. For example, there are detailed descriptions of traditions: Japanese gift-giving (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 20 November, 370) and a funeral ceremony in a temple (*Olevik* 1896, 7 May, 448). Neutral descriptions of everyday activities as well as judgements about them are also used, for example: "Before anyone whom they happened to meet, they bent over at the loins, rubbed their knees with their hands and greeted them, inhaling through clenched teeth. [...] This is the refined way of the Japanese" (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 2 October, 314). Judgements are first and foremost based on the authors' own cultural experiences and cultural comparisons, and on confrontations related to these, as Jürison mentions: "One should know that here white clothes are a sign of mourning – quite contrary to us" (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 9 October, 322). Comparison of the style of Jürison's and Michelson's travelogues reveals that the latter author is much more reserved and neutral in his judgements. A good example is Michelson's reference to hot springs near Nagasaki: in several letters he uses a neutral, descriptive style and does not give either directly approving or disapproving judgements (*Olevik* 1900, 25 January, 84 and 14 March, 239).

In addition to cultural emphasis, another thematic focus used in the travelogues is describing nature and the climate. Unlike descriptions of culture, nature, as a rule, is depicted in a neutral tone. As for the textual devices used, descriptions of nature are dominated by accurate accounts of measurement units and seafaring coordinates as these have an important role in a seaman's life; the aim of such devices was to make the size of natural objects and geographical distances comprehensible to the reader. Another technique employed is detailed geographical descriptions, successfully used to convey the author's mental pictures to the reader.

A key theme in translating travel experiences was religion. Religious references are used in comparisons and descriptions on a variety of subjects, cultural as well as natural, for example: "The mountains look very disorderly, as if the Almighty has forgotten to even them out with a stroke of his hand [...] here Buddha might have left off, neglecting to divvy up and burn-beat the land" (*Olevik* 1896, 20 February, 193).

The sources of the information used in travelogues are mostly undefined, impersonal or based on personal contacts. As can be presumed from the travelogues, it was unexpectedly easy to establish personal contacts, for example: "All of a sudden we had become friends. At once, they were examining the woollen cloth of our jackets and stroking our boots" (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 23 October, 337). The fact that seamen had the courage to initiate an acquaintance with locals served as an advantage when crossing cultural boundaries as Jürison writes: "I, too, proceeded to the grave in the funeral throng, although I did not notice any other Europeans in the vicinity. To this end, I made friends with a Japanese man and did not let go of him after that; a friend found on the road" (*Eesti Postimees* 1869, 5 November, 166). Other travelogues and orally conveyed experiences were also used as source material. Unlike Jürison's travelogues, Michelson's texts include pictures of Japan for descriptive and illustrative purposes ("A Japanese woman with a child", *Olevik* 1896, 1 October, 915).

(Im)mediated references

In this subsection we analyse the spatial references used when 'translating' Japanese cultural experience for Estonian newspaper readers. Both mediated and immediate references are analysed here, firstly including the information acquired from secondary sources (mostly heard from other seamen), secondly picked up from the personal face-to-face contacts.

The results of the analyses indicate that to explain events occurring on the narrator's travels, discursive techniques related to Estonia as well as other cultural

references from earlier travels are used. The variety of national and spatial references used point to a phenomenon characteristic of modernism (Harvey 2006 [1990]), that is, in the midst of crumbling previous spatial dimensions and resulting uncertainty, different places are constructed by means of comparisons and qualitative-aesthetic emphasis.

On the one hand, the texts draw comparisons with various national groups (for example Jews (*Eesti Postimees* 1869, 19 November, 173), and Russians (*Olevik* 1900, 25 January, 84)), with whom the seamen, and probably also the newspaper readers, could have had contact. Abundant references to a number of nations and countries prove the extensive cultural experiences of both authors, for example: “the Japanese drink their tea, like the Turkish drink their coffee, from thimble-size cups” (*Olevik* 1896, 5 March, 240). Moreover, their earlier descriptions help to explain the Japanese experience to the reader when used as a basis for comparison with other countries and peoples, for example: “Here, the mountains are not as wonderful and marvellously shaped as around the bay of Rio de Janeiro” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 2 October, 314).

In addition to general cultural comparisons, clear definitions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ can be identified. Defining the Japanese as the ‘other’ is also based on descriptions of Japan as a country or a region (for example when calling the region an “Asian land”). When presenting Japan as the ‘other’, cultural hierarchy is often used (see, for example, Hofstede 2001). For example, a detailed overview is given of the characteristics of the country’s social hierarchy by describing wealthier groups or those with higher professional standing as well as representatives of groups with a lower professional status. Although the descriptions of the strictly hierarchical Japanese society were often accompanied by certain disparaging comments (explicit or implicit), at other times pure admiration for their culture was expressed with no signs of clear hierarchical positioning, as Michelson exclaims: “Japan with its ancient culture is a wonderland” (*Olevik* 1896, 5 March, 240). Earlier studies of travelogues have indicated the presence of a similar hierarchical positioning in cultural descriptions (Weisenfeld 2000), with the aim of emphasising the author’s own identity by downgrading the ‘other’.

When describing their ‘own’ national group, a variety of textual devices were used in the travelogues analysed. References to *national identity* are made, on the one hand, through the use of metaphoric comparisons, and on the other hand by direct positioning. A recurring theme in the use of metaphoric comparisons is the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*, for example: “These are not just Kalevipoeg’s ploughing furrows” (*Olevik* 1896, 20 February, 193). In addition, when referring to certain groups within Estonian society, the first person plural (‘we’), creating an emotional link, is used (for example when writing about peasants or artisans).

The travelogues also emphasise that Estonian seamen are “not less witty and could do in shipping quite what the Japanese are doing” (*Olevik* 1896, 4 June, 542). Self-awareness and national pride are also reflected in the statement that Estonians could be equally good workmen if only Estonians would have the same education and guidance, which “is why among our little nation there are so many tramps and criminals” (*Olevik* 1896, 11 June, 560). The pre-eminent example of the Estonian seamen’s direct positioning of their national identity is made by the authors’ explanations for whom and why they are writing their travelogues. Jürison has defined the aim of his writings as: “stories gathered from the wide world by the Estonian hand for the pleasure of fellow countrymen” (*Eesti Postimees* 1869, 31 December, 198). In the same way, Michelson hopes that perhaps his travel stories inspire a more capable man in literary work to write his stories and discover these lands (*Olevik* 1896, 30 July, 715).

However, Japan was presented to the Estonian reader not only through the Estonian prism but also through the Russian and European prism, in terms of both culture and language. For example, in several places the texts provide indirect evidence that the authors also identify themselves as Russian due to the usage of Russian as a common language among fellow seamen and locals (for example using the first person plural when referring to Russians and a positive judgement of a group of Russian seamen). Notwithstanding this, in explicit statements about Russians an exclusive categorisation is preferred (cf Russians as the ‘other’). In addition to Russians, the authors repeatedly identify themselves with Europeans. For example, Jürison’s texts give an indication of the Japanese as being cautious toward foreigners, as a result of Japan’s earlier isolated status, writing: “It was not that long ago when Europeans were driven off from the Japanese coast like wolves” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 2 October, 315). Moreover, the texts make use of comparisons based on confronting the cultures of Japan and Europe as cultures of the ‘other’ and the ‘self’. For example, Michelson writes that in the course of modernisation the Japanese did not replace their culture with a European one, but refined their own traditional culture through European education (*Olevik* 1896, 20 February, 240).

In addition to national references used to mediate the Japanese travel experience to the Estonian reader, several institutional references were made, for example to international practices in marine navigation (the cannon salute regulation; *Eesti Postimees* 1868, 20 November, 370). As for institutional references, these were also used in descriptions based on the authors’ positions as seamen. That is, despite several national and cultural references, the authors more than once explicitly identified themselves as professional seamen, for example, “The rattling of the anchor chain is the dearest music to a seaman’s heart” (*Eesti*

Postimees 1868, 2 October, 314). When defining themselves as seamen, they use a certain hierarchical strategy, referring to various positions of power in a similar way to the device employed in culture-based comparisons. Seamen, and especially naval officers, had a high social standing and this status conferred certain privileges on them, as Jürison remarks: “We had the right to enter at any time for an audience, with our boots on, and enter the temple as well, and to do whatever we wanted” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 30 October, 346).

Linguistic textual techniques

A wide variety of linguistic and textual devices were used to culturally ‘interpret’ the remote country for Estonian readers. The linguistic devices used are related to Estonian, Japanese, Russian and other languages. While Jürison uses just a few Japanese phrases and words in his travelogue, Michelson gives an in-depth overview of the language and tries to establish similarities between Japanese and Estonian, as he tells the reader: “Since the Estonians and the Finns are counted among the Mongolic peoples, together with the Chinese and the Japanese, I was expecting to come across a lot of words similar to those in my mother tongue; but so far these have been few and far between” (*Olevik* 1896, 18 June, 584). In some parts of his travelogue, Jürison gives translations of the Japanese words he uses, for example: “*Fune* – this is the word for a boat” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 9 October, 321). In others, he does not give any explanation as to their meaning and uses distorted Japanese words, like “*Osiljan! Osiljan!*” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 13 November, 362), perhaps also not knowing the translation or seeking to add an exotic touch to his texts. At the same time Jürison practices the usage of Japanese words by naturally incorporating them into his Estonian text, as he writes: “In the other room three or four men are sitting with a *musume* [‘young woman’, ‘daughter’], in front of them *tabero* [‘food’] with saké and a charcoal box in between” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 23 October, 338).

In addition to Japanese, the texts refer to Russian as a means of cultural interpretation. The ability to speak Russian enabled seamen to communicate with locals, to an extent. For example, Michelson writes that thanks to his knowledge of the language he was able to communicate with the ship’s cook and his helpers, who were Chinese (*Olevik* 1896, 11 May, 472). Moreover, an understanding of Russian served as an advantage when interpreting cultural codes and, as such, granted a certain edge over others (the Japanese often lacked this advantage due to their superficial knowledge of Russian, for example Jürison mentions that the Japanese were speaking “in their broken Russian” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 2 October, 314). Russian as a language known to Estonians

was also used to make the Japanese travel experience comprehensible to the reader (for example using Russian phrases in texts). Apart from quotations in Japanese and Russian, the texts include references to other languages as well, for example to educate the reader on how to pronounce foreign words, as when Jürison teaches the reader: “for gentleman, read: tshentlman” (*Eesti Postimees* 1869, 5 November, 165).

Another principal textual device for rendering the travel experience understandable to the reader, apart from the use of different languages, is the technique of metaphors. As earlier approaches indicate (Harvey 2006 [1990]), references to metaphors are a popular way of communicating complex meanings. The technique of metaphor is primarily used to render certain events comprehensible and explain the immediate experiences of seamen, rather than to make generalisations based on mediated experiences. The metaphorical images presented are therefore not separated from the practices they describe, which is common in late modernism according to previous studies (op cit): this may lead to the transmission of a cultural experience and thereby to stereotypical cultural notions. Similar to earlier studies of historical media texts (see, for example, Tuvikene 2008), this chapter analyses metaphors relating to nature – the type of metaphor mostly used in the travelogues. Metaphors are used to describe activities, for example: “everybody climbed like ants out of the ship to see the new place” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 2 October), 313, as well as to explain Japanese traditions, for example: “a hairdo resembling a horn whose tip has been cut off” (op cit, 314). Metaphors related to nature or animals are mainly used to describe people or cultural traditions or customs, such as Jürison’s description of the Japanese speaking about their weapons: “stuttering and belching, some praised their swords, saying they were as much as 500 years old and could cut off two or three heads with one stroke” (op cit, 315). Earlier studies also point to the success of ‘interpreting’ culturally foreign traditions by means of natural metaphors (Masso & Tender 2008).

In addition to linguistic techniques, various textual devices were employed to interpret cultural experiences for the reader’s benefit. In terms of structure, Jürison’s travelogue moves on from initial cultural traditions and geographical descriptions to more elaborate explanations of customs and morals. As well as narratives with a clear introduction, thematic development and conclusion, his texts include isolated, loosely connected digressions. Therefore, his texts cannot be described as systematic feature articles in a certain style because he alternates between the first person singular and plural forms, descriptions and dialogues. With some exceptions, the present tense is used. The text structure of Michelson’s travelogues is of a similar nature: it seems as if the narrator

continuously adds to the text whichever stories come to his mind and whatever scenes capture his attention. At the same time, this does not keep the narrator from concentrating on the material or from trying to draw attention to details or local peculiarities that may be exciting to the reader. In addition, Michelson wants to give advice to Estonian readers back at home or to write about topics that could be educative, for example how production and trade could be organised better by following the Japanese example (*Olevik* 1896, 11 June, 560).

A device that simplifies the reading process is the constant (mental) *interaction between the author and the reader*. For example, Jürison addresses the reader in his texts: “Now, let’s go to see the town” (*Eesti Postimees* 1868, 9 October, 321). Michelson, too, employs such a device, for example when comparing how ships are built in Japan and in Estonia, and tries to give advice to Estonians, setting Japanese practice as a good example (*Olevik* 1896, 24 September, 896). Michelson addresses the reader directly much less than Jürison; however, he turns to the reader on one occasion with the sentence: “Let’s continue on the road, later on paths and, in the end, through the forest” (*Olevik* 1896, 30 April, 423). Another form of interaction between the narrator and the reader used by Jürison is his moralising tone: he may have picked this up earlier when reading *Eesti Postimees*, edited by Johann Voldemar Jannsen,⁸ or it could be attributed to his conscious or subconscious desire to imitate Jannsen’s style. In addition to the device of mental interaction, real dialogue between the author and the reader – something quite exceptional for this era – was published in one of the travelogue texts. Specifically, Michelson answers a letter from one of the readers in his travelogue. In his letter, the reader, a Lutheran missionary, demands an explanation for Michelson’s claim that many missionaries come to Japan just to open up new markets for trade. Michelson excuses himself by explaining that he meant only missionaries from the Catholic Church: “May you not look down on blissful and difficult missionary work just because some amongst them have strayed” (*Olevik* 1896, 1 October, 919).

Summary

The objective of this analysis was to study the development of cultural-geographic relations, concentrating on representations of places in the private stories of Estonian seamen. The analysis enabled us to focus on points of emphasis in constructing Japan, on national and cultural references in mediating travel experiences through personal viewpoints and on the use of linguistic and textual devices in ‘translating’ personal travel experiences.

According to the analysis, early travelogues, unlike the first journalistic geographic descriptions, relied primarily on cultural emphases (for example

mentality and customs). No dominant thematic focus could be found in the travelogues analysed, unlike previous studies (Pekar 2003), which revealed prevalent attention to the female gender role. In addition to providing a formal overview of local everyday life, the judgements given on such matters were quite bold, being based on the authors' personal experiences and cultural comparisons. No reassessment of the cultural stereotypes found in previous analytical studies (Lehmann 1978; Wilkinson 1990; Littlewood 1996) could be traced in the analysed travelogues, probably due to the lack, and inaccessibility, of prior written information sources (for example information sources in various languages were linguistically or practically not available, and single articles about Japan were not published in the Estonian media in such a way as to form constant images to be passed on) and personal cultural contacts. Drawing on comparisons of earlier studies (Masso & Tender 2008), we can state that it is due to the cultural focus on daily life, the dominance of unmediated contact and descriptions of place through social activity (Harvey 2006 [1990]) that these cultural-geographic texts are relevant and understandable in a timeless way.

A variety of linguistic and textual techniques that refer to the Estonian nation are employed to explain events that occur on the narrators' travels (for example references to the national epic, to racial groups with whom Estonians have come into contact and to a similar hierarchical status to those subjugated). The perspective on Japan that was offered to the readers was more descriptive and pragmatically analytical than critical or judgmental. The analysis enables us to conclude that sharing personal cultural experiences mediated by newspapers helped to consolidate the foundation for a national identity and for national unity. As Benedict Anderson (2006) has stated, through the spread of the media and literacy different nations shared information and identified themselves with other people with whom they shared a field of information provided by the media. For example, 'otherness' is used in the texts analysed here as a tool to help with the formation of national identity, in which scenario the Japanese are set up as a good example to Estonians in the way they work and study. When constructing Japan as geographically far-flung 'other', cultural distancing is avoided. This, in turn, creates an excellent framework for the construction of a culturally open-minded nationalism instead of an ethnically centred, exclusive nationalism. By drawing parallels with Yokoyama's research we can claim that 'Japan' became a tool with which journalism could express unrestricted opinions on the journalists' own national identity and country; thus the image of Japan could have been "a precursor of intense nationalism, the components of which were increasingly simple and symbolic images of the country in relation to the outside world" (Yokoyama 1987, 175).

Taking into account the characteristics of the structure of feature articles and the linguistic devices employed by the authors (for example, translation, non-translation and the coining of new words), these travelogues also served as an example for later travelogues and feature articles. The private experiences of Estonian seamen that were made public to Estonian readers constructed a new dimension in the public-private divide within the Estonian media. Through the seamen's travelogues about Japan, the private experience became public when published in Estonian newspapers: description of the 'other' opened a door to description of the 'self'. The direct way in which the writers of these travelogues turn to their audience indicates an awareness of the possible spread and influence of the written personal travel experience.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the travelogues on Japan published in Estonian newspapers were inherently modern, for example originating from a national perspective and based on diverse private cultural experiences. The dominance of spatial practices over representations and moderate use of cultural stereotypes in these private stories, inherent to spatial mediation, points to the transition from a pre-modern period to the modern era (see, for example, Warf 2008) that was taking place in the second half of the 19th century (for example using nation-specific references). At the same time these texts feature certain late-modern elements (for example the dominant dimension being spatial rather than temporal) and therefore pave the way for social change (for example the national movement) and the development of place-related identity (for example Estonian identity). The travelogues analysed confirm the construction of a time-space compression inherent to modernity (Harvey 2006 [1990]), which in Estonia was expressed not so much in an increase in direct contact through technological advance (for example, rail and maritime travel, and later the telegraph) but more in the mediation of private cultural-geographic experiences through the media. We can suppose for future research that the construction of Japan as a faraway positive 'model country' could have helped to spread the new ideas and to speed up modernisation in Estonia.

Newspapers

Eesti Postimees 1868 = Jürison, J. (1868) Eestimehhe teekond ümber mailma "Askoldi" laewa peal, *Eesti Postimees*, 2, 9, 23, 30 October, 6, 13, 20 November.

Eesti Postimees 1869 = Jürison, J. (1869) Eestimehhe teekond ümber mailma "Askoldi" laewa peal, *Eesti Postimees*, 12 February, 24 September, 22 October, 5, 19 November, 17, 31 December.

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Olevik 1896 = Michelson, M. (1896) Kirjad Jaapanist, *Olevik*, 20, 27 February, 5, 12, 19, 23 March, 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 April, 7, 11, 21, 28 May, 4, 11, 18 June, 30 July, 10, 17, 24 September, 1, 8 October, 3 December.
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Notes

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1 Such a stereotypical nature is inherent not only to representations of Japan, but also to images of other countries presented in the media (see, for example, Tuvikene 2008, where the representations of Estonians in the Swedish media are analysed).

2 A somewhat higher degree of mobility can be observed among certain (professional) groups (soldiers, deportees, re-settlers, missionaries and seamen) and racial groups, which in turn created selective cultural openness among the people of the destination country. Although mobility was present in these groups, the experiences they mediated may not

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have been accessible to a large number of people (those who were mobile were not necessarily literate), i.e. experiences were, at first, mediated orally.

3 See, for example, Klaassen 1995.

4 Here the percentages are calculated by the authors on the basis of absolute values presented in Maaring 1968, Pohla 1969, and Malkov 1968.

5 Letters written by Some Kaarli (Carl Gustav Greenwaldt) from Finland and St Petersburg and published in *Perno Postimees* in 1859.

6 For example, compare this to the *Missioni-Leht* newspaper, published from 1858 to 1862: *Missioni-Leht*'s geographical scope was quite broad, although descriptions were presented from the perspective of missionary work. Similarly, the very first newspaper, *Marahwa Näddala-Leht*, published from 1821 to 1825, presented not only local news, but also educational items on various geographical regions. In terms of focus, however, these resembled geographical descriptions. See, for example, Pohla 1969 and Ummelas 1977.

7 See, for example, travel notes written by Lydia Koidula in 1876–1879 and by Karl August Hermann in 1876 (Mallene 1957).

8 Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819–1890), an Estonian journalist and poet, published the first Estonian regular newspaper *Perno Postimees* in 1857.