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About Poverty and Inequality in Japan

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Abstract. As a result of the ageing of the population, shifts in the structure of households, changes in the labor market in the last two to three decades, in Japan, there is a gradual strengthening of the initial income disparity, as well as some increase in the relative poverty rate. However, through the mechanisms of redistribution of income embedded in the social security system and tax system, as well as through the provision of material support to the least protected segments of the population, the state has managed to restrain these processes. The measures taken to support families with children in recent years have been particularly important. They made it possible to reduce the rate of relative child poverty and keep income inequality among this group of families at a relatively low level.

Obviously, current income, by which the level of relative poverty and income inequality are measured, cannot clearly indicate that a family or a particular person live in poverty. In addition to the current income, the standard of living also depends on the amount of financial savings, the availability of real estate, the possession of securities, etc. For example, older citizens, who are among the least well-off in terms of current income, have the largest share of the country's accumulated financial assets. The results of opinion polls conducted annually by the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office show that the changes taking place in the country have not led to the transformation of the Japanese "middle-class society" into a "divided society".

For more than half a century, the absolute majority of the Japanese, about 90 percent, when asked how they would rate their families' standard of living,

chose the answer “middle level”. At the same time, in the composition of the middle class, there was a shift towards the increasing share of the more well-off (middle and higher) strata. In general, Japanese society remains healthy and prosperous. As for poverty, unlike Russia, where it is a consequence of blatant social injustice and extreme social contrasts, in Japan, in our opinion, it is not systemic and arises as a result of some particularly unfavorable, exceptional circumstances in which a family or a person find themselves.

***Keywords*:** poverty, inequality, income distribution, deprivation, population ageing, household structure, labor market, social security.

Poverty and inequality have been attracting more and more attention of Japan’s mass media, scientists, and politicians since the early 2000s. The emergence of this theme was quite unexpected for the general public. Back in the 1960s, the government stopped publishing statistics on poverty as the unparalleled economic growth dramatically increased the standard of living in all segments of the population, and the poverty issue came off the political agenda. Moreover, the conviction that successful economic growth had made Japan an egalitarian society where the middle-class life standard was ensured for the absolute majority of citizens fueled up the Japanese national pride for a long time and became a basic element of the national self-image.

Poverty Indicators

The problem of poverty entered the agenda again after the data on relative poverty in the country was published in 2009. Unlike the absolute poverty rate applied to assess the situation in the most backward countries of the world and related to families whose income does not reach the level ensuring elementary physical survival (i.e., receiving the amount of calories essential for life support), the relative poverty rate assesses the position of poor strata compared with the situation in

society as a whole. It is a major indicator for measuring poverty in the countries with the middle and high levels of development, reflecting the share of families the members of which have less than half of the median disposable equivalent income.[1]

The shortcoming of this indicator is that people's living standards and quality of life are defined not only by current incomes, they are influenced by a number of other factors, such as the amount of savings, possession of real estate, labor potential (education, capabilities, health status), social connections, etc. In other words, the phenomenon of poverty may not be directly connected to the level of current income. In addition, as the relative poverty rate depends on the standard of living in each particular country, international comparisons are representative in this case only in relation to countries with an approximately similar level of development. Nevertheless, along with other indicators that will be discussed below, the level of relative poverty permits one to judge the situation with poverty in a country and to keep an eye on the dynamics of this process as well.

The data published by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2009 presented quite an unexpected picture. It appeared that Japan, which had been considered a model of a middle-class society, had the relative poverty level that not only kept increasing but also exceeded the indices of most nations with high and medium levels of development. Thus, according to the OECD data, Japan occupied the twenty-seventh place among thirty most developed countries by the total rate of relative poverty and the nineteenth – by the child poverty rate (reflecting the share of children aged under 17 residing

[1] The equivalent income is calculated by dividing household disposable income (i.e., income after the deduction of taxes and contributions to the social security system) per square root of the number of its members. The median income divides all households into two equal parts: one half has income over median, and the other – below (See: OECD. Society at a Glance 2019, p. 76: https://www.oecd.org/social/society- at-a-glance-19991290.htm).

in families with incomes below 50 percent of the median equivalent disposable income).[2]

The data below indicate how these rates changed in 1985–2015 (%) [Abe 2018]:

	1985	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015
I*	2.0	3.2	3.5	3.8	4.6	5.3	4.9	5.7	6.0	6.1	5.6
II*	0.9	2.9	2.8	2.2	3.4	4.4	3.7	4.2	5.7	6.3	3.9

I* — overall relative poverty rate,
II* — child poverty rate.

As these data show, the overall relative poverty rate and, what is more important, the child poverty rate had an upward trend. To figure out how serious the situation is, it would be expedient to compare Japan's data with those from other highly developed countries comparable to it by the scale of the economy and level of development, i.e., the G7 countries.

Table 1

Relative Poverty Rate in the G7 Countries (%)*

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Canada	12.9 16.6	12.9 16.2	12.7 15.6	13.1 15.7	13.3 16.81	12.6 15.01	14.2 17.1	12.4 14.2	12.0 11.4	11.8 11.8
France	7.0 –	7.2 9.5	7.2 9.3	7.9 11.0	8.5 12.0	8.1 11.5	8.1 11.3	8.3 11.5	8.1 11.2	8.5 11.7
Germany	8.3 10.0	8.0 –	8.5 7.9	8.8 9.1	8.4 7.4	9.5 9.5	10.1 11.2	10.4 12.3	10.4 11.3	– –
Italy	12.2 15.7	12.3 15.5	11.9 16.1	13.4 18.0	13.0 17.7	13.7 19.3	14.4 18.3	13.7 17.3	13.9 18.7	–

[2] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Annual Health, Labor and Welfare Report 2009/2010. Chart 2-3-3. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/wp/wp-hw4/dl/honbun/2_2_3.pdf

Great Britain	11.6 13.1	12.6 14.4	12.3 117.3	11.0 10.5	10.5 10.4	10.5 11.0	10.9 11.2	11.1 11.8	11.9 12.9	11.7 12.4
USA	17.0 –	16.8 20.6	17.3 21.6	17.4 21.2	17.4 20.8	17.5 20.2	16.8 19.9	17.8 20.9	17.8 21.2	– –

Source: OECD. Income Distribution Database. http://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm.

* Upper line – general relative poverty rate, below line – child poverty rate.

As the data above prove, the Japanese society does not look very wealthy compared to the countries known for their strong welfare policies (such as France, Germany, and Great Britain), as Japan has considerably higher rates of overall and child poverty than the above-mentioned countries. Japan is second to the USA by the relative poverty rate and holds the intermediate position regarding child poverty (after the USA and Italy). The following should be emphasized when commenting on these results.

First, achievements in the fight against poverty waged in all advanced countries depend on government spending on these purposes, which, in turn, correlates with the share of the national income taken to the budget through the tax and social security systems. According to the data below, Japan is significantly ahead of the USA by this indicator and closely approaches Great Britain but is notably behind France and Germany.

Share of Taxes and Contributions to the Social Security in the National Income (%)*

	Taxes	Contributions to Social Security	Population's Burden
Japan	25.4	17.4	42.8
USA	24.7	8.4	33.1
Great Britain	36.6	0.5	46.9
Germany	31.2	22.2	53.4
France	40.8	26.5	67.2

Source: Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training. Kokusai rōdō hikaku dētabukku 2019. P. 305.

https://www.jil.go.jp/english/estatis/databook/2019/09.html

*Data on Japan for 2019, on other countries – for 2016.

Second, the poverty situation in many highly developed countries is exacerbated by problems associated with the inflow of immigrants, racial and religious conflicts. Japan, with its virtually homogenous population and strictly controlled migration, is a rare exception in this respect.

In other words, accumulating quite a high share of the population's income in the budget and having no grave social problems that could thwart the fight against poverty, Japan, nevertheless, has very high relative poverty rates. Yet it should be noted that, firstly, it is one of the richest countries in the world, and, secondly, the population's standard of living has been on the rise during the last decades despite economic troubles. Thus, readjusted by the purchasing power parity (PPP), the gross national product per capita amounted to $19,620,000 in 1990, $27,220,000 – in 2000, $35,900,000 – in 2010, and $45,180,000 in 2019, i.e., grew 2.3 times during the period.[3] These two circumstances undoubtedly helped mitigate the social consequences of the spread of poverty.

Social statistics apply the so-called deprivation rate, suggested back in the 1970s by a British sociologist P. Townsend in addition to the relative poverty rate. This rate reflects the share of people (families) deprived of this or that good recognized as essential for normal life in this country. Note that these calculations include not only material goods but also access to various services (educational, medical, etc.), opportunities of participation in public life, etc. Understandably, international comparisons in this case are difficult as the notion of "normal life" in each country is influenced not only by material well-being achieved, but by existing norms and customs as well. It is also evident that the composition of these goods is significantly changing over time.

Since its emergence, the deprivation rate has gone through some changes: for example, significance of this or that good was included into its calculation. If simplified, the method of calculating the deprivation rate is as follows. The group of respondents (audiences differ depending

[3] The World Bank. World Development Indicators. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD

on the purpose of the study) is asked whether they possess this or that good. The positive reply (as well as the reply "I do not need it") is scored 0, the negative – 1. To obtain a consolidated index, the replies received are weighed by the degree of significance of the relevant good defined by the share of those who possess it among the total number of the respondents. [Abe 2006, p. 2–8]

Yet, for the purpose of raising the representativeness of surveys, some "habitual" goods (foodstuffs, clothes, household appliances) are excluded from lists of goods recognized as essential for the "normal life" because the general growth of the life standards made them affordable virtually for all citizens of the country. Thus, for example, the survey conducted by Professor A. Abe in 2006 included only such material goods as microwave stoves, heating equipment and air conditioners. Most of the questions focused on household conditions (a toilet and bathroom available for one family, a separate bedroom – apart from a sitting-room and a dining-room, access to telephone connection) and financial opportunities for maintaining social contacts (attending various events, visiting relatives, and spending on transport and gifts).

Calculations also accounted for opportunities of saving funds for old age, making monthly savings as well as having access to social services (visit to a doctor or dentist when needed), etc. As Professor A. Abe's estimates indicated, 65 percent of Japanese families had all goods required for normal life, 35 percent were deprived of at least one of them, 14 percent lacked two, and 9 percent – three. When analyzed in relation to various social groups differing by income level, age and family type, the rate showed that the highest risk of deprivation lay with the people having an income of 50 percent below the median one as well as with those whose way of life deviated from the "standard". The risk of deprivation among unmarried men of 30–60 years, for example, proved to be higher than that among married ones. Yet there was no significant difference in the deprivation rate depending on the matrimonial status among young men of 20–29 years and men over 70 (in these age groups, it is not considered a deviation from the norm to not have a wife). Sharp contrasts in the deprivation rate were

observed among families with children. The rate turned out twice lower in "standard" two-parent families than in single-mother ones. It is known that the latter type of family is still regarded in Japan as a certain anomaly [Abe 2006, pp. 10–13].

Given a special social resonance of child poverty, the studies analyzing deprivation among Japanese children and teenagers are of an utmost interest. Such is, for example, the picture presented by the results of the survey conducted by A. Abe and J. Takezawa within the UNICEF project "Child Well-Being in Rich Countries".

Share of Children (aged 1–12) deprived of the following goods (%)

Age-appropriate books excluding text-books	1.0
Items for out-of-house entertainment (bicycles, roller skates, etc.)	2.0
Home playthings (teaching toys, construction kits, table and computer games)	3.0
Money for participation in school events	1.0
Availability of a quiet light room (space) to perform homework	10.0
Connection to the Internet	11.0
New clothes (not second-hand)	7.0
Opportunities for celebrating birthdays, name days, etc.	2.0

Source: [Abe & Takezawa 2013, p. 35].

The figures above indicate that the absolute majority of Japanese children live in the conditions corresponding to the perceptions of what childhood should be like in the 21st century. Yet the situation looks different in the international context. Japan proved to be in the twentieth place among the thirty countries under study by the share of children deprived of at least two goods mentioned above – 7.8 percent. However, it was significantly behind highly developed countries with the average index of below 5.0 percent, thus being equal to the East European countries [Abe & Takezawa 2013, p. 9].

Evidently, the risk of deprivation is especially high among children from poor families, which is testified by the results of the survey conducted in 2016 among eight thousand families from Tokyo. Although only about 3 percent of children replied that their families from time to time faced difficulties in paying utilities, repaying loans, making rent payments, etc., the gap between families with different income cannot but surprise. While 30 percent of low-income and 5–6 percent of medium-income families experience difficulties in paying utilities, the problem is quite unknown to rich families. The same kind of differences is typical for making rent payments and loan disbursements: difficulties are experienced by 20 percent and 29 percent of poor families, respectively, and 4 percent and 9 percent of medium-income ones, while no problems at all are faced by rich families. The differences in the life standard affect opportunities for children to visit museums, theaters, sport clubs, theme parks, go to the country with their parents, etc. Thus, 30–35 percent of children from poor families, 6–10 percent of children from medium-income families, and below 1 percent of high-income families were deprived of these entertainments for financial reasons [Abe 2018].

Like in the case of deprivation rate among adults, it is much higher among children in the families deviating from the generally accepted perceptions of "normality". For example, according to the 2015 data, this rate amounted to 9.7 percent among two-parent families, 12.8 percent – among those consisting of three generations, and 43.6 percent – among single-parent families [Abe 2018].

Inequality Indicators

In addition to the relative poverty and deprivation rates applied to analyze the socio-economic situation, experts use a number of other indicators with the Gini coefficient being the main one. It shows to what extent the real income distribution in the population (reflected by the Lorenz curve) deviates from the theoretically estimated and absolutely

equal distribution thereof. This coefficient varies in the range from 0 to 1, where 0 implies the state of absolute equality, and 1 – the state when all income is received by one household. Thus, the higher the Gini coefficient is, the greater the social disparity by income [Mira d'Ercole 2006, p. 13].

Like other highly developed countries with market economy, Japan has quite high Gini coefficient by initial income – over 0.5, but it is much lower after income redistribution (Table 2).

The factors that made Gini coefficient by initial income grow will be discussed in the next section of the article. It would be expedient in this part to focus on the fact that, as disparity of the population by initial income intensified, the government strengthened its function of redistribution; this resulted in the Gini coefficient by post-redistribution income turning somewhat lower in the period under consideration.

Table 2

Gini Coefficient Dynamics (Household Income)

Years	Initial income (1)	Income (including social benefits) minus contributions to the social security (2)	Income (2) minus taxes	Income after redistribution (3)	Coefficient changes (%) (3)/(1)	Trough the social security (%)	Trough the tax system (%)
2005	0.526	0.406	0.393	0.387	26.4	24.0	3.2
2008	0.532	0.402	0.387	0.376	29.3	26.6	3.7
2011	0.554	0.407	0.389	0.379	31.5	28.3	4.5
2014	0.570	0.406	0.387	0.376	34.1	31.0	4.5
2017	0.559	0.402	0.382	0.372	33.5	30.1	4.8

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Shotoku saibumpai 2017 chyōsa hōkokusho* [Survey on Income Redistribution 2017]. P. 6. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/96-1/h29hou.pdf

As households may have a different number of members, the standard of living may differ considerably even with the similar income. Experts calculate the Gini coefficient by equivalent income for the purpose of eliminating the effect of these differences (remember that it is calculated by dividing the family income by the square root of the number of family members).

Although disparity of the population by initial equivalent income is much lower than by household market income, the tendencies are, however, similar by both indicators: the Gini coefficient growth by initial income and its reduction by post-distribution income. In other words, social inequality measured by distribution of current income goes down significantly thanks to government policies (by one third and even more) while the social structure is averaged. Thus, according to the 2017 data, the structure of households changes in the following way: the share of families with the lowest incomes (below JPY 500,000 a year) reduces from 25.9 percent by initial income down to 1 percent by post-redistribution income; the share of the richest families (with income over JPY 10,000,000) reduces from 10.6 to 8.2 percent, respectively, while the share of the "medium" families (with the income from JPY 1,000,000 to JPY 8,000,000) increases from 50.5 to 80.0 percent.[4]

Table 3

Gini Coefficient Changes (by Equivalent Income)

Years	Initial income (1)	Income, (including social benefits) minus contributions to the social security (2)	Income (2) minus taxes	Income after redistribution (3)	Changes of the coefficient (%) (3)/(1)	Trough the social security (%)	Trough the tax system (%)
2005	0.435	0.336	0.322	0.322	25.9	22.5	4.1
2008	0.454	0.343	0.327	0.319	29.7	26.2	4.7

[4] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Shotoku saibumpai 2017 chyōsa hōkokusho* [Survey on Income Redistribution 2017]. P. 3. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/96-1/ h29hou.pdf

2011	0.470	0.342	0.322	0.316	32.8	28.6	5.8
2014	0.482	0.335	0.316	0.308	36.1	32.1	5.8
2017	0.480	0.340	0.319	0.312	35.0	30.8	6.0

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Shotoku saibumpai 2017 chyōsa hōkokusho* [Survey on Income Redistribution 2017]. P. 16. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/96-1/h29hou.pdf

The surveys of income redistribution conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare experts every three years contain some other data showing changes of the Gini coefficient in relation to different groups of the population. These are, for example, calculation results based on the household head's age:[5]

Age of family heads

	under 29	30–34	35–39	55–59	60–64	65–69	70–74	over 75
Initial income	0.384	0.253	0.313	0.402	0.498	0.498	0.672	0.799
Post-redistribution income	0.379	0.240	0.274	0.372	0.399	0.382	0.355	0.400
Degree of the coefficient change (%)	1.0	5.5	12.6	7.6	19.9	35.2	47.2	49.9

As the above data indicate, income redistribution instruments applied by the government are aimed mainly at mitigating inequality in the groups where it is especially grave, i.e., among elderly citizens. The degree of social inequality goes down twice due to income redistribution among the families where the head is over seventy. On the contrary, these instruments are virtually neutral or applied to a lesser degree in respect of younger families.

[5] Ibid. Pp. 28–29.

The picture looks as follows when applied to different types of households:[6]

Household types

	Single Person	Spouses and kids	Spouses only	One parent and kids	Three generations	Others
Initial income	0.676	0.646	0.389	0.454	0.389	0.547
Post-redistribution income	0.378	0.311	0.265	0.345	0.295	0.403
Degree of coefficient change (%)	44.1	51.9	21.9	24.0	24.0	26.4

As the bulk of households consisting of a single person or married couples is represented by elderly citizens, it is these types of families that show the highest rates of disparity by initial income and dramatic (nearly two-fold) reduction thereof after redistribution.

We will return to the question of what income redistribution instruments are used by the government in the final part of the article. The next section will discuss factors influencing the growth of poverty and inequality in the country.

Factors of Poverty and Inequality Rise

One of the major factors resulting in inequality rise and relative poverty rate growth was rapid ageing of the population. The number of elderly citizens (65 and over) grew from 14,890,000 to 35,890,000,

[6] Ibid. Pp. 30–31.

or 2.4 times, over thirty years – from 1989 to 2019 – while the share thereof in the structure of the population increased from 12.1 to 28.4 percent.[7] Ageing of the population impacts the relative poverty and inequality growth as follows: first, the current income of elderly citizens is, as a rule, lower than that of working generations (pensions in Japan make 40–50 percent of the average wage), the growth of their share, therefore, results in the increased gap in income between generations.

Table 4

Changes in the Structure of Japanese Households by Family Type and Level of Income

Families consisting of:	Number of relevant type families (thousands)		Their share in the total number of families (%)		Annual family income (JPY thousands)
	1990	2019	1990	2019	2017
1	2	3	4	5	6
Single person	8446	14907	21.0	28.8	280.9
Single parent and unmarried children	2006	3616	5.1	7.0	408.7
Childless spouses	6695	12639	16.6	24.4	529.1
Spouses with children	15398	14718	38.2	28.4	774.6
Three generations	5428	2627	13.5	5.1	873.4
Others*	2245	3276	5.6	5.3	573.3
Total	40273	51785	1000.0	100.0	560.2 (average)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Handbook of Health and Welfare Statistics 2019. Table 1-56. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/

[7] Statistics Bureau of Japan. Japan Statistical Yearbook 2021. Table 2-6. http://www.stat. go.jp/english/data/nenkan/70nenkan/1431-02.html

db-hh/1-3.html; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Kōsei rōdō hakusho 2020 zenpan [White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020 Full Text]. P. 13. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/hakusyo/kousei/19-2/dl/01.pdf

* Other types include families consisting of a married couple and one or two parents.

Second, as the above data indicate, the gap in initial income is especially high in the groups of over 65 (mainly due to the difference between those who continue working and those who are retired), which also promotes the general inequality rate rise. The changes in the structure of Japanese households make an impact in the same direction.

Evidently, the rise of families with income below average (consisting of a single person, single parent with children, as well as one of the spouses) intensified disparity by initial income as well as the relative poverty rate growth. It should also be noted that heads of many households consisting of a single person or of spouses only are elderly people too. The total number of elderly families (that also includes households made up of elderly citizens and minor children residing together) grew from 3,113,000 in 1990 to 14,878,000 in 2019, and their share – from 7.7 to 28.7 percent, respectively. Note that their income is significantly lower than that of households the heads of which belong to younger cohorts:[8]

Family head age	up to 29	30–39	40–49	50–59	above 65	over 70
Family income (JPY thousands)	362.6	614.8	694.8	756.0	425.4	394.8

The deepening of the gap in income between Japanese families is intensified by the growing share of households formed by the young

[8] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2020). *Kōsei rōdō hakusho 2020 zenpan* [White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020 Full Text]. P. 14. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/ hakusyo/kousei/19-2/dl/01.pdf

unmarried Japanese of both genders. As it is known, the share of the latter greatly increased for the last decades; the 2019 data indicate that 35 percent of men at the age 35–39 were not married while the share of unmarried women at the same age was 23.9 percent (19.1 and 7.5 percent, respectively, in 1989).[9] The figures in younger cohorts are even higher. These households have income much below the average because young people's earnings are low at the beginning of their career due to the age-dependent labor remuneration still applied in Japanese companies.

As for families of spouses with children – although their share reduced significantly and they are no longer a dominating form of households – the processes within this group make a noticeable influence on the general situation with poverty and inequality. It is associated with the growing share of families where both spouses are working and, consequently, with the reduced share of families with *sengyō shufu* (professional housewives). Thus, the number of families with two working spouses grew from 7,830,000 to 12,450,000 during 1989–2019, while the number of families with a housewife reduced from 9,300,000 to 5,820,000. If families of the first type made up a little more than 40 percent in 1989, their number amounted to two thirds in 2019.[10]

Although women make a decision to find a job and become the second breadwinner in the family under various circumstances, material considerations play quite an important role. Thus, according to the 2016 data, nearly 70 percent of women worked in the families where the husband's income was JPY 2–5 million, about two thirds of women – when the husband's income was JPY 5–10 million, and 55 percent if the husband's income amounted to over JPY 10 million. Yet only 55 percent

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9 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Kōsei rōdō hakusho 2020 gaiyō* [White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020 Overview]. P. 2. https:// www.mhlw.go.jp/ content/000684406.pdf

10 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Kōsei rōdō hakusho 2020 gaiyō* [White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020 Overview]. P. 7. https:// www.mhlw.go.jp/ content/000684406.pdf

of women worked in the families where the husband's income did not exceed JPY 2 million.[11]

Since the relative poverty level for a family of four is an income of JPY 2,440,000 per year, it is evident that families where the husband's income does not exceed JPY 2,000,000 live in quite difficult circumstances. Yet 45 percent (about half a million) women from such families do not work. Moreover, according to sociologist Yanfei Zhou, only 20 percent of them intend to find a job in the near future, two thirds plan to do it "sometime in the future," while 11 percent do not want to work at all [Yanfei Zhou 2018, p. 7]. Yanfei Zhou, who studied the phenomenon of poverty among Japanese mothers, provided a major reason for this situation – women's adherence to traditional perceptions of what a family and their duties should be. In particular, they are sure that they are to rear children themselves, rather than send them to kindergartens. Yanfei Zhou calls their behavior irrational as surveys prove that children that have grown in such families are less healthy and successful in their studies than those who went to kindergartens. The lower the educational level and qualification of these women, the higher their readiness to bear poverty and lack of intent to overcome it. As they are able to find only a low-paying job in the labor market, house chores seem much more valuable to them [Yanfei Zhou 2019, p. 6–7].

It may be added that, judging by their husbands' earnings, the latter are not likely to have a high level of education either and hold jobs that do not require high qualification. In other words, the insufficient social capital of such families proves to be a factor of their stagnant poverty. It is evident that the existence of this group of families, on the one hand, and the entry of women from rich families (where the husband's annual income is over JPY 10 million) to the labor market, on the other, widen the income gap between Japanese households.

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[11] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Heisei 29 nenpan rōdō keizai hakusho* [White Paper on Labor Economy 2017]. Pp. 129, 132. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/hakusyo/ roudou/17/17-1.html

Finally, one more factor of growing poverty and inequality by initial income is the changes taking place in the labor market. We mean first of all a dramatic rise of the share taken by non-permanent workers in the employment structure. Their number grew 2.7 times (from 8,170,000 to 2l,650,000) in 30 years – from 1989 to 2019 – and their share in the structure of the employed – from 19.1 to 38.3 percent.[12] We will not analyze the differences in the position of permanent and non-permanent workers and relevant reasons, [Lebedeva 2019, pp. 36–66] but we will just note the aspects related to the income of these two categories of the employed, i.e., labor remuneration.

Back in 2007, Japan passed a law obligating business owners to provide an equal pay for equal labor – regardless of whether an employee was recruited as a permanent worker or under a temporary contract. The 2018 set of measures on changing the working style specified and toughened these requirements. Yet even after that the gap in labor remuneration between permanent and non-permanent workers persists, although it somewhat reduced in comparison with prior years. For example in 2019, an hourly pay of *pāto* women (partially employed, i.e., working less than 35 hours a week) amounted to two thirds of permanent workers' wages in manufacturing, while it made up 73.5 percent in healthcare and social services (which suffer from staff shortage more than other industries).[13]

Although about two thirds of all non-permanent workers are women, the notable growth of the number of young men in this category has become a specific feature of the last 10–15 years. Thus, if the number of non-permanent male workers aged 25–34 was 470,000 in 2006 and their share in the total number of male workers of this age was 6.0 percent, the figures in 2019 were 830,000 and

[12] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Kōsei rōdō hakusho 2020 gaiyō* [White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020 Overview]. P. 2. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/ content/000684406.pdf

[13] Statistics Bureau of Japan. Japan Statistical Yearbook 2021. Table 19-8, 19-11. http:// www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/70nenkan/1431-02.html

14.5 percent, respectively.[14] This does not only increase the income gap among young people and between generations but also reduces the number of marriages because these young men's earnings are far from satisfying Japanese women's expectations.

A particular group – the so-called working poor (*wākingu pua*) – is notable among non-permanent workers. Although many non-permanent workers' earnings fail to reach the minimum income level, not many of them fall into this category. By professor K. Goka's definition, *wākingu pua* are non-permanent workers who work the same number of hours as permanent ones (40 hours a week and more) but earn below JPY 2,000,000 per annum. The 2016 data indicate that 5,420,000 non-permanent workers worked over 40 hours a week, with 2,450,000 of them, or 45 percent, belonging to the *wākingu pua* category. The composition of this group is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Composition of *wākingu pua (*working poor), 2016

Annual income	Aged 15–64 (thousand people)			Aged 65 and older (thousand people)		
	Total: including	men	women	Total: including	men	women
Up to JPY 2,000,000, including:	2170	730	1440	280	160	120
Up to JPY 1,000,000	340	150	190	50	20	30
From JPY 1,000,000 to JPY 1,990,000	1830	580	1250	230	140	90

Source: [Goka 2017, p. 34].

[14] Statistics Bureau of Japan. Japan Statistical Yearbook 2006. Table 4. Japan Statistical Yearbook 2009. Table 1-4. http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/70nenkan/1431-02.html

Evidently, people having such low income are engaged in unskilled labor. Nevertheless, considering the mode of their labor, such income seems to be unjustifiably low and testifies to the significant difference between permanent and non-permanent employment in Japan. The *wākingu pua* existence does not only enhance poverty and inequality but presents a serious challenge for the Japanese society, which considers itself egalitarian.

Thus, a whole number of factors determined the widening of the gap by initial income and pushed up the relative poverty rates. As was mentioned above, the negative social consequences of this process are mitigated by the fact that it is taking place in the country with a high standard of life. In addition, the government's welfare policies are aimed at reducing social inequality and combating poverty.

Measures to Close the Income Gap and Support the Poor

As the data from Table 3 show, the social security system plays a major role in the redistribution of people's initial income, with the tax system making a certain contribution as well. The main instruments of income levelling through taxation are progressive personal income tax as well as differentiated rates of inheritance taxes. In 2007, personal income tax rates – amounting to 10 percent for lowest income persons and 37 percent for highest income ones – drifted even more apart. Currently they are 5 percent for those who earn below JPY 1,950,000 per annum, and 40 percent – for those whose income exceeds JPY 18,000,000 per annum. Various discounts and deductions from the tax base (for dependents, persons with disabilities, etc.) are also widely used in tax calculations. As to the inheritance tax, it is differentiated by the size of the inheritance. For example, if the inheritance is small (up to JPY 10,000,000), the tax is 10 percent; if the amount inherited is from JPY 10,000,000 to 30,000,000, it is 15 percent; and if it amounts to JPY 30,000,000–50,000,000, it is 20 percent, etc. Heirs of large

fortunes (over JPY 300,000,000) pay up to 50 percent of the inherited property cost to the government.[15]

The social security system has two major channels of income redistribution: the pension system and the health insurance scheme.

There are three schemes of pension insurance in Japan: for private employees (welfare pension, *kōsei nenkin*), for public servants as well as private school and university employees (mutual aid association pensions, *kyōsai kumiai*), and for other citizens not falling under the first two schemes (national pension, *kokumin nenkin*). They differ much in insurance terms, pension size and correlation in the subscribers' and recipients' numbers. Redistribution of funds in favor of the worst-off citizens takes place in the following way.

First, if pensions are fully covered by contributions of the insured in the *kōsei nenkin* and *kyōsai kumiai* schemes (half is paid by employees themselves, and the other half – by employers), half of the expenses on *kokumin nenkin* is undertaken by the government. The social significance of this mechanism is that *kokumin nenkin* pension is the main source of income in old age for the worst-off layers of the population (who make up the bulk of its subscribers). Second, some categories of *kokumin nenkin* subscribers have an opportunity to be fully or partially exempt from tax payments yet they retain the right to receive their pension.

The medical insurance system consists of several elements, but it may be divided into two groups by the insurance method:

Employment-based or profession-related insurance;

Place of residence-based insurance through municipalities.

The first scheme entails all persons employed as well as their family members, and the second – all other categories of citizens (farmers, self-employed, pensioners, students, etc.). The following mechanisms provide for redistribution of the financial load in favor of the worst-off citizens.

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[15] *Kokuzeichyō tōkei nempōsho 2014 nendohan* [Yearbook of the National Tax Agency 2014 Fiscal Year]. The National Tax Agency. Tokyo, 2016. Pp. 52, 246.

First, the consideration of the income and material status of the insured when defining the amount of insurance contributions. For example, contributions depend on the income level in the employment-based or profession-related insurance schemes. Place of residence-based health insurance schemes, where the least well-off citizens are insured, include contributions consisting of two parts – a fixed one, equal for all households, and the part calculated by municipalities with regard to the income level, amount of assets, family composition, i.e., different for each household.

Second, the redistribution of financial resources among different insurance schemes. Funds are transferred from more successful systems (pegged to employment-based or profession-related insurance) to less successful (place of residence-based insurance) since 1983.

Third, support of the most vulnerable layers of the population. Although the same share of insurance payments was established to cover citizens' expenses on medical services (70 percent), it goes up for particular categories (people over 70, children under 15, persons with disabilities, etc.). In addition, high income citizens regardless of their age cover services according to the regular scheme, while low-income citizens are, on the contrary, provided with various discounts up to exemption from contributions with the right to medical services reserved.[16]

While the mechanisms of income redistribution in favor of the least protected citizens embedded into social security and medical insurance schemes make an indirect impact on the poverty and inequality situation, the government material assistance provided to some categories of citizens has a direct effect.

The material support of the population is one of the oldest welfare programs in Japan. It is executed pursuant to the Law on Government Support, adopted back in 1950; it relies on four principles:

[16] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Annual Health, Labor and Welfare Report 2017. P. 28. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/wp/wp-hw11/dl/10e.pdf

– Assistance to citizens who are below the poverty line is the government's duty.

– All citizens matching particular criteria are entitled to receive this assistance on the equal non-discriminative basis.

– The government guarantees to all citizens the minimal income level required for the healthy and civilized life subsistence.

– Government support is based on the requirement that a person living in poverty would use their own savings, capabilities, and all other available resources to keep up minimal life standards.[17]

While the government support in the first post-war years was aimed at ensuring people's physical survival, its goal in today's society is to provide citizens with the minimal level of income required for healthy and civilized life or, as Professor A. Abe phrased it, "life without feeling shame" [Abe 2010, p. 32].

The government support includes eight types of benefits: for food, housing, education, medical services, maternity allowances, long-term care, professional activities, and funeral expenses. The benefit calculation accounts for differences in requirements between people of different age groups, households of various composition, as well as between regions. The entire assistance is provided in the form of money transfers (except for medical and long-term care services).

As has been stated above, one of the principles of government support is the requirement for the applicant to use their own resources for earning income of the higher than subsistence level. Specifically, if a person is recognized as capable of working but cannot find a job, he is not eligible for government support. Apart from labor remuneration, these resources imply the use of financial savings, sale of extra real estate, as well as assistance from relatives, who are to support needy family members according to civil law.

The focus on the necessity of using one's own resources – a job predominantly (if age and health allow) – resulted in people up to

[17] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Population and Social Security in Japan 2019. P. 51. http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/e/pssj/pssj2019.pdf

65 being refused assistance or granted short-term aid that was provided under strict control over their search for a job [Sekine 2008, p. 59]. Striving to improve the situation, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare issued instructions obligating local authorities to provide assistance to such people "on the way to obtaining independence" (i.e., getting a job). The year of 2014 saw enactment of the Law to Assist those Experiencing Hardship that provides for creation in the entire country of complex integrated "one-window" centers where people who find themselves in a difficult situation could apply for a consultation and receive aid.[18]

Of special note is the Law on Measures to Combat Child Poverty adopted in 2014 after it had become evident that the situation in this sensitive sphere looked worse in Japan than in many developed countries. The goal of this law was the "creation of the society where a child's future will not be affected by the circumstances under which they were born".[19]

The amount of funds channeled to provision of material assistance has begun growing very rapidly since the mid-1990s (as the number of persons entitled to this assistance grew and amounts of benefits increased). Thus, expenses on these purposes increased from JPY 11.3 trillion to JPY 27.2 trillion during the period of 1990–2019, while their share in government's total social expenses grew from 10.6 to 22.0 percent.[20] Major beneficiaries of this aid are families of elderly citizens, families with people with disabilities and sick people, as well as single mothers. The 2016 data indicate that their shares among government aid household recipients amount to over 50, 26,

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18 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Population and Social Security in Japan 2019.P. 55. http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/e/pssj/pssj2019.pdf

19 Ibid. On measures to support families with children, see: [Lebedeva I. P. 2021].

20 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Kōsei rōdō hakusho 2020 zenpan* [White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020 Full Text]. P. 20. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/hakusyo/ kousei/19-2/dl/01.pdf

and 6 percent, respectively; it testifies to the government's direct commitment to wage a war on poverty. In all, 1.6 million households, or 2.3 million citizens, receive material aid.[21]

Conclusion
"Middle-Class Society" or "Gap Society"?

There has been an increasing number of voices since the early 2000s in Japan about the Japanese "middle-class society" turning into "gap society" *(kakusa shakai)*. Reality, as we think, does not provide ample grounds for this conclusion. As shown above, under the influence of population ageing, shifts in the household structure, and changes in the labor market, the disparity of Japan's population by initial incomes deepens, and relative poverty rates go up. Yet the government manages to curb these processes through redistribution of income. Thus, the Gini coefficient maintains the level of 0.37–0.38 by household post-redistribution income. The same coefficient calculated by equivalent income (i.e., adjusted for the number of family members) is 0.31–0.32, which is regarded as a very moderate level. As to the relative poverty rate, Japanese indicators are not very good: Japan is second to the USA by overall poverty rate among all the G7 countries and third after the USA and Italy by the child poverty indicator. With regard to overall poverty, it's quite high rate is accounted for, predominantly, by the fact that Japanese society is not only the oldest among developed countries, but it also ages most rapidly. This results in the continuous increase of the share of elderly people in the population structure, whose current income is significantly lower than the working generations' income. The child poverty rate had already reduced significantly by 2015 according to the latest available data. There is every ground to believe that it is even lower now, as Abe Shinzō's government recently undertook several measures

[21] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Population and Social Security in Japan 2019. P. 52. http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/e/pssj/pssj2019.pdf

aimed at supporting families with children in order to eliminate the impact of the family's material situation on the child's future. According to the 2017 data, the Gini coefficient by equivalent income in relation to child age was 0.245 in the group aged 0–4, 0.310 – in the group aged 5–9, 0.272 – in the group aged 10–14, and 0.310 – in the group aged 15–19, which testifies to a very insignificant gap in post-distribution income between families with children.[22] Indicators of deprivation among Japanese children also prove that the absolute majority thereof live in very favorable conditions in keeping with standards of highly developed countries.

Speaking about poverty, one should bear in mind that low current income used to measure relative poverty rate and degree of disparity by income may not clearly indicate that this or that family – or this or that person – live in poverty. The standard of life, apart from the current income, depends on the amounts of financial savings, real estate, securities, etc. Thus, elderly citizens, who belong to the least well-off layers of the population, possess the largest share of financial savings in the country. According to the 2014 data, financial assets were distributed among households consisting of two or more persons in the following way: the share of households with family heads over 70 made 30.9 percent, aged 60–69 – 33.6 percent, between 50 and 59 – 18.9 percent, 40–49 years – 11.7 percent, 30–39 – 5.4 percent, below 30 – 0.5 percent.[23]. The fact that poverty among elderly Japanese is a quite rare phenomenon is proven by a very tiny share of government's material assistance recipients among them. This share is below 3 percent among citizens over 65 (2.9 percent in 2015).[24]

Finally, an important indicator that does not confirm the thesis of the

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[22] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. *Shotoku saibumpai (2017) chyōsa hōkokusho* [Survey on Income Redistribution 2017]. Pp. 40–41. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/96-1/ h29hou.pdf

[23] Cabinet Office (2019). *Kokumin seikatsu ni kansuru seron chyosa 2019* [Public Opinion Survey on the Life of the People 2019], from https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/r01/r01-life/ gairyaku.pdf

[24] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Population and Social Security in Japan 2019. P. 10. http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/e/pssj/pssj2019.pdf

Japanese "middle-class society" turning into a "gap society" is the results of public opinion surveys annually conducted by the Prime Minister's Office. These results are quite indicative, as surveys have been conducted since the mid-1960s, i.e., they cover the period (1960s–1980s) when the Japanese society was considered nearly an example of the "middle-class society". The results of these surveys cannot but amaze. The absolute majority of the Japanese – some 90 percent – for over half a century have chosen the reply "average" answering the question of how they would assess the life standard of their families. Moreover, the share of people referring to themselves as middle class proved to be even somewhat higher in the recent years than in the 1960s – 1970s. Thus, if it amounted to 87.1 percent in 1964 and 89.5 percent in 1976, it grew to 92.1 percent in 2015 and 92.8 percent in 2019. At the same time, the share of those who referred to themselves as the middle layer of the middle class grew from 50.2 percent in 1964 to 57.5 percent in 2019, the share of citizens considering themselves to be in the lower layer of the middle class reduced from 30.3 to 22.3 percent, while the share of those who considered themselves belonging to the highest level of the middle class increased from 6.6 to 12.8 percent. As to the social structure poles, the share of the poor went down from 8.5 to 4.2 percent, while the share of the rich went up from 0.5 to 1.3 percent.[25]

Thus, judging by the way the Japanese themselves, Japanese society has not only not polarized, but has become more prosperous and stable. The middle class is not only its foundation – it even strengthened its positions over time. Moreover, there has been a shift towards an increased share of wealthier layers (middle and high) in its composition.

Clearly, the above-mentioned does not imply that there are no people in Japan living in poverty. They definitely exist, especially among single mothers, pensioners, families with people with disabilities or sick people.

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[25] Cabinet Office. *Kōrei shyakai hakushyo reiwa ninen* [White Paper on Ageing Society 2020]. P. 17. https://www8.cao.go.jp/kourei/whitepaper/w-2020/zenbun/pdf/1s2s_01.pdf

Yet, unlike Russia, where poverty is evidence of outrageous social injustice and inordinate social contrasts, in Japan this is more likely a consequence of some exceptional unfavorable conditions in which this or that family or person found themselves. As a whole, the Japanese society remains to be healthy and well-off, which is in many respects promoted by the government's social policies aimed at combating poverty and curbing disparity of the population by income.

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Modern Perception of Japan by Vladivostok Citizens (Based on a 2021 Survey)

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Abstract. This article presents an analysis of the contemporary perception of Japan by the Vladivostok citizens, as well as their views of the current state of Russia-Japan relations and their prospects. The research is based on the results of a survey conducted in May–September 2021 by the Public Opinion Studies Laboratory of the Institute of History of the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The data obtained are compared with the results of similar investigations of previous years and Vladivostok people's views of other countries that are significant for Vladivostok, namely, China, the USA, India, and the two Koreas.

The authors point out that the Japanese factor has played an important role in the history of the city, and therefore Japan attracts so much attention of the city's dwellers. In their opinion, the high level of attractiveness of Japan which, in the past two decades, has been recorded by public opinion surveys in Vladivostok and other centers of Pacific Russia is based, primarily, on the people's interest in the unique culture of the Land of the Rising Sun, their high assessment of the economic and technological development of Japan and the prosperity of the Japanese people. At the same time, the historical experience of Russia-Japan relations and the political contradictions existing between the two countries make a large part of the respondents (about one-third of their total number) believe that there are threats to Russia from Japan, which are naturally associated with Japan's territorial claims. Yet, the Vladivostok residents, for the most part, demonstrate a fairly high level of trust in Japan, positively assess

the quality of current Russia-Japan relations and prospects for their future, and favor their active development.

***Keywords*:** Vladivostok, Japan, public opinion, Russia-Japan relations.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Vladivostok has always held a special place in Russian-Japanese relations. Its special status is determined by various factors and circumstances: the role of Vladivostok in the implementation of Russia's Pacific policy; its unusual perception in Japan as one of the symbols of Russia and one of the few bridgeheads of the Japanese presence in Russian territory; the real contribution that this city on the edge of Russia made to bilateral relations, being a permanent channel of economic and humanitarian interaction between the two countries and nations. These circumstances could not but form a specific public opinion of the Vladivostok people about Japan, which correspondingly influenced the quality of the work of this channel and the state of the regional component of Russia-Japan relations. There are different points of view on the role of the psychological factor in international relations in general and in Russia-Japan relations in particular. To a certain extent, by mechanically extrapolating to Russians the ideas about Russia (mostly negative ones) that have historically developed in Japan [Goryacheva 2020; Kozhevnikov 2020; Melkonyan 2018; Chugrov 2016; Bukh 2010], Nobuo Shimotomai concluded that "because of the entry of Japanese troops into Siberia after the Russian Revolution, the image of 'samurai Japan' was firmly established in Russia, and the war of 1945 became the basis for the subsequent half-century psychological cold war between Japan and Russia". According to the Japanese scholar, "our peoples have mutually strengthened the image of the 'enemy' in relation to each other, and this has become a psychological barrier to improving relations" [Shimotomai 2009, p. 189].

Most of the Russian experts do not think so. They emphasize the contradictory image of Japan in Russia, noting that, in the eyes of Russian society and the Russian political elite, Japan presents a complex, multifaceted, and multicolored picture [Streltsov 2016b, p. 25].

On the one hand, historical memory is a "catalyst of distrust" towards that country [Chugrov 2016, p. 12], superimposed on negative political assessments wherein Japan is perceived "as a country that, at best, does not have its own foreign policy, at worst, as a satellite of the United States and a geopolitical opponent of Russia" [Streltsov 2016a, p. 19]. According to the all-Russia opinion surveys of recent years, Japan is not in the focus of attention of Russians, most of whom simply do not have time to think about its existence. To them, Japan is "neither a friend nor an enemy, but just middling…", which, according to the degree of economic importance for Russia, is located somewhere on the level of Turkey and India and is interesting mainly as a distant exotica.[1] It has not become a country of mass tourism for Russians, a country where they buy real estate, where their relatives live, and where they keep their bank accounts, which in aggregate "translates the attitude towards it into a kind of abstraction…" [Volin 2009, p. 237–238].

On the other hand, in the public consciousness of Russians, Japan has a largely mythologized and attractive image as a country of refined culture with a high level of economic and technological development. In the views of most Russians, Japan is a "symbol and image", which often "has little in common with the original and is limited to a group of pervasive stereotypes" [Kulanov 2004, p. 55, 63].

Based on the materials of studying the public opinion of the Pacific Russia residents, we have repeatedly shown that, in this region, including Vladivostok, the attitude towards Japan is no less contradictory than on Russia's western or southern borders, but, at the same time, has its own specifics [Larin, Larina 2011, p. 187–216]. For various reasons, Vladivostok was not presented in a separate line in these publications, although it deserves to be highlighted.

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[1] About Russia and the Countries of the World. Which countries Russians consider friendly, which ones are hostile, and which ones they want to visit. 24 July 2017. *Website of the Public Opinion Foundation*. http://fom.ru/Mir/13624

Ideas of many residents of this city about geographically close, but culturally distant neighbors – the Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans – have been formed and continue to develop in significantly different conditions than analogous ideas of the vast majority of Russians. While for 90 percent of them Japan is a country located far from Russia [Petukhov 2010, p. 7], for the residents of Vladivostok (as well as of Khabarovsk, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Nakhodka, or Korsakov) it lies much closer than their own capital.

On the one hand, their specific ideas about Japan were determined by the close proximity and extensive long-term contacts of the port city with the island country (as early as in the late 19th century, Vladivostok was connected with Japan by regular maritime traffic) and also by living together on the territory of Vladivostok: in the first 50 years of its history, the Japanese made up a sizeable and, in certain areas, an important part of the city's population [Morgun 2014]. And even when the city was closed to foreigners, and this was almost the entire second half of the 20th century, thousands of its inhabitants, primarily sailors of the Far East Shipping Company, continued to visit Japan regularly, supplying Vladivostok residents with both scarce and exotic (for the USSR) goods and stories about the amazing country. And Japanese philology at the Far East State University was probably the most popular specialty in the 1970s and 1980s.

The opening of Vladivostok in 1990 was accompanied not only by the relocation there of the Consulate General of Japan from Nakhodka, the establishment of a Japanese Center and the signing of sister city agreements with a group of Japanese cities, but also by the active development of a unique sector of the local economy – the automotive business focused on the import and maintenance of used Japanese cars,[2] the appearance of Japanese businessmen and students, and direct flights connecting Vladivostok with Niigata, Tokyo, Toyama, and Osaka.

[2] In an artistic form, the invasion of the Japanese automobile industry in Vladivostok was wonderfully described by V. Avchenko: [Avchenko 2012].

On the other hand, the attitude towards Japan was formed in the conditions of rather complicated – throughout history – political relations between the two countries, and, during the first half of the 20th century, under the impact of awareness of their military-political confrontation in the Pacific and a feeling of Japanese threat. The Russo-Japanese War, the annexation of Korea close to Vladivostok, the 1918–1922 intervention, the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, tensions on the border and the Khasan events of the 1930s, the short, but no less fierce Soviet-Japanese War, Japanese prisoners of war, and subsequent discussions on the territorial problem – all these events affected Vladivostok and its residents to a greater or lesser extent and gradually formed a stable image of the Land of the Rising Sun on the shores of the Amur Bay.

In May–September 2021, the Public Opinion Studies Laboratory (LIOM) of the Institute of History, the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with the financial support of the Consulate General of Japan in Vladivostok, conducted a special study on the attitude of the Vladivostok residents towards Japan and the Japanese, which made it possible to clarify, confirm, or correct on a serious documentary basis a number of previously developed assessments and judgments concerning this topic and draw a fuller image of Japan rooted in the people's minds. A total of 415 respondents were interviewed, including 197 men (47.5 percent of the respondents) and 218 women (52.5 percent). By age, the respondents were distributed as follows: under 20 years – 15 people (3.6 percent), from 20 to 30 years – 73 people (17.6 percent), from 31 to 40 years – 108 people (26.0 percent), from 41 to 50 years – 78 people (18.8 percent), from 51 to 60 years – 69 people (16.6 percent), and over 60 years – 72 people (17.4 percent). This distribution generally corresponds to the age structure of the Vladivostok population.

According to the results of the survey, there was some gender bias: there were 5 percent more women than men among the respondents. However, a careful analysis shows that gender differences are not of fundamental importance in general assessments, although they affect some responses, especially those where emotional perception plays

a more or less significant role. Gender differences in the perception of certain issues, if there are any, are noted in the text of the article.

The objective of the article is to identify the nature, dynamics, and some features of modern ideas of Vladivostok residents about Japan and Russia–Japan relations on the basis of the results of the 2021 survey and previous sociological studies.

Japan in the Context of the Far East Inhabitants' General Ideas About the Outside World

The answers to the first question that begins the study of the respondents' perception of Japan – "Which of the following countries do you like the most?" – make it possible to assess the level of their abstract-emotional perception of the countries of the world. Each respondent was asked either to choose one from a list of six alphabetically arranged states (India, China, North Korea, USA, South Korea, and Japan), or to voice their own choice by writing the name of the country that is not on the list.

After the processing of mandatory and initiative responses, a list of 19 countries was formed. In addition to the states mentioned in the questionnaire, there were 13 more on the list, including Russia, Brazil, and Nigeria, which are far and exotic for Vladivostok, and Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia, which are relatively close to it. Each of the countries initiatively named by respondents scored from 0.2 (one respondent) to 1.2 percent (5 people each) of votes.

Japan turned out to be the undisputed winner in this popularity rating: it was named by 172 respondents out of 415 (41.4 percent). South Korea (15.2 percent), China (13.3 percent), and the USA (12.3 percent) follow in a close group, but with a large margin from the leader. In total, these three countries scored 0.6 percent fewer votes than Japan (40.8 percent vs. 41.4 percent). The survey did not show a significant difference in the country preferences of men and women, although there is a 2–3 percent spread (i.e., within the acceptable statistical error) (Table 1).

Table 1

Answers to the question "Which country do you like the most?" (Vladivostok, 2021, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Country	All respondents	Men	Women
Japan	41.4	42.6	40.4
South Korea	15.2	14.2	16.1
China	13.3	11.7	14.7
USA	12.3	15.2	9.6
India	4.1	2	6
North Korea	2.2	3	1.4
None of them	2.7	1.5	3.7
Other countries	8.8	9.8	8.1

The respondents over the age of 60 showed the greatest liking of Japan (47.2 percent of the people in this age category), while the least sympathetic ones were the respondents aged between 31 and 40 (37 percent). This variation in the views of different generations is the smallest compared to that found with regard to other countries. For China, it ranges from 6.7 to 14.8 percent, for South Korea – from 8.2 to 20.4 percent, and for the United States – from 5.8 to 21.9 percent (Figure 1).[3]

Japan's status as the most attractive foreign country for Vladivostok residents has existed for the past two decades (Figure 2). The number of citizens who particularly like Japan ranged from 35 percent to 46 percent. A certain competitor to Japan was Australia, which once (in 2008) even pushed Japan into the second place (Australia was not included in the 2021 questionnaire). The short-term surge in the level of liking for both countries in 2013 is explained by the euphoria from the APEC Summit held in Vladivostok a year earlier and great expectations in the wake

[3] Hereinafter the figures and tables are compiled on the basis of data from the current archive of the Public Opinion Studies Laboratory.

of optimistic statements by the Russian authorities and multiple media publications about the great future of the city in the context of Russia's "turn to the East" and "its integration into the Asia-Pacific region".

It should also be noted that this trend of positive perception of Japan is characteristic of the entire Pacific Russia. It is discussed in our recent work [Larin, Larina 2020, p. 23], so there is no need to address this issue again. It is important to keep in mind that the answers to the first question give us nothing more than a scale of country priorities of individuals, age and social groups, but in no case do they allow us to speak of their antipathies, just as they do not give us a possibility to measure the real "degree" of preferences and love of respondents.

The motivation of the people expressing liking for a particular country is of no small importance for understanding their true attitude towards it. Respondents identified three main reasons why they like Japan. 68 percent of those who admitted liking Japan mentioned its history, culture, and traditions. For 58 percent, a very important argument was also the quality and comfort of life of the Japanese, and for 54 percent – also the level of economic development of the country.

This order is typical of respondents of all ages, with the exception of 30-year-olds, among whom interest in Japan's culture and traditions is important only for 58 percent. For them, the quality and comfort of life stands in the first place (65 percent). Respondents over 60 (79 percent of those who like Japan the most) and young people under the age of 20 (71 percent) show the greatest interest in Japanese culture. The level of people's well-being (34 percent), natural diversity (22 percent), and the country's political system (5 percent) make up the second group of reasons for liking Japan. Finally, 12 percent of the respondents who like Japan explained their attitude to the country with "inexplicable liking", and most of these are found among the 30-year-old residents of Vladivostok (25 percent of those who like Japan the most), while, among the 50-year-old respondents, those who are unable to formulate the reasons for their attitude account for only 4 percent.

It is interesting to compare the reasons that guided the respondents when choosing the countries they liked. The coincidence of the scale

of values among those residents of Vladivostok who like the USA and South Korea the most is obvious. It is also noticeable that the quality and comfort of life for them is more important than the abstract "level of economic development".

Table 2

Reasons for Vladivostok residents' liking for countries of the world (2021, place in the list of reasons and percentage of the number of people who like the country the most)

	Japan (172)	South Korea (63)	China (55)	USA (51)	India (17)	North Korea (9)
History, culture, traditions of the country	№ 1 (68 %)	№ 4 (24 %)	№ 1 (69 %)	№ 4 (28 %)	№ 1 (95 %)	№ 2 (46 %)
Quality and comfort of life	№ 2 (58 %)	№ 1 (73 %)	№ 4 (20 %)	№ 1 (71 %)	№ 4/5 (5 %)	№ 4 (23 %)
Level of economic development	№ 3 (54 %)	№ 2 (54 %)	№ 2 (62 %)	№ 2 (53 %)	None	№ 5/7 (9 %)
Level of well-being	№ 4 (34 %)	№ 3 (41 %)	№ 6 (13 %)	№ 3 (43 %)	None	№ 5/7 (9 %)
Natural diversity	№ 5 (22 %)	№ 5/6 (13 %)	№ 3 (26 %)	№ 5 (25 %)	№ 2 (46 %)	№ 5/7 (9 %)
Inexplicable liking	№ 6 (12 %)	№ 5/6 (13 %)	№ 7 (11 %)	№ 6/7 (14 %)	№ 3 (17 %)	№ 3 (32 %)
Political system	№ 7 (5 %)	№ 7 (3 %)	№ 5 (18 %)	№ 6/7 (14 %)	№ 4/5 (5 %)	№ 1 (55 %)

Looking at the results of our research in the last two decades, it is easy to find that the reasons for the sympathies held by Vladivostok citizens, as well as all residents of the Russian Far East, towards Japan remain

virtually unchanged, no matter what set of questions researchers use to analyze its causes. Of those who named Japan the most attractive country in 2013 (and these were 60 percent of the respondents), the overwhelming majority – 83 percent – named the level of its economic development and cultural traditions as the main reasons for their choice. In 2017 and 2019, the same two motives guided 86 to 100 percent of the Vladivostok respondents who named Japan. 42 percent of the respondents in 2013, 48 percent in 2017, and 57 percent in 2019 referred to the "friendliness and hospitality" of the Japanese. The natural diversity of the country was important for 20, 33, and 25 percent, respectively.

Considering that no more than 15 percent of Vladivostok residents could personally get acquainted with life in Japan and its cultural traditions, as the results of previous surveys show,[4] and the level of knowledge about the country, even among those who like it, is minimal and not much higher than that of the rest of the respondents [Larin, Larina 2011, p. 193], the conclusion is obvious: liking stemmed from the mythologized and stylized image of the country "that does not exist" [Kulanov 2004, p. 59], which began to take root in the minds of Russians in the late 19th century and persists, despite all the collisions of interstate relations, to this day.

The respondents' answers to the next question of the questionnaire – "What are the countries listed below for you in the first place?" – specify the components from which the image of Japan is formed among the residents of Vladivostok. For almost half of the respondents (48.7 percent), the main feature in this image is the high level of economic and technological development of Japan. For 16 percent of the respondents, it is primarily an "attractive and mysterious culture", for 12 percent – a "beautiful, comfortable country to live in". A very small proportion of

[4] According to the results of the 2013 survey, 85 percent of the respondents from Vladivostok have never been to Japan. The number of Vladivostok residents who have visited Japan is noticeably higher than the average in Russia, but clearly not enough to form an opinion based on personal experience.

the respondents (5 percent) consider the economic partnership between the two countries to be the determining factor (Table 3). For comparison, we would like to note that it is exactly in this way – as an "important economic partner of Russia and the Far East" – that China is perceived in the region (one respondent in two surveyed in Vladivostok (51.1 percent) answered this way). The USA, on the contrary, is seen by the residents of Vladivostok, primarily, as a military-political rival of Russia (54.4 percent of the respondents).

Table 3

Answers to the question "What are the countries listed below for you in the first place?" (Vladivostok, 2021, as a percentage of the total number of respondents)

	Japan	South Korea	China	USA	India
A highly developed economic and technological power	48.7	21.2	22.4	22.6	1
Attractive and mysterious culture	15.7	7	10.6	0.7	46.3
A beautiful, comfortable country to live in	12.3	18.8	1.2	3.1	1.9
An important economic partner of Russia and the Far East	5.1	8.4	51.1	2.4	1.2
Russia's military and political rival	2.9	2.4	3.9	54.5	1.4
No answer	15.2	41.9	10.8	16.6	46.7

There are no noticeable gender and age differences in the answers to this question. The only notable feature is that, surprisingly, the proportion of men who consider the high level of economic and technological development to be a determining factor for Japan (45.2 percent) is smaller than the proportion of women (51.8 percent), while, among women, a smaller percentage noted the importance of cultural attractiveness

and mysteriousness than among men (11.9 percent and 19.8 percent respectively).

Despite the fact that Japan was named the country of the greatest liking by slightly more than 41 percent of the surveyed Vladivostok residents, a noticeably larger number of them find a lot of attractive things in that country, primarily in culture and high technology. Only 3 percent of the total number of respondents admitted that nothing attracts them in Japan (Table 4).

Table 4

The most attractive thing in Japan for residents of Vladivostok (2021, as a percentage of the total number of respondents)

	All respondents	Men	Women
Culture	61	56.3	6.,1
High technologies	49.9	51.3	48.6
Nature	48	41.6	53.7
Cuisine	41	35.5	45.9
History	36.9	37.1	36.7
Recreational opportunities	25.1	21.3	28.4
Customs	24.6	20.8	28
Lifestyle	24.3	24.4	24.3
Order and organization	21.7	28.9	15.1
Medicine	20.2	19.3	21.1
Architecture	17.8	17.8	17.9
Entertainment	16.4	14.2	18.3
Shopping	10.8	10.7	11
Museums	8.4	9.1	7.8
Etiquette	8.4	9.6	7.3
Cinema	6.3	6.6	6
Sake	5.3	9.1	1.8
Fashion	4.3	3.6	5

Theatre	4.3	4.1	4.6
Literature	4.1	5.1	3.2
Japanese women	4.1	7.1	1.4
Religious beliefs	3.1	3.6	2.8
Traditional music	2.7	2	3.2
Sports	0.7	1.5	0
Nothing attracts	3.1	2.5	3.7

Japan's attractiveness for Vladivostok inhabitants and their great interest in various aspects of the country's life predetermined their answers to the question "Which of the following countries would you like to visit the most?". It was Japan that took the undisputed first place, having received 48 percent of the votes. It was followed by the USA (17.8 percent), South Korea (14.2 percent), China and India (8.2 percent each) by a wide margin. North Korea was in the last position (3.9 percent).

There are more people wishing to visit Japan among women (51.4 percent) than among men (44.2 percent); among young people aged 21–20 years (53.4 percent) – more than among fifty-year-olds (43.5 percent). For comparison, it should be noted that the 50-year-old respondents showed the greatest interest in traveling to India and South Korea; the people over 60 years old showed the greatest interest in China, but the young people under the age of 20 are most eager to get to the USA and North Korea. Also, Japan has been the most attractive tourist destination for Vladivostok residents for quite a long time (Figure 3).

82 percent of the respondents who would like to visit Japan first of all in 2021 explained their desire with curiosity (acquaintance with the culture, traditions, and history of the country). 54 percent were also guided by the desire to "rest and have a good time". For 27 percent, gastronomic interest was important (acquaintance with Japanese cuisine), and 8 percent were attracted by shopping. Finally, for 10 percent of the respondents, a trip was a professional need. Those respondents who chose other countries as a priority object to visit were mainly guided by the same motives (Table 5).

Table 5

Motivations for a trip to the country (Vladivostok, 2021, as a percentage of the number of respondents who said they would want to visit the country)

	Japan	South Korea	China	USA	India	North Korea
Curiosity (acquaintance with the country's culture, traditions, and history)	82	62	65	70	98	70
Desire to rest and have a good time	54	62	48	59	27	18
Gastronomic interest (local cuisine)	27	25	36	10	17	18
Professional need (business, study, scientific, cultural, sports, and other ties)	10	17	12	34	0	10
Shopping	8	8	21	8	12	5

Russia-Japan Relations

The attitude of Russians towards Japan is largely determined not only by their abstract interest in the country, ideas about its culture and traditions, the level of economic development and the organization of society, but also by the assessment of the state of bilateral political relations, which traditionally are seen by them, first of all, through the prism of the territorial issue and are considered in the context of threats to the interests and security of Russia.

Since security is impossible without at least a minimum level of mutual trust, the first question in this section of the survey was: "How would you assess the degree of your trust towards the following

countries?". The respondents could choose an assessment of the level of trust towards each country in the range from 1 (the lowest level of trust) to 6 points (the highest level). The scores for Japan were distributed as follows: 1 point – 11.3 percent, 2 points – 8.4 percent, 3 points – 20.5 percent, 4 points – 21.2 percent, 5 points – 24.3 percent, 6 points – 13 percent.

For a more accurate assessment of the level of trust/distrust towards the country, we remove the average (neutral) scores – 3 and 4 points – and compare the number of respondents who chose 1–2 points (distrust) with those who chose 5–6 points (trust). For Japan, this ratio is 19.7 against 37.3 percent, i.e., there are almost twice as many respondents who trust Japan as those who do not trust it. But this ratio varies significantly depending on the age of the respondents (Table 6).

Table 6

Assessment of the degree of Vladivostok residents' trust towards Japan (2021, by age of respondents, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Age	Trust	Do not trust	Difference
under 20 years	60	6.7	+ 53.7
21 to 30 years	43.8	13.7	+ 30.1
31 to 40 years	38.9	19.5	+ 19.4
41 to 50 years	33.3	26.9	+ 6.4
51 to 60 years	37.6	20.3	+ 17.3
Over 60 years	27.7	20.8	+ 7.1

As Table 6 shows, young people and the older generation trust Japan to a greater extent than middle-aged people. The biggest skeptics were found among the 40-year-old Vladivostok residents. A comparison of the degree of trust of Vladivostok residents towards different countries of the region, made according to the same criteria,

shows a very diverse attitude towards them (Table 7). It is quite obvious that Japan enjoys the greatest trust, while the USA and North Korea receive the least.

Table 7

Assessment of the degree of trust of Vladivostok residents towards countries of the world (2021, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Country	Trust (values 5+6)	Do not trust (values 1+2)	Difference
Japan	37.3	19.7	+ 17.6
South Korea	30.6	17.8	+ 12.8
China	23.1	22.7	+ 0.4
India	21.2	28.5	– 7.3
USA	12.6	53.0	– 41.4
North Korea	11.6	55.4	– 43.8

In 2013, when a similar question about trust in the countries of the region, although in a slightly different interpretation, was also present in the questionnaire, the level of trust towards Japan in Vladivostok was slightly higher (Figure 4).

The Vladivostok residents assessed the quality of current Russia-Japan relations in 2021 mostly positively. About a half of the respondents (46.5 percent) agreed that these relations could be called *neighborly*. 16.9 percent consider them friendly. There are also initiative responses: "neutral", "partner", "a pendulum between neighborly and tense". However, about a third of the respondents do not share a positive attitude: 28.7 percent of the respondents called Russia-Japan relations tense, and 2.2 percent called them hostile. Comparison with other Asia-Pacific countries shows that Japan loses in terms of "good neighborliness" with Russia to China and South Korea, and in terms of "friendliness" also to India, but it is ahead of North Korea and significantly ahead of the United States of America.

Table 8

Assessment of the quality of relations with countries of the world (Vladivostok, 2021, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Country	Positive			Negative			No answer
	Neighborly	Friendly	Total	Tense	Hostile	Total	
India	35.7	53.5	89.2	3.4	0.5	3.7	7.1
China	54.2	33.5	87.7	7.7	1.4	9.1	3.2
South Korea	56.4	24.3	80.7	11.3	1.9	13.2	6.1
Japan	46.5	16.9	63.4	28.7	2.2	30.9	5.7
North Korea	39.5	14.0	53.5	32.8	4.1	36.9	9.6
USA	7.5	3.1	10.6	51.8	34.5	86.3	3.1

The quality of Russia's bilateral relations is largely shaped by the residents of the country in the context of their ideas about the presence or absence of threats from these states to the interests and security of Russia. As the answers to the question "Do you think the countries listed below pose a threat to Russia's interests and security?" show, the number of respondents who see threats from Japan (32.8 percent) only slightly diverges from the number of those who call Russia-Japan relations "tense" and "hostile" (30.9 percent). However, this correlation cannot be considered obligatory. For example, it does not work in any way in relation to China. Despite the fact that almost 88 percent of the respondents positively assessed current Russia-China relations, 42.4 percent of the respondents still believe that there are threats to Russia from the PRC (Table 9).

We also note that, over the past decade, the proportion of Vladivostok residents who see Japan as a threat has not changed (33–35 percent), while the number of those who are confident in the absence of the threat has increased. This is especially noticeable against the background of a growing negative perception of the USA and a more positive one of China and South Korea. 40-year-old residents of Vladivostok, to a greater extent than the representatives of other age groups, feel danger from Japan

(46.2 percent of the respondents). They are most acutely aware of the threats coming from the USA and South Korea (Table 10). The "Japanese threat" worries the elderly the least (18.1 percent). This generation generally assesses hypothetical threats from neighboring states more calmly. The exception is the United States: three Vladivostok residents in four see Washington's policy as a real threat to Russia.

Table 9

Do these states pose a threat to the interests and security of Russia? (Vladivostok, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Country	Yes, they do		No, they do not		Uncertain how to answer	
	2010	2021	2010	2021	2010	2021
USA	39	73	36	14	25	13
China	62	42	20	37	18	21
North Korea	33	38	42	41	25	21
Japan	35	33	36	46	29	21
South Korea	22	12	53	71	25	17

Table 10

Feeling a threat to the interests and security of Russia from the countries of the Asia-Pacific region (Vladivostok, 2021, by age, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Country	Age of Respondents					
	Under 20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–60	Over 60
USA	66.7	60.3	75.9	84.6	75.4	69.4
China	33.3	56.2	42.6	52.6	40.6	20.8
North Korea	60	53.4	40.7	43.6	33.3	13.9
Japan	26.7	30.1	39.8	46.2	26.1	18.1
South Korea	6.7	11	9.3	20.5	15.9	5.6
India	6.7	11	6.5	9	4.3	0

The respondents naturally consider its territorial claims to be the main threat posed by Japan (36.6 percent of the respondents). No more than 10 percent of Vladivostok residents believe in the existence of other threats. The situation is different with other world powers – China and the USA. As for China, in addition to Beijing's territorial claims, respondents fear its economic expansion. Moreover, almost 15 percent believe in the possibility of an armed conflict with China. There is a whole bunch of threats from the USA, starting with the undermining of Russia's sovereignty and independence and ending with territorial claims towards it (Table 11).

Table 11

Assessment of the nature of threats coming from China, the USA, and Japan
(Vladivostok, 2021, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

	Japan	China	USA
Territorial claims	36.6	27.5	7.7
Unpredictable behavior	10.1	19.3	27.7
Undermining the sovereignty and independence of Russia	9.2	12.8	43.1
Likelihood of an armed conflict	8.4	14.9	42.9
I feel it on a subconscious level	5.1	9.4	13.3
Ideological sabotage	4.6	7.5	37.6
Economic expansion	2.9	24.6	27.2

Despite the fact that more than a third of the respondents (36.6 percent) indicated the existence of territorial claims by Japan as a threat to Russia's interests and security, only 14 percent of the respondents believe that Russia-Japan relations will worsen in the future. One respondent in five (22.2 percent) is sure that they will improve, while almost twice as many respondents (42.2 percent) believe that the relations will not change (Table 12). Moreover, there are twice

as many pessimists among men as among women: 19.8 percent of the former and only 8.7 percent of the latter are sure that the relations will get worse. The greatest believers in the stability of the relations ("will not change") are young people under 20 (60 percent of the respondents of this age) and people over 60 (51.4 percent). The biggest numbers of optimists ("relations will improve") and pessimists ("will worsen") are found among the 20-year-olds (28.8 and 19.2 percent, respectively).

Table 12

Assessment of prospects for Russia's relations
with the countries of the world
(Vladivostok, 2021, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Country	Prospects for Relations			
	They will improve	They will worsen	They will not change	Uncertain how to answer
Japan	22.2	14	42.4	21.4
India	33.7	2.9	49.2	14.2
China	30.4	12.8	40.2	16,6
South Korea	25.3	5.5	50.4	18.8
North Korea	14.5	7.5	53.5	24.6
USA	9.4	41.9	28.2	20.5

Assessing the dynamics of the Vladivostok residents' expectations regarding the future of Russia-Japan relations, it is not difficult to see that pessimism and uncertainty in their assessments became noticeably greater by the end of the decade, and this applies not only to relations with Japan, but also with China (Figure 5).

Assessing the dynamics of the Vladivostok residents' expectations regarding the future of Russia-Japan relations, it is not difficult to see that pessimism and uncertainty in their assessments became noticeably greater by the end of the decade, and this applies not only to relations with Japan, but also with China (Figure 5).

The respondents' focus on the development of cooperation between Russia and Japan also implies their choice of priority areas for cooperation. More than a half consider trade and investment to be the most important areas (54.2 percent). More than 40 percent of the respondents support the development of relations in two areas: foreign policy and security (46.3 percent), science and technology (46.7 percent), tourism (43.4 percent), as well as cross-border and interregional cooperation (40.3 percent). Energy, education, culture and public diplomacy were considered important by 10 to 15 percent of the respondents. Interestingly, women (56.4 percent of the total number) are more actively in favor of cooperation in the field of foreign policy and security than men (35 percent), and among men there are more supporters of energy cooperation (19.3 vs 3.2 percent).

Conclusion

The analysis of the results of the 2021 survey and their comparison with the research data of the last decade allow us to draw some conclusions about the current attitude of Vladivostok residents to Japan and to Russia-Japan cooperation.

1. Japan is the most attractive culture for them in the Asia-Pacific region. Having received the votes of 40 percent of the respondents, it is significantly ahead of the other countries proposed in the questionnaire (China, USA, India, North and South Korea) in this regard. Comparison of the survey results with the materials obtained in the course of the previous studies suggests that Japan's leadership as the most attractive country for residents of the entire Russian Far East has been maintained for at least the last two decades.

2. The high level of economic and technological development of Japan is the main typological feature, the basis of its image among most residents of Vladivostok. But what attracts citizens to Japan, arousing genuine interest in that country, is, first of all, its rich history, exotic culture and traditions, as well as the quality and comfort of life there.

3. The desire to get acquainted with the culture, traditions, and history of Japan is precisely the main motive for a trip there, which puts Japan on a confident first place in the list of countries that Vladivostok residents would like to visit first.

4. However, it is not only culture and nature that make the Land of the Rising Sun so popular among the residents of Vladivostok. Japan also enjoys the highest level of trust among the Asia-Pacific countries mentioned in the questionnaire. But, at the same time, about a fifth of the respondents refuse to trust it. A similar perception is typical for China and South Korea, which indicates the presence of a population group that is generally skeptical about neighboring states. In the course of previous surveys, we already identified a segment of the population in the Far East with a negative attitude to foreigners in general [Larin, Larina 2019, p. 21; Larin, Larina 2020, p. 42], so this study fully confirms the previously made conclusions.

5. Vladivostok residents assess Russia-Japan relations and prospects for their development mainly in a positive way. However, about a third of citizens do not share these assessments, considering the relationship tense and even hostile. Such views are largely determined by the existence of ideas about threats to Russia and its interests from Japan, which are mainly associated with its territorial claims. Nevertheless, Vladivostok residents advocate the development of various forms and areas of Russia-Japan cooperation, among which trade and economic ties, science and technology, foreign policy and security are given priority.

In general, the survey results show the existence of a favorable platform for the continued development of Russia-Japan relations in Vladivostok, the groundlessness of some claims about the negative influence of the Chinese factor on these ties, although there is a certain group of the population that can easily become a source of unfavorable trends in the perception of Japan with corresponding consequences for the development of the bilateral dialogue in the field of near-border and interregional ties.

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The Peculiar Features of Fintech Development in Japan

V. A. Gorshkov

Abstract. This paper shows that Japan, despite being the most technologically and economically advanced country in the Asia-Pacific region, is demonstrating slower adaptation rates of fintech. The country is currently at *fintech 1.0* stage and its banking system has only partially crossed the *bank 4.0* threshold. Thus, overall, fintech in Japan is catching up with the levels of other developed and emerging economies even though the speed of the catch-up has increased in recent years. The paper highlighted the fact that development of fintech in Japan remains heterogenous in terms of market segments and major financial institutions promoting fintech services.

The most developed segment of fintech in Japan is digital payments; neobanking and digital investment are raising in popularity even though they remain at the pre-maturing stages. Digitalisation of the financial sector is predominantly driven by the collaboration of large banks with fintech firms, which are establishing spillover effects and encouraging banks to further adopt digital technologies. The findings of this paper demonstrate that further promotion of DX in Japan's financial sector will require future reforms in its corporate culture and regulatory environment. The problem of double shortages (the lack of financing for ICT and the lack of digital talents) shall also be addressed. The government has a big role to play in this process and needs to proactively stimulate cooperation among the private and financial sectors and fintech firms.

Keywords: fintech, Japan, digital payments, central bank digital currency, alternative financing, alternative lending, market service providers

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Introduction

Fintech is defined as advanced technology to improve and automate the delivery of financial services and stimulate their usage by consumers and business. It encompasses a broad landscape of services ranging from digital currencies and digital payment systems, digital investment, and asset management to alternative lending and alternative financing.

Fintech is a rapidly developing global trend enhanced by the digitization, digitalization and digital transformation (DX) of the world economy. However, previous research has shown that there remains heterogeneity in the adaptation rates of fintech among developed, emerging, and developing economies [Feyen et al. 2021]. Developed countries have mature financial systems with a higher level of financial trust and, thus, access to credit utilizing traditional technologies and financial infrastructure in these countries is highly developed, which sometimes decelerates the adoption of new financial technologies. Conversely, emerging markets are regarded as leapfroggers in terms of promoting IT-solutions for their financial (banking and insurance) markets as fintech is recognized as a promising tool to promote financial inclusion, to enhance the transparency of domestic and international payments, and to prevent illicit money flows [Amstad et al. 2019]. Researchers have coined a special term *digitalizing emerging markets* [Ito 2020] to refer to the widespread adoption of digital technologies in emerging countries.

Comparing to Europe, fintech in Asia has been advancing at a significantly faster speed, which is particularly pronounced for countries such as the People's Republic of China (PRC), India, and Australia [Amstad et al. 2019]. Nevertheless, heterogeneity in the adoption rates of fintech in Asia is pronounced: for instance, Japan, despite being the most technologically and economically advanced country in the region, is demonstrating slower adoption rates of fintech. In fact, previous studies have shown that digitalisation is unevenly distributed among different sectors of the Japanese economy creating a sort of polarization effect among significantly digitalized manufacturing industries and less digitalized service sectors [Gorshkov 2022], which is partially explained by the disunity existing among the academic and business societies and the leading role of large corporations in the promotion of innovations [Kostyukova 2019, p. 527].

Heterogeneity among developed and emerging countries is also pronounced in the fintech institutions that serve as a driving force to promote fintech innovations. In emerging countries, *bigtech companies* have played a significant role in driving the digitalization and DX of the financial sector: for instance, large companies such as Alibaba and Tencent in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been able to build a large customer base by promoting digital technologies that enabled them to further analyze their customers' big data, to assess their financial capabilities and to develop new financial and non-financial products. It is also no coincidence that China was one of the first countries to pilot the digital yuan, proving that emerging countries are gradually moving into the *fintech 2.0*[1] stage. Conversely,

[1] Two stages of financial technology development are conditionally distinguished in literature: *fintech 1.0*, which does not broadly change the concept of money and finance in the economy and aims to improve the efficiency and quality of already existing financial services, and *fintech 2.0* – financial technology that revolutionizes the existing perceptions of finance and promotes the creation of new financial products, such as cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and central bank digital currencies (CBDC) [Sato 2017].

in developed countries, traditional financial institutions and *fintech companies* are involved in the promotion of fintech [Feyen et al. 2021].

Japan is a typical example of a developed country with a significant digital divide in its financial sector due to a number of factors. The financial sector has long been heavily regulated, there has been little foreign competition, and its conservatism and archaic nature is also due to the remnants of the *convoy system* and the *main bank system*. Consequently, the financial system has long been one of the least efficient sectors of the economy in terms of productivity, and this trend persists. The *Galapagos syndrome*[2] of Japan's economy is clearly observed in the financial system, especially in the development of digital (cashless) payments, neobanking[3] and the creation of new and innovative financial products.

Nevertheless, fintech has been gradually developing in recent years. The scale of the fintech market has been steadily growing since 2017. In 2019, it was estimated at 3.3 billion USD, and Japan is well ahead of the average of other Asia-Pacific, European, and North American countries[4] in terms of the growth rate of investment in fintech development.

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[2] The term originates from the Galapagos Islands, which are known to have undergone a unique evolutionary transformation away from the mainland. The *Galapagos syndrome* explains the existence of many unusual, often inefficient, business practices in Japan non-conforming with the generally accepted global standards. Extremely low level of digital technology penetration in the Japanese economy is often regarded as one of the causes of the Galapagos syndrome, and it is caused by such factors as conservative business practices, the inability of small and medium enterprises (SME) owners and consumers to quickly adapt to technological innovations due to demographic factors, such as aging of the population, the legacy of the developmental state, and the presence of political influence groups of big business (political lobbying) [Watanabe 2020].

[3] Also referred to as internet, online, or digital banking in literature.

[4] The FinTech Market in Japan. Monthly Market Report, 1. FinCity. Tokyo. 2020, November. https://fincity.tokyo/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/1604888710-7041ae1e28863fe098eab163e812bf4f.pdf

In this paper, we provide an overview of fintech development in Japan, analyze its development by market segments and by major market actors. In addition, we identify the peculiar features of fintech development in Japan in comparison to other developed and emerging economies.

This study contributes to the existing literature in two ways. First, it provides a comprehensive analysis of different market segments of fintech, namely, digital currencies and digital payments, neobanking, digital investment, alternative lending, alternative financing, and other fintech services. Second, it identifies the peculiar features of fintech distinguishing Japan from other countries. Examining these features helps better understand the underlining reasons accountable for Japan's catching-up in terms of adoption of digital technologies in the financial sector.

Fintech Landscape in Japan

In April 2016, the Bank of Japan (BOJ) established the *FinTech Center* within its Payment and Settlement Systems Department with the aim of linking financial practices with advanced technologies and research, as well as to meet the demands of the digitalization of the world economy [Amstad et al. 2019, p. 207]. In May 2017, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) published *Japan's Fintech Vision*, where it outlined the first comprehensive policy recommendations for the promotion of financial technologies [Gorshkov 2018]. It was highlighted that *new finance* was needed in order to support the *Fourth industrial revolution* and the construction of the *Society 5.0*. In order to generate innovative fintech services, the government aimed to implement the following core policies:

1) to lay the institutional background for fintech by creating rules and processes that will enable individuals to manage and use their personal data and stimulate the promotion of digital (cashless) payments;

2) to facilitate the smooth flow of money in the economy by building a framework enabling fully digital personal identification

and promoting open application programming interfaces (APIs) by banks and credit companies;

3) to promote the usage of fintech among SMEs, in particular in spheres such as the use of cloud services for back-office operations and digital (internet) banking, support of electronic data exchanges between financial and commercial sectors of the economy, and the improvement of cash conversion efficiency across the supply chains;

4) to establish a *regulatory sandbox* to promote fintech innovation; to establish a globally competitive fintech hub in Tokyo and to cultivate a labor pool to support the development of fintech.

Three key development indicators were established to measure the progress of the above-mentioned initiatives:

1) digital (cashless) payment ratio was to be increased from 18.3 percent in 2017 to 40 percent by 2027;

2) adoption rates of cloud services for SMEs back-office operations (finance and accounting) were to be increased from 9 percent to 40 percent by 2022;

3) supply chain cash conversion cycle planned to be improved by 5 percent by 2020.[5]

The above-mentioned government initiatives triggered the rapid expansion of fintech market in Japan particularly since 2018. Especially, the cross-industry regulatory system was revised and the barriers to new entries into fintech from other industries were lowered. In addition, the government removed restrictions that prohibited banks to hold more than 5 percent of the voting rights in a domestic company (10 percent in case of insurance companies) and stimulated the inflow of investment to fintech companies from financial institutions.

Thus, while fintech markets in other countries are maturing, the Japanese fintech market is still catching-up and is expected to maintain its high growth rates in the coming decade. The enhanced digitalization

[5] Japan's Fintech Vision. First policy recommendations. METI. 2017. https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2017/pdf/0508_004b.pdf

in Japan due to the COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to further drive the demand for fintech.[6]

The fintech transaction volume by segment is presented in Table 1. The fastest growth is pronounced for the segment of digital payments, which includes mobile POS payments, digital remittances, and digital commerce. The segment of digital payments is expected to increase by 4.6 times from 147.1 billion USD in 2017 to 679.4 billion in 2026. This segment also has the largest number of users (Table 2).

Table 1

Fintech transaction volume by segment, billion USD

Fintech segment	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (forecast)	2026 (forecast)
Digital payments	147.1	165.8	189.1	226.9	305.6	364.4	679.4
Neobanking	2.91	7.04	16.2	35.33	70.83	124.2	337.5
Digital investment	7.91	15.36	27.91	44.23	70.83	82.13	113.4
Alternative lending	0.42	0.44	0.47	0.48	0.51	0.53	0.6
Alternative financing	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.09	0.11

Source: compiled by the author from: https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/fintech/japan#transaction-value

Neobanking had a moderate 2.91 billion USD in 2017, but it is expected to become the second largest fintech segment by 2026 with a projected annual growth rate of 28.4 percent in 2022–2026, as more and more banks have been rapidly adopting API technologies, even

[6] The FinTech Market in Japan. Monthly Market Report, 1. FinCity.Tokyo. 2020, November. https://fincity.tokyo/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/1604888710-7041ae1e28863fe098eab163e812bf4f.pdf

though there remains high heterogeneity among large and regional banks. The number of users is expected to amount to 6.23 million people (Table 2).

Table 2

Users by fintech segment, million

Fintech segment	2017	2018	2019	2022	2021	2022 (forecast)	2026 (forecast)
Digital payments	87.20	90.89	93.98	97.08	100.48	102.5	118.18
Neobanking	0.18	0.36	0.70	1.32	2.29	3.54	6.23
Digital investment	1.07	1.92	3.07	4.20	5.22	5.90	6.97
Alternative lending	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Alternative financing	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Source: compiled by the author from: https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/fintech/japan#transaction-value

Digital investment with the use of neobrokers and robo-advisors is expected to become the third largest segment by 2026 with an annual growth rate of 8.4 percent in 2022–2026, while this is yet a significantly lower amount in comparison to other developed and emerging economies.

The most underdeveloped segments of Japan's fintech are alternative lending, which includes crowdlending for business and market lending for consumers, and alternative financing (namely, crowdinvesting and crowdfunding). Both segments have low levels in terms of financial transaction volume (Table 1) and in the number of users for each sector, which is approximately 10,000 people (Table 2). However, in terms of average transaction per user, the alternative lending remarkably stands out among other market segments (Figure 1), indicating larger volumes of finance (capital) procurement through this mechanism.

Fintech Institutions in Japan Promoting Fintech

Japan has a bank-based financial system and even though market finance has been rapidly developing, the banks continue to play the predominant role in the financing of the Japanese economy. Unsurprisingly, traditional financial institutions remain a major driving force of fintech in Japan; the development of original fintech solutions by bigtech firms remains limited and fintech firms, the number of which has significantly increased in recent years, are primarily financed by traditional financial institutions, which clearly reflects the positive outcomes of policy changes implemented by the Japanese government. The dominance of traditional financial institutions in the promotion of fintech is also explained by the high level of trust towards the financial system from customers, who prefer to avoid sharing personal (financial and non-financial) information with other market participants offering financial services. However, digitalization of the banking sector in Japan is rather slow, and there are significant discrepancies among large and regional banks, with the former successfully entering the stages of *bank 4.0*[7] and *fintech 2.0*, while the latter are still struggling with the stages of digitization rather than digitalization or DX.

Personalization is one of the trends of financial market nowadays. The introduction of digital technology allows banks to reach a wider client base, which consequently helps improve the well-being of the

[7] Previous research highlighted the fact that the banking industry has gone through four stages in its development: 1) *bank 1.0* (1472–1980) – the history of the establishment of the banking system in the 12th century by the Medici family; the provision of traditional banking services in banks and bank offices; 2) *bank 2.0* (1980–2007) – the emergence of self-service banking services and the development of the ATM network; 3) *Bank 3.0* (2007–2017) – the development of mobile payments and banking transactions driven by the advent of smartphones; 4) *bank 4.0* (2017–present) – banking services firmly intertwined and embedded in digital technology. For more details, see [King 2018, pp. 319–320].

whole population and stimulate economic growth. Conventionally, the digitalization of financial institutions is implemented through management efficiency, streamlining of existing operations, reformation of old systems, and reduction of excessive branches and ATMs. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) allows importing and analyzing big data and extracting necessary information for customers; the ability to contact customers daily through mobile communication and improved APIs is regarded as an important benefit of DX for the banking sector, as it allows collecting data needed to assess the creditworthiness of customers more efficiently [Kostyukova 2021, pp. 441–442].

Japan has a rather developed financial system, and Japanese banks traditionally enjoy a high level of trust due to their reliability, extensive network of branches and ATMs, and customer-oriented approach. Nevertheless, demographic, socioeconomic, and digital challenges force Japanese banks to significantly reduce their costs. According to the BOJ, a larger number of financial institutions in Japan are showing interest in adopting digital technologies, as evidenced by the increasing trend of financing allocated for information technology adoption, with large banks adopting ICT at a higher speed (Figure 2).

The majority of Japanese regional banks are still at the stage of digitization and digitalization of their businesses, and many of them are prioritizing the reduction of costs, improvement of management efficiency, and freeing up excessive personnel. Thus, only a small number of banks digitally transform their financial services (Table 3) and actively promote fintech. For regional banks and credit cooperatives, there remains a problem of double shortages: the lack of available funds for digitalization and the lack of digital staff. Consequently, the risk of uneven provision of financial services between different groups of banks persists.[8]

[8] Ginkō, shin'yō kinko ni okeru dejitaraizeeshon e no taiō jōkyō. Ankēto chōsa kekka kara [Response and Measures of Banks and Credit Cooperatives to Digitalization: The Results of the Survey]. Financial System Report-Annex, 1-36. Nippon ginkō [Bank of Japan]. May 2019. https://www.boj.or.jp/research/brp/fsr/data/fsrb190524.pdf

Table 3

Examples of digitization, digitalization and digital transformation (DX) in the banking sector of Japan (regional banks)

Business segment	Digitization and digitalization of financial services	Digital transformation of financial services
Management efficiency	business process reengineering; robotic process automation; optical character recognition	–
Retail customer services (individual customers)	using tablets at the office; using smartphones and internet; digital (cashless) payments services; open API; e-contracts; data marketing; robo-chats	regional payment systems; regional currencies; neobanking
Wholesale customer service (legal entities)	using tablets for presentations at customer's offices; assistance and support for the digitalization of customer's business	big data consulting; AI investing

Source: compiled by the author with reference to: Dijitaru jidai no chiiki kin'yū. Kin'yū shisutemu repōto. Besshi shirīzu [Regional Finance in the Digital Era], Financial System Report-Annex, 1-9. P. 3. Nippon ginkō [Bank of Japan]. March 2021. https://www.boj.or.jp/research/brp/fsr/data/fsrb210329.pdf

In addition, personal visits and personal contacts are regarded as the major channel of communication by many Japanese banks, thus, impeding digitalization of financial services.

Overall, the development of fintech services solely by banks remains insufficient and unevenly distributed within different groups of banks. Following the mitigation of the regulatory systems, large banks tend to finance fintech companies and thus jointly participate in the development of new fintech products and solutions.

The rapid development of fintech firms offering services using financial technology to individual customers and SMEs is pronounced

(Table 4). Many of these fintech firms were established by foreign investors, and many are financed by the Japanese traditional financial institutions. Chronologically, many of the fintech firms appeared since 2012 and new market entries were frequent following the reforms initiated by the Japanese government.

Table 4

Leading fintech companies and primary fintech areas in Japan

Fintech segment	Business lines	Fintech companies
Digital payments and digital currencies	Payment systems	Paidy (2008); Paypay (2018); Kyash (2015); Coiney (2012); Payme (2017); Crowd Cast (2011); SBPS (2004); Another lane (2002); bitFlyer Holdings (2018); ANA Digital Gate (2016); BitMile (2018); Credit Saison (1951); jPortal (2005)
	Cryptoassets; coin economy; blockchains	Liquid Global (2014); Orb (2014); Chaintop (2016); techBureau (2014); GVE (2017); FGC Group (2015); Proportion (2019): CXR (2018); Cross Bridge (2010); BlockTec (2018); LCNEM (2018); Bitcrements (2015)
	Remittances and e-wallets	PayPay; Line Pay; Rakuten service on Facebook
Digital investment and asset management	Online (digital) banking	Kyash (2015); Fukuoka Chuo Bank (1951)
	Robo-advisers, AI-investment, AI-stock movements	Alpaca Japan (2013); Robot Fund (2016); xenotada lab (2016); efit (2017); Invast Securities (1960); ZAISAN Net (2015); Japan Digital Design (2017); MILIZE INVESTMENT (2018)
	Cryptoasset (digital asset) trading; risk-trading platforms	BitFlyer (2014); Coincheck (2012); Huobi Japan (2013); CoinJinja (2017); Global Risk Exchange (2018); Proportion (2019); CurrencyPort (n.d.); Digital platformer (2020); Bitcrements (2015)
	Personal financial (wealth) management	Money Forward (2012); Moneytree (2012); Wealthnavi (2015); OsidOri (2018); Prance Gold Holdings (2019); Milestone Consulting Group (2005); STAGE Japan (2015); Nishi-Nippon (1944); DMM FinTech (2012)

Digital investment and asset management	Cloud-based accounting service; loan accounting and monitoring	Moneytree (2012); Mikatus (2009); INORU (2006); Profit Cube (1984); enigma Japan (2016); Nishi-Nippon (1944); THS (2013)
	Real-estate services	FINOLAB (2019); RENOSY FINANCE (2018)
Alternative financing and lending	Crowdfunding	BitFlyer (2014); Crowd Credit (2013); FinTech Global (1994); Kibidango, Inc. (2013); Crowdloan (2018); Miraicrowd (2015)
	Online balance sheet lending; salary services	BANQ (2015); Money Forward Line (2016)
	Lending platforms	Credit Engine (2016); REASE Inc. (2018); Emerada (2016)
	Microlending	Gojo&Company (2014); Resona Capital (1988)
Insurance	Instech, health	JustinCase (2016); Aisys (2013); The Fukuoka Chuo Bank (1951); Nextage (2007)
Miscellaneous	Decentralized authentication	Keychain (2016)
	Online platform for investors; Fintech platforms and solutions; consulting; Fintech research	Smart Trade (2016); Braincat (2016); SMART IDEA Japan (2016); ISI (1989): Fintech Association of Japan (2015); Health Media (2010); cyberplus (2010); Digital Service (1993); T&I Innovation Center (2016); BlueSoft Inc. (2002)
	M&A advisory services for SMEs	BIZVAL (2018)

Source: compiled by the author with reference to : https://www.fintech.coffee/research/89-japan (accessed April 30, 2022).

Financial technology adoption is the highest in the Japanese banking sector, for which the market size in 2019 was 1.4 billion USD, followed by the insurance (USD 900 million) and the security (USD 350 million) markets. Fintech firms provide a wide range of services, such as digital payments, neobanking, alternative lending, alternative financing, financial asset management (including digital investing), personal financial management, business management and corporate financial efficiency services, among others. Below, let us consider some of these fintech segments in more detail.

Digital Payments Systems and Digital Currencies in Japan

The most popular fintech firms providing digital payment services are Coiney, Kyash, Link Processing, Liquid, paidy, PAY.JP (PayPal), ROYALGATE, SPIKE[9] and others (Table 4). Fintech firms are offering technical solutions to increase the efficiency of the payment system using mobile phones, QR codes, and e-money. Payment services added to social media systems are also rising in popularity, with Line Pay, Pay-Pay, and d-Payment applications being developed.

Regional banks have also shown interest in the cashless payment market. For instance, the Bank of Kagoshima Prefecture developed its own Pay-don cashless payment system and organized cashless payment for goods and services in all shops in the Yokado Kagoshima shopping center, located on the ground and first floors of its head office. The bank actively promotes the implementation of a cashless payments to revitalize the regional economy and holds training seminars to promote its new products to customers [Uchiyama 2021, pp. 180–181].

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9 Fintech in Japan. Exploring new avenues. Switzerland Global Enterprise. https://swissbiz.jp/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/sge_fintech_infographic.pdf

Nevertheless, the development of cashless payments in Japan has been slower than in other countries. The government plans to increase the share of digital (cashless) payments in final consumption to 40 percent by 2027, which is still a rather low target compared to other countries. For instance, in 2019, the share of cashless payments in final consumption was 26.9 percent, which is behind PRC (2019.0 percent), Russia (116.3 percent) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) (98.1 percent). Thus, Japan remains one of the countries with the highest cash turnover, which is due to the presence of country-specific features, peculiarities of financial market development, as well as restraints on the implementation of non-cash payments by businesses and consumers [Gorshkov 2021a].

The share of cashless payments by payment instrument is shown in Table 5. Credit cards are the most popular payment instrument (89.7 percent of all cashless payments), which is typical of most developed economies in the world. Simultaneously, in recent years, there has been an active development of QR-code payments, which grew by 512.5 percent in 2018–2019.

Table 5

Digital (cashless payments) by instrument in percentage

Payment instrument	Share of digital (cashless) payments			Growth rates in percentage	
	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Debit cards	1.7	1.8	2.1	18.4	28.2
Credit cards	90.2	90.5	89.7	14.2	10.1
E-money	8.0	7.4	7.0	5.4	5.0
QR-codes	…	0.2	1.2	…	512.5
Growth rate of digital (cashless) payments				13.9	11.1

Source: Cashless Road Map. 2021, p. 5.

Technologically, the digital payments market in Japan is rather developed and includes competing technologies from banks, fintech companies, large transport service providers, and other players

(Figure 3). Nevertheless, digital payments have not yet reached maturity, and excessive competition among different payment service providers creates chaos for consumers, who often do not understand the fundamental differences in products and functions, which serves as a disincentive to a more rapid promotion of cashless payments.

For individual consumers, fintech and bigtech companies offer money transfer services, which are particularly popular with customers of social networks (Facebook) and user-to-user messaging systems (LINE). For example, the Facebook messaging payment service is provided by Rakuten, part of the Rakuten Group, a Japanese e-commerce and online retail company. The PayPay and LinePay apps also allow users to send digital remittances, digital payment orders, and automatically calculate the average amount per person, as they incorporate the warikan (割り勘) function, an extremely popular system among the Japanese for splitting the total bill for a visit to a restaurant, organizing a joint event, and other social events.

The promotion of cashless payments is also enhanced by the development of digital currencies, cryptoassets, and coins based on the blockchain technology. The fintech companies offering such services include Liquid Global, Orb, Chaintop, techBureau, GVE, FGC Group, and others (Table 4). However, these digital currencies have not yet achieved the widespread circulation in Japan. Likewise, the development of digital yen is also slow. The BOJ has been conducting feasibility studies of the digital yen since spring of 2021. Unlike cryptocurrencies, the digital yen is planned to be backed by the legal tender of the Japanese yen, in order to legitimize its value, yet it will only exist as data on electronic networks. Due to frequent natural disasters in Japan, the BOJ is considering adding offline payment functionality. In contrast to emerging economies, where CBDCs are conventionally introduced to compensate for an underdeveloped payment infrastructure, in Japan, there is no such urgent need.[10] The BOJ is following the incremental

[10] Will Japan introduce a digital yen? The Japan Times. February 2, 2022. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/02/02/business/digital-yen-introduction/

approach in the introduction of digital currency, gaining knowledge from the Swedish example of the Riksbank, namely, smaller-scale technical research including a pilot test, rather than large-scale pilot tests that are being conducted in emerging countries such as the PRC.[11]

Digital Investment and Asset Management

Digital investment and asset management is provided by such fintech firms as Anomaly Research, Capitaloco, FPCafe, One Tap Buy, Okane no Design, WEALTHNAVI[12] as well as by other firms mentioned in Table 4. The interfaces of these firms have built-in automated chatbots that communicate with the client, collect information about their age, income level, amount of financial assets, planned monthly investment volume, investment objectives, and other data. On the basis of the information obtained, various investment products are offered to the client. Contracting and reporting is implemented entirely online. There are free (evaluation) chatbots and more advanced paid solutions (such as robo-advisers), which provide professional advice on digital investing. Chatbots are also being actively adopted by many Japanese banks, which are trying to withstand cost-competition for advisory services with fintech firms.

The demand for personal financial management services has also been increasing in Japan. These services are offered by firms such as Dr. Wallet, Money Forward, Moneytree, zaim.[13] and other firms (Table 4). In particular, there is a growing demand from individual consumers for household expenditure record-keeping services that graphically represent the family's cash flow by automatically processing

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[11] Japan to model digital yen tests on Sweden's approach, not China's. The Japan Times. April 19, 2022. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/04/19/business/economy-business/digital-yen-interview/

[12] Fintech in Japan. Op. cit.

[13] Ibid.

information from bank accounts, bank card transactions, and other financial transactions. An example thereof is the Money Forward Me app. MUFG Bank has also launched its own household financial accounting application, Mable, developed by the fintech firm Moneytree, the shareholders of which include Japanese investment firms.

Alternative Lending

Major firms providing alternative lending services are Crowdbank, GreenInfraLending, LuckyBank, maneo, SBI social lending[14] and others (Table 4). It should be noted that, under the existing legislation, the P2P lending in Japan is implemented indirectly via platform companies that connect lenders and borrowers.

The most popular type of alternative lending in Japan is social lending (crowdlending), where lenders offer loans not to specific firms, but to finance specific socio-economic projects.

Transactional lending, where service providers offer loans to consumers based on their purchase history, payment experience on online platforms, customer feedback (e.g., Rakuten Super Business Loan, Rakuten Super Business Loan Express, Amazon Lending, JNB Store Loan) is also gaining popularity. Often, information about the possible loan volume is displayed automatically in the online platforms of these companies [Wada 2016, p. 92–93].

A few Japanese fintech firms are trying to improve existing lending systems by offering loans to a broader segment of the population, including people with low income or no credit history. However, this type of lending is prevailing in developing countries rather than in Japan itself. For example, Global Mobility Service, Inc. is actively promoting Mobility as a service (MaaS) in markets in Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, where buying a car and applying for an automobile loan remains a significant challenge for the general population. The service

[14] Ibid.

is based on IoT combined with financial technology. An automobile loan is provided to a customer based on a more flexible method of assessing their ability to pay. A GMS device is installed in the purchased car, which allows the car's engine to be turned off if the borrower defaults on the automobile loan. Thus, loans are encouraged for people who actually have no chance of getting a loan through the traditional lending system.[15]

Major Japanese banks are also developing technologies similar to alternative lending: they enter international markets in developing and emerging countries with low availability of financial services by partnering with local companies with their own online platforms. MUFG Bank, for example, has entered into a strategic partnership agreement with Grab, the largest food delivery and private transport service platform in Southeast Asia, and is currently providing loans to taxi drivers and restaurants registered on the platform. With access to the Grab database, MUFG can analyze the behavior of its registered users and assess their creditworthiness and financing needs more effectively.

In the domestic market, banks also provide lending services through intermediary non-financial firms, which allows them to collect and analyze financial and commercial information about users to better assess their creditworthiness. Examples here include the services of the intermediary company JAL Neobank, which was established by SBI Sumishin Net Bank in partnership with Japan Airlines (JAL) and the smart money lending service provided by cell phone company NTT docomo together with Shinsei Bank.[16]

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[15] Global Mobility Enterprise. https://www.global-mobility-service.com/en/business.html

[16] Digital Transformation of Japanese Banks. Bank of Japan Review. 2021-E-2, 1-8. https://www.boj.or.jp/en/research/wps_rev/rev_2021/data/rev21e02.pdf

Alternative Financing

Japan's crowdfunding ecosystem has demonstrated notable growth in recent years: In 2016–2020, the market's growth was approximately 157 percent from a starting point of 647 million USD. The most popular fintech firms providing alternative financing services, in particular crowdfunding, are A-port, CAMPFIRE, Crowdban, firstflight, GREENFUNDING, JAPANGIVING, kibidango, Makuake, Readyfor.[17] The crowdfunding market in Japan has increased from 72 billion yen in 2016 to 184 billion yen in 2020, but its development lags far behind that of other developed countries due to the low level of development of equity, debt and equity-based crowdfunding due to existing legal restrictions. Despite the fact that restrictions on raising alternative funding sources by start-ups in Japan have been abolished, crowdfunding is still predominantly used for charitable and socially oriented projects.

Other Fintech Services

Fintech firms also actively provide innovative services to SMEs, such as cloud servers, online inventory services, bookkeeping and sales data storage, accounting and tax reporting, investment plans, and data analysis services. Examples of such firms are A-saaS, board, Crowdcast, freee, MakeLeaps. MerryBiz, MFCloud, Shares, STREAMED, Readyfor[18] and others. The adoption of cloud servers by SMEs is one of the targets set by the Japanese government for the adoption of financial technology, with the number of companies using cloud servers for back-office operations in finance and accounting set to reach 40% by the end of 2022 [Gorshkov 2021b, pp. 144–145].

Based on the analysis of company data, some fintech firms provide alternative lending to SMEs, which, however, is not widespread due to

[17] Fintech in Japan. Op. cit.

[18] Ibid.

the fact that the amount of financing required for this group of borrowers is small and most loans are short-term. Therefore, fintech firms are not always able to cover the costs of evaluating clients' creditworthiness and advertising services.

On the contrary, Japanese banks are actively searching for the opportunities of alternative lending. In particular, SMFG Bank, in cooperation with Komatsu, a Japanese construction equipment manufacturer, has access to a data platform containing information on current construction equipment operations, ongoing construction progress, as well as order and delivery systems, enabling it to offer Komatsu supplier lending services in a timelier manner. Many banks are installing electronic data interchange systems to improve the efficiency of corporate management of SMEs and are trying to link these with settlement platforms that will allow companies to monitor both commercial and financial ordering information in real time. Such interaction can strengthen the links between banks and SMEs.[19]

Fintech companies also provide services for the collection and analysis of financial information (NOWCAST, OFFICELIFE, SPEEDA, ZUUonline), insurance (DRIVEON), security (BankGuard, capy), and the implementation of blockchain technology (bitFlyer, BITBOX, coincheck, mijin, Techbureau).[20]

Peculiar Features of Fintech in Japan

The analysis of the market landscape of fintech in Japan by market segment and market actors allows us to identify the following peculiar features of its development.

First, Japan is currently catching up in terms of general level of digitalization of its financial sector in comparison to other developed and emerging economies.

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[19] Digital Transformation of Japanese Banks. Op. cit.

[20] Fintech in Japan. Op. cit.

Second, the rapid development of fintech in recent years is attributable to the government's policy of reforming the existing legal system, which had significantly hindered the development of fair competition between financial and non-financial institutions.

Third, the development of fintech by segment in Japan remains highly unbalanced: and digital payments demonstrate high levels of growth (even though low as measured by the standards of other developed and emerging economies), neobanking and digital investing grow moderately, while alternative lending and alternative financing are demonstrating extremely low levels of growth due to high availability of the credit on the domestic market and high levels of financial inclusion.

Fourth, unlike the case of emerging countries, bigtech firms have limited role in promoting fintech, and most technological advancements are initiated by fintech firms and their cooperation with predominantly large banks. Thus, the penetration of fintech in the financial system of Japan remains uneven.

Fifth, fintech firms have established a sort of *spillover effect* and triggered many Japanese banks to consider a broader digitalization of their business. Major Japanese large banks have significantly improved their APIs, promoted neobanking and expanded other digital services, such as digital investment, asset management, and other services. Nevertheless, banks themselves, with a few exceptions of large banks, are not actively investing in the development of new digital products. Regional banks and credit cooperatives are still in the digitization stage; thus, full digital transformation of the country's banking sector is slow, and the banking sector as a whole is far from reaching *bank 4.0* stage. To better serve their customers and add value to their services, Japanese banks should be more proactive in embracing DX. Currently, they are mostly relying on fintech firms' technology, and while they possess large data on their customers, they are reluctant to share this information with non-financial institutions.[21]

[21] Digital Transformation of Japanese Banks. Op. cit.

Consequently, the sixth feature of fintech in Japan is the *hidden delegation of powers* by banks to fintech firms (BaaS, Banking as a Service), which then provide these services to customers. Banks such as Mizuho Financial Group, Shinsei Bank Group, SBI Sumishin Net Bank offer deposit services, issue regional gift certificates, conduct currency exchanges, issue mortgage loans, and provide other services through fintech firms.[22] Moreover, large banks and fintech firms are penetrating other Asian markets to provide these services.

Seventh, another peculiar feature of fintech in Japan is also reflected in the fact that fintech firms do not provide services to large businesses, as this market segment has traditionally been serviced by large Japanese banks through the main bank system. Large corporations generally do not have shortages of funds, and in the case of capital financing, the amount of funding they need is extensive and cannot be provided fully by fintech firms. Large corporations in Japan generally lack online platforms, however, in the future, it is possible to assume that, in order to unify the management of cash and commodity flows, companies will be interested in establishing their own online platforms to improve administrative efficiency, reduce costs, and improve financial efficiency [Kostyukova 2021, p. 445].

Overall, DX of the Japanese economy in general and the financial sector in particular has been lagging behind due to Japanese society's high concerns about the usage of personal data by private companies, i.e., there is a lack of trust towards digital technologies caused by a traditionally conservative approach to any kind of change. Digital financial services require well-protected user identification systems, which are not currently available to all banks and non-bank credit institutions for financial, technological, and other reasons. A national digital identification system has not been developed at the national level, so the burden is on banks and non-bank financial institutions themselves to secure personal data.[23] The issue of cybersecurity of financial and non-financial banking institutions is also a serious problem.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Digital Transformation of Japanese Banks. Op. cit. P. 7–8.

Conclusion

Japan, despite being the most technologically and economically advanced country in the Asia-Pacific region, is demonstrating slower adaptation rates of fintech. Japan is currently at *fintech 1.0* stage, and its banking system has only partially crossed the *bank 4.0* threshold. Thus, overall, fintech in Japan is catching up with the levels of other developed and emerging economies even though the speed of the catch-up has increased in recent years.

The development of fintech in Japan remains heterogenous in terms of market segments and major financial institutions promoting fintech services. The most developed segment of fintech in Japan is digital payments, while neobanking and digital investment are rising in popularity even if they are far from entering maturing stages. Digitalization of the financial sector is predominantly driven by the collaboration of large banks with fintech firms, which are establishing spillover effects and pushing banks to further adopt digital technologies. In the banking sector, digitalization is developing unevenly: while large banks actively promote digital transformation in cooperation with fintech companies, regional banks and credit cooperatives are still at the digitization stage.

Further promotion of DX in Japan's financial sector will require future reforms in its corporate culture and regulatory environment. The problem of double shortages (the lack of finance and the lack of digital talents) will also have to be addressed. The government has a big role to play in this process and needs to proactively stimulate cooperation among the private and financial sectors and fintech firms.

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The Meiji Revolution: 100 and 150 Years Later (Nikolai Konrad and the Paradoxes of His "Progress")

A. N. Meshcheryakov

Abstract. Using the example of the article "The Centenary of the Japanese Revolution" (1968) by the outstanding Japanologist Nikolai Konrad, the author examines his understanding of the "Meiji Revolution". Holding on, by and large, to the Marxist views on history, Nikolai Konrad turned out to be surprisingly close to "bourgeois" historians in understanding the Meiji Revolution. The "bourgeois" and Soviet historians (including Konrad himself), who were in conflict relations, consistently qualified the Meiji Revolution as a "progressive" (positive) event that introduced Japan to the "world" (i.e., Western and the only one possible) civilization. Marxist and "bourgeois" thinkers differed in their assessment of the future (whether or not communism was the highest stage of progress), but their view of the Japanese past showed amazing unanimity. The keenness on the theory of progress was so all-embracing that Nikolai Konrad's assessments of specific historical phenomena of the Tokugawa period demonstrate outright error and bias. None of the "advanced" European countries could boast of such a long-lasting social peace as that which we observe in the Tokugawa period, which, however, did not prevent Konrad (as well as other Western historians) from branding the Tokugawa rule as "reactionary" and "stagnant".

Keywords: Meiji Revolution, N. I. Konrad, progress, soviet historiography, marxism, concept of "progress"

The year 1968 saw the centenary of the Meiji Revolution. In Japan, it was celebrated on an unprecedented scale. Since then, as many as 50 years have passed. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the revolution, such magnificent celebrations do not seem to be expected. However, this does not mean that the historical significance of the revolution has decreased. This event took place once and for all, and it cannot be changed. However, the people who reflect on it continue to change, with their attitudes and perspectives transforming. Generations change, and the distance from which they look at the Japan of 1868 is increasing. Something can be seen better, something worse. But no one has yet questioned the fact that, as a result of the revolution, the fate and fortune of Japan changed in the most decisive way.

Fifty years ago, Nikolai Konrad published the article "The Centenary of the Japanese Revolution", in which he presented his view of this event. Konrad was not only an academician; he was a subtle and knowledgeable person. It is to him that the now forgotten primacy belongs: he was the first in the world to translate *Ise Monogatari*, one of the fundamental texts of the Japanese Middle Ages. He translated it subtly, inventively, and in a peculiar way, creating an example of translation that was consulted by all subsequent researchers and translators of Japanese literature. The language for translations of old Japanese literature had not yet been developed; he had to be a pioneer who, under the influence of the hungry, bloody, and free air of the first years of the Bolshevik revolution, did not hesitate to experiment with his native language. In the preface to *Ise Monogatari*, Nikolai Konrad explained the ideas of his translation in the following way: "There are very few principles on which translation is based, and they are very simple: loyalty to the original in its images, in the sequence of these images, and in their emotional content. Therefore, I sometimes consciously sacrifice the correct course of a Russian phrase to create that specific emotional contour that I thought existed in the Japanese text." [Konrad 1921, p. 34].

Later, Nikolai Konrad had to adapt to the changing tastes of the communist regime for the rest of his life, dry his style, and twist his

thought. The Communists put him in jail, they squeezed him dry, but Konrad also squeezed everything possible out of the situation at every opportunity. He literally "dragged" Japanese classical (aristocratic!) literature through the workers'-and-peasants' censorship, attributing to this literature a variety of meanings that met the current Soviet requirements. In his works of the 1920s, he honestly talks about the aestheticism, sophistication, and hedonism of his favorite Heian literature. In the 1930s, he turned *Genji Monogatari* into a "full-fledged realistic novel" [The Orient 1935, p. 11]. After the war, when Soviet ideology began to praise everything folk, he began to assert that Japanese aristocratic poetry was a continuation of folk poetry. "Folk culture was a source of literary poetry not only in historical terms, but also in the sense that the latter, even after becoming an independent branch of poetry writing, continued to use a variety of images and techniques created in folk poetry." [Gluskina & Markova 1954, p. 4].

Today we can only smile understandingly and condescendingly at such maneuverability, but the work was being done: despite the repression, executions, and censorship, Nikolai Konrad himself, his colleagues, students, and followers did a lot to ensure that Japanese aristocratic literature brightened up the Soviet cultural landscape.

Nikolai Konrad was a man with a broad outlook, contemplating not only on literature and culture – history was also part of his range of interests. And the centenary of the Meiji Revolution did not leave him indifferent. In the article "The Centenary of the Japanese Revolution" he summarized his thoughts [Konrad 1974]. Half a century has passed since then; scholarship has moved presumably forward. It makes sense to see where it was going from and where it has managed to arrive. Konrad was not a fiery communist, but the general intellectual atmosphere forced him – both voluntarily and involuntarily – to adhere to the basic Marxist views on history. One of the main axioms of this discourse is the fatalistic doctrine of socio-economic formations, according to which all societies are "doomed" to go through the same stages – from savagery to communism. This understanding of the historical process was one of the sources of the

most powerful discourse that took hold of Europe in modern times. This discourse is called "progress". Despite the objections of some skeptics and retrogrades, it is absolutely prevailing today. At one time, which was especially clearly revealed in the 18th century, "progress" made a real revolution in European minds. Traditional society (including European society) considered the past to be a lost ideal, while progressives believed that the present was better than the past, and the future would be better than the present. All progressive theories are Eurocentric because they recognize Europe as the norm. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Soviet and "bourgeois" historians, who were in conflict relations, consistently qualified the Meiji Revolution as a "progressive" (positive) event that introduced Japan to the "world" (i.e., Western and the only one possible) civilization. Marxist and "bourgeois" thinkers differed in their assessment of the future (whether or not communism was the highest stage of progress), but their view of the Japanese past demonstrates an amazing unanimity: Tokugawa-era Japan was a stagnant state and – glory to Progress! It is a good thing it does not exist anymore.

With this approach, the irrevocable fact completely falls out of sight that, after the suppression of the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637 (in which Konrad, for mystical reasons, sees the prologue of the bourgeois revolution), Japan entered a period of stability and peace. Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the shogun dynasty, and his descendants managed to form a system that proved to be strong for two and a half centuries: the country did not know either external or internal wars, and there were no rebellions. The peasant "uprisings", about which Marxist historians spoke with great fervor, took the form of a petition movement. At the same time, peasant petitions did not demand the impossible. For the most part, the "rebels" asked to be freed from the arbitrariness of a local official. At times, such petitions were filed with insubordination, over the head of the immediate superior, which was strictly prohibited. In this case, the typical outcome was the execution of the instigators and the satisfaction of their demands. Nikolai Konrad's reference to the uprising of Ōshio Heihachirō (1837), accompanied by the destruction

of rice shops, in which the scholar sees evidence of the revolutionary potential of the "masses of the people", lasted for two days and was impressive not so much with its scope (about 300 people participated in it) as with its exclusivity. In any case, the legitimacy of the power of the shogun or daimyo was never questioned. This was also facilitated by the fact that the elite made sufficiently high demands on themselves, which helped to significantly minimize corruption and lawlessness. None of the "advanced" European countries could boast of such a long social peace, which did not prevent Western historians from branding the Tokugawa regime as "reactionary" and "stagnant".

Konrad's main task was to show the uniformity of the historical process in Europe and in Japan. The passionate desire to see Japan as a Western analogue prompted Konrad to claim that the Tokugawa shogunate was an absolutist regime. This, of course, is a far-fetched argument. Under absolutism, someone (usually a monarch) has unlimited power. The Japanese emperor clearly did not have such power. Did the shogun possess it? It is hardly possible to answer this question in the affirmative. Can the government be considered absolutist if there are no national taxes in the country? There were no such taxes in Japan. Under absolutist government, a nationwide army and a unified judicial system are established, and a unified economic policy is carried out. All institutions and rules tend to be unified and centralized. However, under the Tokugawa rule, we do not observe anything like this. The essence of absolutism is "unite and rule", the essence of the Tokugawa rule is "divide and rule", the fragmentation of society into estates, domains, and territories with different customs and status. The Tokugawa shoguns did not try to achieve excessive centralization and unification. The general course in relation to the domains was not their integration, but the fixation of the type of relations that had existed under Ieyasu. It was not only a political, but also a worldview conviction: Ieyasu bequeathed it to his descendants to leave the customs and manners of the provinces that were part of Japan unchanged, stating: what is good for some is not suitable for others.

Nikolai Konrad implemented his idea of the uniformity of the historical process in the West and the East wherever he could, including the theory of the "Oriental Renaissance" that he intensively promoted, which is curious only for its memorable originality. Being in voluntary captivity to his Marxist holism, Konrad had to justify the thesis that the Meiji Revolution was not so much a result of foreign intervention as a consequence of the internal development of the country during the Tokugawa period. "What helped Japan a hundred years ago to make this revolution, so necessary for further economic and social development?" asks the author [Konrad 1974, p. 189]. And he answers that, despite a favorable international situation, which distracted the forces of the Western powers from Japan, the main factor is the internal one: "Of course, first of all, the conditions inside the country, the presence in Japanese society of forces ripe for revolutionary action." With this approach, the provocative role of the West, whose direct intervention provoked the civil war, recedes into the background. This approach – willingly or unwittingly – justifies the "advanced" Western expansionism, which brought so much grief to the "backward" Orient.

Konrad believes that "the bourgeois revolution in Japan was neither an accident nor a historical paradox. The country approached it being quite prepared: it had a developed economy, a national market for many types of goods, good communication routes, and a developed banking system; it had a large, highly educated, and very active intelligentsia; there were various currents of social thought, which formed the ideological ground for revolutionary transformations. Finally, by that time, Japanese society had already formed into the whole that historians call a nation at this stage of social development." [Konrad 1974, p. 195].

In the above assessment, too many provisions look extremely controversial. Japanese peasants really had a fairly high productivity, which allowed them to feed about 30 million people. However, this was achieved primarily through the intensification of the labor process, and there was no scientific and technological progress or industrial revolution. The institution of science did not exist; the Dutch scholars (*rangakusha*), about whom Donald Keene first wrote with such biased

love in 1952 ("The Japanese Discovery of Europe"), were so few that it would be at least short-sighted to talk about their influence on the overall situation. However, Konrad, being a representative of a seemingly competing historical school, fully agreed with Keene – both of them stood for progress. And this despite the fact that, in Japan, no concept of "progress" was developed (it was believed that the "golden age" remained in the distant past; it was necessary to try to somehow match it, but this was recognized as an impossible task). A "national market", of course, did not exist and could not exist: the country was divided into two and a half hundred domains, and many of them had their own monetary system. The market is based on the free movement of goods and people. However, the Japanese were assigned to their place of residence; the roads were narrow; there was no wheeled and horse-drawn transport; the construction of large ships was prohibited. Indeed, there was a rice exchange in Osaka, and coastal transportation was in evidence, but, of course, this could not ensure the existence of a "national market". The statement about the existence of the "Japanese nation" does not correspond to the facts. A person's identity was determined not through a "nation", but through a clan, family, village, province, or domain. Even the word "Japanese" appears very rarely in Tokugawa texts. This is not surprising: the country was closed to entry and exit, therefore, the situation of a meeting (and hence the opposition) of a "Japanese" and a "foreigner" happened extremely rarely. The school of "national doctrine" (*kokugaku*), from which Japanese nationalism stemmed during the Meiji period, was a peripheral trend which did not enjoy state support.

Generally speaking, there were no internal prerequisites for the bourgeois revolution, and it could not have taken place without the influence of an external factor. However, within the samurai class, there were forces that made a political coup. These were the domains that opposed Tokugawa and had been defeated two and a half centuries ago. The shogunate discriminated them by assigning the insulting status of "outsiders" (*tozama*). Their thirst for revenge did not go away, but it was in a latent state for a long time. Representatives of these domains

(first of all, Satsuma and Choshu), with the support of Great Britain, overthrew the Tokugawa dynasty. It was them who came to power and ruled the country for the next 50 years. These samurai carried out revolutionary reforms that transformed the country from feudal to capitalist. The role of the townspeople ("bourgeoisie") and peasants in the implementation of the bourgeois revolution is approaching zero. The "numerous highly educated and very active intelligentsia" that Konrad speaks about are, first of all, samurai from the southwestern domains. It is extremely curious that, having spoken about the prerequisites of the Meiji Revolution, Konrad did not say a word about what it was. Nothing is said about the really large-scale transformations that were carried out after the political coup. Nothing is said, perhaps because it was so difficult to reconcile the positive poetic image of the concept of "revolution" peculiar to communists with what happened afterwards.

To put it in a nutshell, the following happened: Japan really made an amazing leap from feudalism to capitalism, carried out industrialization, created a more or less modern economy, introduced educational (universal compulsory primary education) and military service, built the Japanese nation at an accelerated pace, became competitive in the world imperialist scene, turned into a "normal" imperialist militarized state, began a series of victorious wars, and acquired colonies. All these "acquisitions" entailed ruthless destruction of local cultures and of the former social environment, growing nationalist sentiments, and an increase in the number of mental disorders and suicides.

Having integrated into the Western paradigm of "progress", Japan became a participant in the globalist project with all the resulting gains, losses, and problems. There is no doubt: if Japan had not embarked on the path of modernization (Westernization), it would inevitably have become someone's colony. But the price of independence also proved to be exceptionally high. Should we forget about this when talking about the "progressive" meaning of the Meiji Revolution? But somehow it was not that common to talk about it. Let us face the truth; it is not customary now. There are dissidents, of course, but dissidents are expected to have their voices drowned in the enthusiastic information noise.

And the point is not at all Marxism, which does not enjoy its former popularity today, but the very concept of "progress", which hardly takes in facts that do not fit into the coherent theory. The arrangement of the country's historical development prevailing in modern Japan in recent times was suggested not by the Soviet (Marxist) historiography, but by the American one, with its reverence for "democracy". According to this arrangement, Japan has been developing in a progressive and desirable way since 1868. The logical continuation of the Meiji rule is the *Taishō democracy*. This concept appeared after the war, in the 1950s. The pinnacle of this democracy is universal suffrage (for men), the law on which was adopted in 1925. Everything would have gone just as well and progressively, supporters of the theory of *Taishō democracy* maintain, but a bunch of militarists deceived the good Japanese people who were on the right path, and they became the militarists' victim. The result was the transformation of nationalism into the basis of state ideology; the successful construction of a totalitarian society, in which unanimity far exceeded the unanimity achieved under other totalitarian regimes; a war against half the world that ended in a brutal defeat. Like in Nazi Germany, totalitarianism in Japan came into force in a completely democratic way, enjoying a very broad popular support. But it is not too common to talk about this either.

Like any revolution, the Meiji Revolution was an extremely complex and multidimensional phenomenon. In the arguments of its unconditional praisers (as well as a few execrators), there is non-recognition of the diversity of the world and a desire to simplify it. Dreaming of the future, Sholokhov's character Makar Nagulnov said: "When we break all the boundaries, I'll be the first to make noise: Go ahead! Marry those who are of different race! All people will intermingle, and there will be no such shame in the world that one body is white, another is yellow, and still another is black, and the whites reproach others with their skin color and consider them inferior. All will have pleasantly swarthy faces and all will be the same." This approach makes it impossible to get intellectual and aesthetic pleasure from contemplating the diversity of the world. The ideal situation is when

every theory is subject to refutation, because there are no absolutely correct theories in the field of human relations. And revolutions are part of human relations. The theory of progress, most certainly, has solid grounds. But, carried to the point of absurdist indiscriminateness, it turns into an absurdity, and then its explanatory possibilities leave much to be desired.

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At the Crossroads of Cultures: A Story of Two Performances

N. F. Klobukova (Golubinskaya)

Abstract. The article describes two theater performances: the first took place in the Chinese Theater of Tsarskoye Selo in the summer of 1803, and the second one (or, rather a series of guest performances) – a hundred years later, in 1902, in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The first performance was shown for Emperor Alexander I and his guests including the Japanese sailors who were leaving for their motherland with Ivan F. Kruzenshtern's global circumnavigation. The description of the performance the Japanese sailors left became part of the manuscript *Kankai Ibun* (*"Surprising Information about the Seas Surrounding [Earth]"*) written in 1807. The performances of 1902 were presented by the Kabuki guest company headed by Otojirō Kawakami with actress Sada Yacco, the star of the company, attracting most attention. The performances shown in Russia aroused a mixed reaction among spectators and art critics, which is proven by periodical editions of those days. The article analyzes specific perception of foreign-language theater culture reflected in the spectators' descriptions and concludes that, regardless of the reaction to strange and unusual things, the acquaintance with other culture dramatically broadens the spectator's horizons and allows discerning something new in one's national culture.

Keywords: Kankai Ibun, Chinese theater, Emperor Alexander I, castaways, Charles Didelot, Russian musical instruments, Sada Yacco, Vsevolod Meyerhold.

The history of various cultures' intersection is replete with unexpected mirror coincidences that allow considering similar events from various angles. The relationship between Russian and Japanese theater and music cultures is no exception. This article dwells on two theatrical performances spread out over a hundred years (one performance and one guest tour, to be exact), which took place in Saint Petersburg and its environs.

Below is a short pre-history of the first performance shown in the summer of 1803.

In 1793, Japanese commercial vessel Wakamiya Maru with seventeen crewmembers suffered a shipwreck near the Aleutian Islands. After they had lived with aborigines for 10 months, the sailors were taken on board of the Russian harvesting vessel, moved to Okhotsk, then to Yakutsk. Finally, they traveled by the Lena River to Irkutsk, where they lived for 8 years. In April 1893, the Japanese sailors were brought to Saint Petersburg, where they were received by Emperor Alexander I.[1] The project of establishing trade ties with Japan, towards which the Russian government had conducted an isolationist policy for a long time, had

[1] Entries in *Kankai Ibun* state that the audience took place on May 16 (according to the Julian calendar), closer to the evening upon termination of the Emperor's dinner [Kankai Ibun 2009, p. 257]. The Japanese sailors were accompanied by Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantsev (1754–1826), an inspirer and enthusiast of the global circumnavigation, a full privy councilor, gentleman in waiting, Minister of Commerce, and Senator. Prior to their departure to Japan, the sailors had lived in his house in the English Embankment. The audience was attended by Emperor Alexander I, Empress Elizaveta Alexeyevna, widowed Empress Maria Fyodorovna, and Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich. Saint Petersburg of those days saw great festivities in honor of the centennial of Saint Petersburg founding and the castaways watched the air balloon flight together with the Imperial family. Of interest is that there is no relevant entry about this audience in the Chamber-Fourier journal for 1803. See: [Kamer-fur'erskii tseremonial'nyi zhurnal… 1903]

already been underway. The implementation of the project was one of the goals set before the first Russian global circumnavigation under Ivan F. Kruzenshtern' command (1770–1846), that was to start in summer 1803; the expedition was to depart on July 20.[2] Diplomat Nikolai P. Rezanov (1764–1807) was appointed an official envoy to Japan.

Prior to the audience, Emperor Alexander I had requested the sailors to consider an opportunity of returning to Japan together with the Russian Embassy and express their wishes during the personal meeting. Four of the sailors agreed to return while the others, who had already been christened as Orthodox believers and started families, preferred staying in Russia and returned to Irkutsk.

The Russian Embassy arrived in Nagasaki in September 1804 and the Japanese "castaways"[3] were handed over to Japan's authorities; they were subjected to lengthy interrogations, during which they provided detailed stories about what they had heard and seen in Russia. The interrogations were conducted by Otsuki Gentaku, Chief Medical Officer of the Miyagi military clan, and Shimura Hiroyuki, a rangakusha.[4] While the sailors were telling their stories, it was necessary to illustrate them; Otsuki Gentaku's pupil made a sketch of what had been said while the sailors later confirmed the likeness.[5]

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[2] Due to a number of contingencies, the departure was postponed several times; it happened only on August 7, 1803. More about Kruzenshtern's circumnavigation in: [Kruzenshtern 2007].

[3] That is how official Japanese reports referred to the sailors.

[4] A scholar who studies r*angaku* (蘭学, lit. "Dutch sciences"), which is understood as a set of European scientific knowledge that entered Japan when the country was closed (1639–1853).

[5] The compilers explain: "… it was necessary for us to explain what they [the sailors – *N. K.*]) told us but we failed to accomplish it. Therefore, at some point, a pupil began making meaningful drawings; it was decided to depict the items described by the sailors in drawings next to [descriptions]; then we asked again and corrected until finally we came to have several dozens of drawings. They illustrated every part of the manuscript. It looks as if we

The interrogation results and further research efforts allowed compiling the manuscript *Kankai Ibun* (*"Surprising Information about the Seas Surrounding [Earth]"*) in the early summer of 1807[6].

The manuscript contains a detailed description of various life realities in Russia at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, including a short glossary of the Russian language. Two scrolls, i.e., the 10th and the 11th (as well as the end of Scroll 9), are devoted to the description of Saint Petersburg, where the castaways arrived for the imperial audience. The sailors were shown the city sights and taken around the city, which they liked very much; they visited Kunstkamera and went to a theater. Judging by their description, it was the Bolshoi Kamenny (later Marriinsky) theater. The Japanese sailors also visited Tsarskoye Selo,[7] where they were invited to see a theatrical performance.

The performance, most likely, was staged in the famous Chinese Theater, built in the Alexandrovsky Park of Tsarskoye Selo by architects A. Rinaldi and I. V. Neyelov in 1778–1779 (Illustration 1).

The interior of the Chinese Theater was splendid. According to the descriptions of contemporaries and researches, the central box,

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managed to understand the essence of the depicted, yet all [our drawings] did not conform to the images of real figures, and from the very beginning, we tried to achieve just one thing – to get to know their general contours. In addition, while in the process of compiling it [the manuscript], we sometimes received drawings of such items that we knew about only from their stories; we copied these drawings and inserted them into the text then…" [Kankai ibun 2009, p. 38].

6 The treatise was published in Russian in 2009, translated and edited by Vladislav Nikanorovich Goreglyad; the treatise is preceded by an introductory article telling the history of its creation and the difficulties accompanying reading and translating it. See: [Goreglyad 2009].

7 The manuscript transcribes it as *Tsuvarusukoisero* and explains that this is what is known as the Cool place, which served as a summer country residence and place of rest for the Emperor and his family [Kankai ibun 2009, p. 273].

Illustration 1. Chinese Theater in Tsarskoye Selo,
engraving of the mid-18th century
Source: https://www.citywalls.ru/house23231.html?s=iv0s20hu53ibfs70jg9fstuno3

stage portal, and plafond were adorned by figures of Chinese people, dragons, shields with zodiac signs and other elements of the Eastern décor[8]. The indoor appearance was enlivened by little bells, beads, pendants carved of wood – motley, silvered and gilded. The box decorations were made of painted carton with the glossy foil layer. The central Imperial box and two side boxes for Grand Dukes contained genuine items of Chinese art: decorative lacquer panels, porcelain, and furniture.

In 1779, I. Krist, an artist and theater settings designer, painted an orange silk curtain with scenes and landscapes according to "Chinese taste". The theater was opened that very year with the opera Demetrio Artaxerxes by Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello (1741–1816); the performance was attended by Empress Catherine II. Afterwards,

[8] See, for example, [Fomin, N. 1935].

Illustration. 2. Scene from Giovanni Paisiello's opera "Demetrio Artaxerxes" shown at the opening of the Chinese Theater in Tsarskoye Selo in 1779. *Source:* https://www.citywalls.ru/house23231.html?s=iv0s20hu53ibfs70jg9fstuno3

performances were arranged for the Emperor, his family, and guests, as a rule, in summer[9] (Illustration 2).

[9] The theater was later renovated and rebuilt several times; shortly before the revolutionary events of 1917, a thorough overhaul was made and the interiors were restored in 1908–1913 under the design of a Petersburg architect Silvio Danini (1867–1942). Two-storied lateral annexes were added to the building from both sides to house foyers, vestibules, buffet, and Tsar's side box; the theater was heated by steam. In 1924–1926, the building was repaired again to be used as a museum. The bombardment of September 15, 1941 fully burned the inside of the theater in Pushkino and left it roofless; at the present time, the building is in a ruined state. Yet there is a project aimed at the restoration of the unique historical monument

The sailors described the performance they had seen as follows:[10]

They showed a performance to us here in the palace. The theater room was closed from four sides; it was quite dark but when many candles were lit, it became light as in daytime.

The Imperial family, entourage members, and castaways alone were present – there were no other viewers. The Emperor's seat is right above the stage.

The entrance of the imperial family was met by flutes and drums on the stage. The Emperor proceeded to the rhythm of their sounds. Finally, the orchestra lined up before the stage; kotos, violins, and other instruments began to play… It seems that kyōgens[11] *are performed in different countries. The performance changed with each act; there were no continuations. When they showed performances about their country, they did it in the local style… some people wore waraji*[12]*…* [Illustration 3].

And one more thing: when they show the country with black people, buildings, men and women – they paint them all in black, while clothes and other items look in keeping with that country's customs. As to actors, men play men and women play women. There are no what we call oyamas [onnagatas, "female faces" — N. K.] *among men. The faces of the old and the young change very quickly as they step onto the stage. Although the language is not at all understandable, the situation and the atmosphere are quite the same as in our theater. Fifteen men and women divided into two groups danced in kyōgens.*

Three women out of those climbed a high rock. This rock slowly shrank and went down while the women slipped off and continued to dance.

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and its interiors; the works will start in 2022, given favorable circumstances. For further information see: https://www.tzar.ru/node/1569.

10 In Scroll 11 of the *Kankai Ibun*.

11 The Japanese name for theater performances.

12 *Waranji or waraji* peasant straw sandals similar to Russian lapti

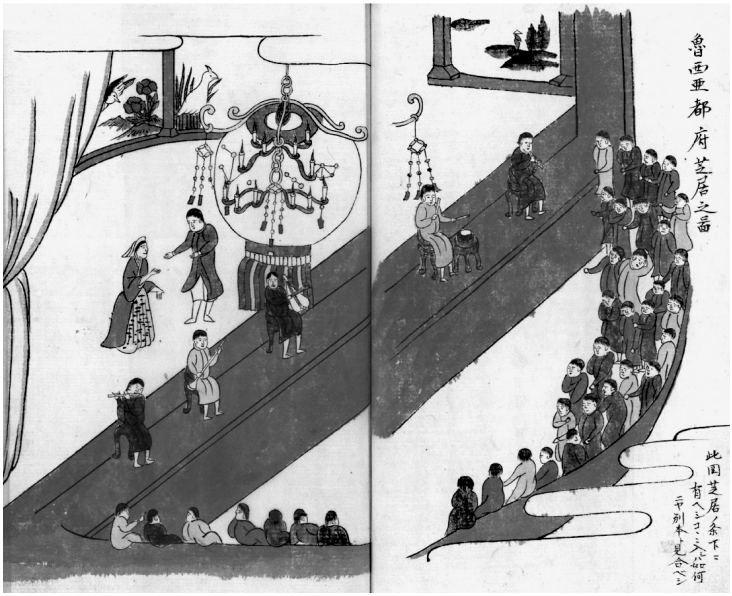

Illustration 3. Performance in the Chinese Theater, Tsarskoye Selo. 1803.
Source: https://streetart-ekb.livejournal.com/281293.html

Many dancers jumped to the height of five-six shaku[13] *and danced spinning on one leg. The viewers applauded and praised them. When the Emperor, deeply touched, clapped his hands, all the other spectators began clapping their hands too… That is, generally, what it looked like. The castaways say that, as they did not understand the intrigue as a whole and did not know the language, they could not grasp every detail* [Kankai ibun 2009, pp. 275–276].

Judging by the sailors' description, they were shown a divertissement containing a drama or opera performance as well as an afterward ballet. The entries in the Chamber-Fourier journals of 1803 state that theatrical performances, as a rule, included a drama in French or a French comic

[13] Japan's measure of distance, approximately 30 cm; for fabric measurement it is nearly 40 cm.

Illustration 4. Charles Didelot in the ballet Cora and Alonzo, or Virgin of the Sun. 1820.
Source: https://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/ File:Modern grace, or the operatic finale to the ballet of Alonzo e Caro by James Gillray.jpg

opera ending with a ballet. It is also known from notes in theater chronicles[14] that, on May 16, 1803, in honor of the centennial of the Saint Petersburg Imperial Theater, the Bolshoi Kamenny Theater held the first night of the "heroic and fantasy ballet Roland and Morgana to Catarino Cavos' music staged by French dancer and choreographer Charles Didelot (1767–1837)[15] (Illustration 4).

[14] See: [Petersburgskii balet... 2014, p. 17].

[15] The ballet *Roland and Morgana* was Didelot's debut as a producer on the Petersburg stage. Starring were Yevgeniya Kolosova (1780–1869) and August Poirot (1789–1832?). Later Didelot staged the ballets *Faun and Hamadryade*, *Zephyr and Flora*, *Cupid and Psyche*, *Laura and Henrick*, etc., which were always a success. The above performances belonged to what

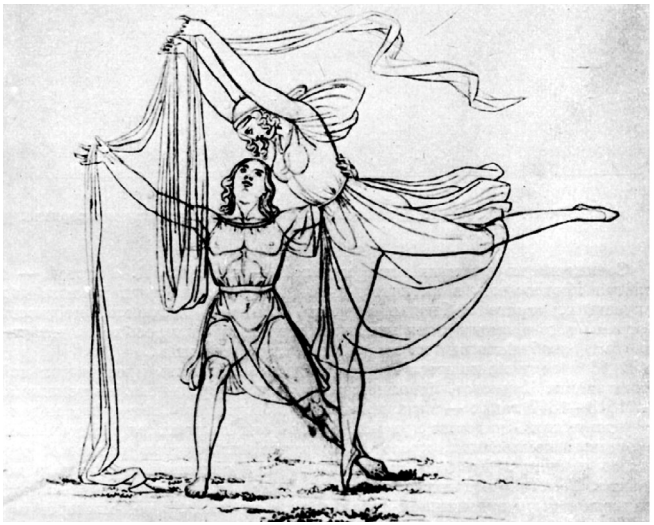

Illustration 5. Russian ballet of the early 19th century.
Scene from the Aeolian Harp. Drawing by Fyodor Tolstoy (1838).
Source: http://artyx.ru/books/item/ f00/s00/z0000046/st017.shtml

Didelot laid emphasis on theater settings, insisting on their variety, colorfulness and credibility; he also developed a new system of theater equipment that enabled dancers to "hover" over the stage either solo, or in groups. There were special appliances for this purpose: actors put on special corsets fixed to the wire that could move along the block invisible to the audience. Didelot also created his own choreographic style having introduced various improvements in the ballet technique (which became possible through the use of lightweight costumes – tights and light tunics)

is called the style of A*nacreontic* ballet – its motifs are derived from the love lyics by Anacreont, an ancient Greek poet. Glorifying the beauty of natural feeling, choreographers required softness and lingering gracefulness, made performers "hover" in the air, shrouding them with flower wreaths and shawls, and thus achieving picturesque effects. Cupids and Zephyrs were personages as iconic for educated people of the early 19th century as Sylphs and Willis were in romantic ballets of the later epoch.

and replaced shoes with heels and buckles the dancers had used before by light ballet slippers, and later – by pointe-shoes[16] (Illustration 5).

Ulrich Schlippenbach, a German writer, described the one-act ballet Roland and Morgana in his memoirs:

"The settings are excellent and transformations take place so quickly that one is astonished…The scene presenting a macabre cave transforms into the valley with the view into the temple floating in the clouds, while everywhere – in the fore- and background – nymphs and ghosts form most picturesque groups. The one who would have lowered his eyes during the performance and then looked immediately up would have surely missed the changes of scenery. The quick appearance of a nearly hundred people who suddenly fill the foreground of the stage is exceptional and may be called really magical"

[Surits 2012, p. 641].

The Japanese sailors described these very features of the spectacle they had seen: it is quite likely that they were shown this very ballet. Besides, the mention of "people in waraji" and "black people" may imply that the sailors were shown scenes of drama performances both from Russian life and that of exotic countries' inhabitants. Probably, one or two acts of Nikolai Ilyin's very popular play about peasant life was performed on that day – *Magnanimity, or Recruitment*; its first night took place in May 1803.

The same month saw the first performance of the drama *Judgement of King Solomon* by Luis-Charles Caigniez (1762–1842), translated by A. I. Klyushin; its scenes could also be shown in the Chinese Theater

[16] For more details about the life and work of Charles Didelot, see: [Mundt, N. P. 1901], [Slonimsky, Yu. I. 1958]. Graphic images of scenes from the ballets of Charles Didelot, unfortunately, have not been preserved, but some idea of them can be obtained from the drawings of the Russian painter F. P. Tolstoy (1783–1873), which depict scenes from the ballet "Aeolian Harp" (1838). These drawings may have been inspired by the memories of his youth, since at the age of twenty Fyodor Tolstoy took classical dance lessons from Didlo.

[Petersburgskii balet… 2014, p. 17]. We may also name the play by Vasily Fyodorov (1778–1833) *Love and Virtue* as the one that could be presented; its first night took place on May 16, 1803 during the festivities in honor of the centennial of Saint Petersburg's founding.[17]

We may add for further information that the *Kankai Ibun* contains descriptions of some Russian musical instruments with illustrations. Among them are *koshike (goshike)* – "guselki", gusli; *tochika (dotochika)* – misspelled "dudochka" (reedpipe); *kerefuko (urebuko)* – a three-string violin or kyrympa (in the Sakha language); *baraika (paraika)* – balalaika, or pallaika (in the Khanty language). Also mentioned are a drum and some wind instrument looking like a tube (a little flute with a wide bell). The manuscript continues:

"These instruments are used during dancing. Being in the capital, we saw them in the theater. They generally play all these instruments together. The musicians make a row before the elevation for dancing and the actors nearby begin dancing afterwards"

[Kankai ibun 2009, pp. 181–182] (Illustration 6).

That is how the Japanese viewers saw Russia's theater and music culture of the early 19th century.

A hundred years later, in March 1902 to be exact, Japan's Theater Company headed by Otojirō Kawakami (1864–1911) visited Saint Petersburg as part of the guest tour of the countries of Europe and America. That was the first tour of Japan's Kabuki theater in Russia,

[17] For more details about the repertoire of early 19th century Russian theaters, see: [Istoria russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra 1977]. The Chamber-Fourier ceremonial journal for 1803 does not have an entry about the trip of the Emperor and his family to Tsarskoye Selo. Yet, the journal of Alexander I for May and June of 1803, which was kept separately, has not survived. It might have mentioned this trip and the performance in the Chinese Theater. Therefore, we may only assume when the performance took place and what play the Japanese sailors saw.

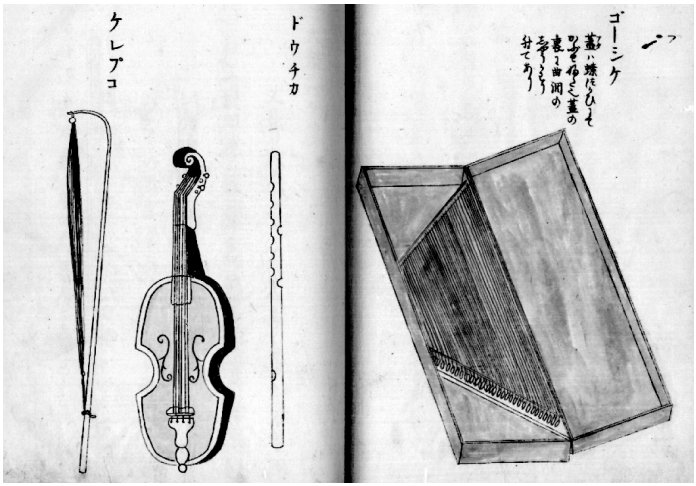

Illustration 6. Musical instruments mentioned in the manuscript Kankai Ibun
Source: https: //www. mediaport.ua/udivitelnye-svedeniya-ob-okruzhayushchih-zemlyu- moryah?page=1#img16

and the savvy public of the capital was eager to hear and see the acting of Kawakami Sadayakko (1872–1946), a legendary actress and the star of the company, whom many had known from articles published in the French, English, and German press; she was likened to such greatest actresses of that time as Eleanora Duse, Sara Bernard, and Tina de Lorenzo (Illustration 7).

We may shortly note that the theater company consisting of fourteen men and four women performed first in the United States, then in England and France, where its performance had been announced specially as a final event of the cultural program of the World Paris Exhibition. Despite initial difficulties that arose in the United States, the company quickly adapted to the tastes of the public in those countries, having contracted the amount of oral speech in their performances (as the Japanese language was not understood by the viewers), and, vice versa, having focused on the visual effect of the performance – bright costumes, dramatic scenes of battles and suicides (*harakiri*), striking and expressive dances. The music specifically, as it sounded odd to a European ear, was dramatically

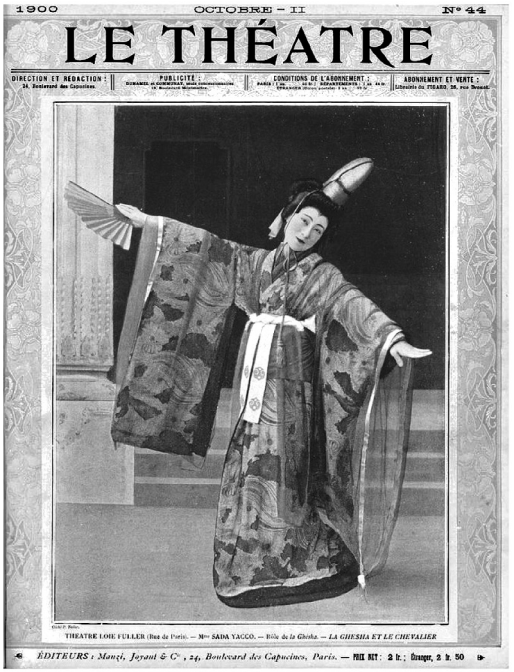

Illustration 7. Sada Yacco on the cover of Le Theatre magazine, 1900
Source: https://twitter.com/JapanStoryFr/status/1240229317826826246/photo/2

shortened or omitted altogether. It was for a reason that German newspapers, for example, a Berlin magazine "Ost-Asien", indicated the pantomimic and "European-Japanese" character of the performances.[18]

On March 20, 1902, the Kawakami Company performed in Japan's Embassy in Saint Petersburg, then in the Marriinsky Theater on March 21, and in the "New Theater" on March 22, 23, and 24; after that, the company left for Moscow.[19] The titles of the plays presented are known:

[18] *Ost-Asien*. No. 45, December 1901. Cit. ex.: [Fritsch 2003, p. 69].

[19] On March 26 and 27, the company performed in the Moscow International Theater (earlier – Georg Paradise's theater, then the theater of V. E. Meyerhold; now it is the Mayakovsky Theater).

Geisha and Samurai (translated into Russian as *Geisha and Knight*[20]), *Kesa*,[21] and *The Merchant of Venice*.[22]

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[20] The play *Geisha and Knight* is a combination of two Kabuki plays. The first act, the plot of which is borrowed from the play *Sayate ("Love Rivalry")*, presents two samurai struggling for the love of famous geisha Katsuragi. She had an affair with the winner of the duel, named Nagoya Sanza, who, however, had a fiancé – Orihime. The second act, based on the play *Musume Dojoji*, shows how Katsuragi, afflicted by jealousy, persecutes the samurai she is in love with while he hides himself and his fiancé in the monastery. The geisha tries to enchant monks with her dancing, as they did not let her inside the monastery; finally, she breaks into the monastery. She strikes a hard blow to her rival Orihime and dies of broken heart in the hands of her lover who deserted her so shamefully [Fritsch 2003, p. 71].

[21] A historical drama based on the famous tragic episode of the 12th century from the life of Ando Morito (with the monastic name of Mongaku) and Kesa-Gozen. In Kawakami's version, the plot is as follows: a young girl named Kesa and her mother were abducted during their travel and are now kept captive. Having heard about the abduction, brave warrior Morito releases both women after a hard-fought battle. Three years later, Kesa, who has grown and become even more beautiful, marries young Wataru, although the mother had promised Morito that Kesa would become his wife. Infuriated by the news, Morito intends to kill the deceitful mother, but Kesa suggests that he should get into her bedroom at night and kill her husband Wataru; after that, he would not have anything else to do but to marry Morito. The latter agrees. He secretly gets into the bedroom and kills the person he takes for Wataru; yet it turns out to be his beloved Kesa who had lied to him. Full of repentance and hopelessness, Morito commits *harakiri* [Fritsch 2003, p. 75].

[22] The company staged a famous court scene from Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*; the fragment was called *Sairoku ("Shylock")*. Shylock, a usurer, appears in a satirical image of a coarse Japanese sailor from a faraway island as an embodiment of western greed. The scene was produced during a tour in Boston in 1899 with the help and consultations of Henry

Despite the spectacular success and enthusiastic reviews of the press related to the Kawakami Company's tour in America and Europe, the Russian public showed quite a skeptical attitude. The articles written by our theater critics, as L. M. Yermakova writes, "combine a wish to master something new and enrich the existent art opportunities with a lack of readiness for adaptation, ability to accept new theater conditionality and difficult theater aesthetics" [Yermakova 2020, p. 133]. Along with attempts to provide a serious opinion of what they had seen, critics did not miss an opportunity of exercising their wits, with unacceptance of the sound component of the action being a commonplace. Pitches of Japanese voices, manners of singing and reciting, and weird sounds of musical instruments never heard before were perceived with hostility and often aroused laughter. Below are several quotations:

"A bit of hilarity, a bit of tragedy, a bit of equilibristics, a lot of naïvety and yet a lot of art – that is the impression of the acting shown by the Japanese company that started its performances in the International Theater yesterday. It is all very original, very skillful, and, despite primitive settings and naïve devices, touching at times. Of course, many things make you laugh, beginning from settings and ending with conditional fighting methods, and those who, when going to the Japanese theater, present the claims we consider mandatory for our stage, will not experience anything but disappointment…"[23]

"Their drama is more pantomimic, as there are only few words, and the plot is conveyed by the plastic and expressive movements. Odd are their grimaces and the hissing sounds of the Japanese language; the Japanese music grates on ears and the settings are unusual for our eyes, but, all this said, we must state that it is very interesting".[24]

Irving and Ellen Terry, American actors from the Knickerbocker Theater [Fritsch 2003, p. 78].

[23] *Russkiye Vedomosti*. March 14, 1902. No. 72. Cit. ex.: [Yermakova 2020, p. 140].

[24] *Moskovskii Listok*. March 14, 1902. No. 73. Cit. ex.: [Yermakova 2020, p. 141].

"The art of this Duse is limited by sticking out hands and fingers, meaningless prattling and squatting to the accompaniment of rattling balalaika and rhythmic drumbeats…"[25]

The scene from *The Merchant of Venice* brought about the strongest, nearly xenophobic, response of the Russian theater press, demonstrating, as L. M. Yermakova put it, "the depth of the gap and misunderstanding existent between the cultures of Russia and Japan, as well as exorbitant eurocentrism among Russians" [Yermakova 2020, p. 142]. Theater critics of Petersburg did not avoid these misperceptions either:

"It was curious to visit the off-stage of the Mariinsky Theater on the evening Japan's "celebrity" Sada-Yacco performed there for the first time. There were many of our producers and actors among those present. In order to realize what impression the Japanese made on our actors it would be enough to note that our actors burst into laughter in the most dramatic episodes of Japanese plays. – The only name for it would be "cats on the roofs" – that is how they exchanged their impressions".[26]

Despite the lack of furor around the Japanese tour, the public of Petersburg perceived it quite favorably. Yu. D. Belyaev (1876–1917), a famous theater critic, compared Sada Yacco's artistic talent with Maria Konstantinovna Zankovetskaya's acting and said that the latter and Sada Yacco were "actresses with a pure heart" [Belyaev 1902, p. 189]. Vsevolod Meyerhold visited the company's performances and was greatly impressed by Sada Yacco's art:

"She made gestures, she did this or that, but it was evidently not enough, and so she acted as follows. She brought her ecstasy to a certain

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[25] Ibid. Cit. ex.: [Yermakova 2020, p. 141].

[26] *Peterburgskaya Gazeta*. March 12, 1902. No. 69. Cit. ex.: [Yermakova 2020, p. 136].

degree and began moving to the music… And she captured the public by it. Not by words, mimic, or postures, but by her acting against the background of the orchestra"

[Meyerhold 1968, p. 84].

The Japanese theater's artistic devices, its symbolism and expressive gracefulness based on traditional dancing art going back to deep antiquity were, to a large extent, a foundation of the new theater that V. E. Meyerhold thought about at that time while looking for new principles of theater arrangement.

His enthusiastic review is followed by V. L. Yurenyeva (1876–1962), in 1902, a graduate of the Petersburg Theater School and, later, a famous Russian actress:

"Her scenic images are created with such a technique we, actors of Europe, can only wish for. It is not enough to have just a usual, good theater technique to be so natural on the stage – you need some "super technique". How well can Sada-Yacco play the most difficult scenes of madness or death!"

[Yureneva 1946, p.56]

In addition, the Japanese company's performances provided theater experts and critics with the basis for contemplation over the nature of the Japanese theater per se and its distinction from the western one. Theater critic Osip Dymov[27] from Petersburg noted in the Birzhevye Vedomosti newspaper on March 12, 1902 that the Japanese performances were full of "between-acts" effect; they were not arranged in accordance with theater laws architectonically – they seemed to show a piece of life "as if magnesium has sparkled for a moment and the photographic plate has developed some "life nook" snatched from the darkness"[28]

[27] The penname of I. I. Perelman (1878–1959).

[28] Cit. ex.: [Yermakova 2020, p. 137]

The critic continues that this feature of the Japanese theater makes a very strong impression:

"The important, needed, and indispensable is mixed with the accidental and third-rate; there is no observance of the laws of perspective, and one essential does not originate from another continuously; haphazard episodes often dominate over primary and important ones. The Japanese drama depicts life, its accidental and chaotic character, its ignorance of evil and good, its entwinement of the great and the petty, the accidental and the principal. The European drama (and art per se) attends not so much to life as to the "thick of it", its analysis (Dostoyevsky), its synthesis (Ibsen), and its most intensively expressed episodes. Therefore, we, Europeans, take no interest in any between-acts developments, consequences, and epilogues. This is, I think, a major difference between European and Japanese dramas; specific features of national mentalities are of great importance in this issue"[29]

Thus, the Japanese theater's tour, despite such contradictory opinions of theater historians, critics, experts, and ordinary public, caused a stir in the Russian theater world, making people argue, contemplate, get away from habitual estimates and ask themselves a question: "If everything they do is so different from us, *why* is it so?"[30] The Japanese sailors who had viewed the performances in Petersburg a hundred years before were certainly not theater experts; they did not ask these questions but only made comparisons: "This is the same as in our life, and this is quite different."

Besides, they did not have any moral right to criticize the spectacle they had been invited to see by the first persons of the state. Unfortunately, we will never know their genuine feelings towards the Russian performances they saw. Yet, we believe that the similarity between the ordinary

[29] Cit. ex.: [Yermakova 2020, p. 138]

[30] Italics added. – *N. K.*

Japanese sailors' response to the western theater performance and Russian viewers' impressions of the Japanese scenic art proves that the Japanese as well as Russians discovered for themselves quite a different theater world as deep and charming as it was frighteningly unknown.

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Japan in *Murzilka* Magazine (1924–2021)

M. M. Gromova

Abstract. The article attempts to generalize and analyze the materials dedicated to Japan, its folklore, culture, and literature in the children's literary and art magazine *Murzilka* since its founding up to the present time. It traces the evolution of the image of Japan in the pages of the magazine for almost a hundred years, taking into consideration the historical circumstances, the Soviet-Japanese relations, the change in the approach to showing the peculiarities of daily life of other peoples in children's literature. One can single out five periods of interest towards Japan in the magazine. In the second half of the 1920s, there is no unity in the image of Japan. Individual publications present it either as a capitalist country, where even small children must work, or as a collection of clichés (geishas, national clothing, Boys' Day). The topic of Japanese aggression in China appears. During the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, the clashes at Lake Hassan and Khalkhin Gol, as well as during the first year after the war with Japan, the abstract "Japanese" are presented as aggressors, enslavers of the Chinese people, fascists encroaching on Soviet borders. The class nature of the Japan-China conflict and the liberating nature of the war against Japan are emphasized. While the Neutrality Pact between the USSR and Japan was in effect, the "Japanese" material was absent from the magazine. In the period of the Thaw, Japan turns out to be a country with an interesting and peculiar culture. In 1955–1966, the magazine publishes poems and songs by Japanese poets, fairy tales, descriptions of folk festivals and daily life, the *kamishibai* "paper theater". After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Japan fascinates the readers of *Murzilka* with its unity of material and spiritual culture, presented in

ikebana, *origami*, and tea ceremony. In the publications of 1991–2001, this is a country existing outside of time, and the life of the Japanese is based on ancient traditions and exquisite festivals. In 2016–2021, Japan is presented, first and foremost, by daily life culture. Besides, for the first time during the existence of the magazine, the topic of technical progress appears.

Keywords: journalism for children, *Murzilka* magazine, image of Japan in Russia, Soviet children's literature.

The monthly children's literary and art magazine *Murzilka* has been published continuously since 1924. In 2011, the magazine was listed in the Guinness World Records as "the longest running children's magazine". The magazine, aimed at the children's audience, has always followed the trends of the "adult" literature, reflecting the current conflicts, sentiments, and interests of its contemporary society. Along with the works by Soviet writers, describing the life of children in the USSR and abroad, it also published translations of foreign children's literature. It is interesting to trace how, for almost a hundred years, the image of Japan was changing in *Murzilka*. Its contents were influenced by the relations of the USSR with Japan, the ideas about the purpose of children's literature, the state of international literary ties and artistic translation as its crucial component.

1924–1929: An Exotic Capitalist Country

The first mentions of Japan appear already in the first years of the existence of the magazine. In Issue 8 of 1924, from the short story by Tatiana Pilchevskaya *Chinka-Chainka*, dedicated to Chinese tea, we learn that the tea tree "grows, beside China, also in Japan, East Indies, and the Transcaucasia."

The magazine reflected the conflicts of the era – both international and social ones. From the short story *And Now We Are in China* (1925,

Issue 5), published under the pen name of O. V-s and telling about the hard life of Chinese workers, one could learn that "English, German, French, Japanese, and Russian merchants" started their trade in China. They "abused the Chinese people in many ways: they cheated them in counting and measuring, just evaded paying them, gave them rubbish instead of decent goods. Moreover, they started opium trade there [...] teaching the Chinese to smoke opium." Then, the merchants "made ... their own factories," where they oppressed Chinese workers. And when the workers started a strike, "the Japanese and English industrialists and merchants got angry. They let loose their soldiers on the workers and forced them to shoot at the workers [...] And children were killed as well." Not only an international, but also a class conflict was described in a form accessible to children: China is represented by workers, and Japan – by industrialists and merchants.

In 1925, every issue of *Murzilka* published a photo of a happy, strong, and cute Soviet child. This was supposed to create the image of a happy childhood in the country of the victorious revolution. An exception is the photo of a sad little Japanese boy, published in Issue 11, with the caption "A four-year-old Japanese boy is learning to weave on a weaving machine." We see that, in capitalist Japan, even little children must work and are thus essentially deprived of their childhood.

The first information about the everyday life of the Japanese was received by the magazine's readers from an idyllic and peaceful feature article about the life of Japanese children, titled *Boys' Day* (1928, Issue 1). The article, written by an unknown author and translated from English, is dedicated to the Boys' Day, traditionally celebrated on May 5. A six-year-old Dakura wakes up, remembers the holiday a year ago, enjoys the sight of the paper carp hanging over the house, receives his gifts from his mother, and runs to his friends. We learn that Japanese small houses have thin cardboard walls, through which one can clearly hear "the noise and the chatter outside", and the rooms are separated in half by paper walls. Japanese wear "little robes" and have *kotto* wooden shoes on their feet, sleep on floor mats, and eat *mokki* cookies, *kakchi* fried nuts, and boiled rice on holidays.

The depiction of a young Japanese girl wearing a kimono (together with 23 children of other nationalities) was printed in the supplement to Issue 5 of 1929 – "New Lotto 'Children of Different Countries'", and the supplement to Issue 6 of the same year was titled "Japanese Pictures With Transformations". A paper construction on a frame, which the readers could assemble, would let one switch one picture in the frame to the other with a single movement (namely, a geisha with a shamisen to a frog in an elegant pose).

In *Murzilka* of these years, one could not find Japanese fairy tales, which are numerous in the national folklore, and this was the case with non-Japanese fairy tales as well. This was the time of a campaign against fairy tales [Chukovsky 1962, pp. 185–204]. Soviet children were presented with exclusively realistic knowledge about the world and with works without any element of fantasy.

In these years, the image of Japan in *Murzilka* varied. Individual publications portray it either as a capitalist state, where even small children must work, or as a collection of clichés about an exotic faraway country (geishas, national clothing, Boys' Day). The topic of Japanese aggression in China begins to appear, but it is not the central one yet.

1936–1946: A Japanese as an Aggressor

In 1932, Japan occupies Manchuria and, in two years, begins to encroach upon the Soviet borders, thus becoming the main external enemy of the Soviet Union in the east. Border guards become the main heroes and examples for emulation for Soviet children. The magazine publishes their letters to its readers, poems about border guards. In these years, in the pages of *Murzilka*, the Japanese are military aggressors and enslavers of the Chinese. They have neither names nor appearance. As a rule, the enemy is not named – this is just "the enemy", as is the case with the *Song About a Border Guard* by Lev Oshanin (1936, Issue 9), where the refrain reads: "The soldier will not let the enemy on the border." From the mention of the Far East, the readers could understand who the enemy

was. However, sometimes the Japanese were named. For example, the letter by a hero border guard Anatoly Chepushtanov (1936, Issue 5) says: "a sudden advance caused the Japanese to panic."

The idea of international solidarity of antifascists and communists, which was stressed by Soviet propaganda, was also reflected in the selection of publications. In the same issue, "Japanese" material was often to be found near "Chinese" one. For instance, Issue 5 of 1938 publishes an excerpt from the novel by a Chinese "antifascist writer" and communist Emi Xiao *The Little Wang Fu* about a ten-year-old Chinese worker, who "actively participates in the struggle against the Japanese enslavers." Wang Fu sees that his uncle has leaflets saying: "All Chinese must unite against the common enemy – Japanese imperialists!" The uncle tells the boy how "the Chinese people fight against the Japanese invaders." The next morning, Wang Fu throws the leaflets around during a demonstration. The participants of the demonstration shout: "Down with the Japanese invaders!" The Japanese themselves do not appear in the text. Only from the annotation, one can learn that the "owners … of the factory, the Japanese, harshly exploit their workers."

In 1938, the Hassan conflict begins. Up to 1946, all publications mentioning Japan focused on warfare (with one exception, which will be elaborated upon later).

Issue 8 of 1938 published a short story by N. Grigoriev *An Occurrence in the Mountains*. A Chinese motorcyclist soldier carries a message: his regiment is surrounded by the Japanese and is asking for reinforcements. A mountain bridge has been blown up, and there are people on the edge of the abyss. They are Japanese: they have "white gaiters on their legs, rifles in their hands, and red bands on their caps." The soldier accelerates and fearlessly jumps over the abyss. "Banzai, banzai! – yelled the Japanese. Instead of 'Take him!' they were yelling 'Hurrah!'". The Japanese obtain a voice (even though they were "yelling"), but still have neither faces nor names.

Issue 1 of 1939 published a feature story by V. Yadin *By Lake Hassan*. "Seven years ago, the peaceful Manchurian people were attacked by the predatory Japanese generals. They were burning fields, destroying

cities, killing people. The generals and their masters who had sent them, the Japanese capitalists, had long been dreaming of capturing the rich lands of the Soviet Far East." But "the haughty generals … made a grave mistake": "escaping from inevitable death, they ran away from our homeland." The feature article describes "one usual occasion, the likes of which were numerous in those days" – the crew of a damaged Soviet tank repel the attack of the Japanese. The Japanese are silent again. A Japanese sniper is taking aim and is already "celebrating his victory", but the Soviet commander shoots him, and the Japanese silently throws his rifle. The Japanese are crawling towards the tank silently, holding bottles with incendiary liquid in their hands, and they die under machine gun fire in silence too.

In Issue 4 of 1941, in the section "Read This Book", the book by L. Saveliev *Stories About Artillery* is presented. The annotation begins as follows: "The Japanese received a good lesson near lake Hassan. The Red pilots, riflemen, sappers, artillerists were fighting valiantly for our glorious motherland and defeated the samurai" (this is the only case when, in *Murzilka*, the lexeme *samurai* was used in the meaning of a "Japanese militarist").

An exception is a story by the above-mentioned Emi Xiao titled *Friendship* about the same boy, Wang Fu (1938, Issue 10). The uncle helps the boy to find a job at a Japanese factory in Shanghai. The work is not easy: "The Japanese overseers maltreated the Chinese children. They had to work thirteen hours a day. The Chinese children were forbidden from learning and even talking to each other." The boy is called by "a little Japanese girl in a colorful robe". Her name is Mi, and she reminds him of his sister. The next day, Wang Fu buys a sweet Chinese melon and offers it to Mi, but she pushes away his hand in fear and runs away. The uncle explains to him: "The Japanese masters do not want Japanese and Chinese children to become friends – and so the Japanese are scaring the children. They make up stories that the Chinese poison the Japanese." Wang Fu persuades Mi that the melon is not poisoned. Soon, he becomes friends with the little Japanese – Mi's neighbors in the dormitory for Japanese workers. But soon all Japanese

workers are transferred to another factory, where only Japanese work. “The masters did not want the Japanese workers to be friends with the Chinese.” Once again, the idea of class division of society and the unity of all oppressed against their exploiters is emphasized. We see that the Japanese are not only the nameless soldiers, but also workers, including children, who are being scared to prevent them from getting along with the Chinese proletariat. But this occurrence remained singular in *Murzilka*.

While the Neutrality Pact between the USSR and Japan was in effect (1941–1945), “Japanese” material was absent from the magazine. It appears once again only after the end of the war with Japan.

In Issue 2 of 1946, from the foreword to the fairy tale *By the Yellow Sea* (author not stated), we learn that Port Arthur was built by Russians “fifty years ago”. Then, “this land was captured by the Japanese, who turned the Chinese living there into their slaves [...] Our Red Army soldiers and sailors kicked the Japanese away. The Russians came back to Port Arthur and brought freedom to the Chinese.”

In the feature article by G. Fish *In Manchuria*, published in Issue 7 of the same year, the same information is repeated: “Port Arthur is a fortress. It was built by the Russians. After that, the Japanese captured Port Arthur. The Red Army defeated the Japanese. Port Arthur became a Soviet fortress;” “Fifteen years ago, the Japanese captured Northern China. In August last year, the Red Army crushed the Japanese fascists and liberated the Chinese from the Japanese yoke. The main battles took place in the part of China called Manchuria.” The Soviet soldiers learn that “the Chinese were forbidden from eating rice! The Japanese took all harvest for themselves. On all roads, in all markets there were policemen. They were searching every carriage, every sack, and taking away rice. The policemen were searching houses as well. And if a policeman saw rice in a Chinese person’s kettle, he sent the Chinese to prison.”

Therefore, in the period of Japanese occupation of Manchuria, the Hassan and Khalkhin Gol conflicts, as well as in the first year after the war with Japan, the abstract Japanese were presented as aggressors, enslavers of the Chinese people, fascists, encroaching on the Soviet

borders. The class nature of the Japan-China conflicts and the liberating nature of the war against Japan were emphasized.

Up to the period of the Thaw, there were no more mentions of the Japanese in *Murzilka* – neither as enemies of the USSR in August 1945, nor as victims of the atomic bombardments of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When they "return" to the magazine on the wave of the rising interest towards Japanese culture, these were totally different Japanese. *Murzilka*, like the entire Soviet society, was discovering Japan "from a blank slate" [Vorobyova 2008, pp. 155–156].

The Thaw. 1955–1966: The Uniqueness of Japan

In this period, the magazine begins to publish works by Japanese authors for the first time, with the first one being published even before the signing of the Soviet-Japanese 1956 Joint Declaration.

Issue 5 of 1955 published the essay *Dear Soviet Children!* by a Japanese writer and literary critic Iwakami Jun'ichi (1907–1958, named *Iwakami Junitsi* in *Murzilka*), who was a prominent supporter of friendly relations with the USSR in the 1950s. In winter of 1955, he visited Moscow, and his works were published in the *Inostrannaya literatura* (*Foreign Literature*) magazine. Like the 1928 translated article *Boys' Day*, the essay by Iwakami Jun'ichi was dedicated to the Boys' Day, which is celebrated on May 5 in Japan. From it, we learn that paper carps are hanged on bamboo poles, "so that boys grow up as brave as carps who go upstream through the stormy waterfall." But, unlike the unnamed author of the idyllic 1928 article, Iwakami Jun'ichi focuses on the topic of class inequality: "Of course, near the housed of landlords and rich people, bigger carps are hanged, and paper pinwheels are attached to bamboo poles, so that they make sound in the wind." The writer recalls the Boys' Day of his childhood. "The children of the landlord and rich people, for whom their parents had hanged beautiful carps, were playing in the village square, dressed in beautiful kimonos," while Iwakami himself, the son of a poor peasant, heads to the meadow to mow grass for

a calf. The writer admires the happy life of Soviet children and dreams that Japanese children could sing the "song about peace" together with them. From the essay, apart from the description of paper carps, one can learn about the characteristic features of people's everyday life: the Japanese wear *kimono* (and not "little robes"), they test their strength in *sumo* wrestling, and children learn, "trembling from cold in classrooms, without stoves in winter, when it snows."

In the publications of the late 1950s, the class topics virtually disappear from the descriptions of Japan. The country's ethnographic uniqueness in its "children's" variant comes to the fore: games, festivals, dolls. Poems by Japanese poets are published, and folk fairy tales are translated. Literary fairy tales by Soviet authors, the action of which takes place in Japan, start to appear as well.

For example, in the fairy tale by Yu. Yakovlev *New Year* (1957, Issue 1), the main characters travel on a flying carpet, observing the New Year customs of various countries. They meet two Japanese girls, *Kamie* and *Makise*, who "were using rackets to throw a round lotus seed with a red feather to each other. They were playing the "hanetsuel" game" (what is meant is, apparently, the *hanetsuki* New Year game). A description of a Japanese house, New Year decorations and customs is provided: "The house was unusual. Instead of glass, there was transparent paper in the windows. On both sides of the door, there were pine branches. Above the door, a straw garland with a bright orange tangerine in the middle was hanging. And two green leaves of shida fern were attached to the door. Under the windows, dwarf birches and Japanese sakura cherry trees were growing. Upon entering the house, the Japanese friends took off their shoes near the doorstep." Unfortunately, one cannot understand from the text whether the pine branches and the other plants are a constant decoration of a Japanese house, or exclusively a New Year one. The "great actor" Kizo – a narrator of the traditional Japanese "paper theater" (which, by the time the tale was published, was quickly fading into the past) [Maguro 2013, p. 94] – arrives on a bicycle: "This was not a regular bicycle. This was a theater-bicycle. The theater was a paper one, but, in the magical hands of Kizo, the paper went alive and was

turning into a fairy tale." After the show, the narrator confesses: "I am not a great actor at all. I am a tinker. And only during the New Year, I set my theater to the wheels to bring joy to the Japanese children." This did not correspond to historical reality, as the *kamishibai* "paper theater" was not a New Year show and functioned the whole year.

In the collection of wooden toys from the whole world (1958, Issue 8), the image of a Japanese *kokeshi* doll appears: "Here live (and friendlier / You will not find a company) / A Japanese doll / And a duck from Denmark." In the same year, in the drawing by F. Lemkul, which depicted kites from different countries, one could see the "Japanese kite" resembling a kite of a classical form *yakko-dako*, but with a tail. In Issue 5 of 1959, there was a picture of *kokeshi* dolls, sent by a Japanese girl: "Here they are, kokeshi, wooden dolls, beautifully painted and lacquered. Such dolls are made in Japan. A Japanese girl Koshiumi Kimiko drew them and sent them to Moscow, so that all of you knew that our matryoshka dolls have a sister and a brother in the faraway Japan – kokeshi."

In 1956–1957, the magazine publishes Japanese folk fairy tales for the first time: *Two Neighbors*, adapted by V. Alekseeva and V. Popov, *Caution* and *Who Will Out-Silence Whom?* (translator not stated). In the same years, the first post-war collections of Japanese fairy tales are published – both in the collections of fairy tales of different peoples and as separate editions for children and adults, and the publication of such works continues every year during the whole Thaw. Three years earlier, Japanese fairy tales, for the first time during the existence of the USSR, appear in the pages of "adult" magazines (*Ogonek* [*Spark*], 1953, Issue 44; *Molodoi kolkhoznik* [*Young Collective Farm Worker*], 1955, Issue 6). In 1958, the studio "Diafil'm" produces the first slide film based on a Japanese fairy tale (*Evil Stepmother*).

Issue 6 of 1957 published children's songs by Hasegawa Shizō (so in the magazine) *Jumping Little Hare* and Saito Nobuo (so in the magazine) *A Frog's Flute* in the loose translation from Japanese by Z. Aleksandrova. The songs of Japanese authors for children (however, presented as folk songs) appeared in Soviet editions only a year earlier – in the children's almanac *Kruglyi god* [*Whole Year*] [Blaginina 1956, p. 121].

In the same issue, the *kamishibai* narrator appears again: "I am an actor, but I have no real theater. Do you see these crates? This is my theater. I take pictures from the crate, show them to the children and tell them various interesting stories. The pictures are painted on paper, and this is why my theater is called paper theater. I ride through city and village streets, and at every stop, children gather near my bicycle."

In *Murzilka* Issue 2 of 1966, songs and poems by Japanese children's poets were published: *Legs of Rain* by Kawaji Ryuko (1888–1959), *Bird, Red Bird* and *On a Moon Night* by Kitahara Hakushu (1885–1942), *Morning Cold* by Momota Soji (1893–1955, called *Momota Saji* in the magazine), translated by the leading post-war era translator from Japanese Vera Markova (1907–1995). Three years before that, in 1963, *Legs of Rain* and *On a Moon Night* (as well as *A Sack of Songs* by Ito Masao and three songs by Saijo Yaso) translated by V. Markova were published in Issue 6 of the *Vostochnyi al'manakh* [*Oriental Almanac*] for the adult audience [Markova 1963, pp. 327–331]. In 1965, these works were included in the collection of poetry for children titled *Chas poezii* [*Hour of Poetry*] [Markova 1965], and in 1967, a year after the publication in *Murzilka*, in the collection of Japanese poetry for children translated by V. Markova *Bird, Red Bird. Poems by Japanese Poets* with illustrations by M. Miturich. Later, these translations were re-published several times, but remained a singular event of professional translation of Japanese poetry for children until the anthology *Red Bird* was published in Russian in 2020. In the short foreword to the collection *Bird, Red Bird*, Vera Markova writes: "The children's poetry of Japan is lyrical in the best sense of this word" [Markova 1967, p. 2]. Here, *Murzilka* once again faithfully followed the trends of "adult" literature. For an adult Soviet reader of this period, Japanese (mainly, classical) poetry was valuable, first of all, due its lyricism and apolitical contents – the things one missed in Soviet poetry [Meshcheryakov 2014, p. 49].

Vera Markova also notes the "nationality" of songs by Japanese authors: "Kitahara Hakushu proceeded from folk songs. The musicality and high humanity inherent in folk songs are the treasury used… by the Japanese poets writing for children" [Markova 1967, p. 2]. This emphasis

on the folk character of children's songs is no accident: in this period, in Soviet press, Japanese national uniqueness and traditional aesthetics were contrasted with "flat utilitarianism" imposed on Japan by the United States. "Japan is protected from Americanization by its deep internal culture, rather than the firmness of centuries-long customs," wrote Ilya Erenburg in 1956–1957 [Erenburg 1965, p. 280].

Nevertheless, in the following years, the relations between Japan and the US became much closer than had been expected in the USSR. For 25 years, mentions of Japan and translations from Japanese disappear from the pages of *Murzilka*.

Post-Soviet Era. 1991–2001: Origami and Beautiful Japan

Japan was once again written about in *Murzilka* only in the new historical era, in Issue 5 of 1991 – in the article titled *Origami*. The article accompanies a scheme of a model of a frog, placed on the back side of the cover. Murzilka goes to the embassy of Japan in the USSR and talks about origami with Ms Furuta. Murzilka becomes fond of decorative paper figures and says: "I also want a box. I will put different nice little things in there." Ms Furuta explains the basic principles of origami to him, also mentioning that "in Japan, every package has its meaning. For example, Japanese children will always see where a person carrying a beautiful bag is heading – to visit somebody, to a wedding, or to a birthday party. For every occasion, there is its own form of package, its own secrets." Ms Furuta, however, does not tell Murzilka that *furoshiki* is a package from cloth, rather than a bag. The article is illustrated by fragments of *sumi-e* depicting bamboo and a pine branch.

Murzilka Issue 8 of 1994 is fully dedicated to Japan. The publication of this issue was marked in the Japanese magazine *Bonfire* which focused on children's literature in Russian [Maruo 1995, p. 50; Katayama 1995]. Most of the issue was occupied by origami schemes. It was in these years that origami gained substantial popularity in the post-Soviet

area, which was reflected in a large number of specialized editions, as well as the establishment of origami circles and clubs in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Cheboksary, Novocheboksarsk, Samara, Izhevsk, and the organization of the First All-Russian Exhibition of Designer Origami (1994) [Chashchikhina, Chashchikhin 1994, p. 6] and the Remote Siberian Origami Olympics (since 1996). Children's magazines published "origami lessons".

From a short article by M. Litvinov, we learn that the art of origami is "as old as paper, which was invented in China more than two thousand years ago. And six hundred years later, paper travelled to Japan. Here, people also learned to make it, but, first, paper was very expensive, and it was only used for religious purposes in Japanese temples. And it was used for solemn ceremonies as well. For example, during a wedding, the groom and the bride exchanged paper butterflies, which were used to decorate wine bottles. As time went on, paper figures transformed into toys made in families for children." The etymology of the term *origami* is also provided. Five simple schemes of origami, placed in the magazine, are accompanied by short poems by poet, writer, and translator V. Berestov (1928–1998). These are a scheme of a flight cap ("From heat will protect me / A paper cap. / But from rain / This is not a good protection"), a box ("Keep your small items in the box, / That is, needles, pins, and thumbtacks. / And why is that? Because a box / Is easier to find than a pin and a thumbtack"), a chicken ("Cluck-cluck! Cluck-cluck? / Come here, come here, you all! / Come, under your mother's wing! / Where are you going?"), a yacht ("My sail catches wind, / And the keel cuts the waves. / I will not be stopped / By storm or calm"), and a penguin ("On ice is gaily walking / A penguin, / A winged pedestrian…"). However, there were seven poems by Berestov about origami in the magazine, but there were only five schemes. Two poems (*Little Fish* and *Flower*) accompany not schemes, but only photos of finished models. In fact, this poetic series was originally written not for *Murzilka*, but for a book titled *Origami* [Tanaka et al. 1994], published in 1994 at the initiative of the Japanese group for the study of Russian children's literature and culture "Bonfire" and its leader, Yasuko Tanaka, with a small print run of 10,000 items

and distributed in Moscow's kindergartens [Tanaka 2018, p. 268]. The magazine published not all schemes presented in the book, but the poetic series was included in its entirety.

In this issue, for the first time since 1957, Japanese fairy tales were published: *Three Treasures, This and That Way, A Blanket's Stalk, Even Though They Fly, They Are Still Stakes* (translated by V. Markova), and, for the first time since 1966, Japanese poetry. These were poems by a children's poet Mado Michio (1909–2014), who, in the same year of 1994, became the laureate of the H. C. Andersen Award: *Blow-Blow-Blowball*, *A Leaf in Its Own Frame*, *Cherry Petal*, *Little Birds* in the loose translation by children's writer and poet Yu. Koval (1938–1995). In the foreword, the translator says that he "could get his hands on" two books by the poet. "It is difficult to translate poems from Japanese into Russian, but I tried it and, certainly, contributed something from myself". This is not the only translation by Yu. Koval from Japanese. A year later, a parable fairy tale by Sano Yoko (1938–2010), rendered by him, *A Tale of a Cat Who Lived a Million Times* was published (*Uraniya*, 1995, No. 6).

A comic by A. Semyonov *Adventures of Murzilka and Bird Chirik*, published in the same issue, was also dedicated to Japan. Murzilka, alternating phrases in Russian with Japanese words and phrases, written with kanji and hiragana, together with bird Chirik, swims to Japan on an inflatable boat and reaches the goal towards the end of the comic. The characters see the Japanese flag against the background of Mount Fuji, a pine tree, and an ancient temple.

In the issue, there is a small article titled *Japan – the Land of the Rising Sun*, which contains the basic geographical information about the country and a quiz *What Do You Know About Japan?* (the results and the correct answers were published in Issue 1 of 1995). The article is illustrated by photos with captions: *Modern Tokyo*, *White Heron Castle in the City of Himeji*, *Golden Temple in Kyoto*, *Imperial Palace in Tokyo*, *Mount Fujiyama* (sic), *Building of the National Diet*. "The Japanese like festivals, prepare for them in advance, and celebrate gaily and beautifully – wearing beautiful clothes, with colorful fireworks.

The most significant holiday is the New Year. This is a family holiday. But, probably, the most touching of all holidays are those dedicated to children," says the article further. Short descriptions of the Girls' Day and the Boys' Day are provided (*Murzilka* does not use the modern name of the holiday – Children's Day). The photos depict children wearing luxurious kimonos, adult participants of various festivals, *hina ningyo* dolls and paper carps – the necessary attributes of the above-mentioned Girls' Day and Boys' Day respectively.

Separate articles are dedicated to ikebana, tea ceremony, and chopsticks. We learn that the art of *ikebana* "has always been taught and is being taught now to children from their younger years", that "in every house, one can see ikebana standing on a shelf near statues, jewel-boxes, and other beautiful things." The article about tea ceremony has an even more reverent tone: "The deliberateness of making tea allows one to see beauty in simple things: the beauty of the cup, the peculiarity of the brush, the scoop. And the waiting itself creates an inimitable mood." In full accordance with late Soviet period publications and the post-Soviet perceptions, based on these publications and often quite removed from reality [Meshcheryakov 2014, pp. 51–54], Japan with which the little readers of 1990s *Murzilka* become familiarized is a country of exotic everyday life, ancient traditions, and pompous festivals. It exists outside of time. Beauty and elegance are valued above everything there, and the items of material culture carry a delicate and inconceivable spiritual meaning.

Issue 11 of the same year publishes one more origami scheme, and Issue 12 – a Japanese fairy tale *Nightingale House*, translated by V. Markova.

Issue 11 of 2001 published an article by M. Moskvina *Journey to Japan*. In an exalted tone, the author recounts the impressions left by the traditional culture of Japan, with which she managed to become acquainted during her visit to Japan: museums ("in this museum, I was particularly amazed by the real ancient swords of Japanese samurai warriors. These swords are many centuries old. It would take a weaponsmith years to make a sword, and it was being sharpened for

more than a year…"), a tableware shop ("the Japanese are astonishing artists. They make from clay such tableware and paint it in such a way that, once you eat or drink tea from it, you always feel: what a good job this person did, they made this thing with their own hands; you feel their love, even though you are completely unfamiliar with them"), temples ("in Japan, there are a lot of gods, spirits, ghosts, and shapeshifters [...] The Japanese worship all of them, give them gifts, put aprons on their stone images and knit caps for them." As we see, here, M. Moskvina does not distinguish between the pantheon of Shinto deities and Bodhisattva Jizō, to whom, during the sad rite of *mizuko kuyo*, parents who suffered a miscarriage, stillbirth, or abortion, give offerings), an ascent to Mount Fuiji (up to the middle of it, marked by a "giant sacred slipper": above that, the mountain was covered by snow). In the photos by L. Tishkov, besides the above-mentioned things, one can see a group of Japanese schoolchildren, a girl named "Chizuru, which means 'A Thousand Cranes'", and Tomoko Tanaka, daughter of Professor Yasuko Tanaka and a graduate student of the All-Russian State University of Cinematography. A more detailed report, aimed at the adult audience and not so exalted, was published at the same time in the *Ogonek* magazine [Moskvina 2001] and, a year later, in book form [Moskvina 2002].

In 1991–2001, Japan, in the pages of *Murzilka*, is a country that exists outside of time. It is interesting, first of all, due to its exquisite material culture, through which, imperceptibly and attractively, spiritual culture is shining through: ikebana, tea ceremony, and origami. The life of the Japanese is based on ancient traditions, festivals, and entertainments. The entertainment element, constituted by origami, is presented to the little readers.

In the following 15 years, the topic of Japan was only represented in the magazine by "Japanese crosswords" (section led by Elena Matusevich and later – by Vladimir Matusevich, Mila Lobova), sudoku and kakuro puzzles (section led by Igor Sukhin).

2016–2021: Technical Innovations and Everyday Culture

Since 2016, Japan once again appears in the pages of *Murzilka*. The "Japanese" material is most often to be encountered in the section "About Everything in the World", which presents a random selection of trivia. For example, a piece in Issue 5 of 2017 tells the readers about a design by "Japanese engineer Kuniako Saito" – "a compact electrical scooter" WalkCar, which is "able to carry people weighing up to 120 kg" (this is not so: the maximum weight of the user of the electrical skateboard is 80 kg). The section also reports about the island of Aoshima ("Cat Island"), where "22 people and more than 120 cats live!" (Issue 2, 2018), and about the "Tempozan Ferris wheel in the Japanese city of Osako (sic!)", which changes its color depending on the weather forecast (Issue 8, 2019), and about the museum of snowflakes in Hokkaido (Issue 1, 2020).

The topic of Japan is also to be encountered in the section "Zoological corner of Murzilka", which is dedicated to exotic (and invariably cute) animals. For example, an article by V. Karpunicheva *The Rooster With a Golden Crown* (Issue 1, 2017) about the long-tailed rooster of the Phoenix breed reads: "The Japanese liked the exotic bird so much that they gave it a name of their own, Yokohamatosa, and decided that it was sacred and so forbid it from being sold. A Yokohamatosa can only be given as a present or exchanged for a bird of the same breed. The Japanese started to breed roosters and even found a way to make their tails longer."

What is notable in this period is the liberal interpretation of the Japanese national clothing by the magazine's artists, together with visual clichés. This is most vividly displayed in the centerfolds, which are a field for a tabletop game. For instance, in the drawing by M. Lobova accompanying the game by M. Dyakova *May Rain* (2016, Issue 5), one can see nine young Japanese girls wearing furisode, with kanzashi, fans, and paper umbrellas, with obi tied in splendid knots both in front and behind the body, and one Japanese man wearing a

grey haori and gray hakama, with a gray waist-belt (?), with his yukata wrapped over right to left. All of them smile, squinting their eyes. They are surrounded by a similarly stereotypical doll-like Japanese landscape: a tiny pond with goldfishes, a bamboo grove, bunches (?) of sakura, a *tōrō* stone lantern, a stone path. In the same way, the "pearl catchers" from the drawing by M. Lobova to the eponymous tabletop game (2020, Issue 6) do not look like the real *ama* female divers.

Murzilka Issue 4 of 2019 declared the competition "Land of the Rising Sun", dedicated to making bento. The results of the competition were published in Issue 8 of the same year. "What do you think about when you hear the words: samurai, kimono, origami, anime?" – asks Murzilka and then answers himself: "Right, about Japan. [...] Making bento is a whole art! Look how funnily these lunches are decorated!" The photos display six exceptionally cute bentos.

In the article *New Year Traditions* (2018, Issue 12, author not stated), among the culinary traditions of different countries, there are also Japanese ones: "The Japanese believe that chestnuts bring success, and so they add them to different dishes. Besides, on the New Year table, there is seaweed, peas, beans, and herring roe." In the article by E. Usacheva *Three Friends of Human Feet* (2019, Issue 7), which is dedicated to shoes, Japanese traditional *geta* shoes are presented as a part of the world history of shoes: "...feet had to be protected... from sand, swampy ground, and sharp grass. In Japan, for example, they invented wooden sandals on a platform, geta, to comfortably walk on water-covered rice fields. All modern shoes on a platform derive from these."

Therefore, in the magazine, Japan is gradually becoming one of the many countries of the world. In recent years, besides technical innovations, it is also represented mainly by everyday culture, which unexpectedly resonates with the materials of the first years of the existence of the magazine.

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Modern Perception of Japan by Vladivostok Citizens (Based on a 2021 Survey)

V. L. Larin, L. L. Larina

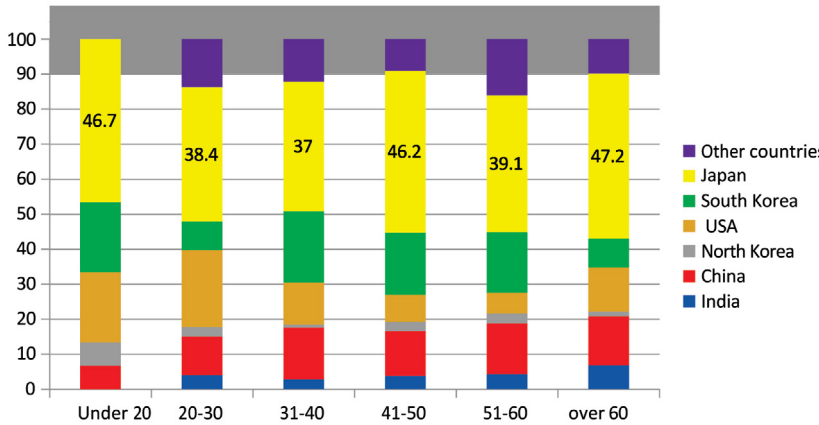

Figure 1. Vladivostok residents' likings of countries of the world (2021, by age, as a percentage by age group)

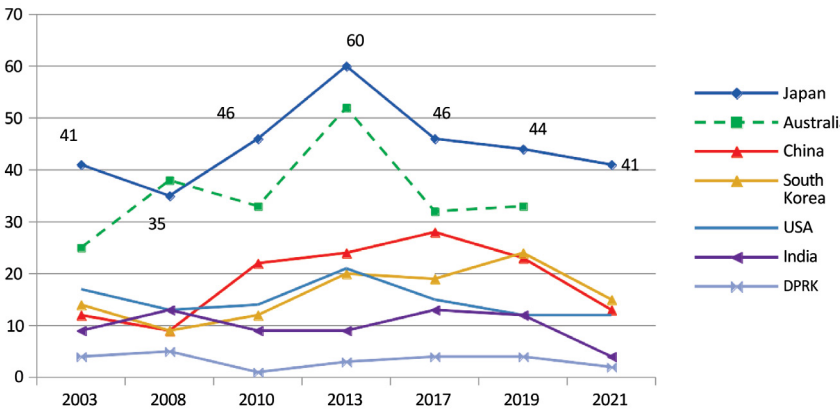

Figure 2. Dynamics of the level of Vladivostok residents' liking for countries of the world (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

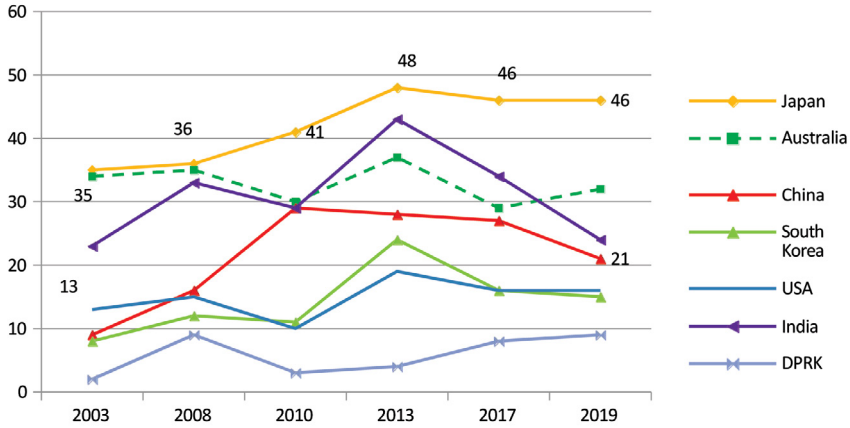

Figure 3. The countries of the world that are of most interest to Vladivostok residents for tourism (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

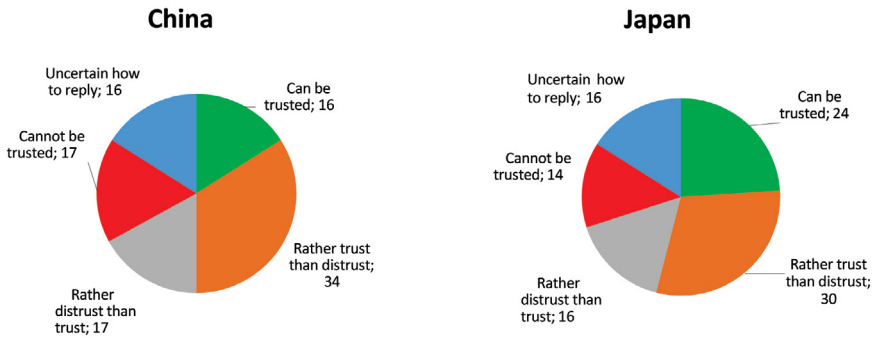

Figure 4. Level of trust towards China and Japan (Vladivostok, 2013, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

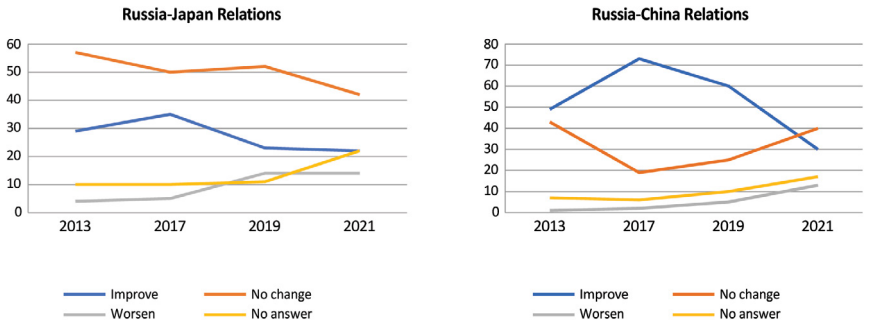

Figure 5. Assessment of prospects for Russia's relations with Japan and China (Vladivostok, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

The Peculiar Features of Fintech Development in Japan

V. A. Gorshkov

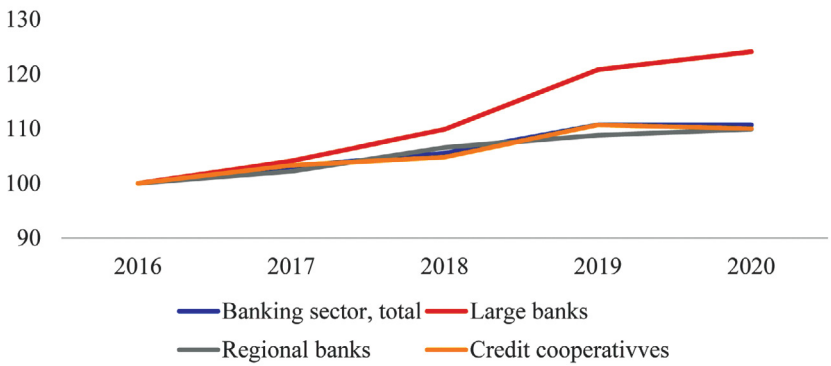

Figure 1. Average transaction value per user, in thousand USD
Source: compiled by the author from:
https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/fintech/japan#transaction-value

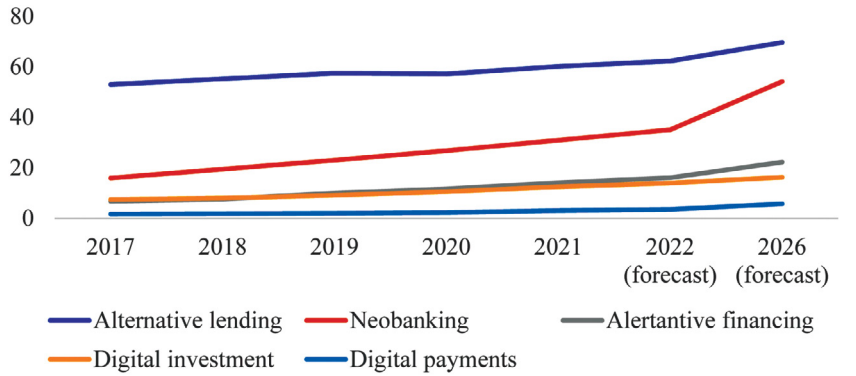

Figure 2. Growth rates of financing for the introduction of ICT in the banking sector
Source: Digital Transformation of Japanese Banks. Bank of Japan Review. 2021-E-2, 1-8. P. 31. https://www.boj.or.jp/en/research/wps_rev/rev_2021/data/rev21e02.pdf

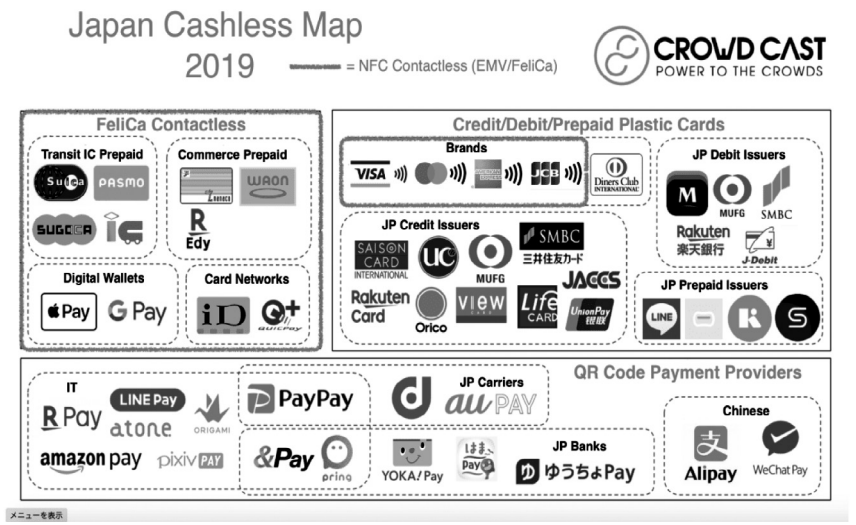

Figure 3. Cashless payment instruments in Japan in 2019.
Source: https://atadistance.net/2019/01/14/japan-cashless-map-for-2019/