

**BOOKSELLER AS A CULTURAL AGENT:
BOOK TRADE IN ESTONIA IN THE SECOND HALF
OF THE 19TH AND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

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Books, written, printed or created in any other form, have many different roles in the society. First of all books are meant for communicating knowledge be it a text or a picture. That makes books cultural agents, transmitting information from one country to another, from one generation to the offspring.

Book trade is a complicated object of study because it essentially depends from the economic, political and social situation of a country [3, 20]. The object of study in book trade is the process of intermediating books from their producers to the readers. In this process book trade can not be handled as only a branch of economy but also as way of mediating intellectual values [21, 7]. This aspect of book trade – dissemination of cultural and intellectual values – has been brought up especially in the study of the 18th century book culture, emphasizing the role of a bookseller as a cultural agent who takes care of contacts between publishers and customers [21, 7].

The developments in European book trade in the second half of the 19th century can be characterised by the following general features:

- The number of bookshops increased, bookshops were opened also in the small towns and in the rural area.
- Book trade concentrated in the hands of booksellers, the role of printing shops, binderies and book pedlars in mediating books diminished.

- New forms of trade were taken in use.
- Booksellers' societies were formed; agreements and conventions were made to control prices and rebates.

Politically the second half of the 19th century is characterized as a century of nationalism. It brought along the destruction of empires and the formation of nation states (as for example in Germany and Italy).

The principle of a nation state presupposes existence of ethnically and linguistically even population. The Russian tsarist government tried to consolidate the multinational empire by the Russification reforms that took place in the last decades of the 19th century. In this situation the role of the printed word (books and periodicals) in mother tongue was especially important for building and maintaining the national identity. The above said can be demonstrated by the evolution of Estonian book production and book trade.

The article handles general developments and changes in book trade that took place in Estonia during the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. The aim is to show the formation of bookshops trading with Estonian books and to analyse the activities of Estonian booksellers.

The survey is based on the research literature and on the master thesis by Signe Jantson “Raamatukaubandus Eestis aastatel 1850–1917: raamatukauplused ja nende omanikud” (Book Trade in Estonia 1850–1917: Bookshops and Their Owners) [11]. In this study great importance was attached to the national and social origin of bookshop owners and their activities.

Research literature on the topic was rather scarce. There are two general studies treating shortly the book trade in the context of other aspects of the Estonian book history: *Eesti raamatu ajalugu* (History of the Estonian Book) by Friedrich Puksoo, published in 1933 [19], and the collective monograph *Eesti Raamat 1525–1975* (Estonian Book, 1525–1975), published in 1978 [5].

Besides general treatments there are few articles that handle the activities of individual publishers, the owners of printing houses and book shops: Friedrich Puksoo has published the article about the dissemination of Estonian books in the middle of the 19th century (*Eesti raamatute levitamisest XIX sajandi keskel*; 1933); Ingrid Loosme has studied the role of the publisher, print shop and book shop owner Heinrich Laakmann in publishing and mediating Estonian books in the era of the “national awakening movement” (*Heinrich Laakmanni osa rahvusliku liikumise aja raamatute väljaandjana*; 1964) [15], and Endel Aule has treated the history of the bookshop “Kluge&Ströhm” (*Kluge ja Ströhmi raamatukaupluse ajaloost*; 1970) [2]. Several research papers on publishing, printing and

book trade in smaller Estonian towns have been accomplished by the students of the Department of Information Studies at the Tallinn University under supervision of Mare Lott, Mari Kalvik and Liivi Aarma. Students' research papers gave additional data about existing bookshops, persons engaged in dissemination of books and biographical data about the book shop owners.

The aim of the master thesis was:

- To ascertain the number of bookshops, that were opened in the years 1850–1917.
- To specify the names of persons who were engaged in selling books.
- To analyse their national and social origin and spheres of occupation.

The main sources were:

- Reference books and address-books from the beginning of the 20th century and treatments of the Estonian book history that gave data about 123 bookshops and book shop owners.
- Writings and advertisements in the local newspapers that gave additional data about 135 bookshops and bookshop owners.
- Card files and archival records in the Estonian Literary Museum and in the Estonian Historical Archive to find and improve biographical data.

The statistical analysis covers both separate bookshops as well as shops, where besides books other items were sold, that were located in the present day territory of Estonia. A shop was considered a bookshop: 1) if its owner had got permission from the government office to open a bookshop; 2) if a shop had been considered a bookshop in previous treatments of the Estonian book history; 3) if a shop was considered a bookshop by its owner [11, 10].

Political, economic and cultural situation in Estonia in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century

The Baltic Provinces with their noteworthy modern industrial and agricultural development and good communication infrastructure (railway, ports) held an important position in the economy of the Russian empire. The Baltic Sea with its often throughout the year ice-free ports was vitally important for the economy and trade. The Baltic Railway that was opened in 1870 connected the port Paldiski through Tallinn and Narva with St. Petersburg and the station Tosno in St. Petersburg–Moscow line, thus providing the economic relations to the inner provinces of the Russian empire. Construction of railways

and development of agriculture formed basis for rapid development of industry. The development was especially dynamic at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century when several big factories and shipyards were erected. The concentration of production and labour was the biggest in Narva and Tallinn. Urbanization and the social structure of the population were more like to industrial society than in Russia generally.

Political developments in the last decades of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century were influenced by the Russification reforms, during which the political power of Baltic German upper class diminished: in 1888 the state police offices were founded, in 1889 the Russian court system was established, and in 1892 the new town law was enforced, which enabled the bourgeoisie to take more active part in municipality activities [20, 89]. The administrative reforms did not touch the economical power of Baltic German landowners and the nobility maintained its power in the government offices up to the Revolution in 1917.

The sphere where Russification reforms had painful impact both for Baltic Germans and Estonians was the intellectual life and education. In the middle of the 19th century the Russian intellectual and cultural influence on Estonia as well as to the other Baltic provinces (Livonia, Curland) was small. The local Baltic German upper class and the native population of the provinces were mainly of Lutheran religion, the nobility and the educated men were culturally orientated to Germany. The cultural Russification touched the exertion of language, school, church, press and social life. The educational reform was introduced in 1885–1887, when according to the so-called *Temporary regulations*, Russian became the language of instruction in rural elementary schools, in 1892 Russian was required already from the first year [20, 90].

By the end of the 19th century the number of Estonians was around 960,000 [10, 86]. The national identity of Estonians started to form only in the middle of the 19th century. The economic basis for national self-consciousness was laid by the formation of landowners of Estonian origin. This became possible by the agrarian reform laws of 1849 and 1856. The following decades are known as the period of the ‘national awakening movement’ that enabled Estonians to be more active in the development of the native culture. In the 1850s and 1860s a network of village schools began to take shape, in the early 1880s there were about 1,500 village schools [13, 378, 382]. The most important centre for Estonians to obtain the university education was St. Petersburg. The first professions that educated Estonians had in mind were those of Lutheran pastor, doctor or lawyer [10, 86]. In spite of the former Germanizing intellectuals started openly consider themselves Estonians and were engaged in the life of the Estonian nation. Since highly educated Estonians numbered

few, the educated people at the medium and bottom level (village school teachers, parish and community clerks) had to assume the role of local leaders of the national movement and bearers of its ideology. Estonian identity was strengthened by the formation of Estonian-language communication network: co-operative movement, Estonian newspapers and literature, cultural and educational societies. In spring 1906 the Russian government granted permission to teach in native language at private schools, and numerous educational and school societies were established with the aim to open the Estonian schools. Jakob Hurt, the first theoretician of the Estonian nationalism, saw the only possible way for Estonians to become a modern civilized European nation in raising the Estonian culture to the level of West European culture. Hurt worded the mission as follows: the small Estonian nation, unable to compete with great nations in might and power, must become their equal in spirit [13, 389]. In Tartu the Estonian Literary Society was founded in 1907 and the Estonian National Museum in 1909 that became centres for the study of Estonian language, literature, history, ethnography and folklore.

Development of book production (printing) and publishing of Estonian language books

The Printing Decree of 1865 simplified procedures of founding printing offices and bookshops: permission for opening a shop was to be granted by the governor, the control over printing enterprises and bookshops was given in jurisdiction of police [5, 137–138]. Periodicals (except illustrated periodicals and satiric publications), booklets less than 10 pages and translations less than 20 pages were set free from pre-censorship. The same was valid for publications of universities and scientific societies [11, 23].

The improvement of educational system favoured the spread of learning which in its turn gave rise for demand of books. All historians have emphasized the very high rate of literacy in the Baltic provinces. According to the results of 1897 census 91,2% of the Estonian population was literate, the corresponding figure for Latvians was 80% and for Lithuanians 54%. In comparison with other regions of the Russian empire these figures were more than twice higher (in Russia the percentage of literate population was 30, in Ukraine 28, in Poland 41) [14, 86].

The growing need for reading lecture inspired people to engage themselves in book production and book trade. The number of printing offices was steadily growing. In 1861 there were only nine printing offices in Estonia, by 1880 their number grew up to 20 and printing enterprises were also opened in smaller towns [5, 137]. The most rapid development

in printing can be observed during the last decades of the 19th century: during 1880–1900 twenty four printing offices were opened in Tallinn, Tartu, Narva and in smaller towns. In 1910 there were 58 printing offices in 12 Estonian towns [5, 137]. Printing offices in small towns made local cultural life more lively and active, gave additional possibilities to issue regional newspapers and to publish books. Besides the private printing enterprises were printing shops founded by the state offices: the printing shop of the Estonian Government Office (1858), the printing shop of the Estonian Railway Board (1873), the printing shop of the Estonian Consistory (1878). The growing competition forced the print shop owners to acquire modern printing technique: in 1846 bought Heinrich Laakmann the first high-speed printing press for his enterprise in Tartu, in 1851 the high-speed printing machine was acquired by Lindfors heirs in Tallinn. Since 1877 steam power was used in printing process [12, 105]. In 1897 Estonians formed 63% of printers, in 1900 from the 14 printing enterprises in Tallinn seven belonged to the Estonian owners [9, 543].

Journalism (newspapers “Perno Postimees”, “Eesti Postimees”, “Sakala” etc.) played a decisive role in developing the national self-consciousness. The total number of periodicals in Estonian language grew from 11 titles in 1880 up to 24 titles in 1900. The average circulation of newspapers reached up to 3000–4000 copies, the newspaper “Valgus” (“The Light”), published by Jakob Kõrv, could even circulate in 8000 copies in 1890ties [20, 93]. In the days of the 1905 the newspaper offices became centres of political strife. On 24 November the new publishing law was launched that replaced pre-censorship with post-censorship, that allowed to confiscate every newspaper where authorities felt to find something suspicious, but in reality the authorities were not able to control the press. By the end of 1906 there were ca. 100 separate Estonian language periodicals together with supplements, but this rise lasted only up to June 1907 when martial act was passed and several periodicals closed [1, 107–109]. In 1908–1914 there were about 60–70 newspapers and magazines [1, 110], periodicals were published before the World War I in addition to Tallinn and Tartu also in 10 smaller Estonian towns. Outside Estonia the Estonian-language newspapers were issued in St. Petersburg, Riga, New York and Paris.

The Estonian national awakening movement was preceded by the birth of Estonian national literature in the middle of the 19th century. In the period of the next 50 years the publication of Estonian language books increased tenfold.

Between 1850 and 1860 the average of 24, 7 books were published annually, between 1890 and 1900 the figure was 274 [7, 8]. At the first decade of the 20th century the average of books published by the year increased almost twice and by the 1917 more than 600 Estonian language books were published yearly. The total circulation figures of books published

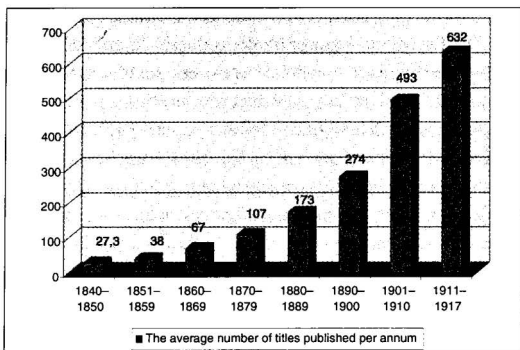


Fig. 1. The average of the Estonian language book production in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century

1850–1917 exceeded 43,6 million with the average circulation of 3350 copies [7, 8; 8, 8]. In general the book production can be divided into so called “reading books” and publications of societies and offices with a limited circulation. “Reading books” consisted of fiction, schoolbooks, popular science, religious publications and calendars with a total amount of 6048 titles in 1851–1900 and 6223 titles in 1901–1917. The average circulation of “reading books” amounted to 3400–3500 copies. Editions of societies and different offices comprise altogether 3249 titles [7, 21; 8, 23]. Fiction made up the biggest part of books published in Estonia with 4286 titles. Works of Estonian authors made up ca. 33% (1435 titles) [7, 22; 8, 24]. In comparison with the second half of the 19th century the thematic scope of publications became more varied and books were published in every possible field. This was caused by the improvement of educational system and the growth of intelligentsia.

Development of book trade and formation of Estonian bookshops

Up to the middle of the 19th century the book production and dissemination in Estonia was in the hands of Baltic German entrepreneurs and depended on the political and economic developments not only in Russia but also in Germany.

The bookshop owners were Baltic Germans and German books made up the main articles of trade. The Estonian language book production consisted mainly of religious and educational literature and was spreaded by printers, binders and book pedlars. There were only few educated Estonians and as the higher education was given either in German or Russian language they often lost contacts with compatriots [2, 165].

In the fear of revolutionary movements in Europe the tsarist government started to restrict the import of books from the foreign countries, including Germany: the censorship was strengthened and customs duty increased. The restrictions caused difficulties in book trade: some booksellers gave the business up, the others tried to replace the lack of German books by increasing the amount of local publishing articles [2, 165].

The book trade in the 19th century Russia was still regulated by feudal laws (guild laws). For example a foreigner who was not a member of a guild could not open a bookshop [15, 161] and most of the booksellers had to belong to different classes of the guild of merchants [16; 17]. The situation changed after adopting the new Printing Decree in 1865 according to which the permission of the government office was sufficient for starting book selling business [5, 156].

In the middle of the 19th century there were only five bookshops in Estonia located in bigger towns – Tallinn and Tartu. In 1870 the number of bookshops reached 13. The greater ascent can be noticed in the last decade of the period – 1870–1880 when 20 new bookshops were opened. The first bookshops which were selling only Estonian language books were also opened during that period. In 1867 Heinrich Laakmann, a German origin publisher and the printing shop owner opened the first bookshop in Tartu to sell Estonian language books, in Tallinn the first Estonian bookshop was opened in 1872 [19, 145–146]. Altogether during the period of the National awakening movement 39 new shops were opened and 45 persons were engaged in selling books. At the end of the period most of the bookshop owners were already of Estonian origin [12, 108].

The bookshops were mainly located in towns, the readers of Estonian books lived in the rural area. To reach their customers book shops had agents – the system used in Russia and regulated by a special law [15, 163–164]. An agent had to be a male person, loyal, educated, not younger than 17 years. Agents had no right to travel in group, to make noise, to gather customers together or to sell books together with other items of trade.

Russification reforms had little impact on the development of economy but brought along political and cultural oppression both to German and Estonian educational and cultural institutions [4, 177]. Regarding the book trade, Russification reforms had no visible consequences. Numerous new bookshops were opened in Tallinn and Tartu as well

as in smaller towns. During two last decades of the century 119 new persons were engaged in selling books and 104 new bookshops were opened [11, 57].

The boom in book trade caused rivalry and competition among bookshop owners. It was quite usual that income from trading with books was not sufficient to pay for rooms, to hire the staff, to buy books etc. Therefore shops enlarged the assortment of goods with newspapers, journals, postcards, writing materials and utensils, music instruments etc. In a small town Võru the bookshop also sold bicycles and spares [18], according to one newspaper advertisement flower and timber were sold in the bookshop in the Võsu village [6]. Many shops operated only for few years.

The first decades of the 20th century were full of crucial political events: wars and revolutions brought along decline in economy and disorder of the political system. The beginning of the century was still favourable for the book trade: 120 new shops were opened, many of them were located in small settlements. 119 new persons tried to start book trade business. Big bookshops in Tallinn and Tartu started to make contracts to provide bookshops in smaller places with books: they were acting as wholesale firms [11, 64].

Alltogether 263 bookshops were founded in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century and 283 persons became bookshop owners (at least for some years).

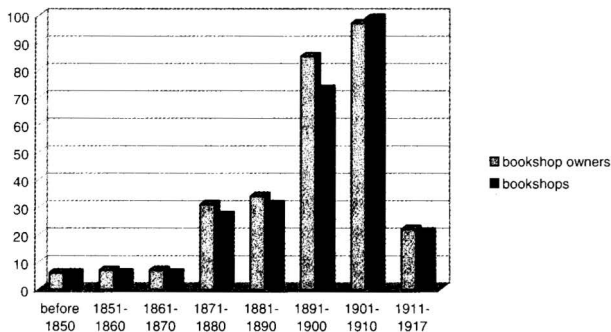


Fig. 2. Bookshops and bookshop owners in Estonia 1850–1917

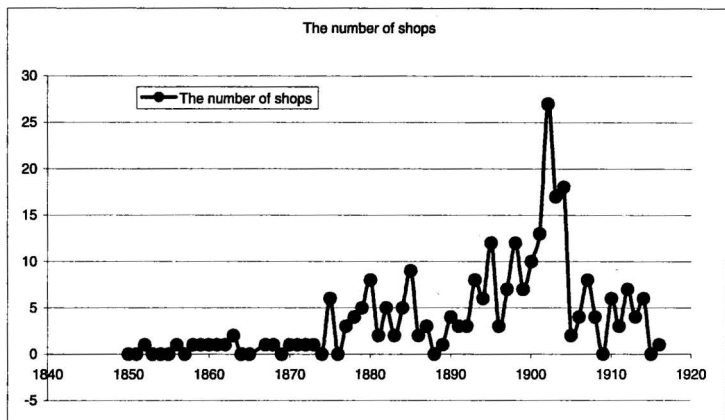


Fig. 3. Foundation of bookshops

These figures allow to conclude that book trade was a popular sphere of activity. The most intensive was foundation of bookshops during 1898–1904. In 1902, 27 new shops were opened, in 1903 the number of new shops was 17, in 1904 – 18 [11, 71–73].

Possibilities to open a bookshop were:

- To apply to the government office for permission and open a new shop.
- To buy an existing bookshop.
- To inherit a bookshop.

If a bookseller had not enough money to acquire sufficient assortment of goods for him, he could apply to the bigger bookshop and get the books on commission [11, 95].

Duration of activities and side line occupation of bookshop owners

Despite of the big number of bookshops that were opened in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century there were not many who could operate for a long period of time.

Analysis showed the correlation between the number of bookshops and the duration of their activities – the bigger was the number of the founded bookshops the shorter was

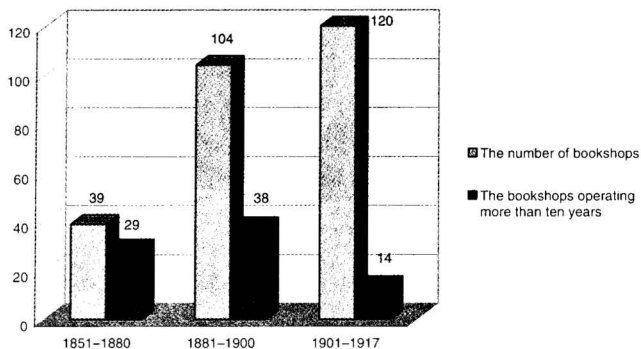


Fig. 4. Duration of activities of bookshops

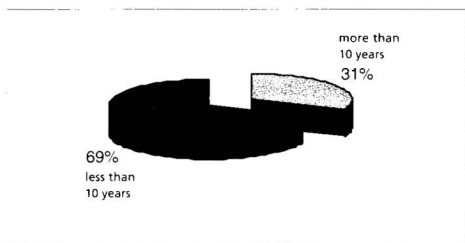


Fig. 5. Duration of activities of bookshops

the duration of their activities. Only 31% of the bookshops were in business more than 10 years, most often was that small shops operated up to five years. The most successful were the bookshop owners who were engaged also in other fields of book production [11, 84].

Trading with books did not guarantee sufficient income and the bookshop owners were often engaged in other spheres, mainly in book production and publishing. Among the 283 bookshop owners 38 headed companies comprising the publishing house, the printing office and the bookshop.

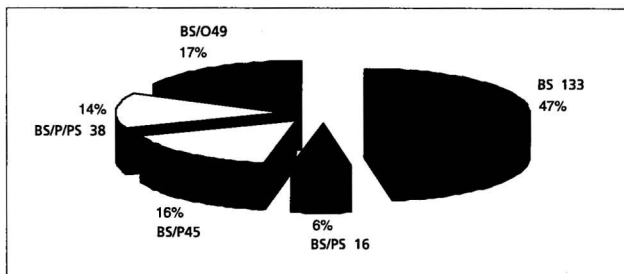


Fig. 6. Side line occupation of the bookshop owners (BS – Bookshop; PS – Printing Shop; P – Publishing house; O – Other occupation)

45 persons were engaged both in publishing and book trade, 16 embodied the printing and book trade. There were also school teachers, parish clerks a.o. (altogether 49 persons) who were trading with books [11, 83].

National and social origin of the booksellers

The geographical sources on booksellers were in many cases scarce. The existent data enabled to make the conclusion that most of the Estonian origin bookshop owners derived from the peasant families and made up the first generation in book trade business. They had predominantly studied in village and parish schools and continued in the institutions of secondary education: county schools, grammar schools, teachers' seminars.

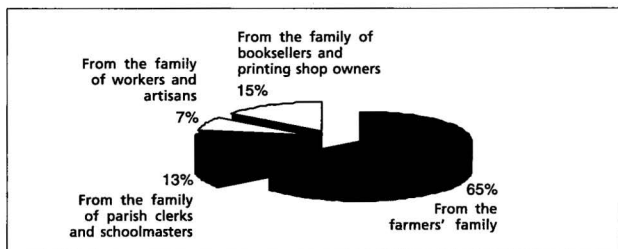


Fig. 7. The social origin of bookshop owners

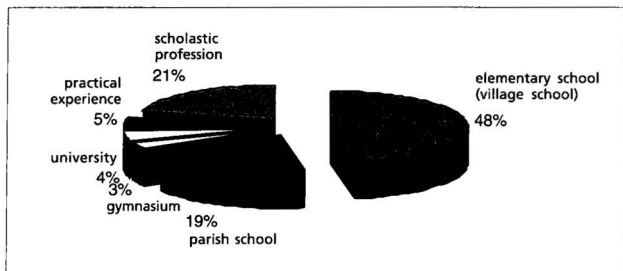


Fig. 8. The education of bookshop owners

Only few bookshop owners had higher education. Comparing the education of German and Estonian bookshop owners it has to be said that Germans were usually better educated and had also more experience in the field of book trade [11, 90–91].

Conclusions

Up to the middle of the 19th century the book production and dissemination in Estonia was in the hands of Baltic German entrepreneurs and depended on the political and economic developments not only in Russia but also in Germany.

In the middle of the 19th century there were only 5 bookshops in Estonia located in bigger towns – Tallinn and Tartu. In 1870 the number of bookshops reached 13. The greater ascent can be noticed in the last decade of the period – 1870–1880 when 20 new bookshops were opened. In 1867 Heinrich Laakmann, a German origin publisher and the printing shop owner opened the first bookshop in Tartu to sell Estonian language books. The economic and political reforms as well as the national awakening movement favoured the engagement of Estonians in the sphere of book production and dissemination. Increasing publishing of Estonian language books enabled the development of trade. At the end of the national awakening period most of the bookshop owners were already of Estonian origin.

Since 1870ies the number of Estonian bookshops started to grow and at the end of the 19th century they outnumbered German and Russian shops. In all over Europe book trade concentrated into the big cities (in the case of Estonia in Tallinn and Tartu), but bookshops were opened also in the rural area (small towns and villages).

Altogether 263 bookshops were founded in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century and 283 persons became bookshop owners (at least for some years). These figures allow to conclude that book trade was a popular sphere of activity. The most intensive was foundation of bookshops during 1898–1904.

Legally it was not difficult to get a permission to open a bookshop but only few shops (31%) operated more than ten years; most often was that small shops operated up to five years. Trading with books did not guarantee sufficient income and the bookshop owners were often engaged in other spheres, mainly in book production and publishing. Majority of the Estonian origin bookshop owners derived from the peasant families and made up the first generation in book trade business. The newcomers had not enough education nor experience in the field.

The most important achievement can be seen in the fact that bookshops were opened in all over Estonia that guaranteed dissemination of Estonian language books to all stratum of the society.

Submitted in February 2006

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Altogether 263 bookshops were founded in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century and 283 persons became bookshop owners (at least for some years). These figures allow to conclude that book trade was a popular sphere of activity. The most intensive was foundation of bookshops during 1898–1904.

Legally it was not difficult to get a permission to open a bookshop but only few shops (31%) operated more than ten years; most often was that small shops operated up to five years. Trading with books did not guarantee sufficient income and the bookshop owners were often engaged in other spheres, mainly in book production and publishing. Majority of the Estonian origin bookshop owners derived from the peasant families and made up the first generation in book trade business. The newcomers had not enough education nor experience in the field.

The most important achievement can be seen in the fact that bookshops were opened in all over Estonia that guaranteed dissemination of Estonian language books to all stratum of the society.

**KNYGŲ PREKYBININKAS KAIP KULTŪROS AGENTAS:
KNYGŲ PREKYBA ESTIJOJE XIX AMŽIAUS ANTROJOJE PUSĖJE
IR XX AMŽIAUS PRADŽIOJE**

SIGNE JANTSON, TIJU REIMO

Santrauka

Straipsnis skiriamas Estijos knygų prekybos plėtrai ir pokyčiams XIX amžiaus antrojoje pusėje. Tikslas – atskleisti knygynų, parduodančių estiškas knygas, steigimąsi ir išanalizuoti Estijos knygų prekybininkų veiklą.

Apžvalga parengta remiantis moksline literatūra ir Signe Jantson magistro darbu „Raamatukaubandus Eestis aastatel 1850–1917: raamatukauplused ja nende omanikud“ (Knygų prekyba Estijoje 1850–1917 metais: knygynai ir jų savininkai) [9]. Šioje studijoje daug dėmesio skiriama nacionalinei ir socialinei knygynų savininkų kilmei bei jų veiklai.

Iki XIX amžiaus vidurio knygų gamyba ir platinimas Estijoje buvo Baltijos vokiečių verslininkų rankose ir priklausė ne tik nuo Rusijos, bet ir nuo Vokietijos politinių ir ekonominių pokyčių.

XIX amžiaus viduryje didesniuose Estijos miestuose – Taline ir Tartu – buvo penki knygynai. 1870 m. knygynų skaičius išaugo iki trylikos. Sparčiau jų daugėjo 1870–1890 metais, kai atsidarė net 20 naujų knygynų. 1867 metais Heinrichas Laakmannas, vokiečių kilmės leidėjas ir spaustuvės savininkas, Tartu atidarė pirmąjį knygyną, prekiaavęs estiškais knygomis. Ekonominės ir politinės reformos, bundantis nacionalinis sąjūdis skatino estus dalyvauti knygų gamyboje ir platinime. Daugėjant knygų estų kalba ėmė plėtotis ir prekyba. Nacionalinio sąjūdžio laikotarpio pabaigoje dauguma knygynų savininkų jau buvo estų kilmės.

Nuo XIX a. aštuntojo dešimtmečio pradėjo augti estiškų knygynų skaičius ir XIX a. pabaigoje jų jau buvo daugiau negu vokiškų ir rusiškų. Visoje Europoje knygų prekyba telkėsi dideliuose miestuose (Estijoje – Taline ir Tartu), bet knygynų veikė ir kaimo vietovėse (mažuose miestuose ir kaimuose).

XIX a. antrojoje pusėje iš viso buvo įsteigti 263 knygynai ir XX a. pradžioje 283 žmonės tapo knygynų savininkais (bent keleriems metams). Intensyviausias knygynų steigimo laikotarpis buvo 1898–1904 metai.

Gauti leidimą steigti knygyną teisiškai nebuvo sunku, bet tik nedaugelis knygynų (31 proc.) veikė ilgiau negu dešimtmetį. Maži knygynai dažniausiai gyvuodavo penkerius metus. Knygų prekyba negarantavo pakankamų pajamų, todėl knygynų savininkai darbuodavosi ir kitose srityse, paprastai knygų gamybos ir leidybos. Dauguma knygynų savininkų estų buvo kilę iš valstiečių šeimų ir tapo pirmąją knygyninkų karta. Naujokai neturėjo nei pakankamo išsilavinimo, nei šio darbo patirties.

Didžiausias to laikotarpio laimėjimas – tai, kad knygynai buvo atidaryti visoje Estijoje ir garantavo knygų estų kalba platinimą įvairiuose visuomenės sluoksniuose.