Russian Japanology Review, 2022, 2, pp. 116–135
DOI: 10.55105/2658-6444-2022-2-116-135

Japan in *Murzilka* Magazine (1924–2021)

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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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