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FIRST BRITISH TRAVELERS AND RESIDENTS IN JAPAN: SOURCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF RESEARCH

Abstract

After the opening of the Japanese ports in the 50s of the 19th century, many foreigners started to visit the country. Due to their interest in the Far East, Britons were among the most numerous, and accordingly, they left many accounts of their experiences in Japan. Thanks to the popularity of travelogues in the 19th century and the effort to record observations on new cultures and societies, visitors to Japan left a considerable amount of written inheritance, and it is now possible to follow their individual opinions and attitudes. Although these sources are highly subjective and must be used with a certain amount of caution, their comparative analysis can bring interesting results for our understanding of Western (British) perception of Japan in the time of its crucial change The critical fact to note is that modern historians have primary sources of various proveniences and backgrounds at their disposal. Their authors had different reasons for coming to Japan, diverse levels of education, social standing, and different gender identities, which contributed to the fact that their perception of Japan was not the same. This phenomenon constitutes a broad possibility for further study into the topic of travels to Japan and the British view of Japanese culture and society. Although the topic of British-Japanese relations and the cultural exchange between both countries in the Bakumatsu and Early Meiji Periods has been popular among modern historians in recent decades, there are still opportunities to study some specific topics to better understand the experience of the British in Japan. One of these is to follow individual accounts, and use them for comparative research to better understand the interaction of Western and Far Eastern cultures in the 19th century.

Key words: Great Britain, Japan, travel, historiography, research

The topic of Western travel writing in the 19th century is growing more popular among contemporary historians (Hooper, Youngs 2017). The accounts of travelers and overseas residents present modern historians with an opportunity to understand the perception of different cultures by Europeans (and Americans) in the age of imperialism and the Great Powers’ global domination. Many of them were influenced by their writers’ cultural and, in many cases, racial prejudices, who often

believed that they brought the light of civilization to less developed people (Curtin 1971: 170). On the other hand, many of them are interesting documents about how individuals viewed "other" societies. Many times, the previous preconceptions of the writers were abandoned in favor of observation, fascination, and a systematic effort to record the new experience, Jürgen Ostermamel called this epoch in his now almost classical book a period of self-observation (Ostrehammel 2014). However, the Europeans did not only study cultures and societies with which they increasingly came into contact, but were also highly interested in the new areas of their geographical and cultural discoveries. This is also the case of Japan in the 19th century, which opened itself to foreigners after increasing pressure from the outside. In the first decades of its official relations with the West, the country was visited by many personalities who left fascinating accounts of Japanese society, culture, and history. These sources present a challenge for modern historians to discover how Japan was perceived by foreign visitors (especially of British origin, who were most numerous) and how it was described to the public in their home countries. This article aims to define future research possibilities and the topics that could be further examined in the field of study of the early relations between Japan and the West, using the example of the British presence in Japan. Its goal is to assess the sources available and discuss the possible outcomes of their research. The paper intends to discuss the following topics:

- The question of travel writing on Japan in the 19th century
- The types of sources available
- Classification of sources according to their origin
- Assessment of the sources according to their author's social and educational background
- Recapitulate current research and outline some possibilities for future research trends

1. Travel writing on Japan and the Far East in the 19th century

European travel writing was an interesting and important phenomenon of the 19th century. The astonishing inventions of maritime steam navigation, railroad, and other means of transport, together with new tools for spreading information and the dramatic rise of modern media, created the conditions for European penetration into all parts of the world and stimulated the interest of the European public for experiences of their compatriots in distant and unknown parts of the world (Youngs 2013: 53). However, this statement does not, of course, mean that travel writing was limited to Western society or that its roots were laid in the 19th century. On the contrary, its beginnings can be traced to the first literary works in history. Even the old Egyptians had travel writers who recorded their Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant journeys (Egberts 1991: 57–67). The works of Xenophon, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, and Daniel Defoe are considered classics in the history of literature. It was, however, the special conditions of the 19th century, during which the Europeans "discovered" most parts of the up to then primarily uncharted parts of

Africa, America, and especially Asia, when the travel writing genre experienced its "golden era." Therefore, some modern historians claim that at that time, it reached "a position of influence greater than had ever previously been the case and certainly greater than was to be the case after 1914" (Youngs 2006: 4). The improvements in printing and the ability to spread vast quantities of printed media together with the fast-growing rates of literacy contributed to this process (Koivunen 2009: 3). The news of new explorations and discoveries of unknown regions thrilled the European public and contributed to the genre's popularity (Colbert, Morrison 2020: 5). The trend was furthermore supported by the fact that traveling became faster and safer than in previous centuries (Seed 2004: 2). Together with the worldwide economic and imperial activities, it contributed to the fact that more Europeans gained experience with other cultures and civilizations.

The high popularity of travel writing was fueled by the fact that it already had an established tradition in European literature. The number of works published significantly increased since the 17th century (Thompson 2012: 6–7). The first half of the 19th century contributed to this trend through famous accounts by Alexander Humboldt of his journeys through South America, Alexis de Tocqueville's account of the United States, Charles Darwin's visit to Galapagos Islands, and the famous journey of Sir Richard Burton to Mecca and Medina (Osterhammel 2014: 21). The huge discoveries in Africa in the second half of the century even increased the interest of the European public in the genre of travelogue (Youngs 1994). Readers were keen to listen to the stories of different cultures and adventures, and travelers like David Livingstone, Oskar Lenz, Henry Morton Stanley, and Emil Holub became the heroes and celebrities of their time (Driver 1991: 135–136; Skalník 2016: 8–9). The topic of traveling and uncovering unknown regions became popular even in fiction literary works. Authors like Jules Verne, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, and Herbert George Wells often set the plot of their stories in exotic and mysterious destinations and helped to fuel the Western interest in science and the exploration of the unknown world (Otis 2002: xviii–xxvi). Therefore, travel writing and accounts of experiences with other civilizations became an integral and essential part of European culture and shaped its perception of the outside world.

Due to the popularity and importance of exploring Africa in the second half of the 19th century, its protagonists are arguably better remembered and preserved in historical memory. However, travels to Asia considerably shaped the European mind and imagination. As Jürgen Ostrehammel demonstrated in his majestic work *Unfabling the East*, the contact with Asian civilizations and countries shook existing concepts of thinking about history and culture and considerably contributed to the shaping of the European Enlightenment (Osterhammel 2018: 14). Although the perception of Asia changed considerably through the 19th century – from admiration to disdain – the interest in Asian countries (China especially) intensified (Kerr, Kuehn 2007: 3–5). This fact resulted from increasing European (mainly British) economic and political contacts with the Far East, which considerably altered the region's history and shaped global history. Especially after the opening of the Treaty Ports, the volume of publications on travel and experience in China and the Far East grew considerably (Forman 2013: 1–29; Chang 2010). The European "discovery" of

Japan was, however, a little bit of a different story. Although China limited its foreign relations with Western countries, the news of its civilization was reaching Europe throughout the 18th century in such abundance that a Jesuit, Jean-Baptiste du Halde, was able to write an encyclopedic account of four volumes on the history and culture of the Middle Kingdom already in 1735 (Osterhammel 2018: 116). On the other hand, Japan limited its foreign presence to within its borders much more strictly and remained mostly unknown to the European public, except to those well-versed in Dutch. Only some of the older Dutch texts, such as Engelbert Kaempfer's *The History of Japan*, were translated into other languages (Kaempfer 1999: 7; the older descriptions of Japan as Francis Xavier's travels to Japan were half-forgotten; Taylor 2022: 29 – 30). Most of the information on the country was inaccurate, incomplete, or outdated. The first Westerners who wrote accounts of their visits to Japan after its opening discovered a new experience for the European and American publics (Sterry 2009: 42–57).

Although the opportunities to travel into the Japanese interior were restricted for most Westerners by the provisions of the treaty system, and Japan was not as interesting for the European or American public as, for example, Africa, a considerable amount of travel literature was written about visits to the country (Sterry 2009: 8–9). As for the early presence of foreigners in Japan, several fascinating accounts are available. Before the opening of Japan, primarily Dutch narration on Japanese culture and society was available. But there were several important exceptions. Foreigners (outside of the Netherlands) in the Dutch East Indian Company service visited Japan several times and left their memoirs of the country. Engelbert Kaempfer (German), Carl Peter Thunberg (Swede), or Philipp Franz von Siebold (German) were able to bypass regulations on the residence of Westerners in Japan by pretending to be of Dutch origin, utilizing the fact that the Japanese authorities were not able to detect their true nationality because most foreigners seemed the same to them (Keene 1969: 16–17). Their experiences, together with their Dutch equivalents, were one of the only few existing accounts of Japan in Western literature (except for several Russian narratives) (Kruzenshtern 1813; Golovnin 1823). Therefore, it is not surprising that Matthew Calbraith Perry studied their written accounts before the onset of his famous expedition (Perry 1858: 48). Siebold, who was banished from Japan in 1829, even wanted to join the American expedition, but although Perry used his work to learn about Japanese politics, society, and customs, he refused him because of his suspect relations with Russians, who were planning their expedition to the Land of the Rising Sun (McOmie 2006: 61).

Since Perry's arrival and subsequent opening of the Japanese ports, the volume of information on Japan written in Western languages multiplied and became more influential. The first accounts are unsurprisingly from the pens of American visitors. Perry's expedition itself was well documented by the Commodore himself and by several of the members of his entourage (Hawks 2005). For the subsequent activity of the Americans in Japan leading to the signature of the unequal treaties, there are published diaries of the first American consul, Townsend Harris, and his secretary, Henry Heusken (Cosenza 1959; Heusken 1964). They contain valuable information on political negotiations and many observations of Japanese culture and daily

life. However, both accounts were published much later (in the 20th century) and contributed little to the knowledge of Japan of the contemporary Western public. The European powers soon followed the Americans, and since the second half of the 50s of the 19th century, more and more foreigners not only visited Japan but left their accounts, which were in many cases subsequently published, inspiring a growing interest in the mysterious island nation in the Far East (Ingrams 2009: 10). Several noteworthy Russian accounts from that period are available (Wells 2004). The French travelers and residents in Japan after 1859 also left critical reflections on their experience (Beillevaire 2001). For example, the former French minister to Japan, Gustave Duchesne, Prince de Bellecourt, wrote an account of Japanese participation in the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1867) (Bellecourt 1867). The adventures of the French officer Eugène Collache, who participated in the Boshin War on the side of the Shogunate forces, were published in the popular travel periodical *Le Tour du Monde* in 1874 (Collache 1874). However, thanks to their strong position in China and a growing interest in Japanese trade, the British gained significant influence in Japan (Fox 1969: 80–81; Laroche 2018: 275). It is, therefore, not surprising that many of the first significant accounts of Japan came from the pens of British authors. For example, in the treaty port of Yokohama, the Western diaspora rose from a meager 100 residents in 1860 to 950 (513 of them British) only five years later. In only in the 60s of the 19th century, the port was visited by 10,000, mostly British, sailors (Auslin 2006: 178). The people who visited Japan in this era came from various backgrounds and had diverse agendas. They left many descriptions of Japan, which varied considerably based on their education, world views, or general background (see part 3). Thanks to that fact, we now have many sources from which it is possible to make a picture of how the British viewed Japan and how their opinions of the country changed.

2. Sources for the British travel history to Japan in the 19th century

The sources concerning the experience of the first British travelers and residents in Japan in the Bakumatsu and Early Meiji Periods can be divided into two primary categories. The first one consists of the official correspondents of the British diplomatic representatives in Japan, which are stored by The National Archives in London, although some of the reports were published in the famous Blue Books – government-issued documents which started to be systematically released at the beginning of the 19th century (Temperley, Penson 1966: 1). A systematic researcher can trace the fundamental problems of the British presence in Japan through these archival sources. Although they concentrate on specific topics, especially the British political and economic interests in the country, and rarely provide accurate personal information, their role in uncovering the British attitudes towards Japan is extremely important. The British diplomatic staff meticulously reported any notable events and commented on the state of affairs in the country and, especially in the first years of their presence in Japan closely scrutinized the political and social order of the Land of the Rising Sun because its knowledge was deemed as essential for British interests. They, however, mostly remain on the level of official correspondence, which is their most serious limit for learning the real feelings and

personal opinions of their authors. The same can also be said for the documents produced by the British trading companies active in Japan, the most important of which was arguably the Jardine Matheson & Company, whose archives are stored in the Cambridge University Library.[1] To discover the actual ("unofficial") view of the first British travelers in Japan, it is, therefore, necessary to rely on the second type of primary sources – personal accounts (either published or unpublished).

As for travel literature, memoirs, or diaries from the British provenience in the following period, the record of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, is one of the best known in current historiography (Satow 1921). However, it was published only in 1921, so his experiences did not impact the British public in the years when Japan was opened to foreigners. Satow nevertheless published *A Handbook for Travellers in Central & Northern Japan* in 1884, which became an important travel guide for foreign visitors to Japan at the end of the 19th century (Satow 1884). This book was one of the first true "Baedekers" on traveling in Japan, which was enabled by the negotiations about revising the unequal treaties (Ker 1928: 1–10). Although Satow is one of the most cited published primary sources on Japan in the Bakumatsu and Early Meiji Period, he was only one of many referring to the Land of the Rising Sun.

One of the most exciting sources for the beginning of the British residence in Japan is the two-volume memoirs of the first British Consul-General to Japan, Sir Rutherford Alcock, whose *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Japan*, published in 1863, is a compelling insight into Japanese society and culture at the beginning of the 1860s (Alcock 1863). But there are even earlier travelogues of the first British visitors in Japan. In this context, *A Cruise in Japanese Waters* (1859) by Sherard Osborn, depicting Elgin's mission to Japan, must be mentioned (Osborn 1859). The same expedition was also introduced to the British public in 1860 by Laurence Oliphant (Oliphant 1970), whose memoirs of his almost fatal experience in Japan in 1862 were later published by Margaret Oliphant (Oliphant 1891). From a diplomatic perspective, the sources concerning the activity of Sir Harry Parkes, who served in Japan from 1865 to 1883, are also important.

As for civilian visitors to Japan during the researched period, historians can rely on *Glover Files* – documents written by a famous Scottish merchant, Thomas Blake Glover – which are unpublished and stored at the Aberdeen Maritime Museum. The British view of Japan can also be illustrated by the work of Charles Wirgman, who, after his arrival to the country, started to publish *Japan Punch*, a local version of a popular British satirical cartoon that strongly influenced future Japanese culture (Harder, Mittler 2013: 314). Although from a diplomatic background, Algernon Freeman-Mitford contributed enormously to the British discovery of Japan by publishing *Tales of Old Japan*, an anthology of texts of Japanese fiction and non-fiction stories, which helped to form the European view of Japan in the second half of the 19th century (Mitford 1871), his published memoirs (1915) also show an interesting picture of Japan at the beginning of the Meiji Era (Mitford 1915). His interest in Japanese culture and history was later followed by Lafcadio Hearn, who, from 1890, resided in Japan and became one of the founders of Japanese studies. However, his extraordinary

1 <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/manuscripts-university-archives/significant-archival-collections/jardine-0> (18. 5. 2021).

personality is out of the scope of interest of this contribution and would deserve a separate article. Among the earlier visitors to Japan, Basil Hall Chamberlain and his *Things Japanese* (1890) must be mentioned (Chamberlain 1905). However, one of the most interesting pictures of Japan in the British travel literature is the fascinating *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* by famous traveler Isabella Bird, published in 1880 (Bird 1880). There are, of course, many more either published or unpublished sources (e.g., by the famous doctor William Willis) on the topic of early travel to Japan. The question, however, is how the British perceived the country and how their opinion of Japan changed in the early stages of their presence in the island empire.

Before a historian tries to interpret the views of the first British travelers to Japan, it is necessary to state that all of the sources mentioned above are highly subjective. As Richard J. Evans declared, to understand a historical source, it is essential "to understand the text, we have to know not only other texts of both writer and reader but also the political and diplomatic context in which they operated, knowledge which requires the reading of yet further texts" (Evans 2018: 105). The British nationals who came to Japan arrived with a set of cultural assumptions, a special kind of education, and a specific worldview typical for Europeans of that time. Each individual's personal opinions naturally differed, varying based on their own social and intellectual background, but some generalizations of their attitudes towards Asia and especially Japan can be made based on their written accounts. In any case, it can be stated that most of them came to Japan with some sort of cultural and even racial prejudices, which strongly influenced their opinion of the country's society and culture (Best 2021: 3). Some events of the relations between Great Britain and Japan can hardly be explained without prior knowledge of this fact. As an example, the murder of Charles Lennox Richardson on September 14, 1862, can be used. This British trader was killed by a group of Satsuma samurai when he and his companions came near the regent of the Satsuma domain, Shimazu Hisamitsu, on the Tōkaidō Road. The British representatives, in many cases, interpreted this incident as a simple act of barbarism and a culmination of similar attacks in the previous month and years.[2] However, to interpret and understand this attack, it is necessary to realize that Richardson was a relative newcomer to Japan, previously residing in Shanghai (Fletcher 2019: 26). Like most British in China, he developed a feeling of contempt for the Asian people. However, the kind of behavior from the superordinate position, which was generally typical for the Europeans towards the Chinese, was in no case possible in Japan, where it was expected that foreigners would behave with deference towards the local population, especially the samurai. The assumption that the pattern of behavior that worked in China would have the same effect in Japan strongly contributed to Richardson's untimely demise with some of his last words: "I have lived in China four years, and know how to manage these people," showing his total underestimation of the situation, cultural ignorance, and prejudiced attitude (Denney 2011: 79).

Richardson's fate is, of course, an extreme example, but it illustrates the bias and assumptions with which the foreigners came to Japan formed not only by their

2 The National Archives (henceforth TNA), London, Foreign Office (henceforth FO) 46/24, Neale to Russel, September 15, 1862.

European (or American) background but also by their personal experience with other Asian countries. The accounts of Japan written in this period have to be treated as highly subjective personal experiences of the writer. Therefore, it is not surprising that in many of these, a great deal of puzzlement can be traced to Japanese society and culture. In many cases, the original presumptions about Japan had to be changed, and the residence in the country had a profound impact on the visitors (Chamberlain 1905: 2–3). Some travelers quickly discovered that Japan is a very specific and distinct civilization quite different from its counterparts on the Asian mainland. Isabella Bird claimed in 1880 that to travel to Japan is like a visit to another planet. Her compatriot, the journalist and poet Edwin Arnold, declared that Japan differs from other societies (he had a long-term experience with India) as the Earth does from the Moon (MacFarlane 2008: 8). Although other narratives are not so enthusiastic, many of the visitors to Japan in the years after its opening to the Western world confess that their stay in the country changed their original assumptions (Alcock 1863: xv–xx). The question, therefore, remains regarding how Japan was presented in contemporary travel literature and how its culture and society were perceived by the first British who visited it. This process can be studied based on the subjective accounts and sources covering the problem, and through their analysis and comparison, some general assumptions on the British view of Japan can be made. It is essential to be careful because the opinions of its writer influenced each of the narratives and must be viewed as a personal account, not as an unbiased historical document. However, this article aims to try to use subjective sources to study the subjective perception of Japan and, through this, attempt to make some general conclusions about the opportunities to develop this research topic further.

3. Sources according to their writer's social and educational background

The Britons who came to Japan in the Bakumatsu and Early Meiji Periods had different origins, levels of education, and social backgrounds. This fact contributed to the subjectiveness of their accounts and the differences between their experiences (Cortazzi 2002). Even the reasons for their arrival into the country differed. Every study of the British view of Japan in the following timespan must begin with this topic. The background and motives of Britons traveling (and residing) in Japan can be divided into several categories. One of the major ones was British civil and military service members. The British diplomatic mission in Japan was relatively small, comprised of the consul general, consuls in the opened ports, and the secretaries of the British legation. Most of these people had (at least in the 60s) no prior experience with Japan or the Japanese language, and the experience in the country was something entirely new for them (Cortazzi 2004: 5). As Satow admits in his memoirs, many of them were chosen thanks to their previous service in China because it was believed that the practice in the Chinese language (and culture) could facilitate their conduct with the Japanese (Satow 1921: 2). Even though this misconception was soon revealed, and the British representatives found out that even the Chinese have only a superficial knowledge of Japan (Oliphant 1970: 301), previous experience of East Asia before posting to Japan was considered as

an advantage.[3] The accounts of the British diplomatic representatives in Japan are pretty numerous and constitute one of the primary sources of Japanese culture and society. This can be attributed to many of them having a university-level education (Jones 1971: 60). Their classical schooling in Britain trained them in observation and encouraged their effort to preserve it in written form.

The number of military men who visited Japan was much larger than that of those in diplomatic service. Hundreds or rather thousands of them served in the fleets and land forces stationed in Japan. Due to numerous anti-foreign attacks in the first years after the opening of the Japanese ports, the presence of the naval fleet in Japanese waters was viewed as one of the few options for ensuring the safety of foreign citizens in the country.[4] Since 1864, the British 20th Regiment was stationed in Yokohama to protect the settlement.[5] However, the opportunity to truly experience Japan was strictly limited for regular soldiers and even the officers who did not have the capacity of free movement throughout the country like those from the diplomatic corps. For many of them, the stationing in Yokohama was only a part of their responsibility as career officers and soldiers and essentially did not differ much from their other postings in the British Empire or the lands under its influence. For example, the commander of the British fleet in the Anglo-Satsuma war and the Chōshū expedition, Sir Augustus Leopold Kuper, spent 18 years and 47 days of his 53-year long career at sea and visited such various regions as British Columbia, India, and China (Denney 2011: 410–411). For him, Japan was one of his many other assignments. Therefore, it is unsurprising that he did not comment extensively on its topics outside his immediate responsibilities and duties. Therefore, the number of British military men accounts of Japan is relatively low. They are essentially sketchy and isolated (contrary to the French, whose officers left a considerable amount of such material).

The trade community members were Japan's most important group of visitors, and their accounts were well preserved. Their numbers swelled quickly after 1859, with companies like Jardine, Matheson & Company, Dent & Company, and Fletcher & Company quickly establishing their presence in Yokohama and Nagasaki (Satow 1921: 12). Some of them came to Japan with the prospect of the possibilities of a new market and quick profits. One of the incentives for foreign traders to come to Japan was the different ratios in the price of gold and silver in Japan and the world market, which promised considerable returns in a short time (McMaster 1960: 276). However, this state of affairs was an important factor only in the first month after the opening of the ports. The motivation for traveling to Japan with an economic interest in mind changed in future years. Some Chinese merchants came into the country because there was not such severe competition as on the Asian mainland. The new market promised the possibility for a new beginning for those who were not so successful in Shanghai or Hong Kong and viewed Japan as a country "out of which great things will come" (Fletcher 2019: 27). Many failed, but those who were able to adapt to the conditions in the country and its specific market succeeded to became almost permanent residents in the country. The most notable example is

3 TNA, FO 46/2, Russel to Alcock, March 30, 1859.
4 TNA, FO 46/3, Alcock to Russel, September 8, 1860.
5 TNA, FO 46/43, Neale to Russel, January 30, 1864.

perhaps Thomas Blake Glover, who was at first able to introduce himself to the trade through textiles and later became a key arms importer into the country and strongly influenced the course of its history (McKay 1997: 28–29; Filed 2018: 153–162). Since many of the traders became long-term residents in Japan, their accounts of their stay in the country are quite important and constitute an interesting point of view of Japanese society, though many of them concentrated on economic questions and were disinterested in learning and recording a completely different culture. On the other hand, through their experience, the problems the Britons faced on Japanese soil and how they reacted to them and coped with them can be traced (Cortazzi 2012: 62). The accounts of long-term residents in Japan are also important because these people came into much deeper contact with the Japanese reality and made personal contacts with the local population. Therefore, they are more often more detailed and accurate than the accounts of the short-term visitors who sometimes describe Japan only superficially.

The next group of visitors to Japan, who had left some of the most important accounts of their opinions on the country, were what we could call "professional travelers." They came to Japan to observe and go through a whole new experience (Seed 2004: 5). This, together with the fact that they stayed only a limited amount of time in Japan, shaped their accounts of the country. It is notable to emphasize that there were quite a high number of women among these travelers, who constituted a very low percentage among the population of long-term Western residents in Japan (Kshetry 2008: 79). Their accounts of Japan are fascinating because in many cases they concentrate on different topics and observations than their male counterparts. While men's accounts try to focus on the "big picture," the women's travelogues are oriented most closely toward everyday life and are more personally written than the elaborate and almost encyclopedic accounts of men (Sterry 2009: 13). Thanks to the visits of Victorian women, it is easier to experience the rhythm of the daily life of the Japanese and their customs. The writings of short-term travelers to Japan also reveal more profoundly the first experiences of foreigners in the country and, through this fact, enable modern historians to study their conception of Japan, their prejudices, and the confrontation of their expectations with the reality of their personal experience. For example, the travel book of the Bishop of Victoria (Hong Kong), George Smith, published in 1861, can be mentioned. Already in the introduction of his work, he manifests his own positive experience in Japan (which was not shared by many of his compatriots due to the political violence directed against the foreigners), by stating that "the many remarkable traits in the national character of the Japanese help also to deepen the interest of European observers" (Smith 1861: 3). On the other hand, some of the professional travelers to Japan show a less biased and abbreviated opinion of Japan and try to expound Japanese culture and society to their readers in an almost exhausting fashion. An example of such a keen observer is the already mentioned famous work *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* by Isabella Bird, which belongs to the best of what was written on the topic during the 19th century (Kaye 1994: viii).

Then, there is a vast group of "other" residents and visitors to Japan. Among those, we can count private self-employed persons who found their living in the country.

Apart from traders, these people usually set up some sort of business which would be labeled as services in today's terms. There are a lot of examples of foreign doctors who resided in Japan. The most notable was arguably Dr. William Willis, who lived in Japan for fifteen years, starting in 1862 (Cortazzi 2012: 1). Although he did not write any kind of travel book or extensive published material, his role in discovering Japan was important. During his stay in the country, he closely cooperated with the British legation and wrote many dispatches on his medical experience in Japan. Apart from persons of a medical background, many other private entrepreneurs worked in Japan from the beginning of the 60s. Among those, journalists who worked in Japan left a considerable amount of material through which the daily life of the foreign community can be studied, and they also often expressed their own opinions on the developments in the country. The first influential periodical published in Yokohama was the *Japan Herald*, established in 1861 (Barr 2011: 144). Although its issues are difficult to obtain, a vast collection is stored in the Yokohama Archives of History deposits.[6] The same can be said about the press issued in other treaty ports, which can be accessed only through archival research – it can be attributed to the fact that some of the newspapers were issued for a short period (e.g., *The Hiogo* and the *Osaka Herald*) (Muramaru 1971: 1251–1252).

A significant source is the personality of Charles Wirgman, who not only established the *Japan Punch* but also blended into Japanese society. As an experienced linguist, he was fluent in Japanese, often wore Japanese clothes, which made humid Japanese summer more bearable than the European ones, and often sought the company of the locals in Yokohama (Checkland 2003: 98). He contributed to the British view of Japan by publishing his opinions in *The Illustrated London News*, which belonged to the most popular media in his home country (Otmazgin, Suter 2016: 69). The key person in the local Western press was Raphael Schoyer, who established *The Japan Express*, and his wife, Anna Schoyer, who was a gifted painter and taught the local artists like Takahashi Yuichi oil painting techniques (Conant 2006: 85). She continued publishing the paper after her husband died in 1865, and left a lot of photographic material on pre-Meiji Japan (Miki 1964: 396). Photographs of Japan made Felice Beato famous. He was Wirgman's friend and, from 1863, opened a studio in Yokohama and published several albums of material on everyday life in Japan and its natural and historical beauties (Beato, Sol 1983: 31). At the end of the Bakumatsu Period, he was perhaps the best-known British photographer in Japan and had the reputation as an innovative and diligent artist whose work contributed to the interest in Japan in Britain (Lacoste 2010: 16–17). The observational talent of people like him, or Wirgman or Schoyer, contributed to our contemporary knowledge of the British perception of Japan in the second part of the 19th century.

In many cases, modern historians are not so lucky to have abundant material as those produced by the abovementioned personalities. During the Bakumatsu and Early Meiji Period, several thousand Westerners visited Japan. The population of their main entry port to Japan – Yokohama – swelled from several hundred to tens of thousands, of which a not negligible number came from the West (at the end of the 80s, there were at least 5,000 foreigners in Yokohama) (Smith 1986: 354).

6 <http://www.kaikou.city.yokohama.jp/document/kaigai/index.html> (25. 5. 2021).

It is, however, understandable that many of them left little or almost no written evidence of their presence in Japan. These "nameless" sailors, traders, soldiers, or pure adventurers who came to the opened country only to try their luck often disappear in the "big history" scope, but their fates and views of Japan can be studied through several channels. Their names are often mentioned in diplomatic reports from and to Japan. It is possible to study their letters published in the contemporary press (especially the advertising section, which is often remarkably interesting to study the tastes and needs of Westerners in Japan). And, of course, some of their inheritance is preserved in the public and private archives and collections. Many of these documents were, however, destroyed or lost during the further decades, but if a meticulous study of the unpublished sources is conducted, it can bring new information or views that would enable us to reconstruct the broader perception of Japan in the decades after the opening of its ports. On the other hand, a historian must admit that not everything can be discovered through examining primary sources and that some fates and persons will remain forgotten. However, this kind of "old-fashioned" research can bring new views of the topic and new challenges for further research.

4. Conclusion: Current research and its future possibilities

In recent years, the topic of Westerners traveling to Japan experienced a certain renaissance. Books like *Victorians in Japan* document this process, as do *In and Around the Treaty Ports*, edited by Hugh Cortazzi, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan: Discovering a 'New' Land* by Lorraine Sterry, and *The Coming of the Barbarians. A Story of Western Settlement in Japan, 1853–1870* by Pat Barr. These are only some representative examples of the current literature regarding the studied topic, and this study does not have the ambition to analyze the modern historiography on the topic in extensive detail. However, it is clear that the interest in the first experiences of the Westerners in Japan is gradually growing (Clark, Smethurst 2008: 1). The study of the British (and overall Western) perception of Japan or Asia in the 19th century brings us considerable opportunities to analyze several essential topics – e.g., how the British perceived individual Asian civilizations and how their opinions on each of the Asian states differed (with regards to Japan); with what assumptions and from what reasons they came to Japan; how their views of the Japanese culture and society evolved; how Japan was presented in Britain itself, and many others. But there are also some questions opened with regard to the British themselves. Firstly, historians can attempt to trace how the British were influenced by the Japanese (this was partly done by Olive Checkland in *Japan and Britain After 1859: Creating Cultural Bridges*). But maybe more importantly, the questions of British self-perceptions can be traced to the attitudes towards completely different cultures. Many British writers not only commented on Japanese realities, but also expressed their opinions and assessments.

In many cases, it was based on their moral standards, education, or persuasion of civilizational superiority. In a simplified way, the British came to Japan with prejudices and assumptions that mirrored their British or Western origin and can be traced in their works and written inheritance. Therefore, studying the topic of

travelling to Japan is also research and analysis of the Western perception of a distinct culture and the self-image of the visitors to Japan themselves. The existence of the foreign community in Japan created a "contact zone" between the two civilizations. This term, coined by Mary Louise Pratt, designates the idea of space where two (or multiple) different cultures meet and clash. In the case of 19th-century imperialism in an asymmetrical way" (Pratt 1992: 4), and the existence of unequal treaties created exactly this type of relationship. The foreigners who came to Japan were endowed with privileges and prejudices. However, their unique experience often changed their attitude towards Japanese culture and society. Although not all of the surviving accounts are positive, the general fascination with a changing Japan helped create a generally positive picture of the island nation in the West. This was significant for the Japanese in their efforts to come to equal terms with the Great Powers and rid themselves of the yoke of the unequal treaties (Ravina 2017: 2). From the cultural point of view, it was significant in creating the Western image of Japan, and helped to spark an interest, resulting in the first wave of fascination with Japan not only in Britain but also in other Western countries. The question, however, arises about how accurate and biased the information the British public got through this channel was, and how much of the contemporary racial and cultural prejudices remained behind the positive view of Japan at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, studying this topic can significantly contribute to understanding British (or European) society and cultural concepts.

Based on the initial analysis of accessible sources, which is, however, far from complete, some goals of the research onto the British travels to Japan in the first years after the opening of its ports can be set. A promising direction is to compare the British experience with that of the nationals of other Western countries. Americans, French, or Russians came to Japan with different cultural and partly educational backgrounds – e.g., while the first British accounts of Japan were largely positive, while the Russians are quite the opposite, which also corresponds to different interests of both countries in Japan (Wells 2004: 118–119). The same can be applied to the French, who became the most important rivals to the British in the Bakumatsu era's closing years. The second possible course of future examination of the early contacts between Britain and Japan would be an analysis of the social and educational backgrounds of those who recorded their experiences in the country. The historian can come out of the assumption that the reason for the journey to Japan and the personal stances and opinions formed by previous experience played a significant role in the way how the country was perceived. The third big task for future researchers is to determine how the image of Japan was distorted and influenced by the prior assumptions and cultural stances of those who visited the country. The subject of gender attitudes towards Japan must also be taken into account. As stated above, travelogues and other writings on Japan differ because of a different gender perspective, which was highlighted by the differences between the roles of men and women in British society in the 19th century. These topics can be traced firstly by meticulously studying the primary sources and then by applying the correct methodology. This should comprise a comparative attitude, thanks to which intensely subjective memoirs, travelogues, and diaries would be analyzed,

and some general conclusions would be made. Overall, although the early British presence in Japan is already quite well-researched, it still represents an attractive field in which researchers can come up with a new understanding of the clash of the ancient Japanese civilization and a quickly developing Western world, heading towards modernity. This contact had a crucial implication not only for British and Japanese history, but is important for the further development of the Far East and, thus, the world. In this way, individual histories had a broader importance, which has to be further scrutinized and researched.

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I PRIMI VIAGGIATORI E RESIDENTI BRITANNICI IN GIAPPONE: FONTI E PROSPETTIVE DI RICERCA

Riassunto

Dopo l'apertura dei porti giapponesi negli anni '50 del XIX secolo, molti stranieri iniziarono a visitare il Paese. A causa del loro interesse per l'Estremo Oriente, i britannici erano tra i più numerosi e di conseguenza hanno lasciato numerosi resoconti della loro esperienza in Giappone. Grazie alla popolarità dei diari di viaggio nel XIX secolo e allo sforzo di registrare le osservazioni su nuove culture e società, i visitatori del Giappone hanno lasciato una notevole eredità scritta, attraverso la quale è ora possibile seguire le loro opinioni e i loro atteggiamenti individuali. Sebbene queste fonti siano altamente soggettive e debbano essere utilizzate con una certa cautela, la loro analisi comparativa può portare a risultati interessanti. Il fatto critico da notare è che gli storici moderni hanno a disposizione fonti primarie di varia provenienza e background. I loro autori avevano ragioni diverse per venire in Giappone, diversi livelli di istruzione, posizione sociale e identità di genere, che hanno contribuito al fatto che la loro percezione del Giappone non era la stessa. Questo fenomeno costituisce un'ampia possibilità di approfondimento del tema dei viaggi in Giappone e della visione britannica della cultura e della società giapponese. Sebbene il tema delle relazioni britannico-giapponesi e dello scambio culturale tra i due Paesi nel periodo Bakumatsu e nel primo periodo Meiji sia stato popolare tra gli storici moderni negli ultimi decenni, ci sono ancora opportunità di studiare alcuni argomenti specifici per comprendere meglio l'esperienza degli inglesi in Giappone.

Parole chiave: Gran Bretagna, Giappone, viaggio, storiografia, ricerca