

ESTONIAN LINGUISTIC ENCLAVES ON THE TERRITORY OF THE FORMER RUSSIAN EMPIRE: CONTACTS WITH LOCAL LANGUAGES

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Abstract. In the 19th century, the emigration of Estonians gathered momentum and Estonian villages were founded on the vast territory of the Russian Empire. Having survived over several generations, these native Estonian-speaking villages can be considered linguistic enclaves outside their homeland. This article will give an overview of research expeditions into Estonian villages in Siberia and the Far East in the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, we treated the linguistic enclaves as a continuation of the map of Estonian dialects, hoping to find in the foreign-language(s) surrounded and isolated Estonian language features which, primarily as a result of the influence of standard Estonian, have disappeared from the dialects of homeland Estonia. In our further studies, we have taken into account developments in modern linguistics: whether to place emphasis on the original (authentic) or on developmental changes. In terms of language influences, we cannot forget contacts with local and regional languages.

Keywords: Estonian language, linguistic enclaves, language contacts, Caucasian Estonians, Crimean Estonians, Russian Estonians, Siberian Estonians

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2014.5.2.08>

1. Historical background

The second half of the 19th century was an age of unprecedented geographical mobility in Estonia. There was internal migration from villages to cities and towns, but the majority of rural Estonians moved to the nearby and newly opened regions of the Russian Empire and to Russian cities, especially to St. Petersburg. This period is called the first Great Migration (1858–1918). It has been estimated that about 20 per cent of the entire Estonian population lived outside Estonian boundaries before the First World War (Nigol 1918: 9–10). In the late 19th century Estonians joined the international process of migration and travelled westwards: to North and South America. The Estonian

migration to the former areas of the Russian Empire comprised approximately 95 per cent of total migration, which means that the Estonian diaspora in the east was quite sizeable, and the Western diaspora formed only a tiny part.

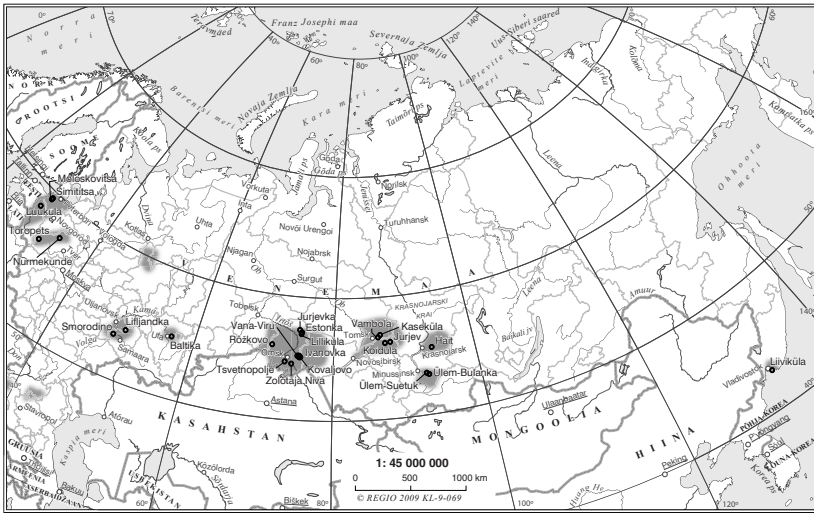


Figure 1. Main regions of Estonian settlements in central Russia, Siberia and the Far East.

The main push factors that motivated Estonians to emigrate were their dependence on manors, heavy taxation, overpopulation in villages and a desire to possess their own land. There were significant pull factors as well. People were needed to settle the newly conquered lands of the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Colonization was facilitated by the increased building of railways, agrarian reforms, skilfully directed propaganda and state financial aid. Estonians migrated mainly to the rural areas of central and southern Russia, Siberia and the Far East. In the 19th century and early 20th centuries, more than 300 Estonian villages, some of which still exist, were scattered over a huge area, ranging from Lake Peipsi to the Sea of Japan. (Raag 1999: 34–46; Viikberg 1992: 79–82, and 2010: 518–520)

Table 1. Establishment of Estonian settlements in Russia.

Year	Region	Village
1850	Siberia	Ülem-Suetuk (Verkhne-Suetuk)
1858	Southern Russia	Liflyandka
1861	Crimea	Zamruk
1869	Northern Caucasus	Allmäe
1882	Transcaucasia	Estonka
1899	Far East	Liiviküla (Liflyandia)

It is interesting to note some expectations and prejudices concerning the language life of Estonian settlements far away from the Estonian motherland in the second half of the 20th century. Linguists, folklorists and historians have mainly been interested in old cultural traits still existing there, in truly archaic phenomena which might be alive in Caucasian or Siberian settlements but disappeared in Estonia long time ago. Many researchers dream of an ideal opportunity to take a few hours' flight and land in another space and another time, to make a trip in the present time and obtain information or data from the past.

But such innocent dreams vanished during the first expedition (in 1983). A positive surprise was that the settlers had retained the Estonian language for more than a century and had passed it on to further generations. But life had not left the language usage untouched and changes were most conspicuous. The Estonian used in the older settlements of Krasnoyarsk Krai and Omsk Oblast had become so homogeneous and different that in homeland Estonia we could not find a similar dialect. An important role in the language change was played by the local environment and acculturation.

2. Language contacts

In terms of language loans and influences, we cannot ignore Russian as a *lingua franca*. But we also must not forget local contact languages. The Estonian settlers, who once had lived in the borderland of the Russian Empire, had contacts with Armenians, Turks, Crimean Tatars and Siberian Tatars, as well as Chinese and Koreans. The traces of such contacts can still be found in the language of the settlers. On closer inspection, we can see that, although Russian may have been

the main language of inter-cultural communication, many words in the everyday vocabulary of the settlers came from the local languages.

Language contacts of Russian Estonians with Russians and Finns have already been discussed extensively (e.g. Viikberg 1989, 1990, 1992, and 2010), and here more attention is paid to language contacts of Estonians with aboriginal peoples in the Caucasus, Crimea, Siberia and the Far East. Information about direct language contacts between Estonian colonists and local aboriginal peoples or other colonist groups were obtained from historical sources, literature and language materials collected in Estonian settlements during 1983–2001.

2.1. Crimea

The first Estonian settlements in Crimea were established in 1861–1864. Their names, Zamruk, Kiyat-Orka, Konchi-Shavva, Uchkuyu Tarkhan etc., indicate that the Estonians settled in the deserted villages of Crimean Tatars. Nowadays these villages are known as Beregove, Uporne, Krasnodarka and Kolodyazne (in Ukrainian), or Beregovoye, Upornoye, Krasnodarka and Koldoyazhnoye (in Russian). (Viikberg 2002: 29–34)

During one of the numerous Russian-Turkish wars (1676–1878), in 1783 the Crimean Khanate was conquered by Russia and in the course of the Crimean War (1853–1856) Crimea was finally annexed. To maintain control of the new territory, Crimea was settled with colonists from other parts of Russia, which was supported by the state and made easier by the forced migration of the local Crimean Tatar population to Turkey. Russians and Ukrainians, as well as Germans, Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews, Estonians, Czechs, Poles and others, were lured there to replace the exiled and deported Crimean Tatars.

The number of Crimean Estonians has over the course of time noticeably decreased: 2176 people in 1897, 2084 in 1926 and 674 in 2001¹.

¹ According to censuses of Russia (Perepis' 1897, Perepis' 1926) and Ukraine (Perepis' 2001).

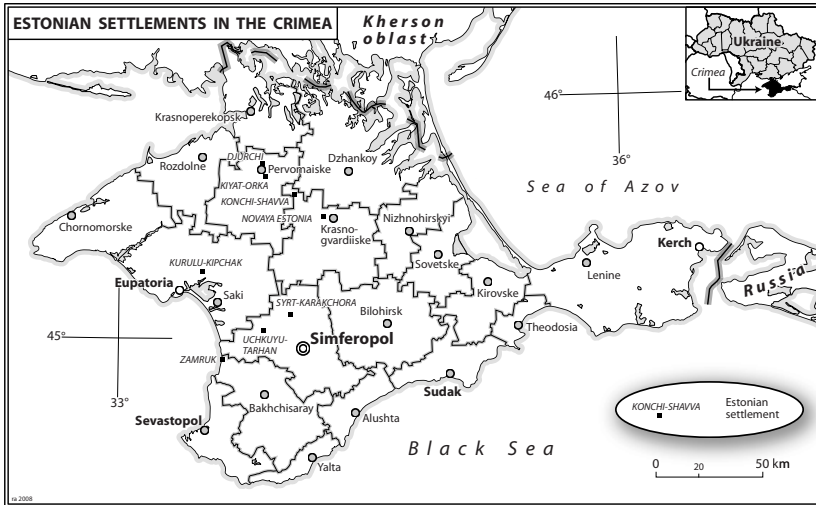


Figure 2. Estonian settlements in Crimea (Ukraine²).

This article gives examples of some Crimean place names and words recorded in the language usage of the Crimean Estonians (Vilde 1904, Laamann 1981, Kurs 1999, and 2002b, Viikberg 2002, and Viikberg and Kurs 2003), and most probably originating from the Crimean Tatar language. These place names and words in the Crimean Estonian language have been compared with the Tatar (TARUS) and Turkish (RBE, TRS) vocabularies; they have no definitive or reliable etymologies. A part of the Turkish vocabulary (e.g. *kurgan*, *mamalyga* and *jaila*) may have also been used in Crimea as regionalisms in other languages.

The Estonian settlers adapted older loanwords to their native sound system, in which the main stress is on the first syllable (e.g. *'kurgan* for *kur'gan*, and *jaila* for *jai'laa*³), voiced stops are substituted for voiceless ones (e.g. *p*, *t* and *k* for *b*, *d* and *g*), and voiced sibilants are substituted for voiceless ones (e.g. *s* for *z*, *š* for *ž*, and *ts* for *dž*). That can be also applied to place names (e.g. *Puskus* for *Boz-Göz*). Acquiring better knowledge of Russian or Turkish, the Estonians used younger loanwords in their more original form, retaining foreign sounds and the main stress on a non-initial syllable (e.g. *baštan* for *pastan*, and *madžaar* for *matsar*).

² Crimea belongs *de jure* to Ukraine (since 1954), but after Russia's unexpected annexation in March 2014 it seems to belong now *de facto* to Russia.

³ In the examples, diacritical marks are not used.

Place names⁴

Living places of Crimean Estonians were e.g. *Aktatši-Kijat* < Crim.-Tat. *Aqtaçı-Qıyat*⁵ (cf. Turk. *ak* ‘white’ + *taç* ‘crown’ + *qıyat* ‘?’; cf. Rus. *Beloglınka*, *belo* ‘white’ + *glina* ‘loam; clay’); *Džankoi* < Crim.-Tat. *Can-Köy* (cf. Turk. *can* ‘healthy, vigorous’ + *köy* ‘village’); *Puskus* < Crim.-Tat. *Boz-Göz* (cf. Turk. *boz* ‘grey’ + *göz* ‘eye’); *Sört-Karakışora* < Crim.-Tat. *Sirt-Qaraçora* (cf. Turk. *sirt* ‘ridge’ + *kara* ‘black’ + *çorak* ‘infertile, saliferous (land)’); *Utşkuju-Tarhan* < Crim.-Tat. *Üçquyu-Tarhan* (cf. Turk. *üç* ‘three’ + *kuyu* ‘draw-well’ + *tarhan* ‘governor’). Understandable are also such old place names as *Karasubazar* < Crim.-Tat. *Qarasıvbazar* (cf. Turk. *kara* ‘black’ + *su* ‘water’ + *pazar* ‘market place’ (= marketplace by the river Karasu), today Belogorsk); *Küçük-Köy* < Crim.-Tat. *Küçükköy* (cf. Turk. *küçük* ‘little’ + *köy* ‘village’, today Pushkino); *Yenikale* < Crim.-Tat. *Yeñi Qale* (cf. Turk. *yeni* ‘new’ + *kale* ‘fortress’, today Sipyagino) etc.

Everyday vocabulary

baştan ‘garden patch’, cf. Turk. *bostan* ‘id.’; *jaila* ‘summer pasture-land’, cf. Turk. *yayla* ‘id.’; *kurgan* ‘grave’, cf. Turk. *kurgan* ‘fortress; grave’; *mamaliga* ~ *mamalõga* ‘corn porridge’, cf. Turk. *mamalika* ‘id.’, Rus.⁶ *mamalyga* ‘id.’; *masar* ~ *masaari* ‘wagon’ < Crim.-Tat. *macara* ‘id.’ (cf. Rus. *mažara* ~ *madžara* ‘id.’), *satşma* ‘fishing net’, cf. Turk. *saçma* ‘id.’.

2.2. Caucasus and Transcaucasia

The Russian-Turkish wars brought about Estonian settlements in the 1880s in the Caucasus, such as Eesti Rohuaiake (Esto-Sadok) in Krasnodar Krai, Salme and Sulevi near Adler, Linda and Estonia near Sukhumi in Abkhazia, in today’s Georgia, and Novo-Estonskoye (Karacaören) near Kars in Transcaucasia, in today’s Turkey.

At first, Estonians in the Caucasus used the common name Cherkess for the native peoples, but later they started to differentiate between

⁴ Many old Crimean Tatarian place names were first changed by Catherine the Great in 1784, e.g. *Aqyar* (> *Sevastopol*), *Aqmescit* (> *Simferopol*), *Kefe* (> *Feodosiya*), *Gözleve* (> *Yevpatoriya*), and therefore were not actively used by Crimean Estonians.

⁵ The orthography of the Crimean Tatar place names follows the spelling patterns of the 1992 language reform (Kurs 2002a: 83).

⁶ Russian equivalents (here and later) come from Ušakov 1940.

them. In the language of Caucasian Estonians, we can find such words as *krusin* ‘Georgian’, *ärmen* ‘Armenian’, *kreek* ‘Greek’ etc.

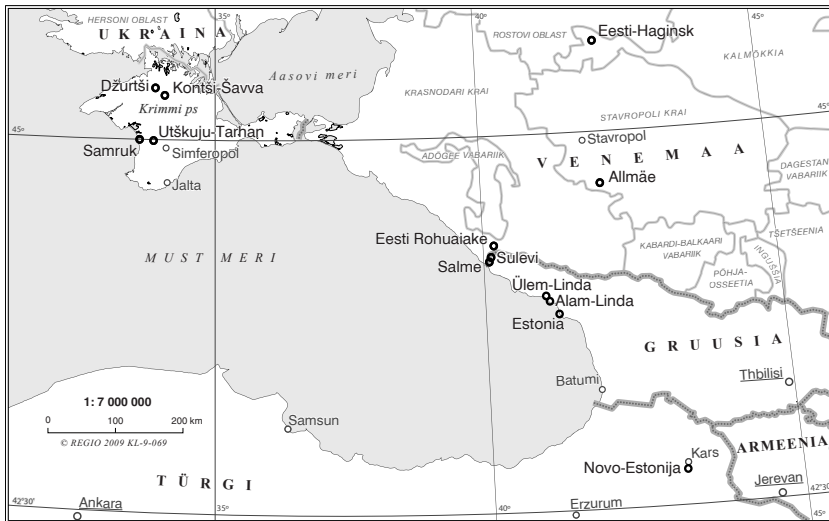


Figure 3. Estonian settlements in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia.

2.2.1. Caucasus (Georgia, Abkhazia)

The Caucasian Estonian national romantic village names Salme, Sulevi and Linda are taken from the Estonian national epic *Kalevi-poeg*. The villages Estonia and Novo-Estonija (New Estonia) are obviously named after the Estonian homeland.

Place names

Kodori, *Msõmta* and *Psou* (rivers), and *Mahater* (mountain).

Everyday vocabulary

lavass ‘bread’, cf. Turk. *lavaş* ‘bread, naan’; *baklažaan* ‘egg-plant’, cf. Turk. *patlıcan* ‘egg-plant’, Aserb. *badımcan* ‘id.’, Rus. *baklažan* ‘id.’ < Pers. *bādlijān*, *bādinjān* ‘id.’; *madžaar* ~ *matsaar* ‘fresh grape juice’, cf. Turk. *macar* ‘fresh wine’; *matsooni* ‘sour milk, very similar to yoghurt’ (*mats’oni* by Georgians, and *matsun* by Armenians) (Anniste 2007: 35).

The examples of the recorded Caucasian Estonian place names and other words (Vilbaste 1960, Vääri 1960) are probably of Abkhaz-

Adyge origin, and the meaning of the place names is unknown. Many loanwords in the Caucasus, connected with daily life and used, for instance, by the Lezgis, Ossetians, Azerbaijanis or Turks (cf. Lezgi⁷ *lavaš*, *jailah*, Ossetian *airan*, *matsjoni*, Aserbaidjani *lavaš*, *macar*, *yaylaq*), can be considered to be regionalisms and cannot be related to any particular language.

2.2.2. Transcaucasia (Turkey)

Place names

Karacaören (= Novo-Estonskoye village in Turkish), cf. Turk. *karaca* ‘dark, blackish’ + *ören* ‘ruins’; **Sarökamõš** (forest), cf. *sari* ‘yellow’ + *kamiš* ‘reed; bamboo’.

Everyday vocabulary

airaan ‘sour milk, kefir’, cf. Turk. *ayran* (‘water’ + ‘kefir’); **jufka** ‘bread’, cf. Turk. *yufka* ‘thin bread, lavash’; **käür** ‘infidel’, cf. Turk. *gayr* ‘another person’, *gâvur* ‘giaour, non-Muslim’; **muhtar** ‘headman of the village’, cf. Turk. *muhtar* ‘headman of the village’; **müdüür** ‘director’, cf. Turk. *müdüür* ‘director, head, chief’; **raki** ‘arrack’, cf. Turk. *rakı* ‘strong grape-wine, arrack’; **rüşvet** ‘bribe’ < Turk. *rüşvet* ‘bribe; permission’; **tändur** ‘baker’s oven’, cf. Turk. *tandır* ‘oven (buried in the ground); heating arrangement’; **ärmen** ‘Armenian’, cf. Turk. *Ermeni* ‘Armenian (person)’; **üsker** ‘soldier’, cf. Turk. *asker* ‘soldier; military service’.

These recorded place names and everyday words were still remembered and used in the 1970s (Roos 1975: 83–105).

The number of Caucasian Estonians has over the course of time noticeably decreased: 5959 people in 1926⁸ and approximately 150 people nowadays⁹. The history of the Estonian community in Turkey has ended (455 people in 1897, 60 people in 1969 and only four Estonian-background people in 2002¹⁰).

⁷ See LRS, ORDW, AES.

⁸ Data from a Russian census (Perepis’ 1926).

⁹ Assessment of the ethnologist Aivar Jürgenson 10.12.2013.

¹⁰ Data for 1897 are from a Russian census (Perepis’ 1897), and later data are from researchers (Roos 1975: 40) and travellers (EPL 2002).

2.3. Siberia

There are two kinds of Estonian settlements in Russia: 1) villages founded by deported persons in the 19th century, and 2) villages founded by voluntary expatriates. The older Estonian villages in Siberia (as well as e.g. the Finnish, German, Latvian and Russian villages) are primarily a result of the conquest policy of Russia. The main purpose of the authorities was to reap the rich natural products of Siberia and to populate new territories with Russian citizens.

Lutherans were able to establish villages of their own in the 19th century and from that time we may speak of Estonian linguistic enclaves or speech islands (*Sprachinseln*) in Siberia. It has to be kept in mind that such resettlements were officially planned and arranged in czarist Russia. New territories were to be populated and natural resources were to be exploited.

The spoken language in older Estonian settlements was quite different from the language spoken in Estonia. The convicts came from different dialectal areas and, in the Siberian villages where they were sent, a northern Estonian language developed that had no exact equivalent in Estonia. Those who emigrated voluntarily maintained their dialects. They came from particular areas, and their dialectal background was more condensed, but more specific dialect features disappeared while others that were more widespread remained (i.e. primary dialect features disappeared, while secondary ones remained). Origins and linguistic differences were preserved in Russia as well: northern and southern Estonians lived in separate villages.

The number of Siberian Estonians (incl. the Far East) has over the course of time noticeably decreased: 32 321 people in 1926 and 11 409 in 2002¹¹.

¹¹ Data from Russian censuses (Perepis' 1926, Perepis' 2002).

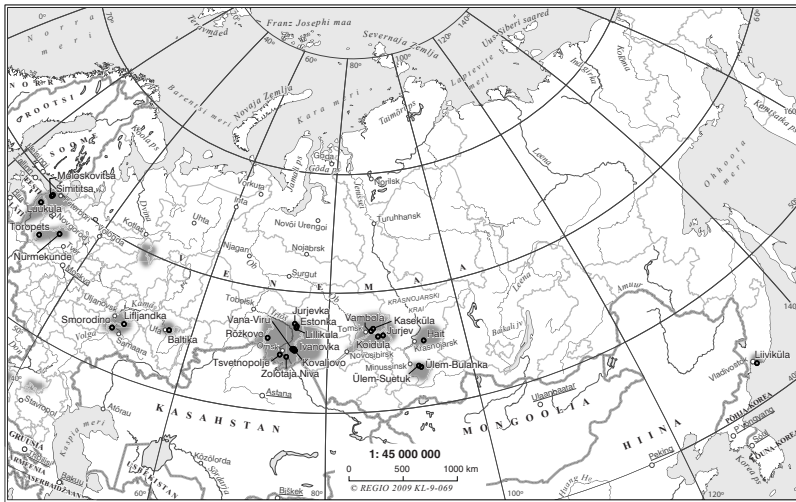


Figure 4. Estonian settlements in western and eastern Siberia.

These place names and words, recorded among Siberian Estonians (Viikberg 1990, and 1992), were borrowed from Baraba Tatar (western Siberia):

Place names

Karatuz, cf. Tat. *kara* ‘black’ + *toz* ‘dust’.

Amõla, *Mana* and *Suetuk* (rivers in eastern Siberia); *Om*, cf. Tat. *om* ‘silent, quiet’; *Tara*, cf. Tat. *tar* ‘narrow’; *Tšulõm*, *Ui* (rivers in western Siberia). Rivers are very important landmarks in Siberia, and many cities are named after rivers: *Omsk* (< Om), *Tomsk* (< Tom), *Tobolsk* (< Tobol), *Irkutsk*¹² (< Irkut) etc.

Everyday vocabulary

jassak ‘tribute’, cf. Tat. *jasak* ‘tribute’; *kurgan* ‘headman’s grave’, cf. Tat. *kurgan* ‘fortress; headman’s grave’; *sabantui* ‘festivity’, cf. Tat. *sabantui* ‘spring holiday, finishing of the sowing season’ (= *saban* ‘plough’ + *tui* ‘festival’).

¹² See Pospelov 2000: 94 (Irkutsk), 140 (Omsk), 178–179 (Tobolsk and Tomsk).

2.4. Far East

The village of Liiviküla (Liflyandia) near Vladivostok, one of the younger Estonian settlements, is both very typical and unique. The village is a living example of the fate of all the Estonian settlements in Siberia.

The czarist government needed fishermen and seafarers in Ussuri to displace the Chinese and Koreans and to repulse the ambitions of the Japanese. For that purpose, the Estonian islanders seemed to be best suited. Numerous inhabitants of the Estonian islands (Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Muhumaa) were ready to leave their homes and go to distant places in the Far East (Mäger 1970 and Jürgenson 2001).

As a rule, people look for familiar landscapes when they move to unfamiliar areas. On the coast of the Sea of Japan, the Estonian islanders, though already used to living close to the sea, had several new experiences. They were surprised by the monsoon climate, with thick fogs in May, heavy showers in the summer and violent storms (typhoons) in August. The nature of Ussuri seemed unique. On the boundary of the temperate zone and the tropics, such species as bear and tiger, crow and parrot, magpie and guinea hen, birch and redwood co-existed. The settlers learned to make their fields on mountain slopes, so that during torrential rainfalls the streams swelling into rivers would not carry the crops away into the sea. They began to grow corn and soya, as they were not always successful in growing rye and wheat. As for their livelihood, they all depended on the sea and became acquainted with the salmon of the Far East. But their houses were reminiscent of the ones that had been left behind on their home islands: dwelling-houses and threshing barns under thatched roofs. On the front walls of the houses, wooden plates carrying the settlers' names, years of arrival and the owners' marks were nailed.

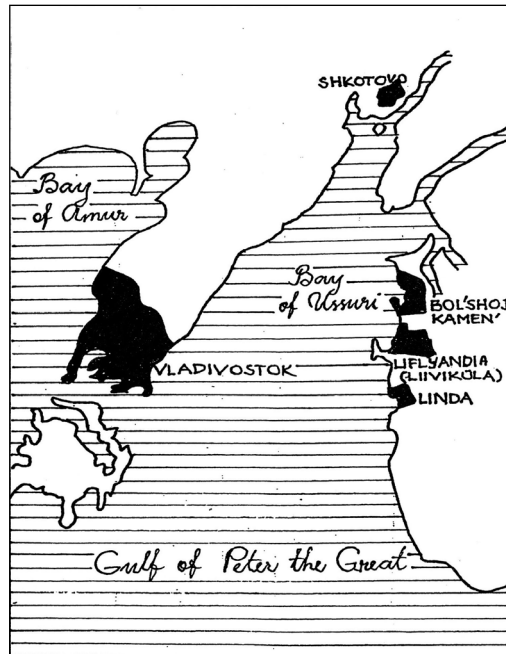


Figure 5. Estonian settlements in the Far East.

More settlers arrived in Liflyandia, and in 1915 the village numbered 141 farmsteads with 691 inhabitants. An Estonian community of considerable size had formed. People there were dialectally close, coming mostly from the islands, but some of them were from the western coast of Estonia. The island dialect and the western dialect belonged to the North-Estonian group of dialects. As the language community of the Liflyandia village was relatively homogeneous, the dialect was well preserved. While living under changed conditions and in isolation, the inhabitants of Liflyandia retained the original dialect. Here many words and word forms have been recorded which no longer exist in their native area. The settlers themselves evidently did not care whether their original language was preserved for science or not although, as far as possible, they lived as an Estonian community and used their mother tongue.

Neighbours. However, the Estonians were not isolated from other people. They had some contacts with Russians who had arrived earlier and settled away from the coast. Their closest neighbours were Chinese and Koreans. When Russia took over Ussuri in 1860, some of

the Chinese left, but some stayed. Starting in 1862, small numbers of Koreans came to live in Ussuri. When the Estonians arrived, they encountered Chinese place names: the rivers of *Setuhe*, *Maihe* and *Maodahe*, the bays of *Kangauz*, *Vampaushi*, *Yushuwai* and *Konsywai*, the peninsula of *Hangan*, and the island of *Sidimi*, to mention a few. No Korean names are known in the region.

During the initial years of the resettlement, the use of the Estonian language was not influenced by their neighbours, as Estonians who came in contact with other people could not speak their own language but used Russian as a means of communication. The Chinese and Korean language are structurally completely different from Estonian. Nevertheless, direct language influences occurred. Even today's Estonians remember and cite from memory the Chinese words for dwelling *fansa*, for the grains *tšumiis* 'Chinese millet' and *gaoljan* 'Chinese sorgo', as well as *taloobe* 'turnip' and *tšimssii* 'sea kale'. The Koreans had potato *kamssii*, pumpkin *hobegi*, millet *paisa*, honey *kuuri* and porridge *pääbi* ~ *phaabi*. There are citation loans, taken from spoken language and pronounced in an Estonian way but used only in contacts with Chinese and Koreans. There are a few direct loans adopted by Estonians, which are also used in other contexts: *ženšenn* 'ginseng, a magic plant of Chinese folk medicine' grown also by Ussuri Estonians (like cucumbers and tomatoes in hotbeds), *kailaa* 'a hoe', more handy and comfortable than a spade, *šalanda* 'a small flat-bottomed boat', and *sindoo* 'the chief of a boat crew' (Viikberg 1992: 86–87).

3. Conclusions

The presented language material makes it possible to conclude that Estonians have had direct contacts with indigenous peoples of many regions in the Russian Empire. From local languages, they have primarily borrowed place names and to a certain extent everyday vocabulary concerning food, clothing, tools, household utensils etc. The loanwords adopted by Russian Estonians through language contacts with aboriginal peoples can be imagined as a long string of pearls, stretching from the Caucasus to the Far East. Not all the pearls are genuine, because not all the loanwords have been borrowed directly: some passed through the medium of Russian as the *lingua franca*. And once again we have to ask ourselves the eternal question: where do all our words come from?

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Abbreviations

Aserb. – Aserbaidjani, Crim.-Tat. – Crimean Tatar, Pers. – Persian,
Rus. – Russian, Tat. – Tatar, Turk. – Turkish

Dictionaries

- AES = Mamedov, Vidadi (2000) *Aseri-eesti sõnaraamat. Asəri-eston lüğəti*. Ed. Ene Vainik. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus.
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Kokkuvõte. Jüri Viikberg: Eesti keelesaared omaegse Tsaari-Venemaa aladel: kontaktid kohalike keeltega. Eestlaste väljaränne kodumaalt saavutas haripunkti 19. sajandil, mil eesti külasid rajati Vene impeeriumis Krimmi poolsaarest kuni Jaapani mereni. Tänapäevani säilinud eesti külades on emakeel kasutusel ka järglaspõlvkondades ja neid saab vaadelda eesti keelesaartena väljaspool emamaad. Et aladel, kuhu Tsaari-Venemaa poliitika eesti koloniste suunas, on elanud paljusid eri rahvaid, siis on artiklis jälgitud võimalikke keelekontakte kohalike keeltega piirkondade kaupa (Krimm, Taga-Kaukaasia, Lääne- ja Ida-Siber, Kaug-Ida). Keelematerjali põhjal võib väita, et kohalike (põlis)rahvaste keeltest on eestlased oma keelekasutusse võtnud eeskätt kohanimedid ning mõningal määral ka toidu, riietuse ja kohaliku elu-oluga seotud sõnavara.

Märksõnad: eesti keel, eesti keelesaared, keelekontaktid, Kaukaasia eestlased, Krimmi eestlased, Siberi eestlased, Venemaa eestlased