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Doctoral thesis:

Book trade in Estonia 1865 – 1940

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

Book trade is a complicated object of study because it essentially depends from the economic, political and social situation of a country. The object of study in book trade is the process of intermediating books from their producers to the readers. In this process book trade can not be handled as only a branch of economy but also as a way of mediating intellectual values.

The research on Estonian book trade history can be divided into general studies and treatments about the life and activities of persons, who were engaged in book trade.

There are two general studies treating shortly the book trade in the context of other aspects of the Estonian book history: *Eesti raamatu ajalugu* (History of the Estonian

book) by Friedrich Puksoo, published in 1933, and the collective monograph *Eesti Raamat 1525-1975* (Estonian Book, 1525-1975), published in 1978.

Besides general treatments there are few articles that handle the activities of individual publishers, the owners of printing houses and book shops starting from the middle of the 19th century up to the beginning of the 20th century: Friedrich Puksoo has published the article about the dissemination of books in Estonian in the middle of the 19th century (*Eesti raamatute levitamisest XIX sajandi keskel*; 1933); Ingrid Loosme has studied the role of the publisher, print shop and book shop owner Heinrich Laakmann in publishing and mediating books in Estonian in the era of national awakening (*Heinrich Laakmanni osa rahvusliku liikumise aja raamatute väljaandjana*; 1964), and Endel Aule has treated the history of the bookshop 'Kluge&Ströhm' (*Kluge ja Ströhmi raamatukaupluse ajaloost*; 1970). Several research papers on publishing, printing and book trade in smaller Estonian towns have been accomplished by the students (T. Leetmaa, E. Eelmäe, E. Rebane, I. Ratas, U. Aedma, A. Laanemets, E. Mägi, L. Kütt) of the Department of Information Studies at the Tallinn University under supervision of Mare Lott, Mari Kalvik and Liivi Aarma. It has helped to gather data about existing bookshops, persons engaged in dissemination of books and biographical data about the book shop owners.

My research on book trade started during the master studies at the Tallinn University. In 2004 I defended the master thesis *Raamatukaubandus Eestis 1850-1917: raamatukauplused ja nende omanikud* (Book trade in Estonia 1850-1917 : bookshops and their owners). The analysis is based on the recent study of book trade in Estonia

1850-1917 in which great importance was attached to the national and social origin of bookshop owners and their activities.

The aim of the study was to

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

The main sources were

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

Statistical analysis cover both separate bookshops as well as shops where besides books other items were sold located in the present day territory of Estonia. A shop was considered as a bookshop:

- If its owner had got a permission from the governmental office to open a bookshop
- If a shop had been considered a bookshop in previous treatments of the Estonian book history
- If a shop was considered a bookshop by its owner

The period under study was divided into three smaller intervals: the period of the National awakening movement 1850-1880, the period of the Russification reforms 1880-1900 and the beginning of the 20th century 1900-1917 covering the Russian-Japan War, the World War I and two Russian revolutions which lead to the formation of the independent Estonian state.

The period of the National awakening movement

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

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

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

The book trade in the 19th century Russia was still regulated by feudal laws (guild laws). For example a foreigner who was not a member of a guild could not open a bookshop and most of the booksellers had to belong to different classes of the guild of merchants. The situation changed after adopting the new Printing decree in 1865 according to which the permission of the governmental office was sufficient for starting book selling business.

In the middle of the 19th century there were only 5 bookshops in Estonia located in bigger towns – Tallinn and Tartu. In 1870 the number of bookshops reached 13. The greater ascent can be noticed in the last decade of the period – 1870-1880 when 20 new bookshops were opened. The first bookshops which were selling only Estonian language books were also opened during that period. In 1867 Heinrich Laakmann, a German origin publisher and the printing shop owner opened the first bookshop in Tartu to sell Estonian language books, in Tallinn the first shop was opened in 1872.

Alltogether during the period of the National awakening movement 39 new shops were opened and 45 persons were engaged in selling books. At the end of the period most of the bookshop owners were already of Estonian origin.

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

The period of the Russification reforms 1880-1900

Russification reforms had little impact on the development of economy but brought along political and cultural oppression both to German and Estonian educational and cultural institutions.

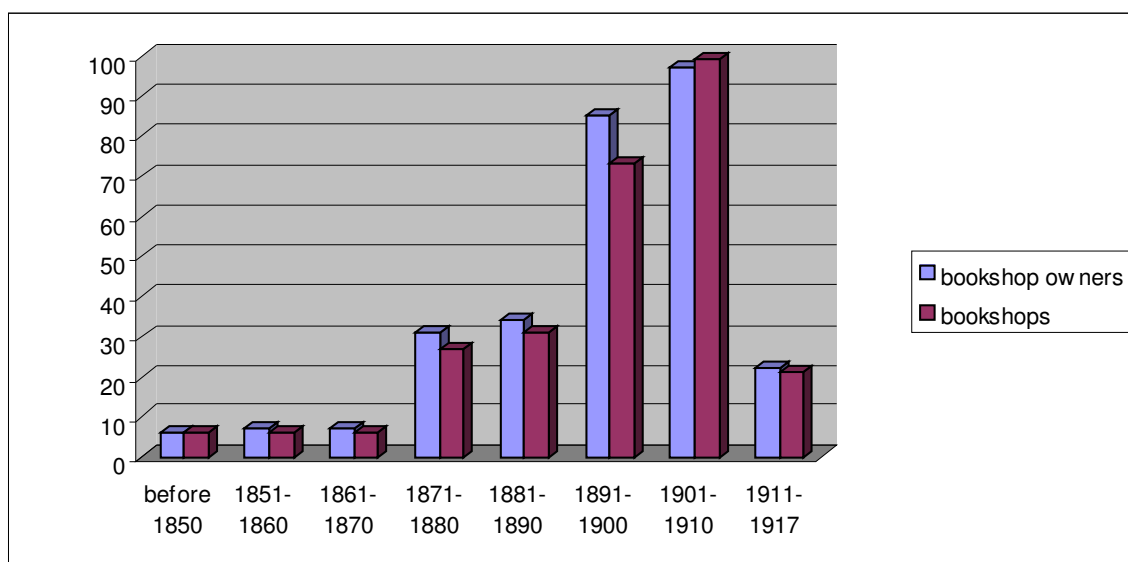
Regarding the book trade, russification reforms had no visible consequences. Numerous new bookshops were opened in Tallinn and Tartu as well as in smaller towns. During two last decades of the century 119 new persons were engaged in selling books and 104 new bookshops were opened.

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

The beginning of the 20th century 1901-1917

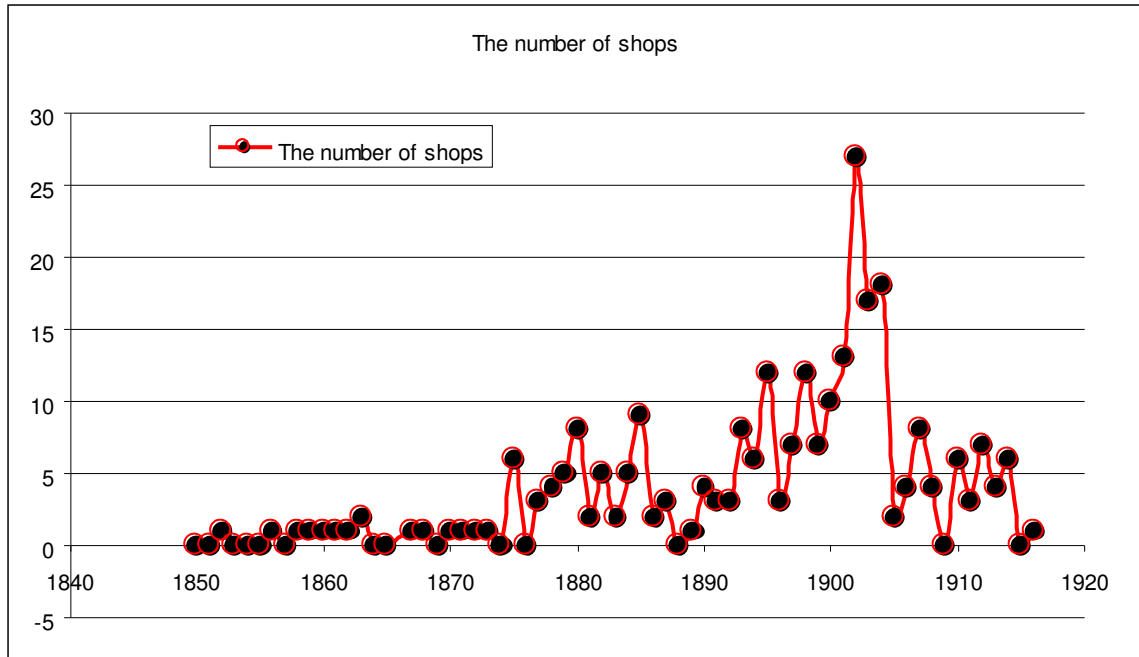
The first decades of the 20th century were full of crucial political events: wars and revolutions brought along decline in economy and disorder of the political system.

The beginning of the century was still favourable for the book trade: 120 new shops were opened, many of them were located in small settlements. 119 new persons tried to start book trade business. Big bookshops in Tallinn and Tartu started to make contracts to provide bookshops in smaller places with books: they were acting as wholesale firms.



Tabel 1. Bookshops and bookshop owners in Estonia 1850-1917

Alltogether 263 bookshops were founded in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century and 283 persons became bookshop owners (at least for some years). These figures allow to conclude that book trade was a popular sphere of activity. The most intensive was foundation of bookshops during 1898-1904. In 1902 27 new shops were opened, in 1903 the number of new shops was 17, in 1904 – 18.



Tabel 2. Foundation of bookshops

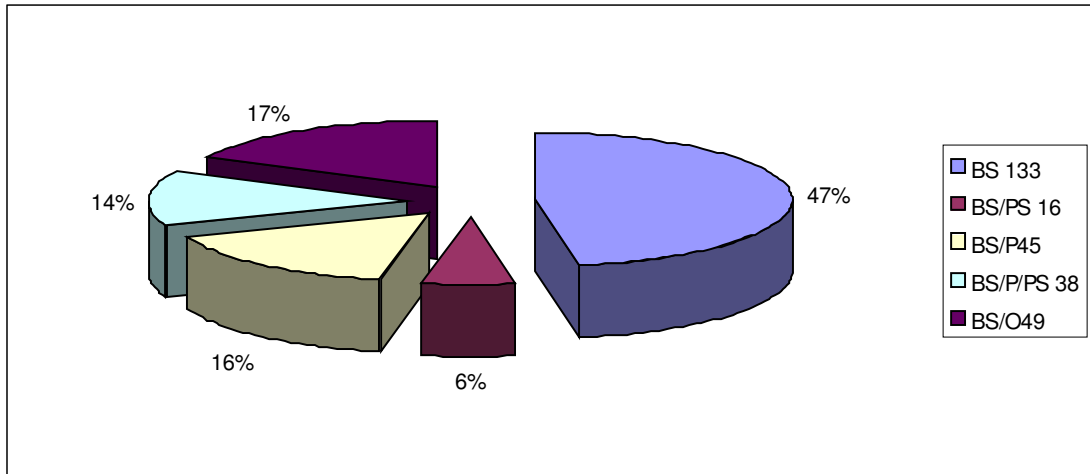
Possibilities to open a bookshop were:

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

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

Side line occupation of bookshop owners

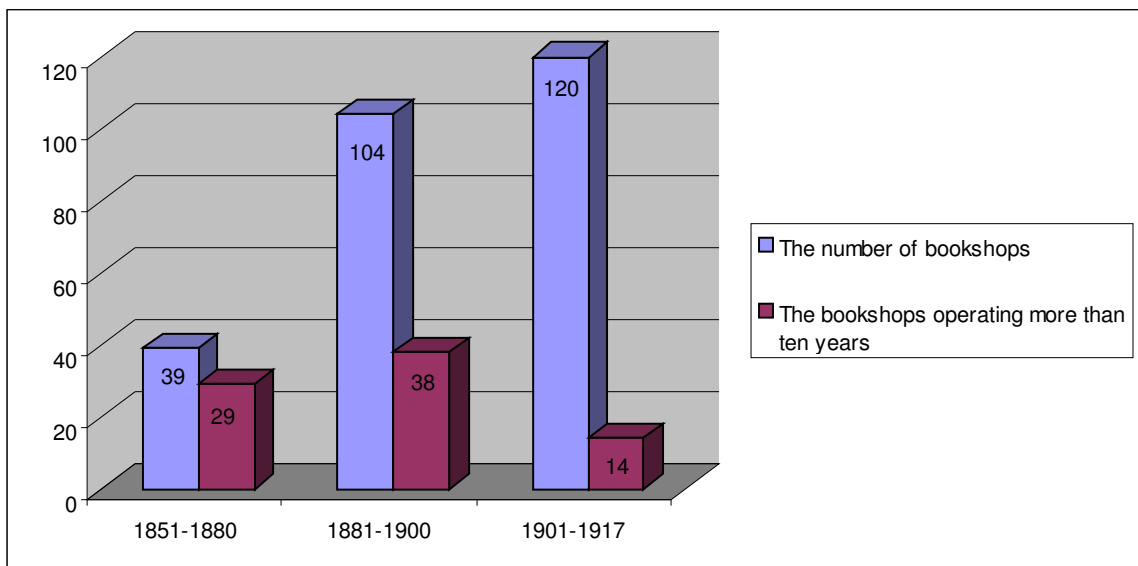
Trading with books did not guarantee sufficient income and the bookshop owners were often engaged in other spheres, mainly in book production and publishing. Among the 283 bookshop owners 38 headed companies comprising the publishing house, the printing office and the bookshop. 45 persons were engaged both in publishing and book trade, 16 embodied the printing and book trade. There were also school teachers, parish clerks a.o. (altogether 49 persons) who were trading with books.



Tabel 3. Side line occupation of the bookshop owners (BS-Bookshop; PS-Printing Shop; P-Publishing house; O-Other occupation).

Duration of activities

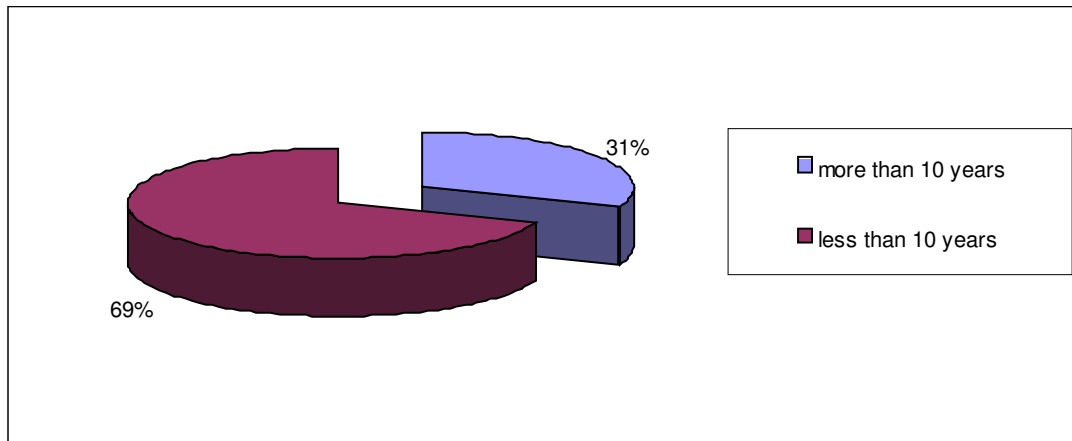
Despite of the big number of bookshops that were opened in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century there were not many who could operate for a long period of time.



Tabel 4. Duration of activities

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

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

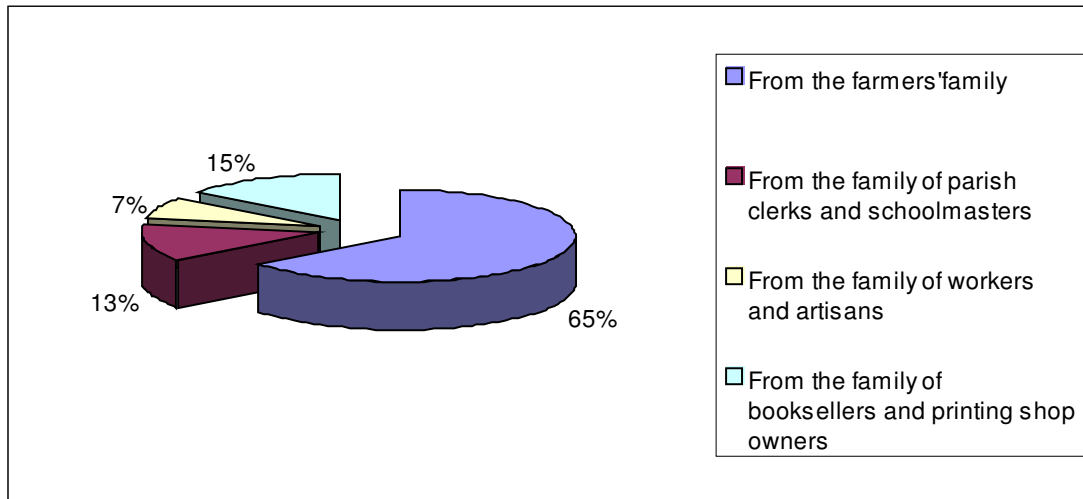


Tabel 5. Duration of activities

National and social origin of the booksellers

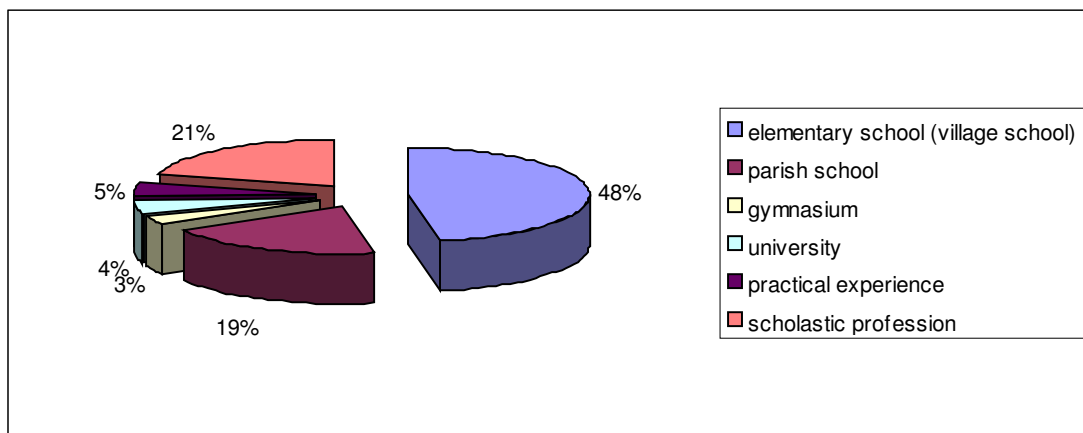
The biographical sources on booksellers were in many cases scarce. The existent data enabled to make the conclusion that most of the Estonian origin bookshop owners derived from the peasant families and made up the first generation in book trade

business.



Tabel 6. The social origin of bookshop owners

They had predominantly studied in village and parish schools and continued in the institutions of secondary education: county schools, grammar schools, teachers' seminars. Only few bookshop owners had higher education. Comparing the education of German and Estonian bookshop owners it has to be said that Germans were usually better educated and had also more experience in the field of book trade.



Tabel 7. The education of bookshop owners

In result of the research a lot of new data was gathered that allowed to analyse the transition of book trade from the tradesmen of German origin to the hands of the bookshop owners of Estonian origin. Up to the middle of the 19th century the book production and dissemination in Estonia was in the hands of Baltic German entrepreneurs. The trade depended on the political and economic developments not only in Russia but also in Germany. The number of Russian books on the literary marketplace was very little compared with German books. In all over Europe book trade concentrated into the big cities (in the case of Estonia in Tallinn and Tartu), but bookshops were opened also in the rural area (small towns and villages). In the middle of the 19th century there were only 5 bookshops in Estonia located in bigger towns – Tallinn and Tartu. Since 1870ies the number of Estonian bookshops started to grow and at the end of the 19th century they outnumbered German and Russian shops. Altogether 263 bookshops were founded in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, but only few of them were active more than ten years.

The majority of bookshops operated five to ten years and finished their activities. 283 persons became bookshop owners. These figures allow to conclude that book trade was a popular, but not a profitable sphere of activity. The most important achievement can be seen in the fact, that bookshops were opened in all over Estonia guaranteeing dissemination of Estonian language books to all strata of the society.

The research lead to the conclusion that the most successful were persons who were active in several fields of book business: publishing, printing and trade.

The doctoral thesis will be a continuation of the research, encompassing already existing data and widening the period and the aspects of research.

The actuality of the topic can be characterised by following:

- The study of the book trade as an important subfield of the Estonian book history has been insufficient. There are lot of gaps in the research of book trade during 1865 -1940.
- Bookseller is a mediator between a book and a reader, his social background and scope of activities has an important role in mediating intellectual values. It is important to know persons who have advanced the development of national culture.
- In previous treatments parallels and relations between the development of the Estonian and European book trade have not been studied.

In doctoral thesis the research is concentrated on the study of the historical development of the Estonian book trade as a branch of trade, characterising it in the context of the developments in book trade in Europe. More detailed comparative material could be obtained from the studies of the he Finnish and the Latvian book trade of the same period. Both these states were also a part of the tsarist Russia, had the foreign language speaking upper class, and gained the political independence after the World War I. In all three states the middle of the 19th century can be characterised as an 'era of national

awakening' that resulted in formation of national identity and fast development of the national written culture. Besides the general developments it is important to continue gathering factual data about the existing bookshops and biographical data about the persons who were engaged in book dissemination. The intention is to study more thoroughly the publishing activities of the Estonian booksellers in order to analyse their role in shaping the literary marketplace.

The research is planned to cover the period starting from the Russian Censorship law of 1865 that widened the possibilities of book trade and made it easier to found bookshops up to 1940 when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union and the former political and economic models ceased to function. **The subject** of the study is the book trade in Estonia during 1865-1940. **The objectives** are developments and forms of book trade, the arrangement of book trade, the network of shops, and the activities of book shop owners, their social origin and position in the society.

The aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the doctoral thesis is to handle the historical development of the Estonian book trade as a branch of trade, characterising it in the context of the developments in book trade in Europe during the years 1865-1940. It also includes the characterization of the arrangement of book trade and the formation of the network of shops, analysis of the social structure of the stratum of book shop owners and analysis of their publishing activities as an important factor in moulding the book market.

The research questions are formulated as follows:

- Which developments in the European book trade, when and how influenced the Estonian book trade during the period covered by the research?
- How much and in which ways influenced political and economic situation in Russia book trade in Estonia?
- How and did at all influenced the nationality of booksellers the development of book trade?
- Which changes took place in book trade during the independent state?
- Did the same processes take place in neighbouring countries (in Latvia and Finland) as well?
- What was the status of the bookseller in the society? How did social origin and education influence his social position?
- What made up the main publishing articles of book shop owners as publishers?

To get an answer to these questions, the following tasks have been set up:

- To study the history of book trade in Europe and in Russia in the second half of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century in order to bring forward the main developments in the field.
- To investigate the development of the book trade in Estonia in the above mentioned period: to examine the arrangement of book trade and the formation of the network of shops; to find out the duration of operation and scope of products on sale.

- To enquire biographical information about the persons who were engaged in selling books.
- To analyse the social background and education of book traders in order to find out how it influenced their social position in the society.
- To investigate the activities of book shop owners as publishers to characterize their role in shaping the Estonian literary marketplace.

Research design

The planned thesis can be classified as a descriptive non-experimental research with the aim to identify the essential features of the phenomena. It combines features both of qualitative and quantitative research design, using the discourse analysis of texts and documents and biographical approach as well as deductions from the previous studies and conclusions based on the analysis of statistical data.

According to the period of study, the methods used derive from the historical sciences.

The study begins with identifying and examining the sources, using the external and internal criticism: authenticity and provenance of sources, content analysis, and comparison with the content of other evidence, historical reliability. In order to prove the historical reliability, all possible and extant sources are compared, the context of the document or text explored: who was the compiler of the document and to whom it was predicted to present, what circumstances caused the composition of it etc.

The comparative-historical approach makes it possible to identify both typical and frequently occurring phenomena as well as to bring forward the unique, individual and

specific features. Examining the facts (events, appearances, biographies, processes) and their historical relations, their accordance with already happened and contemporaneous events will be observed.

The statistical data for analysis will be gathered from documents and texts and classified into two main groups: data about the book shops and data about the persons (book shop owners). In both groups data will be structured according to the criteria elaborated by the author of the thesis. For example the data about the persons will be analysed by the criteria of the social origin, education, scope of activities etc.

The synthesis consists of formulating the generalisation and conclusions of both qualitative and quantitative research results that should give the answer to the research questions.

Sources and data collection

The sources for the comparative study of the history of book trade in Europe and Russia is based on the existing research literature. Here the monographs like (Reinhard Wittman, Aušra Navickiene, Josif E. Barenbaum, Herbert G. Göpfert, Tuija Laine, Anna Perälä jt. and *Geschichte des Buchhandels*) as well as different articles make up the basis of the study.

In order to collect data about the book shops and their owners in Estonia the existing research and reference literature, students' research papers, and previous treatments are used. As primary sources archival materials as well as newspaper articles, advertisements and announcements connected to book trade are taken in consideration.

As the time scope of the study is quite long only the most important newspapers with the wide distribution area can be accounted. In order to avoid the loss of information from the newspapers with smaller distribution area, the analytical card catalogues of the National Library of Estonia, the Archival Library of the Estonian Literary Museum and the university libraries are examined.

The biographical data will be collected from the reference publications (encyclopaedia, school albums, and biographical lexica) of the first half of the 20th century. Additional data will be collected from the students' research papers and archival sources (for example using the parish registers).

The preliminary structure of the thesis will be made up of six chapters. The first chapter will present the theoretical and methodological approach including the review of the research literature. The second chapter will handle the political, economic and legal aspects concerning the book trade in Estonia. The third chapter will characterize the organisation of book trade and forms of book dissemination. These two chapters also present the comparative data with neighbouring countries and European context. The fourth chapter will focus on the persons who were engaged in book trade, analysing their social origin, education and activities in order to find out their social position in the society. The fifth chapter will concentrate on publication activities of the book shop owners, characterising in addition to the number of titles also the thematic aspects and the types of books.

Appendices of the thesis will present some of the interesting archival documents.

