

UDC 94(479.24)+061(=411.16)

## THE ACTIVITY OF JEWISH SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN BAKU IN THE EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Baku was a colonial city within the Russian Empire and was considered a significant centre not only in political and economic terms, but also in cultural and social aspects. During this period, the coexistence of diverse ethnic and religious communities within the city, their social and cultural engagement, and the establishment of public organizations played a crucial role in the development of their respective communities. Among these, the Jewish community stood out in particular. Jews actively participated in the political, economic, and cultural life of the time, contributing to both the advancement of their own community and society.

The paper examines the multifaceted activities of Jewish social organizations operating in Baku during the years 1906–1915. The selection of this time period is explained by the formation of social organizations in the Russian Empire. Basing on archival documents, the author examines the activities of such organizations as the Jewish Charity Society, the Baku branch of the Jewish Territorial Organization, the Talmud-Torah Society, the Jewish Literary and Musical Society, and the Society for the Spread of Literacy among Georgian Jews. The paper is aimed at assessing the impact of these organizations on the Jewish community in the social sphere.

Consequently, the organization and activities of the Jewish community in Baku not only highlight the role and place of Jews within the multicultural social fabric of Azerbaijan during this period, but also serve as a compelling example of the efforts made by national and religious minorities to preserve their identity and engage them in civic life under imperial conditions.

**Keywords:** Baku; Jewish community; Jewish Charity Society; Labor Office; Talmud-Torah Society; Jewish Literary and Musical Society; Society for the Spread of Literacy among Georgian Jews; Baku Branch of the Jewish Territorial Organization; Russian Empire

### *Introduction*

The settling of Jews in the territory of Azerbaijan dates back to the early Middle Ages, and their long-standing presence in these lands has significantly contributed to the region's multifaceted development. The establishment and growth of Jewish communities in cities such as Guba and Baku had a considerable impact on the political, economic, and cultural life of Azerbaijani society. Jewish involvement in trade, craftsmanship, and various other sectors played a vital role in the local economy. It is important to note that Jews continue to reside in Azerbaijan today, represented by three main sub-ethnic groups: the Mountain Jews, Ashkenazi Jews, and Sephardic Jews (Hebrews) [Вайнштейн, Захарьев 2010, 37].

The Jewish community living in Azerbaijan, where an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust prevails among different peoples and religions, considering it their homeland, has

lived in peace and security for hundreds of years, preserved its unique customs, language, and culture, and has never encountered anti-Semitism or discrimination in history [Еврейской общине Азербайджана 2022].

The migration of Jews to Baku facilitated their social and institutional organization. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, under the rule of the Russian Empire, the Jewish community in Baku encountered new social and political challenges. As an oil-rich city, Baku had become a major industrial and commercial hub of the empire, attracting diverse ethnic and religious groups from across the Russian territories. The city rapidly evolved into a multicultural centre, with people arriving in search of economic opportunity. According to the first census of the Russian Empire of 1897, the Jewish population totalled approximately 5.3 million, constituting 4.15 % of the Empire's total population [Пулькин 2008, 280]. In Baku, there were 2,489 European Jews at the time [Nazaraliyeva 2023, 17]. Meanwhile, the First Russian Revolution, political unrest across the Empire, and interethnic tensions in the South Caucasus – particularly in Azerbaijan – also affected the socio-political circumstances of the Jewish community. In response to these challenges, the Jewish population in Baku undertook efforts not only to advance economically, but also to preserve their religious and cultural identity. As a result, they succeeded in organizing themselves and establishing various social and cultural institutions. These organizations played a pivotal role in addressing the social needs of the community, while also ensuring the preservation of Jewish language, culture, and religious traditions. It should also be noted that this tendency was not limited to Jewish organizations alone. In the South Caucasus, educational and charitable organizations belonging to other national and religious minorities were also active. Interestingly, the public organization of national and religious minorities in the Caucasus region was generally broader compared to other regions of the Empire. This situation can be interpreted as a policy of the Russian Empire aimed at setting different national groups against each other.

The paper examines the multifaceted activities of Jewish social organizations operating in Baku during the years 1906–1915. The selection of this time period is explained by the formation of social organizations in the Russian Empire. Investigating the activities of the Jewish community in Baku at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century not only provides insight into the socio-economic conditions of the time but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the coexistence and mutual influence of ethnic communities within the multicultural environment of the South Caucasus. This historical period necessitates an in-depth examination of the challenges faced by the Jewish community, particularly in adapting to the administrative structures of the Russian Empire and responding to broader social transformations. In this context, the paper is of particular relevance as it highlights the significant role played by public organizations established by Baku's Jewish population in preserving and promoting their cultural and national identity, as well as in contributing to societal development.

Although scientific studies include information about the cultural activities of the Jews in Baku, the legal status of Jewish public organizations and their relations with the state have not been extensively researched. Research on Azerbaijani Jews is reflected in the works of Moisey Bekker, a prominent Azerbaijani political scientist and PhD in Political Science. His monograph titled *The National Policy of Azerbaijan in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (in the Example of the Jewish Community)*, published in 2018, reflects the socio-political life of Jews during the years 1918–1920 – the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic [Беккер 2018]. The dissertation by researcher Aygün Nazaraliyeva, titled *Specific Features of the Modern Ethno-Cultural Dynamics of European Jews Living in Azerbaijan*, is dedicated primarily to the history of Ashkenazi Jews' participation in socio-political life and the development of their social organizations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century [Nəzəraliyeva 2023]. The aforementioned research works are dedicated to the general cultural activities of Jews in Baku. However, there are no specialized academic studies

on the activities of Jewish public organizations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. From this perspective, the paper is the first academic work in this field. The findings demonstrate that these organizations were not limited to providing social assistance; they also played a significant role in promoting enlightenment, fostering national self-awareness, preserving cultural heritage, and advocating for legal recognition.

Although several scholarly works have addressed the history of the Jewish community in Azerbaijan, the specific activities of Jewish public organizations remain insufficiently explored. There is a clear need for more comprehensive and detailed analysis – particularly concerning the role and influence of social and cultural institutions. The analysis of materials related to Jewish communities in Fund 46 of the Azerbaijan National Archive Department, the impact of Jewish organizations on society, and the examination of cultural diversity in the city of Baku in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century further enhance the scientific significance of the paper. The primary objective of the paper is to investigate the activities of Jewish public organizations in Baku during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to analyse the social and cultural challenges they encountered, and to examine the strategies they employed in order to address these issues. Furthermore, the paper aims at evaluating the contributions of the Jewish community to the broader development of society through their organizational initiatives and efforts to maintain their religious and cultural heritage. The systematic analysis of these organizations, combined with the extensive use of archival sources, constitutes the scientific novelty of this research. The life and organizational processes of the Jewish community during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are studied within both a local and imperial context, offering new scholarly outlook on this understudied subject.

### ***Activities of Jewish Public Organizations***

When discussing Jewish public organizations, it is essential to begin with the Baku Jewish Charity Society. This organization emerged as the largest and most influential Jewish charitable institution in Baku, garnering wide social support and establishing itself as a leader among other Jewish public organizations. Many smaller Jewish charitable initiatives that later appeared were founded with the support and guidance of the Society.

The Baku Jewish Charity Society officially commenced its activities on January 28, 1906. As its name implies, the organization's primary mission was to address issues of social welfare within the Jewish community. Its Chairman was Rabbi Lev Moiseyevich Berger [Адрес календарь 1920]. The principal goal of the Society was to improve the material and moral conditions of the disadvantaged and impoverished Jewish population in the city. According to its Charter, the Society was responsible for a wide range of assistance measures:

The society's aid shall include the provision of clothing, food, and shelter to the poor, as well as financial assistance; helping the needy find employment, procure materials and tools for work, and profitably sell the products of poor workers; supplying medical necessities to indigent patients, including their placement in hospitals at the society's expense, and organizing the burial of the deceased; placing the elderly and infirm in nursing homes or alms-houses, and minors in orphanages, shelters, vocational and educational institutions; securing conditions and funds for the care and upbringing of orphans, poor, and abandoned children; distributing morally instructive literature among the public; and offering financial assistance to the poor for returning to their homeland [Национальное Архивное Управление Азербайджанской Республики – onwards НАУ АР, ф. 46, оп. 3, ед. хр. 554, л. 2].

The Society provided both material and spiritual support to Jews living in Baku and its surrounding areas. It also financed the activity of a synagogue, a four-year school for boys, a vocational school for girls, Saturday evening educational classes for men and women, and a public library and reading room. Depending on available resources, the Society also had the capacity to establish public dining halls, teahouses, affordable housing, shelters, dormitories, workhouses, hospitals, outpatient clinics, and other similar institutions.

However, the implementation of many of these initiatives required formal authorization from the relevant imperial authorities. The Society was obliged to operate strictly within the framework of contemporary legal and administrative regulations. For example, the establishment of reading rooms and libraries was subject to oversight, particularly in accordance with the 1890 amendment to Article 17 of the Law on Censorship and the Press, issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Membership in the Baku Jewish Charity Society was open to all Jews, regardless of gender, social rank, or professional ability. However, specific groups were excluded from eligibility, including minors, pupils and students, low-ranking military personnel on active duty, and individuals serving criminal sentences. The Society categorized its members into three types: honorary, full and associate members. Honorary members were individuals who either made a one-time donation of at least 500 rubles or rendered outstanding service to the Society. The honorary status was conferred by the General Meeting of the Society's members. Notably, individuals who made annual donations of 500 rubles or more could also be awarded honorary membership. Full members were required to contribute either an annual donation of 6 rubles or a one-time donation of 100 rubles to the Society's treasury [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 3, ед. хр. 554, л. 2]. Importantly, the General Meeting held the discretion to grant full membership, regardless of donation status, to individuals who had significantly contributed to the Society's mission. This included doctors offering free medical services to impoverished patients, teachers educating underprivileged children free of charge, individuals caring for orphaned children, and those directly assisting the needy in other tangible ways. Associate members contributed 3 to 6 rubles annually, indicating a lower but still committed level of engagement.

The Society's financial resources were derived from a combination of sources, including membership fees, capital investments, and income; monetary and in-kind donations from both members and external contributors; spiritual bequests; and proceeds from cultural and educational events such as theatre performances, literary readings, public lectures, and concerts. Additional funding came from the sale of publications and subscriptions, as well as public and targeted ("cup") collections.

In addition to charitable relief, the Society also addressed the issue of unemployment among Baku's Jewish population. In response to frequent appeals from unemployed Jewish artisans seeking assistance, the Society submitted a formal request to the Baku City Hall:

Recently, unemployed Jewish artisans often apply to the Jewish Charity Society to help them find work. It is difficult for them to find work without assistance. With the desire to come to the aid of honest workers who earn their living by their own labor, the Jewish Charity Society appeals to Your Excellencies and asks you to allow our society to open a labor bureau that will create conditions for registering vacancies and job seekers in workshops and factories, as well as for placing unemployed artisans [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 3, ед. хр. 554, л. 1].

This appeal was approved, and permission was granted to establish a Labour Bureau. Its goal consisted in alleviating unemployment by matching job seekers with available positions in Baku's rapidly industrializing economy. The initiative exemplified the Society's commitment not only to charitable relief but also to fostering self-reliance and improving the social standing of the Jewish community. Moreover, the successful establishment of the Bureau demonstrated the community's organizational maturity and its capacity for self-governance in addressing critical social challenges.

Another notable Jewish public organization that emerged in Baku in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Talmud-Torah Society. As early as 1896, a yeshiva – a higher religious educational institution dedicated to the study of the Talmud within Jewish tradition – had already been established in Baku. In parallel with such religious institutions, various Sunday schools also began operating to meet the needs of the city's growing Jewish population

[Nəzərəliyeva 2023, 17]. The Talmud-Torah Society, while grounded in religious education, developed into a broader educational initiative with both religious and secular dimensions. The Society was founded in 1911 on the initiative of Rabbi Lev Moiseyevich Berger, who also chaired the Baku Jewish Charity Society. Alongside with Berger, a group of prominent Jewish residents of Baku – including engineer Solomon Meyerovich Trop, engineer Moisey Meyerovich Trop, merchant Samuil Moiseyevich Shryro, physician Moisey Arinovich Gukhman, and assistant lawyer Mikhail Semyonovich Aleynikov – submitted a petition to the Mayor of Baku for the permission to establish the Talmud-Torah Jewish Society [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. хр. 143, л. 1]. On November 26 of the same year, a meeting held by the Department of Societies and Unions of the Baku City Administration approved the Society's Charter, and it was officially registered under entry No. 94.

The mission of the Talmud-Torah Society was to promote enlightenment and education – both religious and secular – among the Jewish population of Baku. The organization prioritized literacy, vocational training, and the integration of religious instruction with broader educational goals. This dual approach distinguished the Society from other strictly religious institutions. Personal development and social integration were central to its mission, especially in light of the rapid industrialization and demographic shifts occurring in Baku at the time. To meet these objectives, the Society aimed to establish new schools or take existing Jewish educational institutions under its patronage. Its goals extended beyond formal schooling to include the establishment of reading rooms, evening courses for adults, and libraries. Reflecting the requirements of the imperial educational system, instruction in Russian language was mandatory in all schools under the Russian Empire. Accordingly, the Talmud-Torah Society ensured that its schools provided primary education in Russian, while also teaching Hebrew, the Torah, the Talmud, and the core principles of the Jewish faith. Education under the Talmud-Torah Society was provided free of charge, ensuring access for underprivileged Jewish children. This model allowed the organization not only to preserve religious identity but also to adapt the Jewish community to the socio-economic realities of life in an imperial, multicultural, and increasingly industrialized urban environment. In this sense, the Talmud-Torah Society functioned as both a religious and a modern educational institution, responsive to the evolving needs of the Jewish population in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Baku.

The financial resources of Talmud-Torah were obtained from the members' investments, voluntary or random donations, events, performances, lectures, association meetings, and other activities provided for by law. The Society included its founders, honorary, active, and rival members. Regardless of rank and gender, anyone could become a member of the Society. Exceptions were minors, students, military personnel, those whose rights were restricted by the court, and those convicted of a crime.

Persons who participated in the drafting of the Charter were considered founders of the Society. They had to pay a donation of at least 10 rubles per year. Honorary members were persons who had rendered significant services to the Society or had paid a large amount of money. Active members paid no less than 3 rubles per year. Those who did not pay the annual membership fee were excluded from the Society until they paid the next amount. Persons who provided gratuitous services to the Society could be elected rival members.

The general management of the Talmud-Torah was entrusted to the General Meeting of the Society's members. General Meetings were ordinary and extraordinary. Ordinary Meetings were held once a year at a fixed time. Extraordinary Meetings were convened by the Chairman at any time in order to resolve important and urgent issues.

In 1913, the Chairman of the Society was Solomon Meyerovich Trop, Deputy Chairwoman was Rosalia Davidovna Rakhmilovich, with Secretary Simon Moiseyevich Epstein, Treasurer Iosif Vladimirovich Zeyliger, members Lev Moiseyevich Berger, Samuil

Moiseyevich Shryro, Lipman Yerukhimovich Itskovich, Sofya Israilevna Itskovich, Maria Abramovna Rabinovich, Yevgeniya Isaakovna Idelson, Nadezhda Savelyevna Zombe, Moisey Meyerovich Trop [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 226, л. 18]. The Society often organized holiday performances for children.

In general, the Talmud-Torah Society created conditions for involving children from poor families in education in the Jewish community, tried to make education the main means of preserving Jewish national identity, and paved the way for the community's youth to enter the labour market in the future. Thus, Baku Jews considered enlightenment to be the main means of their national and cultural revival.

Another Society that promoted enlightenment was the Dissemination of Literacy among Georgian Jews Society. The Dissemination of Literacy among Georgian Jews Society was registered on September 17, 1910, by the decision of the Baku City Administration [Бакинские губернские ведомости № 41]. The founders of the Society were David Yakobadze-Trakelashvili, David Iosifovich Kurkishvili, Eushak Shalomovich Chianurashvili, Iosif Yakovlevich Chianurashvili, Eushak Shalomovich Chasidi-Kadoshvili [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 130, л. 1]. It should be noted that all five founders were residents of the city of Akhalsikhe, Tbilisi province, who came to Baku and began their activities here.

The purpose of the Society was to help spread primary education and literacy among Georgian Jews settled in Baku. To achieve this, the Society encouraged the opening of schools and their support at its own expense. Additionally, the Society organized reading rooms, evening courses for adults, libraries, and, along with primary education in Russian, taught Hebrew and religious studies in its schools. The Chairman was Israel Yulievich Glachenhaus. The members of the Society's Board of Directors in 1911 were P. V. Kraveyv, S. F. Rivlin, O. G. Dembo, J. Gernstein, U. Aberson, D. Prokelashvili, E. Khasidishvili, Sh. Kurishvili, and A. Mosashvili [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 130, л. 19]. In general, the Society's activities served to raise the intellectual level of the Jewish community and strengthen their positions in social and cultural life. This approach was synchronous with the enlightenment processes taking place in Northern Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus in general during the mentioned period.

Another Jewish public organization operating in Baku was the Jewish Literary and Musical Society, which also played an important role in the field of enlightenment and culture.

The purpose of establishing the Baku Jewish Literary and Musical Society was to promote the study and development of Jewish literature in the native language and other languages, the study of Jewish folk and synagogue music, and the creation of enthusiasm for it. In this regard, the Society held discussions and readings in Russian, Yiddish (the colloquial Jewish language), and ancient Jewish languages for its members. It also organized an orchestra and choir from among its members for the study of synagogue and folk songs, gave reports and lectures at its public meetings and literary evenings, staged performances, and organized libraries, reading rooms, book stores, museums, and exhibitions under the Society's auspices. With the permission of the educational authorities, it created courses for the study of the Jewish language, literature, and history. The sphere of activity of the Society was the Baku City Hall [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 164, л. 42].

The founders of the Society were the first-guild merchant of Baku, Samuil Moiseyevich Shryro, the engineer-technologist David Lvovich Landau (father of physicist and Nobel laureate Lev Landau), the chemist-engineer Mendel Mordkovich Gallay, the doctor Yakov Kusielevich Varshavsky, and the dentist Samuil Movshovich Itkin [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 164, л. 1]. The Society was registered on February 27, 1913, and the founding meeting was held on March 7 of the same year.

Since the Baku Jewish Literary and Musical Society did not have its own building, it held its meetings and events in spaces owned by various societies, such as the Imperial

Technical Society, the People's University located on Mariinskaya and Merkurievskaya streets, and the Tagiyev Theater. A report on "The Artist Levitan and His Artwork" [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 164, л. 21], an analysis of the paper published in the journal "Novyy Voskhod" by S. M. Dubnov [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 164, л. 20], who wrote the scientific history of the Jewish people, a discussion on the drama "Dyadya Shtumer" (Mute) by play righter A. Weiner in the Yiddish colloquial language [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 164, л. 22], a report on the topic "Heine and Judaism" [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 164, л. 25], Jewish folk music evenings, and other events were steps taken towards the promotion of Jewish literature, culture, and language.

As seen, the above-listed public organizations played a significant role in meeting the needs of the Jewish community, increasing literacy among children and youth, and taking initiatives in the fields of primary and vocational education. They also contributed to strengthening the cultural and social structure of community members. However, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about a shift in focus. It was no longer merely about social assistance and enlightenment, but a stage emerged in which deeper political and national issues took precedence. In this context, the Jewish Territorial Society operating in Baku represented a new stage – steps toward the self-determination of the Jewish community, determining its legal status, and the formation of the idea of autonomy outside Europe. While the previous organizations sought to improve the living conditions of community members within the existing realities, the Territorial Society aimed to alter these realities and create new horizons.

The Jewish Territorial Society was founded in Warsaw, and its first General Meeting was held on March 27, 1907, in the "Novo-Harmony" Hall. The founder and Chairman of the Society was Isidor Vladimirovich Yasinovsky. The key representatives were Noakh Yankel-Berovich Filkelshteyn, Samuil-Yakov Shulimovich Yatskan, and the Secretary Yakov Aronov-Ziselev Yoselev. The Board of Directors consisted of 16 members:

1. Bsidor Vladimirovich Yasinovsky, chairman, Warsaw
2. Noakh Yankel-Berovich Filkelshteyn, Warsaw
3. Samuil-Yakov Shulimovich Yatskan, Warsaw
4. Yakov Aronov-Ziselev Yoselev, Warsaw
5. Gilka Leyzerovich Tseytlin, Warsaw
6. Doctor of Medicine Max Yemelyanovich Mandelstam, Kiev
7. David Shlimow Leibovich Yochelman, Kiev
8. Samuil Moiseyevich Shryro, Baku
9. Doctor Yosif-Gersh Avraamovich Stein, Yelizavetgrad (Ganja)
10. Engineer Moisey Meyerovich Trop, Baku
11. Leon Yakovlevich Rabinovich, Odessa
12. Doctor David Borisovich Dorfman, Odessa
13. Leon Hersovich Panerin, Odessa
14. Doctor Max Leontovich Goldberg, Yelets
15. Zelman Vulfovich Vilka, Kovno
16. Engineer Lev Abramovich Lev, Kiev [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 99. л. 1–2].

It is evident from the list that the Board members were from the cities with a substantial Jewish population.

The Society raised the issue of searching for and acquiring new lands outside Europe as a starting point for autonomy for Jewish immigrants who did not want to remain in their countries of residence. This initiative indicated that a more pragmatic and alternative political idea, in contrast to Zionism, was taking shape within Jewish communities at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Society did not promote or encourage emigration but aimed at the resettlement of Jews who had emigrated from Russia and other countries based on their personal wishes to have safe and free territories.

The Society's sphere of activity covered the territory of the Russian Empire. It set two main goals: First, to find ways and take measures to search for and acquire suitable territories outside Europe for the purposes of autonomy; to collect the necessary information about the countries of immigration, provide material assistance to those placed in settlements, autonomous farms, and colonies organized for Jewish immigrants outside Europe; to equip expeditions to inherit the territories offered by governments for the establishment of autonomous colonies; to properly familiarize oneself with the rules and conditions of colonization and emigration; to find ways to create the means required for the tasks of the Society. Second, to establish relations with government, public, and private institutions on issues concerning the Society; to reach agreements with emigration and colonial organizations, financial and other structures inside and outside Russia; to ensure the participation of its representatives in congresses, conferences, and other meetings related to the activities of the Society [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 99, л. 3].

Any person accepted by the Board of Directors and contributing 50 kopecks per year could become a member of the Society. Income was obtained from membership fees, donations, wills, theatrical performances, concerts, musical and literary evenings, dance parties, balls, and other events organized by the Society.

On August 26, 1907, the Baku Mayor received the appeal from the Warsaw Executive Committee for opening a branch of the Jewish Territorial Society in Baku [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 99, л. 7]. The founders of the Baku branch were chemical engineer Moisey Meyerovich Tron, doctor Janko Yakovlevich Georgenburger, and citizen of Tbilisi Abram Semyonovich Tseitlin [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 99, л. 9]. Since it was a matter of opening a public or political organization, the Baku Mayor had to apply to the city Gubernia Gendarmerie Department and conduct an investigation into the political security of the founders. No information was obtained about the political convictions of the named individuals. On September 28 of that year, the founders submitted the Charter of the Society to the Baku Mayor and received the permission to open the branch. The opening of the Baku branch of the Jewish Territorial Society was important in several aspects. First, Baku's geopolitical position and location on the imperial border made it a suitable location for considering such plans. Second, the multicultural environment and economic development of the northern city were considered as a potential place of residence and settlement for Jewish immigrants. Finally, the territorial issue was the subject of discussions with imperial centres and international organizations in the context of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination. In this regard, the activities of the Baku branch showed that local Jewish communities were no longer striving to have a say not only in domestic social assistance but also in the formation of the global Jewish future. It was the reason, among others, that the Jewish Territorial Society in Poland was declared a "dangerous" institution. As a result, the Warsaw city governor appealed to the Baku governor on March 2, 1908. The appeal stated that, in accordance with Article 3 of the Provisional Regulations, the Jewish Territorial Society was to be terminated along with all its branches [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. xp. 99, л. 13]. For this reason, the Baku branch of the Society was closed, and its founders were held accountable.

### ***Conclusions***

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Baku was a place distinguished not only in terms of industrial and economic development, but also in terms of its multinational and multi-confessional socio-cultural environment. This period was especially remembered for the active role of the Jewish community in the life of the city. In general, the level of organization among the Jews of Baku was higher compared to other cities and regions of Azerbaijan and, more broadly, the South Caucasus. This difference was mainly due to the fact that, as noted, Baku had become a major industrial, oil, and trade centre within the Russian Empire during that period. The city's economic dynamism and multiethnic composition created a favourable environment for the Jewish community to organize itself both



socially and culturally. As a result, Jewish public institutions in Baku not only preserved religious identity but also actively participated in the city's public life. In this context, the term "Baku Jews" can be regarded not only as a geographical designation but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

Studies show that the Jewish community created a number of public organizations for religious, educational, and social welfare purposes. Jewish public organizations operating in Baku were distinguished not only by their social and educational activities but also by their contribution to the general process of society development. All above mentioned organizations played a multifaceted role in the life of the Jewish community in Baku, promoting not only the material, but also spiritual, intellectual, and cultural life. Thanks to the activities of these organizations, the Jewish community became an integral part of society. This line of development, which began and continued through education and charity, sometimes passed to the political and ideological level, giving rise to initiatives that brought the issue of the Jewish people right to self-determination to the agenda. It is clear that during the mentioned period, Baku was not only an economic and industrial centre but also a multicultural, tolerant, and open environment for civic initiatives. In this context, the activities of the Jewish community were one of the brightest manifestations of both local history and universal humanitarian values.

Jewish organizations, especially in the field of education and culture, operated under the relatively low pressure. This indicated a more liberal environment compared to organizations like the Ukrainian "Prosvita". Since charitable societies related to the Muslim population of Baku were religious in nature, the government did not interfere much in their activities. However, organizations with political elements, such as the "Jewish Territorial Society", were subject to surveillance, and eventually, their activities were halted. Interestingly, in this context, the Russian authorities showed a tolerant attitude towards institutions like the "Baku Armenian Philanthropic Society" and the "Baku Armenian Cultural Union". However, these societies secretly maintained connections with the Dashnaks and Bolsheviks and, under the guise of cultural activity, were effectively involved in spreading political ideology [HAY AP, ф. 46, оп. 2, ед. хр. 314, л. 15]. Nevertheless, these organizations were not directly shut down; rather, their activities were often overlooked. This was the result of the Empire's dual policy towards certain ethnic groups – some were treated harshly, while others were tolerated to a greater extent.

Based on archival materials, it became possible to clarify the reasons for the formation, functions, and focus areas of activity of the mentioned organizations. The educational initiatives of these organizations, the organization of social assistance, their help in getting job, and their contributions to cultural life were indicators of solidarity within the Jewish community, as well as meeting the internal needs of Baku Jews and directing them to integration into public life. In addition, the study shows that the organization of the Jewish community was possible within the framework of imperial legislation, but even within this framework, they gained certain maneuverability in their relations with local authorities and the public. The organized expression of the community's needs and the documentation of these activities in the archives allow for a deeper understanding of the multinational nature and socio-cultural diversity of Azerbaijani history.

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### *III. Багірова*

#### **Діяльність єврейських громадських організацій у Баку на початку XX століття**

На початку XX століття Баку було колоніальним містом у межах Російської імперії і вважалося значним центром не лише в політичному та економічному, а й у культурному та соціальному аспектах. У цей період співіснування, соціальна та культурна взаємодія різноманітних етнічних і релігійних громад у місті, а також створення громадських організацій відігравали важливу роль у розвитку цих громад. Серед цих осередків особливо вирізнялася єврейська громада. Євреї брали активну участь у політичному, економічному та культурному житті того часу, сприяючи розвитку як власної громади, так і суспільства загалом. Ця стаття досліджує різноманітну та багатогранну діяльність єврейських громадських організацій, що діяли в Баку протягом 1906–1915 років. Цей період характерний формуванням громадських організацій у Російській імперії. Спираючись на архівні документи, авторка аналізує роботу таких організацій, як Єврейське благодійне товариство, бакинське відділення Єврейської територіальної організації, Товариство Талмуд-Тора, Єврейське літературне та музичне товариство, а також Товариство поширення письменності серед грузинських євреїв. Метою статті є оцінка впливу цих організацій на розвиток єврейської громади в соціальній сфері. Результати дослідження засвідчують, що єврейські громадські організації Баку не обмежувалися наданням соціальної допомоги; вони також відігравали значну роль у сприянні просвітництву, вихованні національної самосвідомості, збереженні культурної спадщини та обстоюванні правового визнання. Отже, організація та діяльність єврейської громади в Баку не лише висвітлюють роль і місце євреїв у мультикультурному соціальному середовищі Азербайджану цього періоду, а й служать переконливим прикладом зусиль національних і релігійних меншин щодо збереження своєї ідентичності та участі в громадському житті за імперських часів.

**Ключові слова:** Баку, єврейська громада; Єврейське благодійне товариство; Робітниче бюро; Товариство Талмуд-Тора; Єврейське літературне та музичне товариство; Товариство поширення письменності серед грузинських євреїв; бакинське відділення Єврейської територіальної організації; Російська імперія

*Стаття надійшла до видання 21.05.2025  
Прийнято до друку після рецензування 30.09.2025  
Опубліковано 7.10.2025*