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## Teachers and Their Work in the Civic Associations of the Regional Centers of Eastern Siberia in the Late XIX Century

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**Abstract.** The teaching professionals of the Eastern Siberian cities played an instrumental role in the founding and functioning of civic associations designed to advance social reform, popularize science and conserve regional historical and cultural heritage. Public service of teachers helped shape an active public sphere, which served as an impetus for the emergence of civil society in the late imperial Russia.

**Keywords:** teaching intelligentsia, pre-revolutionary Siberia, civic associations, Sunday schools, public readings, congresses, public sphere.

Eastern Siberian cities of the late XIX century witnessed a large increase in the growth of civic associations ranging from educational, technical, agricultural and geographical societies to sports and leisure clubs. By 1897, there were more than 30 actively functioning associations and clubs in Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Chita. These associations created by the local intelligentsia, municipal administrator and entrepreneurial elite helped shape a lively public sphere, which served as a building block for the emergence of the civil society in the late tsarist Russia. The Siberian associations were a part of the growing country-wide trend.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thousands of voluntary associations have been established in the central and peripheral regions of the Russian empire, including many educational associations organized and led by the teachers of private and public schools. These associations and institutions they supported (e. g., libraries, reading rooms, Sunday schools, museums and orphanages) fulfilled the local needs that the residents themselves identified, notwithstanding of the government directives. Despite the overbearing nature of the autocratic rule, these associations found a way to operate autonomously and to avoid confrontation with the state. Moreover, the state administrators often collaborated with the associations to help promote social and economic improvements in the regions, which lacked adequate funding and, therefore, had to rely heavily on the associations to deliver services to the people. The organizers and members of these associations, which mostly consisted of local intelligentsia ranging from medical doctors, teacher and engineers to the city officials and administrators, exemplified the values of “individual initiative, self-improvement, respect for rationality and science” and the desire to work collectively for the betterment of a region and a country as a whole [1, p. 1120].

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the role of the professional teaching intelligentsia in the founding and functioning of the civic associations of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Chita at the end of the XIX century. These associations were an instrumental part of the urban public sphere. They provided an expanded access to the elementary education and vocational training and created new forms of leisure for the urban residents. They also advanced scientific knowledge and historical preservation in the region.

In the past twenty years, historians produced a vast amount of scholarship on the history of the associational life and the emergence of the public sphere in the central and provincial regions of the Russian empire in the late XIX century. The works of N. I. Gavrilovoyi, P. N. Meshalkina, V. P. Shaferova, G. V. Ogleznevoyi, E. V. Sevostyanovoyi, A. A. Kuznetsova, T. V. Palikovoi, D. A. Alisova and E. A. Degaltsevoi explored various facets of the public sphere in Eastern Siberia and Trans-Baikal, and analyzed the role of the urban elites in philanthropy and creation of multiple associations. A similar direction of the research but with the concentration on the central Russian regions has been conducted in the recent years by the western historians Joseph Bradley, Jeffrey Brooks, Alfred Rieber, Adele Lindenmeyer and Laura Engelstein, who pondered the connections between the associational life and the construction of a civil society in Russia on the eve of revolution. However, no substantial research has been done to illustrate the role of the teaching intelligentsia, who affirmed the task of cultural stewardship and contributed greatly to the social reform and modernization of Eastern Siberia. Our article will attempt to fill this historiographic lacunae.

The most prominent voluntary associations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, organized by the teachers with the assistance of local elites, were the Society to Provide Financial Assistance to the Students of Eastern Siberia, established in Irkutsk in 1875; the Society to Provide Financial Assistance to the Students of Eniseyskoyi Gubernii, established in Krasnoyarsk in 1884; the Society to Provide Financial Assistance to the Students of Zabaikalskaya Oblast' established in Chita in 1897 and two societies to Provide Assistance to the Siberian Students studying in Moscow and St. Petersburg, both established in 1884. These associations were not exclusive to the Siberian regions. According to I. V. Suchkov, in 1898, there were 193 educational associations in the Russian empire, primarily organized by the teaching professionals [19, p. 71]. These organizations provided teachers with a major vehicle for the public service in central and peripheral regions of the Russian Empire. The associations raised financial aid for the students and worked towards the democratization of the education by constructing new educational, cultural and leisure opportunities for the local residents. According to our data, there were 353 professional teachers at the secular elementary and secondary schools of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Chita in 1897. Roughly 70 % of them was involved into the associational service. The elementary school teachers, most of whom were females, represented more than half of the teaching membership in these associations [6, p. 121, 327–330].

There were several reasons why teachers engaged into the creation and work of the voluntary associations. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time of

great changes in the Russian empire, and the teachers hoped that through public service and collaboration with the local administrators they could soften the autocratic policies of the state and bring an era of progressive civic life into the Siberian cities. By raising the educational and cultural level of general public through the Sunday schools and the public readings the teaching intelligentsia confronted the conventional notion of the “Siberian backwardness” and worked towards national improvement.

One may argue that the teachers, while already been in the public service, saw their work at associations as the continuation of their professional duty to the state. In reality, however, as American historian Joseph Bradley stated, “The bureaucratic service to the state no longer defined the public duty of the professional elites” [1, p. 1105]. Through their service in Sunday schools, libraries, museums and public reading initiatives, teachers democratized the education with the hope of creating an “educated citizenry”. Outside of traditional classroom they challenged the notion of the tsarist education, whose objective was to “instill in children love and obedience to the tsar, church, and the motherland”. As one Sunday school teacher wrote, “Our goal as educators is to instill in our students love and appreciation for the truth, freedom and creativity” [5, p. 59].

By engaging into the public service, the teachers shaped their self-identity and promoted their professional interests, including raising public awareness of the school’s heavy workloads, poor working conditions and unsatisfactory wages. Teachers enjoyed meeting their peers from other educational institutions and establishing sense of professional camaraderie and reciprocity. Some entered into the associations because they were in vogue and all their peers were already involved in them. Finally, the teaching professionals longed for the public recognition of their talents and expertise, which they sorely extended to the community.

The charters for each association were written by the teachers themselves and, unlike the government sponsored associations, they were entirely voluntary. Their members paid annual membership fee and met bi-weekly during the school year. The organizers had an authority to recruit new members, elect the board, plan events and allocate funds. The local administration had to approve the charters for each society in accordance with the *Gorodovym Polozheniem* but it did not regulate fund allocations, and the elections of new members and the board. It is worth noting that the relationships between the associations and the autocratic polities in Siberia, as well as in the Russia as a whole, were complex. According to Joseph Bradley, “Collaboration and cooperation are just as likely as confrontation to define the relationship [between the two]” [1, p. 1102]. The organizers understood the situation well and chose to avoid direct political activities, which could challenge the autocratic rule. In turn, the autocratic state came to recognize and rely on civic associations to provide education, rational leisure, medical care and infrastructure to the residents of remote regions, chronically lacking funds. The government, which was unwilling to change its autocratic rule, nevertheless allowed great degree of autonomy for the multitude of associations emerging in cities, working towards the goal of national improvement and modernization [1, p. 1113].

Reacting to the creation of the Irkutsk Society to Provide Financial Aid for the students of Eastern Siberia, prominent Siberian ethnographer and historian Grigoryi Potanin wrote that “Public of Irkutsk is finally growing out of its administrative swaddling clothes and is beginning to recognizing its human dignity” [11, p. 57]. With the help of the local press actively publicizing the work of this and other associations, their general membership grew tremendously. In 1898 the membership of the Irkutsk Society to Provide Financial Aid stood at 662 people, including 100 teachers, 20 medical doctors and several local administrators, all of whom made up the “active core” of the organization [9]. This and other associations raised money for scholarships, opened up libraries, Sunday and evening schools for the adults and children, and organized multiple public readings, lectures and concerts.

Educational entertainment was a large area of focus by the societies. Their objective was to provide the urban population with an alternative medium of leisure, one that stimulated desire for self-improvement and enlightenment. This was met with a great deal of enthusiasm by the local press, which lamented in 1888 that “Siberian leisure consists of playing cards, drinking and brawling and does not satisfy the growing public need for the cultural enrichment” [14]. In 1893, the Irkutsk Society to Provide Financial Aid for the students of Eastern Siberia in conjunction with the Remeslenno-Slobodskim Voskresnym Uchilishem started organizing popular public readings accompanied by the magic lantern. An elementary school teacher Konstanin Konstantinovich Chernyakov was elected by the society to execute organizational functions, including the selection of readings, advertisement, writing annual reports and managing financials. Chernyakov recruited a group of his peers from public and parochial elementary schools of Irkutsk to conduct the readings.

From 1893 to 1895, the teachers organized 36 free public readings. The readings fell into four categories: religious, historico-geographical, scientific and fictional. Teachers gravitated more towards secular literature and attempted to avoid topics of Christian evangelism. Teachers of elementary schools F. G. Myasnikov, K. I. Votincev, V. V. Elichev, V. I. Losev, O. N. Mayanskaya and O. F. Shemetiva and A. M. Kozmina were the most frequent readers and enjoyed warm reception by the public. From its inception through 1895, the readings were attended by seven thousand people, which constituted about 13 % of total population, averaging 200 attendees at each event [2, p. 140]. There was a correlation between the numbers of attendees and the usage of the visuals and music. For instance, the readings which were accompanied by the magic lantern and music had higher attendance than those that did not have visuals.

The readings from the works of Mamin-Sibiriyak, Zhukovsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, Shevchenko, Lermontov, Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrasov seemed to generate more interest than the readings on the religious topics. A lecture about Abraham Lincoln and the slave emancipation in the United States also created a great deal of interest in the Irkutsk audience. Incredibly popular among those who liked agriculture were a series of lectures about botany, delivered by Vasilyi Vasilievich Elichev, who taught at a parochial school of Irkutsk in the 1890s. He

built a large green house and purchased several acres of land at the outskirts of the city, where he cultivated new varieties of crabapples, pears and plums. In 1897, Elichev sold his orchard and a green house, resigned from the school and travelled with his family to Hawaii to research agricultural techniques there. While in Hawaii he wrote a series of letters for the Irkutsk newspaper *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, published in 1897 [18]. The book titles for the readings were selected in the accordance with the special catalogue of the Ministry of Public Education. In 1891, the Ministry approved 148 titles but after teachers' outcry about the scarcity of selection, the Ministry added more titles, and then relented and allowed teachers to read any books, located in the libraries of their schools [10, p. 2].

An effective collaboration established by the Irkutsk teachers with the local administration ensured success of the public readings. In 1896, with the help of the patron of arts and a prominent member of the Irkutsk Duma Vladimir Platonovich Sukachev, a new auditorium was built for the readings with the maintenance costs carried by the Duma. The organizers of readings believed in the power of knowledge and strived to elevate urban residents from an intellectual impoverishment and shape them into knowledgeable and responsible members of the society. Religion did not have a large place in this agenda. To counteract the influence of the secular public readings, the religious seminary of Irkutsk in 1893 began holding its own public readings centered on the religious themes. One common thread, however, that connected these initiatives was temperance. The organizers hoped that new forms of educational leisure would serve as a substitute for the recreational drinking.

The popularity of readings and the growing public appetite for the educational entertainment inspired teachers and other representative of the local intelligentsia to create in 1897 the organizational charter for the Association for the Public Education and Entertainment in the Irkutsk Region. The primary objective of the association was the democratization of the education, which included expansion of Sunday schools, reading rooms, libraries and museums and the organization of musical and literary concerts and public lectures. The charter outlined a set of rules defining the creation of the Board, the election of chair, membership fee and recruitment. The treasury was also set with its specific set of rules. The Association submitted its charter to the Ministry of Interior and began its operation almost immediately upon submission. The Ministry approved the charter on June 6, 1900. This example yet again illustrates the existence of benevolent relationship between the autocratic polities and the local initiative working towards educational and cultural improvements. In this and many other cases, the members of the associations skillfully navigated the political landscape and managed to start their operations well before the official regulations were issued by the government. In 1900, the government, which at first limited the pool of readers to the teaching personnel, clergymen and administrative officials, began to allow other groups of residents submit applications to become readers [19]. The young people who once attended the readings and developed thirst for knowledge, were now given an opportunity to become the readers and carriers of the culture themselves.

The benevolent attitude of the administration towards popular educational initiatives turned sour during the revolutionary events of 1905. The readings began to be closely censored and their attendance declined [8]. Public lectures on geography, archeology and local history, organized by the intellectual elite under the auspices of the learned societies started growing in popularity and gradually replaced the public readings.

The associations also supported creation of libraries and free Sunday schools, which served to both genders and were financed through fundraising and charity. One of the most popular free libraries in Irkutsk was created in the 1896 and named after A. V. Potanin. To open the library, teachers joined their efforts with the members of local elite, including medical doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs. By establishing a horizontal network of connections with various social groups, who shared similar civic interests, teaching intelligentsia amplified its educational impact on the public sphere. The executive board of the library consisted of six people, four of whom were the elementary school teachers. The library actively recruited new members and used their membership fees to finance this institution. At various times between 1896 and 1899, more than 30 elementary school teachers served at the library's board [3, list 51]. During its first year of its operation, the library worked in the mornings and evenings seven days a week, with the members volunteering their services in weekly four-hour shifts.

Striving to broaden an access to education among the poor urban residents, the teachers also turned their attention to the Sunday schools, which were seen as an affordable alternative to the public and parochial elementary schools. In the 1890s, the Krasnoyarsk Society to Provide Financial Assistance to the Students of Enisei Region opened seven Sunday schools. The two most prominent Sunday schools of Irkutsk were the Remeslenno-Slobodskoe uchilishche and the Voskresnaya Shkola Sukacheva. The initiative to open up the uchilishche belonged to the elementary school teacher A. M. Korbut, who in 1885 approached a merchant and the honorary citizen of Irkutsk V. T. Zimin and persuaded him to donate money to the "good cause". On December 13, 1885 the school was opened and Zimin was named a main trustee of the school's board. The school opened with eight students and grew to 155 students by 1892 [17]. However, after the Zimin's departure from Irkutsk in 1888, the endowment run out and the uchilishche began to suffer from the lack of funding and was eventually placed on a city budget in 1891.

Both schools had small libraries created through donations and catered to the teenagers and young adults of both genders, taught in separate classrooms. The schools' curriculum was aligned with one at the narodnye uchilishcha and was comprised of religious instruction, reading, writing, math and needlework. The schools operated from 8:00 till noon on Saturdays and from noon till 14:00 on Sundays. Elementary school teachers taught at both schools but received no compensation for their service. They usually volunteered for two or three months at the time and then were replaced by a new group of volunteers. One of the major educational objectives of Sunday schools was to teach students reading comprehension skills. The good readers were often selected by the teachers to read excerpts from the books to their peers at the beginning of the class time. They were

also encouraged to borrow books from the school library and read to their family members at home.

Sunday schools as well as the public readings were mostly staffed by the elementary school teachers, most of whom were young unmarried women. For instance, at the *remeslenno-slobodskom uchilishhe* in 1885, there were five teachers, all of whom were females. In 1890, the school used services of seven females and two male teachers, and in 1895 there were 11 female teachers and only 4 males [17].

There were few possible reasons why female teachers dominated at Sunday schools. Women traditionally experienced gendered exclusionary practices in the workplace. For instance, in 1897, females constituted about 20 % of teaching personnel in schools of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Chita. The majority of them were native residents with the high school diplomas and mostly employed by the elementary schools. Elementary schools had the lowest wages compared to other educational institutions, and many female teachers of these institutions lived in poverty. In contrast, about 45 % of male teachers with the secondary school diplomas have been employed by the institutions of secondary education ranging from gymnasiums and teaching seminaries to technical and industrial schools [6, p. 330–332]. Because the curriculum of Sunday schools was similar to the curriculum of public elementary schools, and because Sunday schools were frequently publicized in local press, they presented an easy choice of service for women. Women hoped that the public exposure of their dedicated service would earn them recognition and respect and perhaps broaden their professional opportunities. Not a week went by when a local newspaper did not write yet another report on contribution of female teachers to the educational and cultural initiatives in Siberian cities. The public spotlight, while it did not immediately improve the employability of women, helped them gain visibility in the community and establish useful vertical connections with the local administration and an urban elite.

The work at the elementary schools was also an incredibly isolating experience, in a sense that it did not provide women with many opportunities for socializing with their peers. To make matters worse, female teachers of Irkutsk region were excluded from the congresses of elementary school teachers for almost two decades, from 1850s to 1870s. This disparity and a sense of isolation have long been acknowledged by the female teachers, who actively sought for ways to break out from this isolation and join the “engines of collective action” by donating their time at Sunday schools, libraries and public readings. They took volunteering as an opportunity to strengthen their professional standing in the community, while fulfilling their objective to expand educational offerings for the local residents. Thus, although most of the educational associations were initiated by male teachers, women entered them in large numbers and made an important civil contribution, while also enjoying public spotlight and recognition generated by the Siberian press. The entrance of female teachers into the public sphere of the autocratic state in the late XIX<sup>th</sup> century suggests a shift from the traditional view of associational life founded on the basis of male authority.

Some Sunday school teachers became highly involved with their pupils and volunteered their services every year. In 1897, an elementary school teacher Vera

Popova was praised by the local press for her many years of service and successful needlepoint classes, which she opened at the *remeslenno-slobodskom uchilishche*. Several of her pupils received recognition for their needlepoint pieces at the Nizhniy Novgorod Exhibition of Art and Industry in 1896 and began giving private lessons to the urban residents. Others were not as enthusiastic about their service and complained about heavy workload and the unruly students they had to deal with. "It is much better to work with young boys all week, than one day with the adult males at the [Sunday School]. They come to school drunk, shout obscenities at teachers and roughhouse", complained one teacher [3, listy 12–13].

Despite these setbacks, the teachers continued to volunteer, and Sunday schools continued to grow in popularity and numbers. Being native-born residents of the Siberian cities, the elementary school teachers directly witnessed the dearth of educational and cultural opportunities for the poor residents, and, therefore, focused their resources on the democratization of educational offerings. Through their diligent work, teaching intelligentsia broadened an access to the elementary education, created new forms of rational leisure and provided useful vocational training for the variety of residents.

While elementary school teachers channeled their energies towards social reform, their counterparts from these condary schools engaged in to the scientific research and popularization of regional cultural and historical heritage through the Eastern-Siberian (VSOIRGO) and Trans-Baikal branches of the Russian Imperial Geographic Society. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the teaching membership at the both branches of the Geographic Society grew substantially and was composed mostly of male teachers, employed at the city gymnasiums and technical and industrial schools. Almost 50 % of them were born in the central regions of Russia and acquired higher education degrees from the universities and institutes of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev and Kazan [6, p. 51]. The need for the intellectual stimulation, coupled with the desire to utilize existing research skill for the benefit of the society, drove them to join the learned societies. Both branches of the Geographic Society had great reputation in the region and boasted a long tradition of research in geography, climate, botany, archeology, anthropology and ethnography.

Teachers A. C. Elenev, N. N. Bakai, Y. P. Prein, V. L. Teremetz, I. N. Rumov, V. K. Zlatkovskiy, A. V. Yanchukovskiy, D. A. Zverev, N. N. Saburov, S. I. Kossovich, V. O. Tyshko, N. N. Agapitov and I. T. Savenkov organized and led multiple research and expedition projects, presented and publish research papers and delivered public lectures on the vast array of subjects. The Geographical Society heavily depended on the volunteer services and attracted a wide spectrum of intellectual and technical elites. Alongside the teachers there worked engineers, medical doctors, journalists, writers and entrepreneurs. The members regularly attended meetings, voted in the elections and executed day-to-daymundane tasks, such as utilization of funds, reviewing of monthly financials, cataloging of the collections, proofreading reports and filling out various paperwork.

In the 1880s, several teachers from the male gymnasiums of Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk-Savenkov, Elenev, Martynov and Proskuryakov engaged into suc-



successful archeological collaboration and research. In 1884 through coordinated efforts they discovered paleolithic sites on the Enisei River near Krasnoyarsk and in the Birusa caves of the Irkutsk region. In effect, they proved that the settlements of the primitive people in Eastern Siberia were established much earlier than the archeologists initially thought. In his book «Siberia and Exile» the American journalist George Kennan remembered meeting Savenkov in Krasnoyarsk and been impressed by the quality and quantity of his archeological collections [7, p. 49]. Savinkov and Elenev collected hundreds of artifacts, and Savenkov was dispatched to present their findings at the 1892 International Congress of the Anthropology and Archeology in Moscow. In 1896, Savenkov published a book, titled the “Kamennyi Vek v Minusinskom Krae”, which was well received by the Imperial Archeological Association in Moscow.

History and language teachers Teremetz, Bakai, Krasnozhenova and Zavadskiy-Krasnopolskiy actively worked in the field of historical research. They analyzed and catalogued a multitude of archival documents dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, collected folklore materials and extensively published their findings in the local newspapers and in the journal of the VSOIRGO. For instance, Krasnozhenova published 11 articles and books on the subject of folklore in the Enisei region. By the end of the XIX century, teaching membership of the Siberian learned societies published more than 60 articles and books on the topics of archeology, history, geography, botany, folklore, anthropology and climate [6, p. 341–346]. They have presented their findings to the public at the open lectures and garnered an approval of the local press for the popularization of science. Their research efforts were also focused on more effective utilization of natural resources and improvement of human condition. In the article of the newspaper Vostochnoe Obozrenie, published in 1889, an anonymous author praised the outreach efforts of the VSOIRGO members, “The Siberian society appreciates your efforts in the popularization of science. Your objective is to get our residents excited about the scientific exploration and discovery, which in turn will strengthen the place of science in the region” [15].

For the teachers, participation in the learned societies also provided a unique opportunity to create connections with a wide array of educated people from different professional and social groups, while enjoying a relatively autonomous environment. Because these societies focused primarily on the scientific research and application, the government granted them greater degree of independence. Inside the organization, its members behaved and carried their duties as if they were living in the civic society, and not in the absolutist state. Thus, the voluntary service of the intelligentsia help shape their new identity, one that was centered on civic leadership and initiative. However, the learned societies served as a testament of the gendered public sphere: one where educated men came together to enjoy the company of their male colleagues, pursue science and gain public recognition for their talent, expertise, and leadership. Female teachers, majority of whom lacked higher educational degrees and served at Sunday schools and public readings, were excluded from the “man’s club”. Krasnozhenova’s collaboration

with the VSOIRGO was a rare example of a female professional breaking the constraints of gendered being.

In the late 1870s, the teaching members of the Society to Provide Financial Aid for the students of Eastern Siberia took upon themselves a role of an organizer of professional gatherings for the elementary school teachers of Irkutsk region. One of the first congresses of the elementary school teachers was held in Irkutsk in 1859 with only male attendees. The focus of the first congress was on the financial conditions of the rural schools in the region. After the ten-year hiatus, the congresses resumed and this time they included females as well. The topics of discussions were centered on the living and working conditions, quality of instruction, parental involvement and the importance of a female education in Siberia.

The local press covered their meetings and brought the challenges of the elementary schools into the public light. For the longest time the congresses were not regulated by the government; only in 1899 the government finally issued the "Temporary rules pertaining to the congresses of the public elementary schools". The rules allowed attendees to present on a vast array of topics, but prevented them from creating action items and passing regulations. Teachers could compile grievances and suggestions and hand them to the school administration. The Congresses provided the participants with the great deal of autonomy and served as an excellent means of socializing. The Congresses became a nation-wide phenomenon and were regularly held in Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tumen, Tomsk and Tobolsk, as well as in urban centers of central Russia. In the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the congresses became an integral part of the Russian liberal movement, providing a peaceful alternative to the growing radicalism.

The school administration, while initially weary of the congresses, came to support them, if not financially – at least in spirit. In 1889, the Inspector of the elementary schools of Irkutsk Region (Inspector of *Narodnyh Uchilish' of the Irkutskaya Gubernia*) Troitskyi-Senutovich publicly praised the work of Congresses referring to their participants as the «new teachers who diligently carry their civic duties and obligations to serve the local community». In the same year, he delivered several public lectures, discussing the history of elementary education in Eastern Siberia and its current challenges, while supporting the importance of the teaching congresses, especially for the rural teachers [16].

The overreaching concern expressed by the congress participants centered on the financial hardship, experienced by the elementary teachers, especially in the rural schools, whose pay was traditionally lower than that of the urban school teachers. These concerns spawned the creation of several mutual aid societies, where teachers supported each other financially. These societies emerged in many cities across Siberia and provided short-term loans and grants to the eligible members, paid their medical bills and provided help to the families of deceased teachers. Unlike other voluntary associations created by the teachers, which accepted members from the general public, they included only peers from other schools. This autonomy contributed to the developing sense of camaraderie and professional conscience and empowered the teaching intelligentsia to advocate for their interests. However, after the events of 1905, the local and central administra-

tion began limiting the functions of the mutual societies and congresses despite the fact that they were not involved into political action.

Through their voluntary service teachers created new educational and cultural opportunities in the Siberian cities. They democratized education, constructed public sphere and rose to the position of the civic leaders. In his book, "Irkutsk and its place in the historical and cultural development of Eastern Siberia", Vladimir Sukachev writes, "The teaching personnel of Irkutsk schools represents the best part of the local intelligentsia and plays an enormous part in the cultural and intellectual advancement of our society" [13, p. 253]. This praise demonstrates the recognition of the teachers' role in the society by the local administrators and the amicable relations existing between the two groups in Irkutsk prior to the revolutionary events of 1905. Over time, some urban residents who attended the various educational events and Sunday schools evolved from the passive attendees into the creators of culture themselves. All of these suggests that the tireless and dedicated work of the teaching intelligentsia in the civic associations helped create a dynamic public sphere in Eastern Siberia. Teachers also established horizontal and vertical connections with the urban residents and state administrators, while at the same time creating a basis for the reform movements and eventual struggle against autocracy.

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## **Деятельность учителей в общественных ассоциациях региональных центров Восточной Сибири в конце XIX в.**

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**Аннотация.** Учительская интеллигенция восточносибирских городов сыграла важную роль в создании, функционировании общественных ассоциаций, целью которых являлось продвижение социальной реформы, популяризация науки и изучение и сохранение культурного наследия. Деятельность учителей помогла сформировать общественную сферу городов, давшую импульс к развитию гражданского общества в поздний имперский период.

**Ключевые слова:** учительская интеллигенция, дореволюционная Сибирь, общественные ассоциации, воскресные школы, народные чтения, учительские съезды, общественная сфера.

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