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The Jewish Houses of Worship in Tobolsk in the 19th Century: A Source Study

Abstract

The article addresses the issue of Jewish religious construction, one of the aspects of ethnoconfessional geography of the city of Tobolsk. This is the first attempt of such study. With the disappearance of the Jewish community from the city, all memory of the once large and fairly active Jewish diaspora has disappeared without a trace: the issue of Jewish presence in the urban space of pre-revolutionary Tobolsk is absent in academic, museum, and public discourses. The purpose of the article is to fill this gap and to present an analysis of the peculiarities of Jewish religious construction in Tobolsk in the 19th century on the basis of sources from the State Archives in Tobolsk (a branch of the State Archives of the Tyumen

Region), which are thus being introduced into scientific use. In the course of her research, the author analyzes main sources of information on the Jewish religious construction in Tobolsk which have been used in the research literature and supplements them with sources from the Tobolsk archives: plans of the city of Tobolsk, memorial books, geographical descriptions of the city, census materials of 1897, photographic images, etc. The author identifies the location of the first and the second city synagogues, determines their role in the functioning of the local Jewish community and its interactions with the city and gubernia administration. The author is able to reconstruct the chronology of the Tobolsk Jewish prayer houses construction (most complete up to date); to determine the role of the houses of worship in the community life of the Tobolsk Jews; to find several previously unknown images of the Tobolsk synagogue; and thus to fill the existing gap in the knowledge of ethnoconfessional life of national minorities of Western Siberia. The article introduces hitherto unpublished images: a panoramic photo of the foothill part of Tobolsk, where a wooden building of the first synagogue can be seen, a photo of its interior, and a plan of the third (unbuilt) synagogue.

Keywords

Archive, sources, Jews, Judaism, Western Siberia, Tobolsk, religious construction, synagogue, architecture.

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