

Scientific article

УДК 94(47)+411.16+930.25

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2021-2-603-614

Tatyana G. Emelyanenko

Russian Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

Materials of I.M. Pulner on the Ethnography of the Georgian Jews in the Archive of the Russian Ethnographic Museum: 1926–29

Abstract

The article introduces one of the documentary sources on the history and ethnography of the Georgian Jews stored in the archive of the Russian Ethnographic Museum – field materials collected by I. M. Pulner in his expeditions to Georgia in 1926, 1928, and 1929. The introductory

Written by Кирилл

Thursday, 17 November 2022 00:00

---

part of the article provides a brief summary of the main stages of his professional activity, wherein his study of the Georgian Jews ethnography dates back to his student years. The expeditions he carried out at that time were the first experience of purposeful ethnographic study of this Jewish ethnic group. Pulner's field materials accrue special scientific value as they contain real facts and people's statements, as well as ethnographer's direct observations, which give a fairly objective idea of everyday culture and socio-economic conditions of the Georgian Jews in the second half of the 1920s. The documents of the archive include expedition journal and report, as well as separate notes on various areas of Georgian Jewish culture. Most notes date from Pulner's first trip to Kutaisi; in the following two years, he mostly visited villages where the Georgian Jews lived, but the archive of the Museum contains only several his recordings of weather wisdom, culinary recipes, and song lyrics written down in these trips. The article chiefly analyses Pulner's Kutaisi materials. Drawing on them, methods and peculiarities of his ethnographic work among the local Jews are revealed; areas in which he collected his data are described; certain information is cited concerning occupation, material situation, organization of religious life, specificity of religious rituals performed in synagogue, Sabbath celebration, state of Jewish education following the closure of Jewish schools during the Soviet era, attitude to the ideas of Zionism among the youth, relations (including matrimony) between the mountain Jews, Ashkenazi, and Georgians Jews, traditional dwelling and its decoration, festive and everyday food, clothing, folk sayings, wedding ceremonial rites, etc. Among all occupations, Pulner underscored trade, which remained the main occupation of the Jews of Kutaisi, although it fell into decay under the Soviet rule, forcing Jews to master new professions of porters and water sellers, which were considered lowly occupations in Georgia. Talking about the synagogue, he drew attention to the fact that among the Georgian Jews it was not just a place for performing religious rites, but also the center of the Jewish quarter residents' social life; he noted the leading role of cantor in synagogue service and detailed its procedure. There are interesting materials about relationship between the Georgian Jews and the Jews of other ethnic groups (mountain, Ashkenazi) demonstrating their distancing, as well as materials on their close cooperation with the Georgians in everyday life. Information on material culture is brief and concerns mainly clothing worn by men and women. Of the wedding rituals, Pulner managed to record only matchmaking rites. He did not succeed in continuing a full-scale study the eorgian Jews, and those materials he collected during his student expeditions remain rare evidence of the Georgian Jews in the Soviet era.

