

## EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF SLAVIC CHARITABLE SOCIETIES ACTIVITY IN THE 19<sup>th</sup>- EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES (SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS SLAVIC CHARITABLE SOCIETY OF ODESA)

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**Abstract.** *The study examines the educational activities of Slavic Charitable Societies, namely Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa, using source analysis and historiographical literature. The society was founded in Odesa in 1870 to assist southern and western Slavs who had become stranded in the southern region due to various circumstances. According to the Statute, the main activity was focused on educational matters. The society opened the Slavic reading room with a library and awarded special scholarships to the Slavs studying at Novorossiysk University in Odesa. A special educational institution for Slavic girls was later created. Educational activities included the establishment of free libraries as well as organising concerts, theatre performances, public readings, and Sunday classes.*

**Keywords:** *Charity, Slavic societies, educational activities, Odesa, Saints Cyril and Methodius Society.*

**Rezumat:** *Aspecte educaționale ale activității societăților caritabile slave în secolul XIX – începutul secolului XX (Societatea Caritabilă Slavă „Sfinții Chiril și Metodie din Odesa”). Studiul examinează activitățile educaționale ale societăților caritabile slave, în special a Societății caritabile slave „Sfinții Chiril și Metodie” din Odesa, folosind analiza izvoarelor și literatura de specialitate. Societatea a fost fondată în Odesa în anul 1870 pentru a ajuta slavii de sud și de vest, care au ajuns să fie blocați în această regiune din variate motive. Conform statutului, principala activitate a fost axată pe probleme educaționale. Societatea a deschis o Sală de Lectură slavă cu o bibliotecă și a acordat burse*

*speciale slavilor care studiau la Universitatea „Novorossiysk” din Odesa. Ulterior, a fost creată o instituție de învățământ specială pentru fetele slave. Activitățile educaționale au inclus înființarea de biblioteci gratuite, precum și organizarea de concerte, spectacole de teatru, lecturi publice și cursuri duminicale.*

## INTRODUCTION

The charity has a rich history in Europe, dating back to ancient times, passing through the Middle Ages and continuing nowadays. Charitable foundations and societies arose for very different reasons. People who were motivated by their fame and desired to leave an imprint on history and their interests or political gain founded them. One might begin to see why the concept of charity is so deeply ingrained in the European mentality by exploring further into these motivations. Even in the countries where the practice of charity was discontinued for various reasons, this notion only briefly disappeared before re-emerging. The role those charitable organisations played in the ever-changing interaction between the state and society may be measured by how these processes took place.

The abovementioned processes were particularly noticeable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The famous British historian Norman Davies, author of *Europe. A History*<sup>1</sup> pointed out that the 19<sup>th</sup> century evolved through three precise stages, reaction (1815–48), reform (1848–71), and rivalry (1871–1914). In the first stage, the conservative fortress held out with varying success until it collapsed amidst the general revolutionary outburst of 1848. In the second stage, the powers reluctantly conceded that controlled reform was preferable to endless resistance. Significant concessions were made on all fronts. Constitutions were granted, and the last serfs were freed. Two of the three leading contenders for national independence were allowed the chance to succeed. The third and final stage saw Europe enter a time of intense rivalry, aggravated by diplomatic realignments, military rearmament, and colonial competition.

National charitable societies were established for political and philanthropic reasons in South-Eastern Europe, and they grew significantly in importance during intense rivalry. In particular, this applies to those Slavic Charities that emerged on the territory of the Russian Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, 1365 p.

century. Unlike France or Britain, which had colonies far beyond Europe, the Russian Empire was characterised by the phenomenon of “internal colonialism”, expressed in the intention to conquer neighbouring territories or extend its political influence. National charities were one of the factors of this policy.

### SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE REVIEW

The activities of Slavic societies were underrepresented in historical literature. Among the most thorough investigations is Sergey Nikitin’s research on *Slavic Committees in Russia. 1858 – 1878*, published in 1960.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, these societies included the best representatives of that time’s intelligentsia: Osyp-Bodyansky, one of the Moscow Committee’s initiators; Ishmael Sreznevsky, who was a member of the St. Petersburg Committee; Mykhailo Maksimovich, Andrey Linnichenko, Volodymyr Antonovich, Nicholay Rigelman, active members of the Kyiv Society. Some Russian historians studied the activities of the Slavic societies in the context of Slavophilism and pan-Slavism. Thus, historian Aleksey Popovkin believes that attempts to determine the chronological framework of Slavophilism narrowed the research of Slavic Charities. Thus, according to some Soviet historians, Slavophilism “disappeared” in the 1880s; however, the societies existed as early as 1917 and united classical followers of Slavophilism.<sup>3</sup>

Some foreign researchers also showed interest in this issue. David MacKenzie’s works play an essential part in the American historiography of the Balkan Crisis. MacKenzie, the student of Philip Mosely, a notable Slavist scholar and one of the founders of American Soviet Studies, published the monograph *The Serbs and Russian pan-Slavism in 1875 – 1878*<sup>4</sup> at Cornell University in 1967. Many Balkan experts have long held that Slavic committees and societies should be guided by the national interests of the Balkan peoples. Professor Slavenko Terzić’s English article<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sergey Nikitin, *Slavyanskiye komitety v Rossii. 1858-1878* [Slavic Committees in Russia. 1858-1878], Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Moscow university, 1960, 364 s.

<sup>3</sup> Aleksey Popovkin, *Deyatel'nost' slavyanskikh obshchestv Rossii v kontekste sotsial'nogo razvitiya slavyanskikh narodov (1858 – 1917)* [The activities of Slavic societies in Russia in the context of the social development of the Slavic peoples (1858 – 1917)], in “Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnyye nauki” [Bulletin of Tambov University. Series: Humanitarian sciences], Vol. 6 (110), 2012, s. 246.

<sup>4</sup> David MacKenzie, *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism, 1875-1878*, Ithaca – New York, Cornell University Press, 1967, 365 p.

<sup>5</sup> Slavenko Terzić, *About eastern and western Panslavism (in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)*, in “Istorijskiy chasopis” [Historical Review], 2006, vol. LIII, p. 317-332.

is essential for the historiography of the Slavic committees and organisations.

As for Ukrainian historiography, there are very few such studies. The history of charity in the southern region of contemporary Ukraine dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century; moreover, it is also closely related to the administrative and political system of these lands. Having come under the Russian Empire's rule in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the southern provinces were actively populated by different nationalities. The charity was actively used to support such a population. Some contemporary researchers conditionally divide charity into state, private and public charity.<sup>6</sup>

Several studies have been published in historical literature that covers the origins and activities of charity organisations in southern Ukraine. Among them is Lilya Bilousova's substantial work on *National societies in Odessa in the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*<sup>7</sup>. For the first time in history, Bilousova analysed and summarised information on the national associations of Odesa. Anna Gedyo's and Yuri Guzenko's works *The Role of Consular Offices in the Development of Charity in Odesa (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)* and *The Formation and Activities of Public Charities on the Territory of Southern Ukraine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (on the materials of Kherson province)*<sup>8</sup> are also dedicated to the history of charity.

In recent years, some authors have published research dedicated to the Slavic Charitable Societies of Kyiv and Odesa<sup>9</sup>, in which they discuss the history of

<sup>6</sup> Irena S. Grebtsova, *Stanovleniye gosudarstvennogo popechitel'stva i obshchestvennoy blagotvoritel'nosti v Odesse v kontse XVIII – 60-ye gg. XIX st.* [Formation of state guardianship and public charity in Odesa in the late 18<sup>th</sup> – 60's 19<sup>th</sup> century], Odesa, Astroprint, 2006, s. 270.

<sup>7</sup> Lilya Bilousova, *Natsional'ni tovarystva v Odesi v XIX – na pochatku XX st.* [National societies in Odesa in the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries], in "Ukrayins'kyy istorychnyy zhurnal" [Ukrainian historical journal], 2017, № 2, s. 46-63.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Gedyo, *Rol' konsul's'kykh ustanov u rozvytkovi dobrochynnosti v Odesi (seredyna XIX – pochatok XX cm.)* [The role of consular offices in the development of charity in Odesa (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)], in "Naukovyy visnyk Dyplomatychnoyi akademiyi Ukrayiny" [Scientific Bulletin of the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine], Vol. 24, 2017, No.1, s. 163-170; Yuri Guzenko, *Stanovlennya i diyal'nist' hromads'kykh blahodiynykh ob'yednan' na Pivdni Ukrayiny v druhiy polovyni XIX – na pochatku XX st. (na materialakh Khersons'koyi guberniyi)* [The formation and activities of public charities on the territory of southern Ukraine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (on the materials of Kherson guberniya)], Mykolayiv, Ilion, 2006, 232 s.

<sup>9</sup> Volodimir Kotsiuk, *Profesor O. Kotlyarevs'kyy ta Kyyivs'ke Slov'yans'ke blahodiyne tovarystvo u 70-kh rokakh XIX st.* [Professor O. Kotlyarevsky and Slavic Charitable Society of Kyiv in the 70s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century], in "Visnyk Kam'yanets'-Podil's'koho

these associations. These societies' practical activities require additional investigation. Contrary to popular belief, they were not only limited to collecting voluntary donations and establishing scholarships for the poor southern and western Slavs who, by the will of fate, found themselves in the southern region and, in particular, in Odesa, in the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also worked in a variety of other areas.

Thus, this article aims to analyse the principles, directions and results of the educational activities of Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa (from now on – SCMSCSO). The exploration of certain understudied facets of the Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa makes this study unique. For various reasons, historians did not pay enough attention to this society. The presentation and interpretation of information based on the sources, in particular, the Charter of SS Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa (1870) and Reports of the Board of SS Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1889 – 1910, give this article a distinct advantage.

### **THE FIRST IN THE SOUTH: THE ORIGIN AND PARTICULARITIES OF THE SLAVIC CHARITABLE SOCIETY OF ODESA**

In Eastern Europe, the Slavic Charitable Societies' activities started in January 1858 with Emperor Alexander II's approval of the project aimed to establish the first Slavic Committee in Moscow and ended in the early second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The history of these societies is a picture of the functioning and development of a unique public social institution that brings hundreds of highly qualified specialists and influential people together, i.e. the Slavic scholars, economists, military and church figures, artists, writers, poets, doctors, and specialists in public affairs as well as administration of charitable organisations. During the

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natsional'noho universytetu imeni Ivana Ohiyenka: Istorychni nauky" [Bulletin of Kamyanets-Podilsky National University named after Ivan Ogienko: Historical Sciences], 2008, №1, s. 73-79; Tetiana Moiseieva, *Odes'ke slov'yans'ke tovarystvo imeni svyatykh Kyryla ta Mefodiya: formuvannya zasad diyal'nosti* [Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa: formation of principles of activity], in "Visnyk Odes'kohoho istoryko-krayeznavchoho muzeyu" [Bulletin of the Odessa Museum of History and Local Lore], 2011, vol. 10, s. 203-206; Olexander Muzychko, *Odes'ke slov'yans'ke blahochynne tovarystvo imeni svyatykh Kyryla ta Mefodiya: osnovni etapy diyal'nosti* [Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa: main stages of activity], in "Problemy slov'yanoznavstva" [Problems of Slavic studies], Lviv, 2007, vol. 56, s. 311-312.

semicentennial period of activities, the Slavic committees and societies managed to gain considerable authority in the Slavic lands and implement several important regional and international projects in the field of Slavic studies and education.

Some historians attribute the reasons for the emergence of the Slavic societies to the general political situation. Thus, Slavenko Terzić believes that after the Crimean War, the Slavophiles shifted their focus to the relations between Russia and other Slavic countries, especially Orthodox ones. This idea was embodied in the creation of the Slavic committees.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the researchers believe that the Slavic committees served as civil society's structures promoting literacy in both Russia and the Slavic countries, the exchange of ideas between Russia and Slavdom, and raising Slavophile civic consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of pan-Slavism was at the core of their work. Norman Davies points out that "in Russia, the pan-Slav movement was loaded with racial overtones. Arguing for the unification of all Slavic peoples under the aegis of the Tsar, it often assumed that political solidarity would emerge from the (non-existent) racial affinity of the Slavs. It received little support from Catholic Poles and Croats, who had both produced earlier versions of pan-Slavism, and who now countered with scientific papers showing that the Russians were slavified Finns. It was most appreciated amongst Serbs, Czechs, and Bulgars, all of whom looked to Russia for liberation. Russian nationalism, blended with pan-Slavism, exhibited unparalleled messianic fervour".<sup>12</sup> The Slavic societies' activities in the Slavic peoples' protection field became especially active during the Balkan crisis of 1875 – 1876.

This research aligns with respected historians' views that the general political situation influenced greatly the spread of pan-Slavism and the emergence of the Slavic societies. However, it should be noted that the process of public charity in the Russian Empire's southern provinces had its characteristics compared to the central areas. It was stipulated by the region's specific situation, which was evolving under the influence of numerous immigrants. Foreign colonists held a significant position among the settlers. Despite the successes in the social-economic development of the annexed southern territories (late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), migration and the development of the new lands had a negative side effect, i.e. the creation of a broad stratum of the poor and the needy, who were in dire need of social protection.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Slavenko Terzić, *About eastern and western Pan-Slavism ...*, p. 317.

<sup>11</sup> Aleksey Popovkin, *Deyatel'nost' slavyanskikh obshchestv v Rossii...*, s. 236.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History ...*, p. 812.

<sup>13</sup> Irena S. Grebtsova, *Stanovleniye gosudarstvennogo popechitel'stva...*, s. 271.

As the South's principal port and border city, Odesa became a crossroads of active international and domestic migration flows and a permanent or temporary stay for the representatives of over one hundred nationalities, including foreigners. Odesa was also a major administrative, judicial, military, and educational centre. Seeking happiness, representatives of various nationalities and different social strata filled the city, bringing their funds, abilities and talents. Communities of different ethnic groups had united and formed several national societies to jointly pursue various social interests, including charity activities to assist the needy.

In general, various forms of charity developed in Odesa. Corporate associations became the most prominent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their assistance was usually directed to the members of the community. The distinctiveness of Odesa's philanthropy is defined by the presence of numerous foreign consulates, which contributed significantly to the establishment of organisations such as the Swiss Charitable Society, French, Greek, German, Austro-Hungarian Societies, etc. The primary purpose of all these associations was to assist their citizens who permanently or temporarily resided in the southern region.<sup>14</sup>

The SCMSCSO was established in 1870 to "encourage useful work in the field of Slavic science and art as well as to assist indigent Slavs". It was the fourth Slavic society to be founded on the territory of the Russian Empire. As previously stated, the first such society, the Moscow Slavic Committee, emerged after the Crimean War in 1858 and aimed to provide various aid to the Slavic peoples under Turkish and Austro-Hungarian rule. At the initiative of the Moscow Slavic Committee, the Slavic Congress was held in Moscow in 1867, which prompted the establishment of the Slavic Charitable Societies in the largest cities of the Russian Empire. Thus, in 1868, the Slavic committee was established in St. Petersburg, in 1869 in Kyiv, and 1870 in Odesa. All of them, except for the SCMSCSO, existed initially as the Moscow Committee's departments and only in the 70s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century turned into independent charitable societies.

According to Sergey Nikitin, the idea of creating a Slavic charity in Odesa came from the Odesa Slavs, i.e. the Serbs, the Bulgarians, and the Croats who lived in Odesa. Diplomat Mikhail Khitrovo, who hoped this organisation would become an active disseminator of Russian ideology among Balkan peoples, endorsed that idea.<sup>15</sup>

The Slavic Society's first chairman was Sergey Golubtsov, the Odesa Educational District Trustee, and its secretary was Viktor Grigorovich, a

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<sup>14</sup> Anna Gedyo, *Rol' konsul's'kykh ustanov...*,s.165.

<sup>15</sup> Sergey Nikitin, *Slavyanskiye komitety v Rossii...*, s.52-53.

philologist and professor at Novorossiysk University. The society's composition was dominated by Novorossiysk University teachers, natives of Slavic countries living in Odesa. According to the SCMSCSO's Charter, approved on April 8, 1870, the society's activities (following the examples of the Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kyiv Committees) focused on providing financial assistance to the poor Slavs and assisting them in education.<sup>16</sup> The tasks of the society were moral and financial support of the scholars as well as literary and artistic events for the population. Furthermore, the institution assumed the duty of working with local authorities to provide opportunities for migratory Slavs to earn a living.<sup>17</sup>

The Board of the Society tried to react quickly to any complications that arose in the Slavic lands. Thus, in 1872, financial aid was sent to the Czech Republic, which suffered from the floods, and material support was provided to the Serbs and the starving Galicians. The Board of the Society provided material assistance in the struggle for the Balkan Slavs' independence during the Balkan peoples' demonstrations against Turkish rule from 1875 – 1876. During the uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of the society collected about 9,000 rubles via donations. The Odesa residents supported society's work during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 – 1878. The organisation assisted the wounded during the war in the Balkans (1912).<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, the society's members focused mainly on philanthropy. Valtazar Bogii, a Dalmatian native, a graduate of Vienna University, a history professor at Novorossiysk University, and an honorary member of the society, held a significant position in the Slavic society. He suggested that the organisation establish a library fund to acquaint the representatives of the Slavic peoples with each other's culture, lives and needs.<sup>19</sup> All this was put into practice: the Slavic reading room with a library was opened at the society, and special scholarships were awarded to the Slavs who studied at Novorossiysk University. Aiding girls of Slavic heritage acquired an important place in the SCMSCSO's activities (the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Poles, etc.). The society helped them obtain an education and, as a result, a profession as public and secondary school teachers in their

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<sup>16</sup> *Ustav Odesskogo slavyanskogo blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva imeni svyatykh Kirilla i Mefodiya* [Charter of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa], Odesa, 1870, s. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Derzhavnyy arkhiv Odes'koi oblasti (DAOO) [State Archive of the Odesa region], fond 273, list 1, file 1, p. 1-6.

<sup>18</sup> DAOO, fond 273, list 1, file 7, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Tsirkulyar po Odesskomu uchebnomu okrugu* [Circular on the Odesa educational district], 1870, № 10, October, s. 339.



homeland. To that end, the Society established the “Slavic Maidens’ Nursery” in November 1874, which, according to the Statute, was subordinated to the Ministry of Education, the Odesa Educational District Trustee, but was under the direct supervision of the SCMSCSO.

Interest on fixed assets, membership fees, scholarships on the Organization of the Southern Slavs’ Education in Russia (located under the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Bulgarian Board of Trustees as well as proceeds from public charities, etc. were the primary sources of institutional funding.<sup>20</sup> The SCMSCSO was notable for dedicating a substantial percentage of its charity operations to cultural and educational work, mainly among the poor in Odesa and its suburbs. This feature distinguishes the SCMSCSO from similar societies within the Russian Empire.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, against the background of social reforms carried out throughout the Russian Empire, the intelligentsia paid increasing attention to people’s educational levels. Some Writing Societies emerged in Kharkiv and Kyiv in the 60s and 80s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; later, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they became large cultural and educational centres.

Members of the Society organised concerts and theatre performances, public readings, Sunday classes, and opened free libraries. A similar idea arose among Odesa’s intelligentsia. In the early 1860s, one of the popular newspapers, the Odesa Herald, announced its intention to establish the Literacy Society in Odesa and even began publishing lists of those wishing to join. Unfortunately, it never operated due to a variety of factors. Instead, the SCMSCSO’s members took up the idea of cultural and educational activity among the people, which they accomplished through public readings and lectures and theatrical, literary, and musical evenings.

### CONTENT AND FORMS OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

One of the most popular forms of educational activities was public readings. It was nearly the only extracurricular activity that could be used to improve the cultural level of the illiterate adult population (the government banned Sunday schools in 1862). The government issued the official permission to organize public readings in provincial cities in 1876, and similar readings existed in Kyiv and Kharkiv in the early 1880s. The idea of opening public readings in Odesa came from the former Governor-General of the region, SCMSCSO’s member, Prince

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<sup>20</sup> Tetiana Moiseieva, *Odes'ke slov'yans'ke tovarystvo...*, s. 204.

Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov. The permission was obtained in March 1882, and on April 25, the first reading took place.<sup>21</sup>

Later, a Committee on Public Readings was established under the society's Board, which included Sergey Znamensky (chairman), Ivan Karvatsky, and Gregory Afanasyev. The Committee drew up a program of readings, engaged teachers of educational institutions, and established contacts with the leaders of the public lessons in other cities in the southern region.

The organisation of public readings did not require large expenditures (the lecturers spoke for free), and key attention was paid to the requests of a large audience. The topics of the readings were quite diverse, and, according to the SCMSCSO's Board Reports, they had to list all of the public activities they had engaged in. Most of these reports were published and now are stored at the Scientific Library of I. I. Mechnikov Odesa National University; several reports are stored at the State Archives of the Odesa Region.<sup>22</sup> The readings were intended mainly for the illiterate population and included general information on natural sciences, geography, literature, and history. Thus, of the 42 folk readings organised in 1885, 11 lectures were on historical topics and eight on literature; in 1889 (in two classrooms) – 22 and 20 lessons, respectively, with a total number of 65.<sup>23</sup> The report of the SCMSCSO's Board for 1890 stated, "the people are most interested in historical readings which concern the major reforms and certain historical figures' activities as well as actively attend readings of classical works by Alexander Pushkin, Nicolay Gogol, Mikhail Lermontov and others".<sup>24</sup> One may assume that the lecturers' personalities can also explain this. Members of the Society who were also professors at Novorossiysk University's Faculty of History and Philology mainly conducted the readings. As a result, much emphasis was placed on the readings' historical and literary themes.

Such activity of the Society's members in conducting public readings received a positive response from historians. In particular, the researcher

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<sup>21</sup> *Odessa. 1794 – 1894. Izdaniye gorodskogo obshchestvennogo pravleniya k stoletiyu goroda* [Odesa. 1794 – 1894. Publication of the city public administration for the centenary of the city], Vol. 1, Odesa, 1894, s. 766.

<sup>22</sup> DA00, fond 273, list 1, files 2, 6, 19.

<sup>23</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo slavyanskogo blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva im. sv. Kirilla i Mefodiya za 1889 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1889], Odesa, 1890, s. 7-9.

<sup>24</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo slavyanskogo blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva im. sv. Kirilla i Mefodiya za 1890 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1890], Odesa, 1891, s. 5.

Olexander Muzychko, while defining the periods in the Society's activities, refers to the period of 1890 – the 1910s as “educational” and connects it with the organisation of public readings.<sup>25</sup> It would seem that this period should have begun earlier – from 1882, with the actual start of the public lectures.

At the same time, it should be noted that there was a decrease in the number of visitors to public readings in 1888 - 1889. This tendency was explained in correspondence between the SCMSCSO's Board and the Office of the Interim Governor-General of Odesa<sup>26</sup> by a limited range of literature allowed for public readings. This led to frequent repetitions, e.g. in 1889, “Poltava” by Alexander Pushkin was read 11 times. To improve the level of public readings, the SCMSCSO's Board, with the support of the former interim Governor-General of Odesa, Christopher Roop, petitioned the Academic Committee of the Ministry of Public Education to expand the range of readings. Finally, permission for the new lessons was obtained, and the list of literature was updated with 95 new works, mainly on history, literature and geography.<sup>27</sup>

The Committee on Public Readings members were constantly looking for new ways to improve the public readings. As the Committee's chairman, Sergey Znamensky, noted, “the people are drawn to new knowledge by the very nature of things and living conditions. They need this knowledge for self-determination, to improve their level of education, and to fill their leisure time. That's why we must ensure that the readings are meaningful and as productive as possible”.<sup>28</sup> To achieve this goal, the Committee introduced new forms of public readings: from the 1890s, special public lectures were organised to promote scientific knowledge. These lectures gave in-depth information on the same topics covered in the regular public readings.<sup>29</sup> For this purpose, the Lecture Committee was created at the Odesa People's Auditorium. Its tasks included disseminating information about the lectures, making them as accessible as possible for the people in terms of both content and payment (the entrance fee was from one to five kopecks), providing the lectures with visual material, and establishing

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<sup>25</sup> Olexander Muzychko, *Odes'ke slov'yans'ke blahochynne tovarystvo...*, s. 311.

<sup>26</sup> DA00, fond 5, list 1, file 1961, p. 1-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Tsirkulyar po Odesskomu uchebnomu okrugu* [Circular on the Odesa educational district], 1890, №8, August.

<sup>28</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo slavyanskogo blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva im. sv. Kirilla i Mefodiy za 1903 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1903], Odesa, 1904, s. 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> Alexey Markevich, *O nashey narodnoy auditorii (pis'mo v redaktsiyu)* [About our people's audience (letter to the editor)], in “Odesskiy listok” [Odessa leaf], 1896, 16 September.

feedback with the visitors through interviews and written wishes.<sup>30</sup>

The public lectures were distinctive in that they were organised in the form of systematic courses in individual disciplines, and various specialists, mostly university teachers, usually attended them. Starting from 1897, the Lecture Committee began signing up students for the lectures that began in September, one to two months before the start of the courses. At the same time, free attendance was also practised. When registering to attend the lectures, students had to indicate their age, education, occupation, place of residence and subjects of interest. Based on the subscription materials, the Lecture Committee compiled bulletins using tables. Later, the publications were distributed to the Committee Members. Based on these newsletters, the lecturers gathered course programs, considering listeners' level of education and interests.

During 1897 – 1900, the Lecture Committee organised and conducted 406 lectures on 11 subjects (literature, history, geography, cosmography, anatomy, physics, chemistry, botany, geology, economics, and law); the average number of visitors was 600-700 people per each lecture.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, in contrast to the folk readings, where classes in history and literature were of primary interest, in public speeches, physics courses (64 lectures in three years), chemistry (66 lessons), and geography (58 lectures) were the most popular. It should also be noted that this type of educational activity gradually replaced popular readings starting from the first years of the 20th century.

Literary-musical and dramatic evenings organised by the SCMSCSO at public auditoriums became extremely popular among the population. It began in January 1893, during Petr Tchaikovsky's stay in Odesa, when he responded to the SCMSCSO's invitation and attended the first literary and musical evening at the Exchange Committee Hall. Tchaikovsky personally led the folk audience's amateur orchestra during the evening's musical part, which featured the composer's works.<sup>32</sup>

In general, literary and dramatic evenings as forms of cultural and educational activities were aimed at acquainting the working people with the biography and works of several prominent Russian and Ukrainian writers, i.e. Nicolay Gogol, Alexey Tolstoy, Lev Tolstoy, Vasil Zhukovsky, Mikhail Lermontov,

<sup>30</sup> *Otchet o deyatel'nosti Lektsionnogo komiteta pri Odesskoy gorodskoy auditoriy za 1897 – 1900 uch. g.* [Report on the activities of the Lecture Committee at the Odesa city audience for 1897 - 1900], Odesa, 1901, s. 5-6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, s.18.

<sup>32</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo slavyanskogo blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva im. sv. Kirilla i Mefodiy za 1893 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1893], Odesa, 1894, s. 28.

Alexey Ostrovsky, and Ivan Turgenev. As a rule, the evenings consisted of two significant parts: lectures on the life path and significance of a poet or writer's work and reading or staging excerpts. If the evening was literary and musical, the composer's biography was usually told in the first part, and his works were performed in the second. By 1891, there had been 55 literary, musical, and dramatic evenings.<sup>33</sup> The Society continued to organise free literary evenings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that had already been "illustrated with playful light pictures". In 1911, 2,000 visitors attended 18 readings.<sup>34</sup>

Since the end of the 1890s, the SCMSCSO's cultural and educational activities have been supplemented by several new activities. The Society staged works by Ukrainian and Russian writers to popularise them. The SCMSCSO created a special Theatrical Committee led by Sergey Krapivin and a permanent acting troupe of nine people (Nicolay Klensky was the director). The Committee compiled performance programs and enlisted the help of some professional actors. For example, in 1909, 34 performances with 12,000 visitors took place at public auditoriums.<sup>35</sup> The most popular among the general public were Mark Kropyvnytsky's "Stupid Fools", Taras Shevchenko's "Nazar Stodolya", Mykhailo Starytsky's "Bogdan Khmelnytsky" and "Oh, do not go, Hrytsia, to the party" as well as Ivan Tobilevych's "Sava Chaly". In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the popularity of such performances increased by more than 50%: in 1899, the ratio of the Russian and Ukrainian authors' performances was approximately equal; then, in 1902, 20 performances out of 25 were works of Ukrainian authors.<sup>36</sup>

Funds collected during the evenings and performances (entrance fee was 5 kopecks) went to the Committee's needs to pay for public readings and charity. For example, in 1887, two literary evenings dedicated to Alexander Pushkin's works were held. A part of the raised funds (100 rubles) went toward constructing a monument of this great poet in Odesa.

The administration of the public auditoriums tried to involve teachers and lecturers of various secondary and higher educational institutions to conduct public readings and lectures as well as literary and musical evenings. The teachers of Novorossiysk University, namely historians Gregory Afanasyev, Alexey

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<sup>33</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo ... za 1891 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1891], Odesa, 1892, s. 4.

<sup>34</sup> DAOO, fond 273, list 1, file 19, p. 1-5.

<sup>35</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo ... za 1910 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1910], Odesa, 1911, s. 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo ... za 1902 g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1902], Odesa, 1903, s. 17-18.

Markevich, literary historian Alexander Kirpichnikov, philologist Nicolay Mandes, and lawyer Andrey Borzenko actively cooperated. Such Odesa Community Members as Dmytro Syharevych, Anton Syniavsky, and Sergey Singaivsky were regular participants of the SCMSCSO events. In his memoirs, Anton Syniavsky wrote about citizens' participation in public readings: "The teacher of St. Paul school, Ivan Rudenko and the inspector of the same school Anton Kryzhanovsky began wider cultural and educational semi-legal work. Anton Syniavsky, a teacher of Higher Courses and military school for women, worked at the auditoriums of the "People's Readings" since its foundation. Rudenko was in charge of the audience, and Kryzhanovsky and Syniavsky worked as lecturers. The first one lectured on literature, while Syniavsky lectured on history and economics, mainly to a working-class audience".<sup>37</sup> Dramatic artists were also involved in organising literary, musical and dramatic evenings.

The members of the SCMSCSO paid particular attention to improving the material and technical base. Visual material, musical breaks, and the free distribution of literature were all actively used during readings, lectures, and performances. They were inspired by the slogan "it is not the literate who can read, but the one who truly reads" (words of an activist in the field of spreading education among people, a member of the SCMSCSO, a professor of Novorossiysk University Alexander Kirpichnikov). In 1886, the SCMSCSO founded Saints Cyril and Methodius Bookstore. The book store aimed to provide books to public audiences and distribute and sell popular literature during the readings (the cost of one copy ranged from one to 15 kopecks).<sup>38</sup> In the mid-1890s, some bookstores were established in Odesa's suburban villages and towns. One of the essential activities was the publication of brochures based on the public lectures to make them popular with a broader audience. Most of them were on historical and local lore. Some copies were distributed free of charge, some were transferred to the reading rooms, and some were sold.

The SCMSCSO established free reading rooms for those who could not afford to buy books, even for a nominal fee. It should be noted that, at first, visitors were only allowed to borrow books from the reading room. Later, books were loaned out for home reading on a small deposit. It significantly expanded the circle of the readers. The first public reading room was opened as far back

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<sup>37</sup> Anton Syniavsky, *Dmytro Syharevych. Vybrani pratsi* [Dmytro Syharevych. Selected works], Kyiv, Naukova dumka, 1993, s. 44.

<sup>38</sup> Yuri Karvatsky, *Gorodskaya auditoriya dlya narodnykh chteniy v Odesse* [City auditorium for public readings in Odesa], Odesa, 1895, s. 20-21.

as 1885 at the city auditorium, then moved to a specially designated space at the City Public Reading Room.<sup>39</sup>

The activities of the SCMSCSO in the field of education were not limited to Odesa. The Ministry of Public Education issued a permit for public readings in villages in 1888, then in county towns in 1894. In 1893, the SCMSCSO began preparations for the public assignments in suburban villages. The Bourgeois Society of Odesa allocated funds to organise some public readings in the country. Permission to hold the lessons was obtained in 1894, and the first public readings were held in five suburban villages in October-December of that year, attended by 15,000 people. Noting that the public lessons are almost the only “window of culture in the countryside”, the general meeting of the SCMSCSO considered it necessary to establish local committees for the public readings. Reading organisers attempted to make them as valuable and informative as possible. On Ivan Rudenko's initiative, several field meetings of the Commission were held in 1903, which village teachers and priests attended to gain experience.

Subsequently, the SCMSCSO succeeded in extending the geography of cultural and educational events and the number of visitors. Thus, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, approximately 200 folk readings and literary evenings were held near the villages of Velikiy Fontan, Dalnik-1, Dalnik-2, Nerubayske, Seredniy Fontan, Gnilyakove, Fomina Balka, Kriva Balka and Usatove, with an average audience of up to 100 people.<sup>40</sup> The topics of the folk readings were as close to the programs of the public tasks at the local auditoriums as possible.

In educational work, the SCMSCSO maintained contacts with the Charitable Societies and Organizations of Odesa, whose public figures were involved in its activities. Special mention should be made of the SCMSCSO's ties with the Ukrainian society “Prosvita”, which collaborated on a literary and musical evening in Taras Shevchenko's memory at the city public auditorium in 1906. However, it should be noted that the general content and direction of the activities organised by the Society lacked an unmistakable national character and aimed at broadening the broad horizons of the population.

Mention should be made of the SCMSCSO's cooperation with the educators from other regions. Thus, in 1886 the exchange of illustrative material was established with the Commissions of People's Readings in Kherson, Melitopol,

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, s. 41-43.

<sup>40</sup> *Otchet pravleniya Odesskogo slavyanskogo blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva im. sv. Kirilla i Mefodiya za 1907g.* [Board Report of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa for 1907], Odesa, 1908, s. 8-12.

Sevastopol, Kerch, Chisinau, and Tiraspol. In 1889, the SCMSCSO Commission established a Recommendation Bureau on the Selection of Textbooks for the Readers of Different Ages, led by Professor Alexander Kirpichnikov. The Recommendation Bureau took care of compiling catalogues and selecting books for the reading rooms at the public auditoriums: libraries were built for rural schools in Kherson and Poltava provinces, an orphanage in Kherson, and Vinnytsia parish school. The total number of free publications sent annually on demand was about 1,500 units.

The SCMSCSO was awarded a gold medal for fruitful work organising public readings. One of its most active members, Yuri Karvatsky, was elected to the Commission of Public Readings of the Ministry of Education. However, as Ivan Rudenko rightly noted, the accurate recognition of the educators of Odesa came from the gratitude expressed by visitors to the public auditorium: “for many people, the auditorium is a temple, the god of which is science. Sow what is wise, kind, eternal, and then the best of the listeners who seek to grow in themselves the seeds of science laid down with your help will thank you from their hearts”.<sup>41</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, Saints Cyril and Methodius Slavic Charitable Society of Odesa, which functioned within the southern region of the Russian Empire, had two activities defined in the Society’s Charter and functioned simultaneously. The first was focused on providing financial assistance to needy Slavs. This trend was also seen in the activities of other societies. The second one, cultural and educational work became the Odesa Society’s defining feature that distinguished it from Kyiv or Moscow Societies.

The society was unique in that it was founded by local representatives of South Slavs who sought to help their compatriots.

The central and local governments supported them, hoping that the society would become an active disseminator of the Russian ideology among the Balkan peoples. Odesa would become their place of residence after the resettlement. The SCMSCSO’s success in many respects was ensured by the community members’ interest, as the endeavour, especially at first, was free and required much dedication and enthusiasm. Local intelligentsia, particularly Novorossiysk University professors who moderated many such events, played an undeniable role in this.

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<sup>41</sup> *Otchet o deyatel'nosti Lektsionnogo komiteta...*, s. 95.



Unlike other societies, where educational work was reduced to elementary lectures on social nature and had a practical focus, the SCMSCSO practised various forms of education: at first, it was folk readings, then public lectures, as well as literary, musical and dramatic evenings. The work of the bookstore and libraries at the public auditoriums that had found recognition among the poor of the city became crucial in the society's activities. It is important to note that the SCMSCSO's cultural and educational activities were not limited to Odesa but extended to some suburban villages. Moreover, the society willingly shared its achievements with educators from other regions.

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