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ORGANIZATION

OF CHARITY SOCIETIES IN AZERBAIJAN AS THE EVOLUTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

ORGANIZACIÓN DE SOCIEDADES BENÉFICAS EN AZERBAIYÁN COMO EVOLUCIÓN DEL DESARROLLO DE LA EDUCACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

Charity societies have played an important role in education throughout history. These nonprofit organizations have been dedicated to providing additional support and resources to students and schools, especially in areas where government resources may be limited. The role of charities in education can vary depending on the context and country and some of the ways in which these organizations have contributed to education include scholarships and financial aid, development of school infrastructure, teacher training, and support for disadvantaged communities. It is important to note that the role of charities in education can vary depending on the context and specific needs of each community and each charity may have different approaches and programs to contribute to the improvement of education. Considering this, the goal of this article is to reveal the factors, objective and subjective reasons that have influenced the creation of charitable societies in Azerbaijan, delving into the history of their creation and the main directions of their activities.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, charity.

RESUMEN

Las sociedades benéficas han desempeñado un papel importante en la educación a lo largo de la historia. Estas organizaciones sin fines de lucro se han dedicado a brindar apoyo y recursos adicionales a estudiantes y escuelas, especialmente en áreas donde los recursos gubernamentales pueden ser limitados. El papel de las sociedades benéficas en la educación puede variar según el contexto y el país y algunas de las formas en que estas organizaciones han contribuido a la educación incluyen: becas y ayudas económicas, desarrollo de infraestructuras escolares, capacitación docente, y apoyo a comunidades desfavorecidas. Es importante destacar que el papel de las sociedades benéficas en la educación puede variar según el contexto y las necesidades específicas de cada comunidad y cada organización benéfica puede tener enfoques y programas diferentes para contribuir al mejoramiento de la educación. Considerando esto, el objetivo de este artículo es revelar los factores, razones objetivas y subjetivas que han influido en la creación de sociedades caritativas en Azerbaiyán, profundizando en la historia de su creación y las principales direcciones de sus actividades.

Palabras clave: Azerbaiyán, organización benéfica.

INTRODUCTION

The term “charity” is multifaceted and can acquire distinct connotations contingent upon the context in which it is employed. Broadly speaking, charity pertains to the benevolent act of providing assistance, typically in the form of financial resources or material possessions, to individuals facing hardship (Berezina, 2018; Mohamed, 2012). Then, charitable societies are institutions established with the primary purpose of offering support and aid to individuals facing various forms of hardship or need. However, it is important to acknowledge that within legal and policy frameworks, there exist more precise definitions and criteria that delineate the concept of charity (Halliday & Harding, 2022). This way the legal definition of charity varies among countries and jurisdiction under consideration. For instance, in Australia, there exists a statutory characterization of charity as proposed by the Charities Bill 2013 and the Charities (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013 (Parliament of Australia, 2021). Conversely, in the United Kingdom, the legal categorization of charity is founded upon the provisions outlined in the Charities Act of 2011 (The National Archives, 2023).

The concept of charity and charitable societies has evolved over time, reflecting changes in society’s attitudes towards those in need. This way, in the past, charitable societies were often associated with religious organizations but with time philanthropic organizations are usually involved in charity actions (Sidorina, 2011). But with the entry of other non-religious actors into the charity field, states took action to combat fraud. According to Keane (2019) charity fraud constitutes a form of fraudulent activity characterized by the misconduct of charitable organizations that solicit contributions from the public for philanthropic purposes but use funds for purposes that do not align with the donors’ original intentions. In this regard, charitable entities are susceptible to various forms of fraud, akin to those encountered by commercial enterprises, including embezzlement and the misappropriation of funds by organizational executives. Notably, charity fraud is regarded as a particularly reprehensible form of deceitful business practice, given that it exploits the trust of altruistic individuals who contribute with the belief that their donations will aid those in need. However, the prosecution of charity fraud presents distinct challenges and complexities (Burston, 2020; Masters, 2022).

However, dismissing the role of charitable societies would be unfair, especially if we consider the impact they have had on education, usually addressing deficiencies in regions where government resources are potentially constrained. For example, foundations such as the “GENIUS”

Charity Foundation in Transcarpathia undertake initiatives related to talent identification, talent nurturing, and research endeavors among school-aged children, college students, and emerging scholars. These endeavors aim to establish a comprehensive framework of programs dedicated to nurturing talent, ensuring equitable opportunities for talent promotion, and enhancing the social conscientiousness of gifted young individuals (Váradi, 2020). Charities can also provide education opportunities for students with disabilities, as seen in the “Disability and Christian Ministry” mini-course with ministerial students from Princeton Theological Seminary and Career and Community Studies students with I/DD from The College of New Jersey. The dynamic, experiential, and collaborative learning process in the mini-course encouraged students to take greater shared responsibility for their learning in the classroom, equipping them for ministerial leadership by allowing them to experience mutual leadership with one another (Raffety & Carroll, 2021).

Examples like these ones are abundant but additionally, charities may engage in activities such as advocating for policy reforms, raising awareness regarding educational challenges, and forging partnerships with diverse stakeholders to enhance the overall quality of education. Then, considering the above, the objective of this work is to analyze the organization of charity societies in Azerbaijan as the evolution of the development of education. The role that these organizations had in the national territory is highlighted, but special attention is also paid to emphasize the actions of individual figures as a sign of recognition. For this, the historical-logical method was used as the main research methods in conjunction with the analysis of documents, which allowed us to understand the evolution of the analyzed phenomena.

DEVELOPMENT

Since the formation of the Azerbaijani people, the feelings of benevolence have been strong, and they have found their embodiment in their activities. These traditions have been passed down from generation to generation by our great-grandfathers and that’s why such an expression is still used as a proverb: “Kindness left from grandfathers”. As we turn the pages of our history, we come across the ancient traditions of charity in Azerbaijan at every step. In all periods, there were not a few of our compatriots and entrepreneurs who were known and distinguished for their good deeds. If we had an excursion to the dark pages of history, we would have encountered interesting facts. Benevolence, which is one of the attributes of the national identity of the Azerbaijani people, has existed from the

earliest times until now and has had a great impact on the rise and development of the people and the nation.

For example, in the 12th century, artisan organizations called *akhili* (brothers) operated in Azerbaijani cities and gained great fame for their benevolence. The members of these organizations were fighters and benevolent people. The Arab traveler Ibn Batuta wrote about the *Akhis*: "There are few in the whole world who cares so much for the destitute and the homeless like the *Akhis*". On the other hand, the land around the *Ateshgah* temple on *Shubani* mountain, which existed until the end of the 19th century, belonged to a person named *Abdal Darvish*. He dug shallow wells, sold the oil produced there, and helped the poor, sick, orphans, and widows in need (Bunyadov, 1994, pp. 169–170).

Our people's attachment to Islam for many centuries has influenced the deep rooting of benevolent feelings in its spirituality. The sayings of *Hazrat Muhammad alaihissalam* encouraged Muslims to be kind and compassionate, and they are still doing it now. "The house most loved by God is the house where the orphan is respected". When a person complained to the Prophet about the hardness of his heart, the Holy Prophet said: "Past the head of the orphan, feed the poor." "For every step of a person who goes on a journey in order to meet the needs of his Muslim brother... Allah Almighty writes seventy rewards and forgives seventy sins" (Stleimanov, 1989, p. 11). "A person who helps a widow and a poor person... is like a person who fasts during the day and spends the night in prayer." "Whoever eases the pain of a Muslim, Allah will ease that person's distress on the Day of Judgment." "The best of people is the one who works for the benefit of the community" (Hasanli, 1990). The believers who were under the influence of these sayings thought to enter the world of the hereafter with meritorious deeds. This was expressed by the eminent scientist and social and political figure *Ahmad Bey Agayev*: "Aya, we Muslims... will come to our prophet *Muhammad al-Mustafa* on the Day of Judgment, in what kind of way and with what words will they show respect to their *madrasahs*, schools, and *darulums*?"

At the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, the exploitation of *Baku* oil on an industrial scale caused a deep revolution in the socio-economic and political life of Azerbaijan. Yesterday's cart drivers, drillers, carpenters, and others bought a piece of land and soon became an entrepreneur thanks to its oil. Born and grew up in an oil country, people there could turn from poor to millionaires with their intelligence, iron will and energy at an extraordinary speed. This statement about *Shamsi Asadullayev* also applied to other Azerbaijani entrepreneurs. However, it is noticeable how many of

them directed part of the capital they earned to charity. Therefore, during this period, representatives of various organizations, nations, charitable societies, organizations, etc., which sponsored mass-cultural events did not remain unaffected by the national bourgeoisie and intellectuals of Azerbaijan. In this regard took action in *Baku* Muslim Charitable Society, "*Nashri-maarif*", "*Safa*", "*Saadat*", "*Nijat*" and others doing useful work by creating societies.

In the second half of the 19th century there was a certain revival in school education in Azerbaijan. Issues such as the adoption of the Transcaucasian school charters, the creation of different types of public schools, the start of the Azerbaijan branch of the Transcaucasian Teachers' Seminary, the expansion of the struggle for a new school, the teaching of the mother tongue in schools and the preparation of textbooks in the mother tongue, are important problems that had to be solved. As a result of the reactionary policy of the tsarist government, the vast majority of Azerbaijanis were illiterate. That is why there were heated debates on the pages of magazines and newspapers about the opening of schools in the mother tongue. The pedagogical movement, which began in the 60s of the 19th century had a great influence on democratic educators and created favorable conditions for the improvement of work. Starting from these times, opening schools in the mother tongue, and creating textbooks in the pages of "*Akinchi*", "*Ziya*", "*Köşkül*", later "*Sharqi-Rus*", "*Rahbar*", "*Molla Nasreddin*" magazines and newspapers caused wide debates (Ahmadov, 2014).

At the end of the 19th century, *Hasan bey Zardabi*, *Seyyid Azim Shirvani*, *Najaf bey Vazirov* started the idea of opening national schools, and at the beginning of the 20th century, prominent educators *Firudin bey Kocherli*, *Jalil Mammadguluzade*, *Soltan Majid Ganiyev*, *Uzeyir bey Hajibeyov*, *Rashid bey Efendiyev*, *Muhammad Shahtakhtli*, *Muhammad Taghi Sidgi*, *Mahmud Mahmudbeyov* and others in the new phase, perform under better favorable conditions. At the beginning of the 20th century, the democratic society of Azerbaijan fought to expand the network of "Russian-Tatar" schools. At the same time, they strongly opposed the tsarism's policy of russification of these schools. In spreading culture, including education, the Muslim educational society "*Nijat*" in Azerbaijan, and the *Baku* society spread literacy among the population of *Baku* governorate. Societies like "*Nashri-maarif*", "*Safa*", "*Saadat*", and then Azerbaijan's *Nukha* (*Sheki*), *Ganja*, etc., arose in their cities and towns and played a major role. The main goal of these societies, as written in their charters, was to educate the Muslim people who were deprived of knowledge, education and literacy. But apart from that, those societies also held charity events. Charitable

societies were created by well-known Azerbaijani intellectuals and wealthy Bakurians, representatives of the national bourgeoisie. During that period, representatives of various nationalities created charitable societies, organizations, and unions in Baku. Of course, they also influenced the national bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan, contributed to its financing, and generally took an active part in its work.

Prominent representatives of the national bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan - Haji Zeynalabidin Taghiyev, Murtuza Mukhtarov, Musa Naghiyev, Shamsi Asadullayev, etc. they spent a large part of their income on the progress of the nation, its education, the opening of various societies, schools, reading rooms, libraries, and the construction of mosques. With their funds, various printing houses were established in Baku, newspapers and magazines were published, books and textbooks were printed. Thanks to their financial support, some of the later famous sons of the Azerbaijani people studied in Moscow, Kiev, Astrakhan, Gori, St. Petersburg, Italy, and Warsaw, and rendered great services in the education of the people. The case of Haji Zeynalabidin Taghiyev is special because one of his greatest services to the people of Azerbaijan was to attract girls to education. But the impact was greater because the national bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan provided financial assistance not only to Azerbaijanis and Muslims, but also to the education of the children of other nations.

At the beginning of the century, charitable societies had a great role in educating the people by opening new schools and attracting the poor and destitute to these schools. Famous intellectuals of Azerbaijan, party and GDR statesmen also closely participated in the work of these societies. It was they who drew up the statutes of the societies, taught and managed the schools opened by the society, prepared programs, and textbooks, and contributed to the formation of the ideology of national independence. For example, born in Balakhani in 1851 in a poor peasant family, Haji Soltanali Hashimov was orphaned at the age of 11 and grew up under the care of his aunt. He started working in the oil fields at the age of 14. Thanks to his observation, business acumen, and sharp mind, he not only became a good craftsman, but also collected some money, opened a private enterprise, expanded it, and turned it into a trade. Among the merchants in Baku, he was chosen for his generosity. He built 3 mosques in Baku at his own expense. With this, he won first place in the field of mosque construction. Because entrepreneurs Shamsi Asadullayev and Murtuza Mukhtarov each built two mosques.

The revolution of 1905-1907 had a positive effect on the awakening of the national consciousness of the Azerbaijani people and the practical activity of their representatives.

As a result, the struggle of Azerbaijani intellectuals for the enlightenment of the people was further expanded. Thus, the number of primary and secondary schools increased. The issue of educational school became the object of discussion of all parties, organizations, societies, unions, and congresses. This was not without reason. Because a nation's progress, development, and its rise to the world level are only related to its education. A nation without modern schools, a nation that does not work for the development of its national education, will sooner or later be subject to decline. According to Nariman Narimanov, the nation's progress is related to school. Then, in all media outlets published at the beginning of the 20th century, including "Akinchi", "Ziya", "Ziyayi Qafkaziyya", "Kashkül", "Sharqi-Rus", "Goch-Davat", "Hayat", "Fyuzat", "Taz". - life", "Waterfall", "Bahlul", "Zanbur", "Rahbar", "Debistan", "Evolution", "Irshad", "Taraq", "School", "Açık soz", "Molla Nasreddin" as well as newspapers and magazines, the issue of school and national education was seriously discussed. Proposals for solutions were given, the government's policy in this field is criticized, and the achievements of charitable societies are praised (Ahmadov, 2014, pp. 261-265).

In 1906, for the first time, "Nicat" society was established to spread literacy among Muslims in Baku governorate. On February 15th, 1910, the "Nicat" society addressed the Baku City Duma and wrote that recently there was a special desire for education among the Muslim community. It was noted there some limitations as follows:

1. In "Russian-Muslim" schools, as well as in Azerbaijani elementary schools, teaching in the Azerbaijani language was not as desired. Because the teaching period was short, and it was not possible to do much work in a short time, which cannot give them the knowledge they need for life. On the other hand, it was not possible to organize reading outside of school and outside the classroom because there were no necessary textbooks and booklets in the school.
2. Since they didn't have textbooks, reading books and booklets, students could not develop themselves through education after finishing school.
3. In general, all older Muslims were illiterate in their mother tongue. They had a great need for magazines and books. This is mainly felt in the evening and Friday schools, which were maintained at the expense of the city. Considering all this, we ask you to create a publishing house for the Muslim community of Baku and publish original textbooks and books, as well as translated books.

The second society created to spread literacy among Muslims in Baku governorate was "Nashri-maarif" society.

The society was founded in 1906. The charter of the society states that the main goal of the society is to spread education in the city and villages of Baku. The society also aimed to provide assistance to schools, open new schools, libraries, reading rooms and train teachers. In 1911, a charitable society approved by the state was established in Nukha. The charter of the society stated: the purpose of the society is to spread knowledge and education, especially primary education, in the native language among the Muslim community living in and around the city of Nukha. The third Muslim society in Baku was "Saadat" society. The society was founded in 1907. Like the "Safa" society, the "Saadat" society has also done some work in the field of public education, opened schools, and educated the children of poor and disadvantaged people.

Since then, educational charitable societies defending the interests of Muslims, as well as charitable societies and cultural centers of other nations have been operating in Baku city. Among such societies were "Baku Russian Charity Society", "Seraphim Committee", "Union of Baku Armenians", and "Baku Georgian National Council". Apart from that, Jewish, Polish, German cultural societies were also active in Baku. One of the main activities of these societies was education as well as cultural and educational work.

An interesting aspect is that the charity societies of other nations were established and operated in Baku long before the society created by Muslims. Muslim societies were also created after that, referring to their experience. The progress in the economy of Azerbaijan at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the development of the oil industry in Baku gave a strong impetus to the creation of the national Azerbaijani bourgeoisie. At first, Azerbaijani industrialists, who had no means and worked in various jobs as laborers, soon entered into competition with foreign capitalists.

This way, charitable societies, which were established at the beginning of the 20th century, were founded based on the benevolent traditions of our people and were widely active. During the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, charitable societies continued their activities and even new charitable societies and organizations, various unions and foundations have been established in our republic since the 1980s. Nevertheless, unlike at the beginning of the century, today's philanthropy is based on improving the financial conditions of people displaced from their homes as a result of Armenian aggression.

CONCLUSIONS

Charity societies have played a significant role in education throughout history. Its main function has been to provide financial resources and support to educational institutions, students and disadvantaged communities. Through donations and funding, these organizations have contributed to the development of educational programs, scholarships, and research projects. They have also advocated for educational reforms, promoting equal access to education and improving the quality of teaching. In the specific case of Azerbaijan, charitable societies have played an important role in the educational field because during its history the country has experienced significant transformations in its educational system, and charitable organizations have been involved in various initiatives to improve education in the country. In addition, as seen in this work, the benevolence of historical figures such as Haji Zeynalabidin Taghiyev, Murtuza Mukhtarov, Musa Naghiyev, Shamsi Asadullayev among others was notable. Their efforts have contributed, and still contribute, to the improvement of education and the development of human capital in the country.

One of the main directions of current philanthropy includes preparing high-level personnel, publishing books and textbooks, organizing various courses, and educating children of refugees living in tent cities and dormitories. Due to the funds of benefactors, Azerbaijani athletes have participated in international competitions getting high achievements. Azerbaijani people charity tradition lives on today as it did at the beginning of the century and becomes a guarantor of meeting the material and spiritual needs of the needy, the destitute, and the poor. This quality, which characterizes the spiritual face of our nation, lives, will live, and will always be appreciated as an aspect that distinguishes our nation.

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