

**AMURCON 2021**  
**AmurCon 2021: International Scientific Conference****THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH CULTURE FORMATION IN  
THE FAR EAST OF RUSSIA**

Elena R. Abdurazakova (a)\*, Natalya V. Martynova (b), Maria A. Udova (c)  
Valerii V. Martynov (d)  
\*Corresponding author

- (a) Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, 70a Shirokaya St., Birobidzhan, Russia, elenaab79@mail.ru  
(b) Pacific National University, 68, Karla-Marksa St., Khabarovsk, Russia, natalmart@mail.ru  
(c) Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, 70a Shirokaya St., Birobidzhan, Russia, umari2888@yandex.ru  
(d) Pacific National University, 68, Karla-Marksa St., Khabarovsk, Russia, 009879@pnu.edu.ru

**Abstract**

The article is intended for specialists studying the historical and cultural problems of Russia. At the present stage of the development of the Human Sciences, the history of the Jewish Autonomous Region is becoming the subject of close attention of historians, cultural scientists and philologists. A real historical situation always creates its own theme and its own hero. And, if we turn to the history of the formation and development of the region, then we will see a unique, distinctive Russian region, a special spiritual and cultural space which represents the richest material for modern researchers. A new mental pattern of Russian-Jewish culture has developed in the Jewish Autonomous Region over 85 years of its existence. The creation of the region was based on a political Stalinist experiment, which, despite all the drama, turned out to be successful. Tens of thousands of Jews found a new homeland in the Far Eastern expanses of the USSR, without losing their own cultural identity. Yiddish culture was one of the important landmarks of the region. It was in this language that the settlers wrote and spoke. In the 1940s over six million Jews-native speakers of the Yiddish language died in the fire of the Holocaust. Israel developed only Hebrew and did not support Yiddish, but squeezed it out, and to this day Yiddish is not the state language, although it is spoken by two million Jews. The Jewish Autonomous Region became the only place for the preservation and development of the Yiddish language.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1934 a political «miracle» appeared on the boundless expanses of the Far East, the original Jewish Autonomous Region, the centre of which was the city of Birobidzhan. The name of the city comes from the Tungus names of two mountain stormy clean rivers Bira and Bidzhan, the city stands on one of them. Bi means «big», Ra means «water». There are some facts from the prehistory of the region: the predecessor of the city of Birobidzhan, Tikhonkaya station that was founded in 1912, was a small taiga way-station (half-station). These kinds of half-stations were scattered in thousands along the great Trans-Siberian route. There were several dozen wooden houses among islets of untouched taiga on the banks of a fast river. Only 623 people lived here (railway workers, hunters, prospectors). There was a tiny mill, a shop, an elementary school, an old ferry across Bira ... such a picture appeared before the settlers' eyes. Nothing disturbed the centuries-old peace here. There were several Cossack villages and the Korean village «Blessed» that appeared on this territory in the 19th century two hundred kilometres from «Tikhonkaya». And then in May 1928 a train came, Jewish settlers «poured out» of the carriages, and a new history began on this land. They knew that it would be difficult for them and that they being the children of tailors, coopers, grocers would have to master new specialities. But how did the Jewish settlers appear here? Back in 1921, the Council of Nationalities of the Central Committee organized a Committee for the Land Arrangement of Jewish Workers with the aim of attracting the Jewish population of Soviet Russia to productive labour; Pyotr Smidovich headed this committee. He was looking for places for compact settlement of Jews, an adaptation of the Jewish population to agricultural work. For 7 years they decided and thought where, in what place of the country to organize Jewish agricultural settlements, how to resettle the Jews so that there would be no more terrible and cruel pogroms to which they were subjected: such proposals were received as Crimea, Azov, Stavropol, Altai and others but these attempts were not successful because of the lack of free lands in these places. In 1927 Professor Brook led an expedition that was sent to the Amur region. Based on the results of the expedition, Boris Lvovich came to the conclusion that these places are suitable for a living (Brener, 2013). And on March 28, 1928, the final decision was made to assign to the Committee for Land Arrangement of Jewish Workers free lands in the Amur strip of the Far Eastern Territory, approximately 4.5 million hectares of the Amur lands. And already in May 1928, the first group of Jewish settlers arrived from cities and villages, townships in Ukraine, Belarus, and central regions of Russia to the Tikhonkaya station, where the Birobidzhan resettlement centre was located. The first year in the new place for the settlers was truly terrible: a stuffy and rainy summer with hordes of mosquitoes and poisonous midges, swamps all around. In autumn there was a terrible flood that washed away even the cattle burial grounds and anthrax began. After a long, harsh and hungry winter finished, scurvy began in spring. Koreans and Cossacks came to the aid of the Jewish settlers from distant villages, who simply saved them from scurvy by bringing dried wood garlic, lingonberries, herbs. Subsequently, Koreans and Cossacks taught the Jewish settlers about agriculture. Only forty per cent of the migrants survived and remained on this land to live and work, overcoming unthinkable difficulties associated with weak organizational work, natural disasters, including severe floods, the lack of housing, household, equipment, infrastructure prepared for resettlement. For 6 years (from 1928 to 1934) about 18.5 thousand Jews arrived in the Jewish Autonomous Region, but only 8.5

thousand remained by 1935, the rest left was unable to withstand the most difficult conditions. The city was founded on swamps, the designers made different proposals - to start building a city on the hill, on the other side of the river, where floods would not reach, where there was solid soil, but Stalin gave the order to start construction in the swamp. It was first necessary to fill in the swamp to build even a small building. And now every centimetre of Birobidzhan was filled by hand. This city was built despite everything. This is a monument to human resilience!

## **2. Problem Statement**

The history of the Jewish Autonomous Region is especially important from the point of view of the study of Yiddish culture since Yiddish culture was one of the important landmarks of the region. It was that language that the settlers spoke and wrote in. Yiddish is the language of the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe and belongs to the European languages (Avineri, 2014). It originated around the 12th century. It was at that time when the first texts appeared, written in some kind of Germanic dialect, but in Hebrew letters. During the period of the late Middle Ages a mass migration of Jews began from Germanic lands to the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where they united into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth - the largest conglomeration in Europe (Avineri, 2015). Yiddish was formed in these territories, in close interaction with the Slavic languages. In the late Middle Ages, Yiddish was divided into two dialects: West Yiddish, which was spoken by the Jews of Germany, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Austria and East Yiddish, which was spoken by the Jews of Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia. Approximately 13-14 million Jews were speakers of this language, which means that it was the largest European language (Krogh, 2013). And this Ost-Yiddish was spoken by the Jewish settlers of the region. In the twentieth century, when Jews settled all over the world (in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, Africa), Yiddish lost its self-identity, mixing with the languages of these peoples. In the 1940s, over 6 million Jews, native speakers of Yiddish, died in the fire of the Holocaust (Gallas, 2019). Israel developed only Hebrew and did not support Yiddish, but «squeezed» it out, and until now Yiddish is not the state language, although it is spoken by 2 million Jews. And it turned out that only Birobidzhan became the only place for the preservation and development of Yiddish. It was spoken, taught in schools and in other educational institutions. In our city, we still can see the names of streets, organizations and institutions that are written in two languages (Gilbert, 2019). Newspapers, magazines, almanacks were published in this language, people created their literary works, staged performances (Wolf, 1969). The writer Sholom-Aleichem became the central image for Birobidzhan. He was one of the classics and founders of Yiddish literature. He wrote about the poor, destitute Jews who lived in Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was this type of Jews who founded this city. Sholom-Aleichem had never been to Birobidzhan. He had died long before Birobidzhan was built, but a lot of things are connected with the name of this writer in Birobidzhan (Grosser & Halperin, 2021). In the centre of the city, there is a monument of Sholom-Aleichem, made according to the sketches of the famous Birobidzhan artist V. Tsap. The main street of the city is named in honour of Sholom-Aleichem, the only multidisciplinary university in the region – Priamursky State university is named after Sholom-Aleichem.

### 3. Research Questions

The article takes up the issue of the national Jewish question, the problems of resettlement of Jews and their adaptation in the Far East of the USSR. The model of interethnic relations, the history of Yiddish literature in the USSR, Stalin's repressions, the decline of Jewish culture in the USSR are considered. Considering the political and propaganda component of the Birobidzhan project: the city was supposed to become for the Jews of the Soviet Union and foreign countries that Palestinian Zion, to which they had been waiting for almost two thousand years to return (Perelmutter, 2018). That is why in Moscow it was decided to involve the newly created GIPROGOR trust in this work. A team of this institute under the leadership of the famous professor Hannes Mayer, a Swiss architect, was involved in the preparation of the project (Siebenbrodt & Reissinger, 2000). At the end of 1930, two strong groups of German architects came to Moscow from Germany. One of them was represented by the politically neutral E. May, the other - by H. Mayer. In February 1931 Mayer was visited by his former students, graduates of the Bauhaus (Vayserman, 1993). German architects were given the name «Red Brigades». They designed general plans for the development of cities such as Perm, Krasnoyarsk, Chita, Orsk, Rybinsk, Nizhne-Kurinsk and Birobidzhan. Before the trip to Birobidzhan, H. Mayer studied all the available information about the city in Moscow. H. Mayer arrived in Birobidzhan on May 31, 1933. Mayer described in his report to GIPROGOR what he had seen. This report was of interest since it described what Birobidzhan was like in those years, its appearance reflected the architectural features of those places from which the settlers arrived:

The inhabitants of the village preferred their own private houses with small gardens - as in some petty-bourgeois production of a Jewish theatre! Buildings of different sizes, combined with different construction methods, create the impression of some kind of randomly arranged exhibition of dwellings of different peoples of the world. Local building materials - wood, reeds, straw, clay, sand, gravel, lime and limestone were transformed in the hand of a resident according to his origin in the process of an individual or collective construction into a blockhouse of a Latvian or Belarusian Jew, into a bleached adobe wattle and daub house of a Ukrainian Jew, or into a two-story brick building of a Jew from the German «Reich». The roofs, complementing this colourful picture, were made of reeds, straw, slab, shingle, tin and asbestos. In particular in wooden buildings, all types of construction were presented - from the «subsistence economy» of Korean houses, woven from twigs and branches, plastered with clay and whitewashed with lime, to standard panel houses of the Central Union of Housing Cooperatives. In a fiberboard factory near the village, a group of foreigners, mostly American Jews, were building two two-story wooden blockhouses in the style of American block structures, requiring an equipped carpentry workshop and a lot of nails. Both of these conditions have not been carried out here. In addition, we came across three round standard houses characteristic of the entire Far East, assembled from ready-made wooden walls and upholstered with tin. The place for fire is in them in the middle of a circular inner space, which is divided in an arbitrary way. Bricks are rarely used. The Koreans produce bricks on a professional basis in two factories. Bricks go to the laying of stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, and also (for prestige) for the construction of a three-story building of the district executive committee (Vayserman, 1993, p.76).

Criticism of the development of the village does not apply to the flourishing collective farm «Waldheim» (13 km south from here), which provided its 620 residents with five types of houses, built in a uniform style (Ikonnikov, 2001). Mayer designed a wonderful city, but when the project came to Stalin, he did not give permission to build a city according to the project of H. Mayer. Stalin considered that living for Jews in such a luxurious city was too much (Pearlman, 2007).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to comprehensively consider the cultural and historical process of the development of the Jewish Autonomous Region. Highlight key points, outline important development processes in literature and art.

#### **5. Research Methods**

As a basic methodological principle of the research, a combination of historical, problem-logical, typological-systemic and comparative methods was chosen. Art criticism methods are used: formal, stylistic, semiotic-hermeneutic. They are used as fundamental - the iconological method of interpretation. Please replace this text with context of your paper.

#### **6. Findings**

On October 30, 1930, an important cultural historical event took place in Birobidzhan - the publication of two newspapers began: «Birobidzhaner Star» in Russian and «Birobidzhaner Stern» in Hebrew. The founder of the newspaper was the first secretary of the district party committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Yankel Levin. And the first editor of these newspapers was a prominent literary figure of Ukraine Genakh Kazakevich (father of the famous Soviet writer Emmanuil Kazakevich). Genakh Kazakevich is a legendary man, a close friend of Marc Chagall, a Jewish Soviet journalist, publicist, critic, editor. These newspapers were published with a frequency of five times a month, with a circulation of two thousand copies. Half of the circulation of the newspaper «Birobidzhaner Stern» was distributed in the region, the other half in the Soviet Union and abroad. It was these newspapers that became the first creative platform for many Birobidzhan writers. The first poets and writers of the Jewish Autonomous Region were Victor Fink, Naum Friedman, David Hait, Meir Alberton, Shmuel Gordon and David Bergelson. The writer Emmanuil Kazakevich spent his youth and began his development here. Together with Kazakevich, such writers as Buzi Olevsky, Hirsch Dobin, Tevye Gen, Ihiel Falikman, Lyubov Wasserman, Salvador Borges, Isaac Bronfman, Grigory Rabinov creatively grew up (Kotlerman, 2017). The first thing that is characteristic of the literature of this period is bi-nationality. The first works of fiction were created in Yiddish, and therefore much attention was paid to literary translation. The first book published in the region in the Hebrew language was a collection of poems about Birobidzhan. The author of this collection was 18-year-old Emka Kazakevich. The pictures of the Far Eastern nature, the hard work of people truthfully, tragically, with a romantic tinge, were described. But, despite the signs of the times, this literature did not have a heroic beginning. «Anti-heroism» was a

consequence of the national mentality and wisdom of the Jews. Human vigilance, intellectual giftedness were the hallmarks of these writers. Undoubtedly, in the works of writers and poets of that time, it could be felt the «consciousness of the era». However, the «quiet lyric poetry» of Birobidzhan poets were devoid of slogans, hot appeals, declamation and most often appealed to a lonely human soul. They could impart biblical seriousness to everyday things and to philosophical themes a clownish acuteness. They created their own literary «mental map», mastering the Far Eastern life landscape poetically and philosophically. Accordingly, more and more mental glazes associated with the concept of «nation», «homeland», «ideal state» were imposed on everything that was happening around. In 1932 a department of Dalgiz was opened in Birobidzhan, which published a number of brochures in Hebrew (Yiddish). This formation created a new literary community, where Buzi Olevsky, Aron Kushnirov, Tevye Gen, Moisey Goldstein, Isaac Bronfman, Nikolai Kapusto and many others began their creative activities. In 1934, the State Jewish Theatre was created in Birobidzhan, built in the Bauhaus style, which existed until December 1949. The troupe of the theater was formed from graduates of the Moscow Jewish school-studio of Solomon Mikhoels, who arrived in Birobidzhan in full in 1934. During this time about forty performances were staged in it, the part of which has remained to these days a significant event in the cultural life of Russia. The Birobidzhan theatre was the centre of the cultural life of autonomy. Several children's studios worked on the theatre: musical, choreographic, ballet, stage speech. The 30-40s were the peak of the development of both the economy and the national Jewish culture in the Jewish Autonomous Region. The literary almanack «Forpost» and «Birobidzhan» began to be published. Birobidzhan achieved high achievements in industry and agriculture, for example, at the «Dalselmash» factory (Assouline & Dori-Hacohen, 2017). This factory began its work with the production of carts, and then there it was begun to manufacture and assemble crawler-mounted rice grain harvesters. These harvesters were exported abroad to 26 countries. The Birobidzhan garment factory and the power transformer factory also exported abroad. Before the war, sledges were supplied to Finland, which were made in the region in the village of Londoko. Gold was washed, brucite and iron were mined on the Sutara River. Since the 1930s marble has been sawn in the village of Bira (Jewish Autonomous region). For example, in Moscow, the Belorusskaya, Sokol and Airport metro stations are lined with Birakan marble. The region was also famous for its agriculture. For example, even before the war, only in the one Korean village «Blagoslovennoe» 55 centners of rice per hectare were harvested. As in the whole country, since 1937 the life idyll of the peoples who inhabited this territory gradually began to collapse. One of the first «enemies of the people» was a well-known and respected person in the region, director of the pedagogical school Ihil' Rabinovich. He was incriminated in low academic performance in the Russian language, personal training of spies within the walls of the school, the distribution of Trotskyist literature and many other false accusations, the result of which was the execution. 1938 was a fatal year for almost all families of the Jewish Autonomous Region. Many amazing, talented innocent people have left (B. Miller, L. Wasserman, I. Kharik, L. Shvayshtein, G. Shlem-Meerovich Chereshnya, L. Pevtsov, S. Klitenik and others). Terrible repressions against the Korean people began in the region: "It is impossible to convey the grief, the tragedy that befell the Korean population. They were not given even 24 hours to prepare for shipment" (Vayserman, 1999, p. 14). The next tragic page in the history of the USSR was the Great Patriotic War which was complicated for the Jewish population by Auschwitz, the ghetto,

Maidanek, Treblinka, Stutdorf. The decline of Jewish culture in the Far East began in the post-war years. The struggle against rootless cosmopolitanism began. The repressions continued, the magazines were closed, the Jewish theatre in Birobidzhan was dying a painful «step-by-step» death. In 1949 the theatre was officially closed. Many outstanding Jewish actors had to leave the area. Thus ended the first wave of Jewish culture in the Far East (Melikhov, 2009). The second wave of cultural flourishing in the Jewish Autonomous Region began in the late 1960s. The poetic boom in the country has left its unforgettable mark in our region, and it should be noted that poetry in the literary process of the Jewish Autonomous Region has always dominated over prose. A new generation of word masters has appeared in the literary arena of Birobidzhan. Vasily Morozov, Roman Shoikhet, Irina Metelkina, Viktor Solomatov, Leonid Shkolnik, Anatoly Kobenkov and others became active members of the regional literary association. Many of them tried to preserve the creative continuity of E. Kazakevich, B. Miller, L. Wasserman and other Jewish writers. The literary translation was resumed. During that period memory became the most important aesthetic component, and the war was the central theme. The works of those who went through the war along the front line (I. Bronfman, E. Kazakevich, A. Vergelis, L. Wasserman, Israel Goldwasser, Naum Fridman, Feivel Aroris, Ber Slutsky and others) sounded especially piercing. The second direction of that period was the theme of repression and fascist genocide against the Jewish people. An illustrative example of this thematic vector is Isaac Bronfman's poem «Two White Roses». Also at that time a socio-critical view of the past was being formed, in connection with which journalistic genres were activated. There were works about the indigenous peoples of the Far East (Nina Filipkina «Khovrun - the son of Chidan» and others). In the late 1980s the collapse of the Soviet Union became a new test for the Jewish people. The «exodus» of the Jewish population began, both from the whole country and from Birobidzhan. These were the years of a cultural «vacuum». Few people write, few people read. But by the end of the 90s, a new period began in the development of the culture of the Jewish Autonomous Region. With the help of the Birobidzhan artist Boris Kosvintsev, a museum of contemporary art was opened, the main value of which was the art collection «The Old Testament through the Eyes of Contemporary Artists». The third generation of writers appeared. After the crisis of the 90s, when the old school of literary Birobidzhan was irrevocably gone, it seemed that continuity and traditions were lost. However, by the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the literary process in the Jewish Autonomous Region began to «revive». The year 2004 became the most significant milestone in the modern literary process. That year the first poetry festival took place which was attended by many famous writers of Siberia and the Far East. A creative association appeared, the literary almanack «Birobidzhan» was revived, in which almost all modern writers and poets of the Jewish Autonomous Region presented their work. A distinctive feature of the modern process was the thematic diversity represented by history itself. Images of Birobidzhan emigrants appeared in the literature of the 90s, in whose memory the most important periods of life were associated with Birobidzhan: childhood, youth, adolescence, maturity; for them for that time Birobidzhan was a city-myth, memories of it gave a rise to excruciating nostalgia. 40 years later, the Jewish theatre «Kogelet» was revived, the Birobidzhan puppet theatre «Kudesnik», as well as the academic folk choir chapel, appeared. The violin ensemble celebrated its 40th anniversary. Today the Jewish Autonomous Region is experiencing a new literary renaissance. The most famous authors are Rimma Lavochkina (author of the poetry collection «Pretender»), Alla Akimenko (author of the poetic

book «The Trace of the Current Elusive ...»"), Alexander Drabkin (author of several poetry collections «We are from Birobidzhan», «On the Way to Winter», prose writer), Tamara Ilyina (author of the poetic book «Equator of the Day»). Recently, the remarkable poet Maria Glebova has passed away, leaving us a «heritage» of the collection of poems «From September to September».

The writers, poets and artists of the Jewish Autonomous Region have found «their corner» in the space of Russian literature of the twentieth century. Their work revealed a different outlook on life: from the Bible and the Talmud; from Jewish legends and parables, from the history of resettlement, from the world of Birobidzhan streets and its suburbs. Of course, not all works of poets, writers and artists are unequal in their artistic value, not many of them have become the property of art with a capital letter. But they all have become a part of the mosaic that formed a bizarre picture of the cultural biography of the Jewish Autonomous Region. There is also a unique flora and fauna in Birobidzhan. The black crane nests in the Bastak Nature Reserve - the rarest bird not only in Russia but throughout the world. This bird is so rare that bird watchers could not describe it for quite a long time because it was almost impossible to find it. Until 1974 the black crane was considered almost a myth. Its image can be seen on a silver coin of the Bank of Russia. There are not very many species of cranes in the world, and most of them are rare today. And the rarest is the black crane. The main habitat of these birds is the territory of the Russian Federation (Siberia and the Far East). Slightly smaller numbers are found in China (north) and on the Korean Peninsula. These birds prefer swampy light-wooded deciduous forests or swamps, along the banks of which there are thickets of cotton grass and various rasp-grass. These cranes are especially honoured in Japan, Korea and China. For a long time, representatives of these countries studied where this species of cranes were nesting. In 2016 a Korean expedition of Seoul Television worked in the Jewish Autonomous Region which for the first time managed to shoot a film about the black crane directly in the Bastak Nature Reserve. A monument to black cranes is erected on the embankment of the city. In addition, the Amur tigers are considered a special pride of the Bastak Nature Reserve. On the territory of the reserve in the autumn-winter period of 2020 two females (tigers) were recorded - Cinderella, her three-year-old daughter and one tiger, its name is Bastak. Speaking of this territory, it is impossible not to speak about the most important balneological centre of the Far East, the Kuldur sanatorium, reviews of which from year to year confirm its status of a health resort of federal significance, is the embodiment of the beauty and healing power of nature in its original form. The wellness complex has a century-old history and has been reconstructed several times during its existence. During the Great Patriotic War, a military hospital was temporarily organized on its territory for the wounded soldiers of the Soviet Army. The famous Kuldur waters gained popularity at the beginning of the last century. For a long period of time legends about the healing power of local water, sources were among the Far Eastern people. From mouth-to-mouth people passed on stories about cases of incredible recovery of patients, however, there was no medical confirmation of that. In 1910 scientific studies of the region began, during which the healing effect of local waters was proved.

What other people does this city remember: of course, the highly professional journalist and wonderful poet Leonid Borisovich Shkolnik, poet Anatoly Kobenkov, the righteous man of the world, Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugiharu. Every year in Kaunas on September 3 events begin that are dedicated to «Sugihara Week» in memory of the Japanese diplomat who saved at least six thousand Jews



from the Nazis. In 1985 Israel honored Consul Chiune Sugihara with the title of Righteous Among the Nations. What was the feat of Chiune Sugihara? On September 1, 1939, many Jews fled to Lithuania since the beginning of World War II. To save the Jewish population, diplomats developed the following scheme: the consul of the Netherlands in Lithuania Jan Zwartendijk issued certificates to Jews that they did not need a visa to enter the Dutch colony of Curacao. Then people with such «visas» went to the Soviet Union, which insisted that Jews should also receive a Japanese transit visa because in the Far East they could leave the USSR only through Japan. This document was handled by Chiune Sugihara. In 1940 after Lithuania joined the USSR, foreign diplomats were asked to leave the country. Sugihara postponed departure for a month to complete his business. The Japanese Foreign Ministry ordered him to issue visas only to those Jews who had the necessary amount of money. However, the diplomat ignored this order and issued more visas. According to some estimates, the diplomat issued only 2,193 visas. Given that the document was issued for a family, researchers suggest that Sugihara helped save at least six thousand Jews. The total number of descendants of the rescued diplomats has exceeded 50 thousand people. Sugihara himself commented on his act of heroism like this:

*You want to hear my motivation, don't you? It's like the feeling that everyone would experience if they met face to face a refugee pleading with tears in his eyes. And, apart from sympathy, nothing remains. There were old men and women among them. Led to despair, they kissed my shoes. <...> I knew that in the future someone would definitely make a complaint against me, but I was sure that I was doing the right thing. There is nothing wrong with saving many lives. Being guided by the spirit of humanity, charity, neighbourly friendship, I decided on what I did, confronting this very difficult situation - these feelings are the reason why I continued what I had started with redoubled courage. (Taniuchi, 2001, p. 4)*

This is a real example of human behaviour! Undoubtedly, everyone who contributed to the Great Victory is in the memory of the residents of the region. From the first days of the Great Patriotic War, the region's economy switched to the production of products for the front. The wagon factory produced tires, grenades, trailers and special vehicles, auto repair shops produced ammunition, a furniture factory produced skis, military-sanitary equipment, a garment factory produced parachutes, knapsacks and others. The regional enterprises sent to the front 1,500 wagons of ammunition, 48 echelons of a military convoy, 500 thousand sets of military uniforms, 38 wagons of military sanitary equipment, a large amount of foodstuff and gifts for soldiers. More than 12 thousand residents of the region were called to the front, 7 thousand of them died or disappeared. More than 7 thousand people were awarded orders and medals of the USSR for bravery, courage and heroism. 19 heroes of the Soviet Union, four full Cavaliers of the Soldier's Order of Glory. More than 7 thousand residents of the region were awarded the medal «For Meritorious Labour during the Great Patriotic War», 1 hero of Russia - George Abramovich Koval'.

## **7. Conclusion**

Today Birobidzhan is still a small but cosy, beautiful and very hospitable city. Jewish traditions are reviving here. Festivals of Jewish culture are annually held, a newspaper in Yiddish «Birobidzhaner

Stern» is published, there is a kosher restaurant. A synagogue and community centre «Freud» are actively working. The department for the study and preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the Jewish Autonomous Region operates at the Institute for Comprehensive Analysis of Regional Problems at the Academy of Sciences. But Birobidzhan is alive not only by Jewish traditions (Sadan, 2011). Thanks to Vladyka Joseph and Vladyka Ephraim, Orthodox traditions are actively developing in the region. The Birobidzhan diocese includes 48 Orthodox parishes and 3 deaneries. the Cathedral of the Annunciation Cathedral and the synagogue are located very close to one street. The mosque is built too in the Jewish Autonomous Region. The region maintains the traditions of the Cossacks. There are many wonderful children's creative groups, the regional Union of Artists. The region is proud of the fact that for the entire period of its existence there has not been a single interethnic conflict.

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