2 A Brief Archival History

Today's National Archive of the Kalmyk Republic (БУ РК «Национальный архив») has its origins in the tsarist-era central Archive of the Kalmyk People's Administration in Astrakhan and its local branches affiliated with each ulus administration. It was founded as part of the Astrakhan governorate, but independently and parallel to the governorate archive, following the establishment of the Kalmyk People's Administration.14

After the October Revolution the archive was renamed and reorganized as the Archive at the Central Executive Committee of the Kalmyk People (Архив при ЦИК калмыцкого народа) stipulated by a resolution of the committee from August 18, 1920. A few months later, after the foundation of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk People (Аутономная область калмыцкого народа) on November 4, 1920, the archive was initially brought under the purview of the Archival-Museum Section of the Kalmyk Central Executive Committee's Department for National Education (Архивно-музейная секция отдела народного образования Калмыцкого ЦИК) on May 17, 1921.15 By this time, Nikolai N. Palmov who had started his academic career in Kiev in the 1890s, had assumed directorship of the archive (1921–34), which subsequently became part of the Archival Department at the Central Executive Committee (Архивный отдел ЦИК КАО) in June of that year, only to be reorganized shortly thereafter as the Archival Bureau at the Central Executive Committee (Архивное Бюро при ЦИК КАО) in December 1922. Yet, while the administrative center of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region (КАО) was transferred from Astrakhan to Elista in 1928, the archive still remained at Astrakhan.16

The Kalmyk Autonomous Region existed until October 20, 1935, when it was upgraded, receiving the status of a Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (КАССР) which, in turn, was dissolved on December 27, 1943 following accusations of collaboration with Nazi Germany that only a day later led to the immediate deportation of the Kalmyk people to Siberia and Central Asia.17 Within this short period of eight years the archive underwent changes in status and designation. On January 1, 1935 the Archival Bureau was renamed the Archival Administration, only to be renamed again in December as the Central Archival Administration (Центральное Архивное Управление КАССР), reflecting the designation of the region as a republic in October the same year. When all Soviet state archives were handed over to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (НКВД СССР) in 1938, the Kalmyk Central Archival Administration was reorganized as the Kalmyk State Archive at the Archival Department of the Kalmyk ASSR People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (Калмыцкий государственный архив при архивном отделе НКВД КАССР) in July 1939 and upgraded in 1940, receiving the status of a Central State Archive (Центральный государственный архив КАССР).

With the advance of German troops into the Caspian steppe (they would suffer defeat at Stalingrad soon after), the archive was evacuated on November 24, 1942 on orders of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. About 47,463 files were brought to Shalkar (Шалкар, Челкар), a town within the Aktyubinsk region of northern Kazakhstan, while 20,007 files continued to be kept in Astrakhan, which was spared the horrors of being a battleground.18 By contrast, Soviet-era documentation that had been collected since the mid-1920s up to 1942 at Elista and some district archival branches was largely destroyed as a consequence of war-time occupation.19 In September 1943 the archival holdings were brought back from Shalkar in fairly good condition and stored at the Astrakhan regional archive, while the Kalmyk archive was dissolved together with all other Kalmyk governmental institutions in December the same year. During the deportation

---

14 The Kalmyk People's Administration (Управление калмыцким народом) was created in 1867 with the liquidation of the Bureau for Horde-Peoples of the Ministry of State Domains at Astrakhan (Ордынское отделение Астраханской палаты государственных имуществ) which was founded in October 1848. The bureau itself was a successor institution of the Council of the Astrakhan Kalmyk Administration (Совет Астраханского калмыцкого управления) founded in May 1836 following the closure of the Commission for Kalmyk Affairs (Комиссия калмыцких дел) established in June 1826.


18 Илюмжинова, «Зарождение историографии Калмыкии» (2016).

of the Kalmyk people (1944–55) a large amount of material again vanished, this time consisting largely of Soviet-era collections.\textsuperscript{20}

With the re-establishment of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region on February 12, 1957, the archive was reopened as the State Archive of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region (Государственный архив Калмыцкой автономной области) and subsequently, following the restoration of status of republic on July 29, 1958, upgraded as the Central State Archive of the Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Центральный государственный архив КАССР). About 50,000 complete files from regional archives in Astrakhan, Volgograd, Rostov, and Stavropol were subsequently brought to Elista. The archive was now supervised by the Kalmyk Ministry of the Interior until its transfer to the Council of Ministers (Совет Министров КАССР) in 1962.

Following the changes of perestroika, the archive was renamed the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia (Центральный государственный архив Республики Калмыкия) in 1992 and its classified holdings were gradually declassified. The adoption of the Kalmyk national constitution – also known as the “Steppe-Code” (Степное Уложение)\textsuperscript{21} – on April 5, 1994, introduced a short-lived presidential system to the Kalmyk Republic and induced another renaming of the archive which in 1995 became the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia (Национальный архив Республики Калмыкия)\textsuperscript{22}.

In December 2014 the archive was reorganized again, ear-marked and renamed as a state-financed Budgetary Institution of the Republic of Kalmykia “National Archive” (Бюджетное учреждение Республики Калмыкия «Национальный архив»). At its centennial in March 2021, the archive comprised about 445,254 files in 1,550 fonds in various collections from tsarist, Soviet, and contemporary times.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Фонды Национального Архива Республики Калмыкия 1713–1993гг. (2002), 7–8.
\textsuperscript{22} Renamed by Ukas No 224 of former president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov on November 29, 1994.
\textsuperscript{23} The archive is located at the capital of the Kalmyk Republic, 358000 Elista, ulitsa Pushkina, 9а; phone: +7 (84722) 4-09-16; gu-nark@yandex.ru; http://kalmarhiv.ru.