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Archival Management in Kazakhstan: Yesterday and Today

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ABSTRACT

The twentieth century turned out to be the most eventful for the history of archiving, and for the history of Kazakhstan as a whole. This has profoundly affected all aspects of the state, political, social, economic and cultural life. Wars, revolutions, changes in the political system, the restoration and collapse of the USSR - this is how the twentieth century began and ended. This article is an attempt to understand the course and certain feature of the long-term archival process in Kazakhstan. The entire history of archives of the Soviet period is closely intertwined with the history of the political system of the state. The history of archives is related to the monopoly rule of one-party ideology, with administrative pressure in the spiritual sphere of man, including pressure over archives. A new milestone in the development of archiving took place after the collapse of the USSR, so the archive system became independent. Independent Kazakhstan has carried out a number of reforms to democratize archival activities. As a result of these changes, a new archive management system was formed. Archives become part of the country’s cultural heritage. The article focuses on identifying the leading trends in the formation of archives and key problems in the domestic archival science. Less attention is paid to the history of individual archives, since in general this is fully reflected in monographs, textbooks and numerous articles of Kazakhstani authors.

Introduction

Before the October Revolution, parts of modern Kazakhstan were part of the Russian Empire and were controlled from various administrative centers. The territory of Kazakhstan was divided into six regions. Syr-Darya and Semirechensk regions became part of the Turkestan General Government with a center in Tashkent. Akmola, Semipalatinsk, Ural and Turgay regions became part of the Stepnoy region, the center of Omsk. Territory Of Internal (Bukey) Horde was part of the Astrakhan province, and Mangyshlak was part of the Transcaspian region. Therefore, some of the valuable
documents on the history of Kazakhstan are in various departmental archives of the cities mentioned above. After the establishment of Soviet power on the territory of Kazakhstan, a Revolutionary Committee for the Administration of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Krai was organized. This Committee was established by Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR of July 10, 1919 and had the features of a civil-military governing body. Kirrevkom (as known as Military Revolutionary Committee for the Administration of the Kyrgyz Krai) immediately began work on the formation of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Soviet Autonomous Socialist Republic as part of the RSFSR with the capital in Orenburg. The status of the Autonomous Republic was legislated on August 26, 1920. Since Kazakhstan became a part of the Russian Federation, representatives of the General Administration of Archival Affairs of the RSFSR took an active part in creating the regional archival fund.

Special commissions were sent to the autonomous republic to disseminate the experience of archival construction in the legislative and practical sphere.\(^1\) The first Commissioner of the Main Archive Department of the RSFSR for the Orenburg province, Alexander Petrovich Mikhailov, immediately began work on recording documents. The newspapers of that time published all the decrees on archival affairs on the need to transfer documents of past years to state storage. Appeals were issued to all government and public institutions and individuals. They were about taking measures to protect abandoned archives, about preserving and transferring to the archive all their printed materials: Newspapers, brochures, posters, leaflets, etc., as well as private archives.\(^2\)

In Kazakhstan, the former Soviet Republic, archival policy was modeled on the Russian one. Kazakhstan, and along with it all state bodies, were considered as part of the all-Union apparatus, and the solution of this or that issue took place "from above", directly from Moscow.

In December 1930, the Regulation on the Central Archive Administration of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic was approved as the governing body of archival affairs on its territory. However, the state archival fund of the republic was part of the State archival fund of the RSFSR. All its activities were based on the directives of the Central Archive Administration of the RSFSR. Establishing the value of documents, determining the storage periods, their use was carried out exclusively with the permission of the Central Administrative Administration of the RSFSR. The Constitution, adopted in 1936, did not significantly change the activities of the archival authority of Kazakhstan. Despite the fact that the Republic left the RSFSR, the entire archival sphere existed and operated on the basis of a single archival legislation common to the USSR. This status of the
Archival activities in the Soviet period

The Kazakhstan archival activities of the post-revolutionary period, for more than seven decades of the existence of the Soviet regime, was built in accordance with the decree "On the reorganization and centralization of archival affairs" of June 1, 1918, signed by the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR V.I. Lenin. The decree was the legal basis for the implementation of archival reform in the Soviet state. The ideas of the decree were the basis for the first measures to radically reorganize and centralize the archive business. It took the form of a declaration consisting of short abstracts that in a general form reflected the essence of the new organization of the country's archives.

The significance and role of this document is sufficiently covered in the article by Patricia Grimstead Kennedy “Lenin's Archival Decree of 1918: The Bolshevik Legacy for Soviet Archival Theory and Practice”. It should be noted that Patricia Grimstead Kennedy is an active, interested researcher in Soviet archival affairs. For the most part, her research addresses issues related to the state archives of Russia.

The Bolshevik authorities immediately began work on taking the archives under their own control. It began with the creation of large archives. The essence of the idea of centralization (Unified State Archival Fund) was to form a centralized archival system on a national scale.

Prior to the establishment of a special archive management in Kazakhstan, the decree was carried out by authorized commissioners from the Center with the most extensive powers. Communists were mainly involved in this work, those who decided, first of all, the managerial aspects of the archives.

On January 24, 1922 the Board of the People's Commissariat of Education of the Republic approved the first official regulation on the Central regional archive of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The archive has received the status of the main repository on the territory of Kazakhstan. The archive began to analyze and put in order valuable and important documents of scientific and historical significance, both state institutions and public organizations and individuals. The regional archive was divided into several sections: the archive of the revolution, the section of pre-revolutionary documents, and a reference library.

On February 3, 1925, the Board of the Central archive approved a new "Regulation on the organization of the Unified State Archive Fund of the RSFSR" (hereinafter USAF). The document defined the USAF as "the
totality of all archival materials of official and private origin, owned by the state and administered by the Central archive of the RSFSR." Thus, the legislative basis was laid for the complete nationalization of all documents, regardless of their origin, owner and content.6

This "Regulation" gave a fresh impetus to the organization of archival funds of the post-revolutionary period. It established the clear principle of dividing all materials according to the time of occurrence into materials of the pre-revolutionary period (historical archives) and the post-revolutionary period (archives of the October Revolution). Finally, all archival materials were divided into materials of Central origin (i.e., funds of higher and Central state institutions, as well as public — professional, cooperative and other organizations operating on the scale of the RSFSR), and materials of local origin (i.e., materials of local institutions, organizations and enterprises).

Documents of Central departments and a certain category of historical and revolutionary materials became priority. At the same time, documents from the personal archives and collections of ordinary, not outstanding individuals, and local archives of "low level" were ignored. The composition of funds was regulated extremely strictly.

Even harsher measures were prescribed against "enemies of the Soviet power." In accordance with the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR of August 2, 1923, all materials of this kind were to be transferred to the political sections of the USAF. Later, at the local level, it was supplemented by the decree of the CEC and the Council of People's Commissars of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of September 8, 1928, "On the delivery to the Kazakh Central Archive of printed and illustrative materials, photographs and films of historical and revolutionary interest, as well as archives of former khans, sultans, active figures and supporters of the former government of Alash-Orda and other "archival materials".7

In general, the “Regulation” was aimed at consolidating the principles of centralization of archiving. It was understood as the subordination of all archival bodies to a single all-Russian body - the Central Archive Administration of the RSFSR. Verification commissions were created to examine the value of documents, which included representatives of party and Soviet bodies. They had much broader powers than archival staff.

In addition, departments were given the right to independently determine the secrecy of their materials and thereby arbitrarily block access to them. Certificates, extracts and copies were provided only on matters relating to personal and property rights, and only for presentation to state or public organizations.
Mainly, "the primary task of archival institutions" was "regulation of archival funds," so the problem of their use was pushed into the background. In the decree of the Central Archival Department of November 29, 1936, all Union, Republican, and regional archival institutions were ordered to use all the forces of employees of archival institutions to disassemble, describe and audit documents.

Since 1938, the archive authorities have been fully integrated into the totalitarian management structure, which is reflected in the transfer of archives to the People’s Commissariat of internal Affairs (NKVD). The absorption of the entire system of archives by NKVD (since 1946—the Ministry of internal Affairs) was the logical conclusion of the course of total politicization and nationalization of archives.

The idea of complete politicization of archives led to their gradual integration into the administrative and departmental system of society management, and then they were completely absorbed by the established regime.

After the end of World War II, the use of archival materials is becoming increasingly important. Research and publishing departments are created as part of the archives. Their function was to exercise total censorship over all collections of archival documents. They were engaged in selecting authors, editors, and reviewers. The department fully controlled the printing and publication of archival materials in all publishing houses in the country. In a closed letter to all the heads of the archival services of the Union republics dated August 31, 1959, it was indicated that the content of materials on domestic and foreign policy and the economy was unjustifyably disclosed...

At the direction of the Main Archival Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, annotations of documents that “could be used to the detriment of the interests of the Soviet Union” should not be included in archive guides. All work on the creation of a scientific and inquiry apparatus was placed under the most severe control of specially formed commissions.

Main Archival Directorate consisted of several departments (organizational and inspection; acquisition, examination and accounting of archival funds; scientific and methodological). Archivists had an idea about them only thanks to the constantly increasing flow of various regulations that were aimed at regulating literally every step of specialists at any level.

For decades there was a kind of "militarization" of the archives that emerged in the remnants of the scientific independence of archivists, the severance of their ties with regional organizations and with the creatively minded historians and, ultimately, in establishing a rigid system of their subordination to party-state dictatorship.
The new Regulation on the State Archival Fund of the USSR and the network of central state archives of the USSR of August 13, 1958 confirmed the basic principle of the indivisibility of funds, but did not cancel the status of archives that enjoyed a privileged position (Academy of Sciences of the Union Republics, USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the All-Union Geological Fund of the USSR Ministry of Geology, State Fund of hydro-meteorological documents and some others). The list did not mention archival funds of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense of the USSR and others. 8

The right to permanent storage of documents to individual departments was legally secured, and it limited access to the archives of certain structures. In the Regulation on the State Archival Fund of 1958, there is also no mention of special funds ("special", "secret" archives and legally independent archives of individual departments), however they existed in practice. It is interesting that in the new Regulation on the State Archival Fund of 1980, in the conceptual section “General Provisions”, along with state archives, “branch departmental funds and other departmental archives” are also called a place of permanent state storage. 9

By Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of January 13, 1960, the State Archive Fund of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was transformed into the Main Archival Directorate under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. 10

The exit of archives from the system of bodies of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR and the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not lead to any radical changes in the work of archivists. Now the functions of the scientific and methodological management are assigned to the Main Archival Directorate by setting up the documentary part of the current paperwork of the ministries and departments of the USSR. So, in the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR of January 6, 1964, it was indicated about the neglected state of record keeping in the country. It was also said about the serious shortcomings of using archival funds "for the communist education of workers and solving the problems of communist construction". 11

Now archives and archivists have come under direct control of the powerful and ramified structure of the party-bureaucratic apparatus. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union considered archives primarily as part of its agitation and propaganda arsenal. The Council of Ministers did everything possible to turn archivists into narrow specialists in organizing paperwork, and limited the sphere of activity of archival professionals to only the sphere of managerial and departmental work.
Within the framework of totalitarianism, archives, as analysis shows, do not have their own destiny. Decisions are made and imposed by external bodies, which often do not take into account specifics, spiritual essence, cultural aspects, etc. Archives and archivists found themselves in such a situation in the early 90s.

The archival sphere, being a part of the created political system, could not exist outside of the norms and values operating in a totalitarian state. Like other spheres of society's life, it turned out to be politicized. Such problems as the availability and openness of archives were solved based on ideological expediency, and remained very relevant from the moment of their existence. So, already in the 20s, rules that reduced the rights of individuals were adopted. They were given only certificates concerning their personal rights, but not the information they were interested in. At the same time, researchers lost the right to publish fully texts and individual documents without special permission from archival authorities. The restrictive measures taken at that time regarding the use of archival documents for many years deprived users of all the variety of information stored in the archives of Kazakhstan. Restrictions on access to entire documentary complexes for ideological reasons, the publication of archival sources according to officially approved schemes, led to the lack of an impartial study of the ongoing processes and the formation of a one-sided approach to understanding and learning history.

But you should not see the history of archives only in "black colors." The first and subsequent acts of the Soviet state were aimed primarily at preserving the documentary wealth, regardless of the time of their creation. The sale and destruction of archival files were prohibited, the procedure for transferring documents by institutions was approved, and professional work was started with the sources that were received for storage.

Based on political and ideological expediency, the Soviet state, at the very beginning of its existence, recognized the necessity and obligation of the existence of archives. With the release of the Decree of June 1, 1918, archives and archiving are recognized as independent structures at the state level. The centralized budget made it possible to establish the organization and development of archives, their technical equipment, and the training of highly qualified personnel. The created system of archives has proved its effectiveness and ensured the regular receipt of historical sources in the archives, the use of stored archival documents. Although political reasons and ideological motives have left their mark on the preservation of documentary complexes, it is obvious that the history of the previous period has a solid and multi-sided archive and source base. The archives also managed to implement the ideas of document management, which
resulted in a unified basis for organizing document flows and documentation on a national scale.

Undoubtedly, from the perspective of today, we see the inherent shortcomings of the archive system. Being one of the structures of a totalitarian state, it could not function outside the interests of this state. The entire scientific and informational activity of the archives turned out to be a politicized and ideologized part of the archive business. This was especially evident in the method of describing, using, publishing documents, creating a scientific reference apparatus. The democratic principles of publicity and transparency of archives were violated, which resulted in restricted access to archives.

However, despite the ideological press, many areas of archiving have successfully developed. So, an indisputable achievement of Soviet archival studies is the theory of the selection of valuable documents to replenish the documentary heritage of society. The Soviet system of search tools for documents of state repositories still provides an effective search for information. The system of normative and methodological manuals regulating archival processes, excluding ideological clichés, generally met professional criteria. It has stood the test of time and is still widely used in archival practice.

This was the end of the archive’s functioning as a structure that reflected the principles and management mechanisms of the existing political system.

Archives in modern times

The state-legal and socio-political transformations that have taken place in the country have significantly influenced the principles of organizing archival business and the basis for the activities of archival institutions. The new archival studies, while maintaining undisputed continuity with the Soviet archival sphere, have acquired a number of fundamentally important differences.

Under the influence of political, economic and socio-cultural transformations, the activities of state archives are changing. The understanding of its role and function is also conceptually updated.

A number of features of the centralized system of archives, as effectively functioning, have been preserved. The system is based on monitoring the preservation of historical sources created by the society and organizing targeted acquisition of archives with such sources. Theoretical research and methodological work of archivists of the previous period, which provided a relatively coherent and integral system of views on archival business, remain relevant today.
The new political foundations and economic foundations adopted in the early 90s of the last century directly affected the functioning of archiving. Until the end of 1998, this sphere operated within the framework of the legislative framework that was developed during the Soviet period. Despite the fact that in the beginning of the 90s, the government of Kazakhstan adopted a number of resolutions, they can hardly be defined as acts regulating the archival sphere in a changed situation. The resolutions concerned archival complexes of Communist and youth organizations, declassification of archival information, and access to certain categories of archival documents.

The long absence of a new legal framework has led to many problems in the functioning of the archive industry. This was reflected, first of all, in the financing, material and technical base, and the lack of a sufficient number of qualified personnel in this area.

An analytical review of the development of archival business in Kazakhstan in 1991-1998, concludes that there was very little funding for the archival industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan during that period. There was no construction or repair of archives, and the material and technical equipment remained minimal. Such standard parameters of document storage as fire-fighting, temperature-humidity, sanitary-hygienic, light were only partially observed, which constantly posed a threat to the safety of documents.

Financial and technical support from the state, in the conditions of breaking the previous economic relations, was so scanty that the archives barely managed to carry out a mandatory set of archival work, ensuring the safety of retrospective documentation. Technical capabilities did not allow archives to effectively carry out work on the preservation and use of stored documents. The equipment and technology of archives were already considered morally and physically obsolete.

Difficulties in organizing effective management were also caused by an insufficient number of qualified personnel, a reduction in the number of employees and a high percentage of turnover due to low wages.

The process of completing archives remained difficult, with a reduction of 29.5% during this period. Among the factors that influenced the full-fledged acquisition of archives were the liquidation, abolition or change of ownership of institutions and organizations, but also the lack of a legal basis for replenishment of archival funds, acquisition strategies.

New political and economic realities and the process of Informatization of society have made significant adjustments to the work of the archives of Kazakhstan. The archives have retained their status as custodians of valuable documentation reflecting the material and spiritual life of the people. They were an integral part of the country's historical and cultural
heritage. The functions of archives were not limited to storing the historical part. They also continued to form the current part, which was supplemented by the systematic and mandatory transfer of documentation by the main sources of acquisition after the expiration of the departmental storage period.

The old traditions and technologies in the method of performing basic works with archival documentation have been preserved. However, the introduction of new information technologies has affected many procedures for working with archival sources. The departure from the method of traditional acquisition, the introduction of innovative technologies in the field of preservation and use of the archive's retrospective database, has made significant changes in the activity of archives.

The archive has faced serious problems in its activities with the emergence of various non-state structures in society. The long-term lack of legal support for working with documents has had a negative impact on the acquisition of archives with valuable sources for society.

The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the National archive Fund and archives" appeared only in December 1998, where the most important provisions were recorded. 13

Archival legislation follows the principle of state control over the state, maintenance and preservation of departmental archives with various forms of ownership. At the same time, responsibility for the preservation of archives is assigned to the institution itself or their owners, subject to mandatory control by the archival authorities. The archive, for its part, should provide scientific and methodological, reference, and information assistance to institutions.

The law provided for the following:

- Ensuring a unified state policy in archiving and document management;
- Formation and functioning of the National Archival Fund (NAF) and the State Insurance Fund of copies of documents;
- Ensuring centralized state accounting of NAF documents;
- Collection and return of archival documents on the history of the Republic of Kazakhstan located abroad;
- Development of projects and implementation of state programs for the development of archiving and record keeping;
- Creation of an information network and a databank of documents of the NAF;
- Publication of documents of the NAF and their use;
- Development of research and scientific and methodological activities in the field of archival and document management.
The law laid down a new concept of the archive service of Kazakhstan. It legisitates the place and role of the archive service in the system of state institutions of Kazakhstan. The law reflects a set of issues related to the main concepts used in the field of archives. The concept of the National archive Fund is introduced for the first time. It is considered as a national heritage as part of the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Kazakhstan. According to the law, the national archive Fund is a unified and integral system based on public and private archives (individuals and legal entities and their associations). Regardless of their origin or place of storage, they are equally guaranteed legal protection.

Thus, the National Archival Fund includes all documents of value to society, regardless of their ownership. The Archival Fund of the country is defined as a set of documents reflecting the material and spiritual life of its peoples, having historical, scientific, social, economic, political and cultural significance and being an integral part of the historical and cultural heritage of the people of Kazakhstan.

The adopted document emphasizes the role of the National Archive Fund in meeting the needs of society and the state for information, the implementation of the rights and legitimate interests of citizens of our country in the use of archival sources.

The law reflects the generally accepted obligations for all types of archives for centralized state accounting, storage, and preservation of documents.

Today, the real value of information in the life of society and the state is undoubtedly increasing. Archives become part of the information system, and their documents are used actively and on a large scale. The law considers information contained in archival documents as intellectual property of the state. Guaranteeing the rights and interests of users of archival documentation, the regulatory act also regulating information security, which is followed in the world practice. First of all, we are talking about the part of information that can damage national security and privacy.

Although this legislative act plays a positive role in preserving the historical heritage of the country, the imperfection of the legal archival environment is obvious today. Many current information regulations do not take into account the interests of the archive sector, which creates difficulties in the relationship between archives and institutions. For example, the laws of the country “On Copyright and Related Rights” of June 10, 1996, “On the Media” of July 23, 1999 do not provide for the preservation, selection and transfer of audiovisual documents for permanent storage in state archives. The reluctance of many institutions that create audiovisual documentation to transfer historical retrospectives to the state archives is now an obvious fact.
The archival legislation of our country broadly declares the right of every citizen to receive information stored in archives. Legislation is determined by the general policy of access to information in the state. The access policy is based on such important principles as the right to receive information, the protection of confidential information, and equality of access to information. The problem of access to archival documents remains relevant today.

In the second half of the 80’s, public interest in archival secrets increased. The "local declassification" of individual events in our history and the lifting of the veil of "state secrets" have begun. The documents subject to declassification in the archives included information related to the political struggle; discussions within the party on the ways of industrialization, collectivization, and cultural development; confiscation of property; hunger; armed clashes caused by excesses in party politics; mass repressions of the 1930-1950s; special settlers; the consequences of the development of virgin and fallow lands, etc.

One of the most important aspects of using archived information is not only its availability, openness, but also compliance with information security. The country’s archival legislation, along with a broad declaration of the right of access to archival information, also sets restrictions on the use of certain categories of official documents. Information affecting the country's defense capability, national security, and economic and political interests are classified as state secrets. The owners of such information have the right to classify them for a certain period of time.

The recommendations of the International Council of Archives (ICA) played a well-known role and contributed to the introduction of reduced access periods of 30 years into the archival legislation of our country.

**Conclusion**

Archives, as part of state institutions, functioned in accordance with the established political system. That is why the most ideologized segment of archival work was the use of archival sources. Despite the declared openness of archives by the Soviet government, the public is denied access to a significant amount of archival information for many decades.

The use of archival information based on ideological criteria, the commissioned nature of ongoing projects on historical topics, and the publication of documents based on officially approved schemes have led to a narrowing of the source and information base of the national historical science.

The attitude to archives and archival information has been ambiguous throughout the history of its existence. Most often it is depended on what
role was given to the archives at a particular stage of development of the state. Thus, the Soviet government, in addition to taking care of the preservation of the historical past, begins to actively use it for political and ideological purposes. Archival documents in the hands of the Soviet government become a powerful tool for influencing the minds of the masses. For several decades, the political and ideological role of archival documents has been widely used. Archives master various forms and methods of using documentary sources. Their main task was to introduce into the mass consciousness the political and ideological attitudes required at the moment.

Today, the archives of Kazakhstan, with its huge information potential, strive to enter the unified information space of the country. This is related not only to the formation and use of information resources, but also to compliance with legal, intellectual, ethical, physical and other aspects of access to information and its protection.

The state program "Archives – 2025" defines the priorities of archival information policy. It consolidates the principles of information openness of archives. The main objectives of the program are the following: use of archival information based on monitoring of the information services market; complete declassification of previously unavailable archival information; informing the public about archival documents through web pages on the Internet; use of electronic technologies in the activities of archives, etc. The main idea of this document is to create a modern image of archives as an integral part of the unified information space of the country.

Adhering to this concept, archives consider it their functional responsibility to create an information and technical infrastructure for the wider use of historical sources.

In recent decades, the real role of archives in the information environment has increased immeasurably. Today, we do not provide archives outside of information processes; they become an integral part of the unified information space. The "inclusion" of archives in the common information space has highlighted many problems, and, above all, its legal aspects, the creation of high-quality information search tools, physical access, etc.

In any society that adheres to democratic values, the use of information, including archival information, is regulated by a legal framework. In my opinion, the basics of archival legislation should be improved. State archives should be given the opportunity to monitor the status of historically significant documents, regardless of their organizational and legal forms. Such actions of the government could ensure a high level of integration of departmental archives into the national archive, where an adequate source base is formed.
The study, analysis and generalization of the available practical experience at the level of archives, archival affairs in general, remain an urgent task of our time.

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Notes

1. V. V. Maksakov, Istoriya i organizaciya arhivnogo dela v SSSR (1917–1945). M. 1969, s. 57, 121-122 [V. V. Maksakov, History and Organization of Archiving in the USSR (1917–1945) (Moscow, 1969), 57, 121-122].


5. Arhivnoe stroitel’stvo v Kazahskoj SSR (1918-1980 gg.), s. 26–27.


