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“To Prevent the Destruction of Precious Archives”: The Draft of the Instruction on the Caucasus Military Historical Department Activities (1900)

Abstract

This is the first publication of the draft of the instruction on Military Historical Department of the Caucasus Military District Staff activities. It was worked out by the Head of the District Headquarters Major General N.N. Belyavsky in 1900. The document helps to establish the area of responsibility of the institution that was a party in the foundation of the archival fund in the Caucasus region of the Russian Empire. It shows that the main concern of the Military Historical Department was research. Its members collected materials on military history, thus providing the source base for writing academic papers on the history of the Caucasus integration in the

Russian Empire. Its areas of work included archiving, museum activities, and publishing. The published document provides valuable data on the problem of perished materials of regional military archives on the example of the Caucasus Military District. It is important that all Caucasus regional military archives were given into the management of the Military Historical Department. According to the instruction its staff oversaw documents storage, compiling scientific reference apparatus, and destruction of the expired papers. Thus, the Military Historical Department was the institution that was directly responsible for the destruction of old files in the archives of regiments, directorates, and headquarters in the Caucasus Military District. The document may interest those who study the history of military institutions of the Russian Empire or preservation of cultural heritage. The instruction secured to the department such activities as sorting out, description, and control of safekeeping of documents kept in Caucasus military archives, as well as their publication and acquisition, which helped to set the scientific base for Caucasus military history studies. In its functions, the Military Historical Department was the predecessor of the Russian Military Historical Society. The published document is stored in Russian Archive for Military History (Moscow) in the fond of the Imperial Committee for Military Studies.

Keywords

History of archive activity, Russian Empire, Caucasus Military District, Military Historical Department, archives of military institutions.

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