

Historical Analysis of Hunting in Turkestan at the End of the XIX – Beginning of the XX Century

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Abstract: This article examines the history and conditions of hunting in the Turkestan region at the end of the XIX – beginning of the XX century, based on periodical publications and archival sources.

Keywords: hunting, predatory animals, hunting processes, legal foundations, circular letter.

As history shows, like every field, hunting also had its legal framework. In particular, the “Law on Hunting,” approved by the leadership of the Russian Empire on February 3, 1892, and in effect at the beginning of the XX century, is among such legal acts. This law replaced various decrees and regulations related to hunting enacted at different times and became an important step in the development of hunting management in Russia and later in Turkestan.

On July 21, 1892, the Second Office of the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire sent a circular letter to all responsible officials and governors, providing centralized instructions on preventing rabid animals from biting the population and causing damage, as well as on killing predatory animals, especially wolves, with cash rewards provided by the Medical Council for each killed wolf.

In Turkestan, a number of measures were implemented to protect livestock from predatory attacks. For example, cash rewards were introduced for hunters or residents who killed wolves or tigers attacking livestock. As noted above, on July 21, 1892, a central circular established cash rewards for killed wolves. On March 2, 1894, a letter from the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the military governor of Syrdarya province requested the acceleration of reporting on cash rewards given to those who killed wolves that harmed livestock.

By the end of the XIX century, attacks by predatory animals on livestock in Turkestan had significantly increased, targeting camels, horses, cows, sheep, and goats. For example, on June 11, 1893, the military governor of Syrdarya province received report No. 2261 from the head of Kazalinsk district. According to this report, in 18 volosts of Kazalinsk district, predatory animals killed 1,500 camels, 1,342 horses, 577 cows, 10,693 sheep, and 2,287 goats. These figures indicate that predatory animals caused significant damage to livestock at the time, totaling 16,399 heads of livestock killed.

At the beginning of the XX century, hunting of gazelles in Turkestan by hunters exceeded the permissible limits. To prevent this, provincial military governors appealed to the Turkestan General-Governorate to take measures. For example, according to report No. 15157 of September 1903 by Major General G.A. Arendarenko, military governor of Fergana province, he received instructions from the General-Governorate to ban the hunting of gazelles in the province.

On October 6, 1903, in a letter No. 10225 from the head office of the Turkestan General-Governorate in Tashkent, the authorities expressed concern about Arendarenko’s proposal to ban gazelle hunting, noting that such a decision could provoke dissatisfaction among the local population.

After reviewing the proposals and opinions of the military governor and district leaders of Fergana province regarding gazelle hunting, despite the passage of one year, on January 21, 1905, the Turkestan General-Governorate issued letter No. 813, signed by the chancellery general, officially prohibiting gazelle hunting indefinitely. The letter stated: “Considering Major General Arendarenko’s recommendation, I consider it necessary to prohibit hunting of gazelles in all districts of Fergana province for an unlimited period,” and ordered monitoring of compliance.

On July 8, 1905, the Turkestan General-Governorate issued a new decree No. 162 on the ban and duration of hunting. This decree was an addition to the earlier decree No. 36 of February 8, 1901, regarding hunting restrictions in Tashkent district. Several modifications and additions were made to the old decree, and it was sent to all regions under the General-Governorate for enforcement.

In conclusion, the signing of the “Law on Hunting” on February 3, 1892, and its dissemination to all provinces, including the Turkestan General-Governorate, partially regulated illegal hunting activities in the region. Additionally, the General-Governorate collected information from local military governors regarding hunting and hunting conditions. Notably, the General-Governorate offered cash rewards to hunters for killing predatory animals while implementing bans on hunting non-predatory animals and birds. This demonstrates the efforts of the Turkestan General-Governorate to protect animals. However, statistical data indicate that in the late XIX – early XX centuries, many wolves, tigers, and bears in Turkestan were exterminated in response to attacks on livestock and residents, as well as to clear land for new cultivation to serve the empire’s resource needs.

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