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Research paper

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EVOLUTION OF FISHING INDUSTRY IN DAGESTAN IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Abstract. The Dagestan fishery has evolved significantly, from riverine fishing to the establishment of large companies and associations. This study traces the key developmental stages of fishing as a vital form of sustenance for the peoples of Dagestan. Employing problem-solving, comparative-historical, and systemic-historical approaches, along with historical analysis, this research examines the industry's trajectory. Furthermore, logical, chronological, and updating methods were utilized. The study draws upon archival materials from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan, original fieldwork, and published literature. This article examines the key stages in the origin, development, and evolution of fishery in Dagestan. Fishery represents a complex area of study, necessitating consideration of a broad range of issues intertwined with various aspects of life for the peoples of Dagestan. This complexity contributes to the topic's multifaceted nature. Currently, the most scientifically productive and insightful research perspectives are, in our view, natural-geographic, socio-economic, and cultural-historical. During the pre-revolutionary period, fishing held a prominent position in the Dagestan economy. This prominence fostered the development of industry infrastructure, leading to the emergence of trading companies and associations that established connections not only within the Russian Empire but also internationally. The practical significance of this work lies in the introduction of new archival data into scholarly discourse. The findings presented here can contribute to further research on various aspects of traditional subsidiary occupations.

Keywords: Dagestan; Caspian Sea; sustenance system; economy; fishery; fishing industry

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Исследовательская статья

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РЫБОЛОВСТВО КАК ПРОМЫСЕЛ В СИСТЕМЕ ЖИЗНЕОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЯ НАРОДОВ ДАГЕСТАНА В XIX – НАЧАЛЕ XX ВЕКА

Аннотация. Рыболовство в Дагестане, как отрасль, прошло долгий путь, начиная с ловли рыбы в реках и вплоть до создания крупных рыболовческих компаний и объединений. В данном исследовании мы постараемся проследить основные этапы развития рыбного промысла как системы жизнеобеспечения народов Дагестана. В качестве методов были применены проблемно-технологический, историко-сравнительный и историко-системный методы, а также метод исторического анализа. В соответствии с выдвинутой целью исследования автор использовал и частные исторические методы: логический, хронологический, актуализации. При написании статьи привлекались архивные материалы, хранящиеся в Центральном государственном архиве Республики Дагестан, полевой материал автора, литературные источники. В статье рассмотрены основные этапы зарождения, формирования и развития рыболовства в Дагестане. Необходимо отметить, что рыболовство – область достаточно сложная для изучения, требующая учет широкого круга вопросов, касающихся различных сторон жизни народов Дагестана. Отсюда многосторонность, многоаспектность этой темы. Наиболее научно-результативными и плодотворными аспектами ее исследования в настоящее время являются, на наш взгляд, естественно-географический, социально-экономический, культурно-исторический. Рыбный промысел в дореволюционный период занимал одно из ведущих мест в экономике Дагестана, благодаря чему развилась инфраструктура данной отрасли, появились торговые компании и объединения, наладившие связи не только с городами Российской империи, но и с зарубежьем. Практическая значимость работы определяется тем, что вводимые в научный оборот новые архивные данные и полученные в статье выводы могут быть использованы при дальнейшем изучении различных аспектов, касающихся традиционных подсобных занятий.

Ключевые слова: Дагестан; Каспий; система обеспечения; хозяйство; рыбный промысел; рыбная промышленность

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Introduction

Research into the historically developed livelihood systems of ethnic groups is particularly relevant today, as traditional economic systems, including the subsidiary agricultural activities of the peoples of Dagestan, are rapidly disappearing. Their study is especially crucial in the context of radical changes in both public and private life, as well as in ethnocultural interactions. This article examines fishing, a branch of subsidiary farming practiced by the peoples of Dagestan in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

This article aims to analyze the role of fishing as a trade within the livelihood system of the peoples of Dagestan during the 19th and early 20th centuries, drawing upon available archival, literary, and field research materials.

Historiography of the problem

Analyzing the traditional subsidiary farming activities of the peoples of Dagestan offers a valuable lens through which to understand the complex development of human society. As a vital component of their life support culture, these practices demonstrate how communities adapted to their specific environments, resulting in diverse local economies within a broader, interconnected system. This adaptive process explains why researchers focus on economic activities, particularly in the pre-revolutionary period, when subsidiary economic branches were recognized as integral aspects of the overall life support culture.

Pre-revolutionary publications on the ethnography of Dagestan and the Caucasus predominantly consist of articles, with books being relatively scarce. This emphasis on shorter-form publications is a general characteristic of pre-revolutionary Russian ethnographic literature, but it is particularly pronounced in works focusing on the Caucasus [1, p. 277].

E.I. Kozubsky's two-issue "Dagestan Collection," published in the early 20th century, provides insights into the occupations of the mountaineers. Kozubsky was active in several fields, working as a history and geography teacher at the Temirkhan-Shurinsky real school, secretary of the Dagestan regional statistical committee, founder of the Temir-Khan-Shura library, and, later in his life, director of the Dagestan regional handicraft museum. He also contributed articles on Caucasian history to the magazines "Russian Archive," "Russian Antiquity," and "Historical Herald" [2; 3].

The study of Dagestan entered a new phase during the Soviet period, characterized by a resurgence of interest in ethnography. By the 1950s, Dagestan ethnographers had already produced a body of scholarly work. They contributed, alongside other prominent Soviet ethnographers, to the collection "Peoples of Dagestan" [4], which explored diverse aspects of Dagestan life and culture, including subsidiary economic activities. These topics were examined most comprehensively by S.Sh. Gadzhieva [5–9], whose research provides a particularly detailed analysis, focusing on the Turkic-speaking populations.

Contemporary ethnographic research on subsidiary economic activities, particularly fishery, demonstrates its enduring presence as a core component of sustenance cultures. This stability has made it the subject of increasing scholarly interest and observation in recent years. These topics are addressed in a growing body of historical and ethnographic studies and essays focusing on specific populations, often within sections dedicated to "Economy" and "Material Culture" [5; 6; 7; 8; 10–20]¹. It's important to note that while ethnographic monographs and collections often include sections on individual peoples and ethnocultural regions, these sections tend to be descriptive. A more comprehensive understanding requires comparative study that connects these descriptions with the ethnic history of the people, providing richer and more meaningful information [21–27].

The study of sustenance systems, particularly subsidiary economies, benefits significantly from incorporating ecological perspectives. These perspectives, increasingly prevalent across scientific disciplines, provide a deeper understanding of the formation, function, and development of life processes. The work of M.-Z.O. Osmanov, a leading ethnographer of Dagestan, exemplifies this approach. His research on the economy and material culture of the region draws upon unique field material collected during expeditions throughout Dagestan

1. Lugev S.A. Material culture of the Akhvakh people. 19th – early 20th century // Scientific archive of the Institute of Historical and Ethnographic Studies. F. 3. Inv. 3. File 571.

[28; 29].

This work on the subsidiary economies of the peoples of Dagestan is based on a wide range of literature concerning the economies of other peoples, both within Russia and globally. M.V. Dobrovolskaya's monograph is particularly relevant, offering an analysis of archaeological, anthropological (both cultural and physical), and psychological data to understand the evolution of diet in human ancestors and early humans. This work also assesses the influence of environmental factors and cultural traits on the development of ancient culinary traditions [30].

Despite the existing literature mentioned, there's a significant gap in research on subsidiary economies, particularly a comprehensive examination of all their aspects. This gap is even more pronounced regarding Caucasian food [31], and specifically Dagestani food [32; 33; 49; 50]. The subsidiary economies of the peoples of Dagestan, especially within traditional societies, remain understudied. A comprehensive overview of the development and complexities of this topic is still lacking.

This work is based on a variety of sources, including field ethnographic materials, archival documents, and literary sources. Crucially, it draws upon the field materials of ethnographers who have studied the peoples of Dagestan across different time periods and regions. These materials include both published works and unpublished resources housed in the Scientific Archive of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Dagestan Federal Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The research also employs a range of published archival and documentary collections, including: "History, Geography, and Ethnography of Dagestan" (Moscow, 1958); "Russian-Dagestan Relations from the 17th to the First Quarter of the 18th Century" (Moscow, 1958); "Russian-Dagestan Relations from the 18th to the Early 19th Century" (Moscow, 1988); "Feudal Relations in Dagestan: 19th to the Early 20th Century" (Moscow, 1969); "Materials on the History of Dagestan and Chechnya" (Part 3. Makhachkala, 1940); and "Reviews of the Dagestan Region for 1891–1910" (Temir-Khan-Shura, 1892–1911). In addition to unpublished materials, the study utilizes published archival materials [34].

Main body

The emergence and development of any economic sector, particularly those integral to sustenance, are significantly influenced by natural conditions. Fishery, in particular, is a livelihood wholly reliant upon natural and geographical factors.

Despite the abundance of fisheries within Kumyk territory, fish consumption remained comparatively low. However, evidence suggests that fish constituted a more significant dietary component for the middle and, notably, the Trans-Sulak Kumyk populations in the past. This historical prevalence is corroborated by the existence of distinct Kumyk terms for various fish species: *balyk* (general term), *bekra* (sturgeon), *yayin* (catfish), *irgay* (salmon), *chorpa* (pike), and *sazan* (carp), among others. Fish was typically boiled, fried, or dried for winter consumption. Furthermore, Kumyk elders recount that dried fish was historically incorporated into khinkal, a dish currently prepared exclusively with animal meat [35, p. 97].

Fish constituted a significant dietary component for Mountain Jews, its consumption influenced by established traditions and religious tenets. Specifically, the consumption of fish lacking scales was proscribed. Fish possessing both scales and fins, exempt from *shtich* (the ritual slaughter and preparation prescribed by Jewish kashrut) unlike animal and fowl meat, served as a near-daily food source for Mountain Jews. Commonly prepared by frying, smoking, or salting, the most frequently consumed varieties were pike perch (colloquially termed "Jewish chicken") and kutum. These fish were typically accompanied by bread and onions [36, p. 52].

Intensive exploitation of the Terek River's fish resources commenced with the establishment of Russian Cossack settlements along its banks in the 17th century [37, p. 188]. The tsarist government "granted" the Terek River to the Cossacks, encompassing its entire length "from the very crest of the Caucasus Mountains to its mouth in the Caspian Sea" [38, pp. 2–4].

Naturally, fishery constituted a crucial aspect of the Terek region's economy, serving as a vital sustenance resource for the Terek Cossacks. Initially, their fishing activities were confined to the river itself, near their settlements, exploiting the populations of valuable migratory and semi-migratory fish, particularly salmon and sturgeon species. Consequently, the proximity of a settlement to the sea directly correlated with the abundance

of its fishing yields. Fishing served as the primary source of material wealth for downstream villages. However, for settlements situated further upriver, fishing held less significance, becoming a supplementary or occasional activity for residents, similar to its role in the more inland regions of Dagestan, distant from major rivers and the sea [38, p. 29]. Academician K.M. Baer highlighted this disparity, observing that “the benefits of the Terek fishery are distributed very unevenly, so that the regiments settled in the lower part have large benefits, in the middle – moderate, and in the upper – very small” [39, p. 201]. The settlements situated at the river’s mouth enjoyed the most advantageous fishing conditions, being the first to encounter fish migrating from the sea, and consequently, catching the vast majority. In these locations, fishing was not solely a male occupation, with women also participating actively.

Participation in fishing was granted through the issuance of shares, which were available not only to adult Cossacks but also to widows and orphans. Share ownership conferred the right to fish, a right which could be sold or transferred to another individual. The price of a share varied depending on the time of year and the duration of its validity: a full-year share cost 10 rubles, a spring share cost 3 rubles, and an autumn share cost 5 rubles [38, p. 24]. The higher price for autumn shares reflected the greater value of the autumn fishing season, primarily due to the abundant catches of salmon and shemaya.

Different types of fishing gear were used, and the number of shares required to operate them varied depending on the fishing method. For instance, seine fishing necessitated combining four shares, net fishing – three shares, and using a thread vanda – also three shares [38, p. 24].

The remoteness of major markets created challenges for selling the caught fish. The entire catch was sold to a contractor, often through agreements spanning several years. Acting as an intermediary between the fishermen themselves and the wider market, the contractor assumed a complex set of responsibilities. These included purchasing all the fish caught by the Cossacks at a predetermined price, providing an upfront deposit for each share, and supplying the Cossacks with fishing equipment at Astrakhan prices [38, p. 25].

The long-term contracts established with the contractor essentially placed the fishermen in a position of economic dependence. Fishermen bore the full brunt of risks associated with poor catches or falling market prices due to oversupply. This dependence stemmed not only from the upfront deposit they received but also from the contractor’s ability to refuse fish at any time. Consequently, the prices paid to these fishermen for their fish and fish products were typically lower than those paid to “free” fishermen who had not received a deposit and were not bound by such contracts [40, pp. 128–129].

By the late 19th century, control over the waters of the Middle Terek River was divided. Cossack villages along the left bank held fishing rights within their yurt allotments, while Chechen villages held similar rights along the right bank. Ownership of the Terek’s waters was multifaceted, belonging to a variety of entities including the state treasury, the Terek Cossack army, individual villages, rural communities, cities, monasteries, and private individuals. The lower reaches of the Terek’s northern branches, however, remained under state control, forming a common fishing area designated as the “Terek state fishing waters.” These state-controlled waters were then leased out [40, pp. 88–89].

The Terek River fishery primarily targeted salmon, stellate sturgeon, shemaya, catfish, asp, and carp. Fishing activity, though varying in intensity, generally spanned from early spring to late autumn (10–11 months), just before ice formation. However, the fishing season effectively split into two distinct periods: spring and autumn, dictated by the spawning migrations of the different species. The spring season focused on sturgeon and large ordinary fish, while the autumn season concentrated on salmon and shemaya [38, p. 13].

Cossacks typically processed their catch in their own yards, primarily through salting, drying, and smoking. Barrels and other similar containers were used for the salting process [38, p. 19].

Industrial fish processing along the middle Terek River was initially nonexistent. Only later did processing facilities emerge in the lower reaches, owned by leaseholders. These facilities, however, were considerably less developed than those found in Astrakhan. The contractor at Aleksandriyskaya stanitsa, for instance, operated a rudimentary setup consisting of an open-air storehouse with vats, a basic barracks with a dirt floor, and a simple adobe smokehouse. Other leaseholders further upstream from Aleksandriyskaya stanitsa possessed even more primitive processing operations.

I.D. Kuznetsov described a rudimentary fish processing operation: “Here,” he wrote, “next to the usual nomad tent that serves as the clerk’s dwelling, I saw a reed canopy, under it – scales and a wooden table on which they cut up fish. There were also 5–6 containers covered with boards and matting, weighed down with weights... in the corner – a small wooden chest standing directly on the ground, and between the tent and the

canopy – a kayuk² half-buried in the ground, in which, having poured water into it, they washed the fish” [38, p. 19]. These primitive methods naturally resulted in lower quantities and reduced quality of the final product. However, the fishermen, profiting handsomely from cheap labor and the overexploitation of fish stocks, had little incentive to invest in more advanced fishing and processing infrastructure.

The “Caucasian Calendar for 1879” highlighted the serious organizational and technical deficiencies within the fishing industry, and the resulting poor quality of fish products, rooted in the outdated production methods and a complete lack of technological advancement [41, p. 384]. It further emphasized the stagnation within the sector, stating that “despite all sorts of successes in other sectors of economic life, fishing and preparation of fish is carried out in our country in the same way as it was done hundreds of years ago” [38, p. 19].

Despite the significant role of fishing and the abundance of fish resources in northern Dagestan, it failed to provide adequate sustenance even for those Kizlyar district serfs specifically engaged in this trade, due to the severe exploitation and robbery by their landowners.

The life of peasant fishermen was extremely harsh. The development of the Cossack fishing industry was hampered by several restrictions. The Cossack elite controlled the best fishing locations, relegating ordinary Cossacks to areas further upstream on the Terek River. Furthermore, Cossacks were obligated to sell their fish exclusively to lessees of the Cossack fishing industries at fixed prices [42, p. 152].

By the late 19th century, labor practices in the Terek region’s marine fisheries were marked by rampant capitalist exploitation and tyranny. Wages depended not only on the terms of employment (temporary seasonal or permanent annual work) but also on the specific tasks performed, required skills, and even the worker’s nationality. Women were widely employed in fish processing (as cutters), typically earning lower wages than men.

The workforce comprised both temporary and permanent employees. Permanent workers included skilled tradesmen like carpenters and blacksmiths, as well as *probeznyye* – workers responsible for delivering goods to and from the fisheries. Seasonal workers received monthly wages supplemented with rations of bread: white bread for breakfast and rye bread to accompany *privarok*, a hot meal typically consisting of fish, and occasionally salted or fresh meat.

Working hours were unregulated during this period, with people typically working from dawn until dusk, taking short breaks for meals. According to I.D. Kuznetsov, “work started at dawn and continued until 8 am, followed by work until 12 pm after breakfast (tea), an hour for lunch, and then work again until dusk.” [40, p. 109] Craftsmen often utilized Sundays as days off or “holidays, unemployed days,” while field workers were granted days off when there was no fish or work available [ibid].

Nogais, Kalmyks, Kumyks, and Russians were employed in the Terek fisheries. Temporary workers received monthly wages ranging between 8 and 20 rubles. Cutters, known as *tisyachnitsy*, earned piecework wages for cutting a thousand pieces of fish, with payment varying based on the fish species. For cutting a thousand large fish like carp, pike perch, or asp, they were paid 2 to 2 rubles 50 kopecks, while for small fish such as vobla and bream, the payment was 1 ruble [40, p. 108]. Contractors were responsible for hiring workers and received 1 ruble for each worker they recruited.

At the end of the 19th century, in the Terek fishing region where mainly red and small fish were caught, approximately 250 people were employed across all the fisheries. Entrepreneurs commonly relied on local labor, but they also occasionally brought in skilled Russian workers in limited numbers, incurring significant expenses for their transportation, amounting to 5-10 rubles per person³.

Over time, a more advanced practice of bait fishing was introduced to the Caspian Sea from the Black and Azov Seas, involving the use of the English hook. This bait fishing technique gradually spread throughout the Caspian Sea. Through simplification and improvement, it became known as “kalada” [43, p. 201].

At that time, kalada fishing developed rapidly off the coast of Dagestan, but the products obtained were of low quality. The fish was considered second grade, and caviar was often produced in the pressing, roe, or overripe form [43, p. 203]. This quality issue arose because sturgeon fishing using kalada was conducted far from the shore. Due to frequent storms, the kalada was only sorted twice a week, allowing caught fish to remain on the hook in the water for several days, leading to spoilage. As a result, the spoiled fish had to be discarded [ibid].

Many people who had nothing to do with the fishing industry were engaged in kalada fishing: artisans, rail-

2. A vessel hollowed out from a solid tree trunk of a strong species of tree (poplar, oak).

3. Statistical Department of Dagestan Region // CSA RD. F. 21. Inv. 4. File 29. Folio 59.

road workers, port employees, even clergymen [ibid].

The Samur River is renowned for its salmon, and the practice of artificial breeding of these fish garnered the attention of the Eastern Waters Administration of Transcaucasia as early as 1901, due to abuses in the fishery. The quantity of salmon caught in the Samur River that was suitable for artificial breeding, known as “loch” or locally referred to as “albat,” was very restricted. In this river, primarily salmon with immature sexual products, known as “samur-balyk,” were caught, and these were highly valued in local markets. Albat (loch) was exclusively caught in the small “black rivers” adjacent to the Samur, such as Kairan-chai and Kara-su, where samur-balyk was completely absent. Fishermen estimated that the average annual catch of albat was likely underreported, with 100 caught in the Samur, 300 in Kairan-chai, and 300 in Kara-su, totaling 700 pieces.

The fishing industries of the heirs of the Shamkhal extended from Kabakh-Chang-Khan on the Uch Peninsula, south along the sea coast, up to Krasnaya Gora, across from the village of Novy Buinak (Zagu-yurt), locally known as Izbir-burun. This area served as a boundary, separating the waters of the Shamkhal from those of Terekemey, and reaching into the depths of the sea for a distance of 50 miles from the coastal border. In the Agrakhan Bay, the eastern half and southern part of the Chechen Strait were under the ownership of the heirs of the Shamkhal. The Shamkhal waters were leased by the Astrakhan merchant K.P. Vorobyov, who possessed 11 fisheries, although tax inspection records indicated 10 fisheries. Among these fisheries, 4 operated intermittently, and 7 functioned solely in the spring from February to May 10, specifically during the herring fishing season. Apart from the vatagas, Vorobyov also managed three other industrial establishments [44, p. 47].

Fishing on an industrial scale in the Dagestan region began in the early 19th century, spurred by the increased demand for fish products following Dagestan’s annexation to Russia. Fishing areas owned by private individuals and the treasury were leased to entrepreneurs from various regions, including Astrakhan, Vladikavkaz, Grozny, Pyatigorsk, and the southern provinces of central Russia [ibid].

The rent for the Terekemey state waters significantly increased in 1903, soaring from 6,840 rubles to 49,640 rubles and 83 kopecks [3, p. 76].

On the southern part of the Dagestan coast of the Caspian Sea between the Rubas and Yalama rivers within the Kyurinsky district, there were no fisheries until 1900. The local population primarily focused on river fishing, utilizing salmon and valuable large ordinary fish species⁴. The first herring fishery was established in 1901, followed by the emergence of three fisheries in 1902, and an additional one in 1903 [45, p. 4].

The Dagestan Regional Vedomosti reported that «herring was the primary product of the fishing industry in Dagestan. The focus on herring not only gave the Dagestan coast a distinct business-oriented atmosphere but also forged a solid and enduring economic link between the region and the empire. The act of catching herring was not only productive but also brought enjoyment to all involved. They work in profits, with hotels, restaurants, banks, notaries, coopers, carpenters, carriage makers, druggists, shoemakers, bakers, gardeners, and clothing stores for workers all benefiting. When herring fishing is thriving, the local economy booms, and businesses thrive. Even the earnings of the editorial office increase, with a rise in paid announcements related to various matters such as residence permit losses, receipts, promissory notes, and the revocation of powers of attorney»⁵.

As noted in the same Dagestan Regional Vedomosti, “the fish industry in the region was primarily established and advanced by the Jewish community. They not only facilitated the finding of markets for sales but also set the standard for the beloved brine quality in the local area”⁶. The construction of the Petrov branch of the Vladikavkaz railway played a crucial role in the development of the industry. Following the opening of the railway, a significant portion of the fish from Agrakhan Bay could be transported to the nearest Khasavyurt station for further distribution to more distant locations. Additionally, fish products were transported from farms to the station via road transport using carts, oxen, or camels, completing the journey in 2-4 days” [6, p. 112].

The placement of the workforce in herring fisheries depended on their capacity. On average, there were 250 people per craft [46, p. 160].

All living quarters for workers were so overcrowded that “there is no question of any norm of cubic air content. Sometimes it was possible to observe that before the arrival of any of the persons involved in sanitary supervision, a good half of the workers left the field for the forest and waited there for the departure of the superiors” [46, p. 125].

4. Report of the head of the Kyurinsky district // CSA RD. F. 21. Inv. 3. File 9. Folio 280.

5. Ibid

6. Dagestan Regional Vedomosti, 1910. No. 24, p. 2.

In 1913, the Terek fishing region had around 20 fisheries for receiving and processing fish, along with 10 “camps” designated for parking fishing boats and unloading fish [47, p. 248]. Local and foreign workers, mainly Russians, were employed to process the fish immediately upon receipt from fishermen [48, p. 249]. The fishermen living on the northern coast of the Caspian Sea and in Chechnya served as a steady source of labor for the fishing industry. These individuals were economically dependent on entrepreneurs since fishing was their primary livelihood [46, p. 173].

The herring catch in 1917 peaked at 806.1 thousand c. – its highest recorded value. Nevertheless, the intense fishing activity, lacking proper regulation on fish catch limits for stock preservation and reproduction, ultimately resulted in the predatory depletion of fish populations. During the pre-revolutionary era, characterized by the capitalist mode of production and haphazard allocation of resources, the exploitation of natural resources in a predatory manner was unavoidable.

Further, as already mentioned, 1912–1917 fishing was characterized by an unprecedented increase in herring catches due to the herring fishery on the western coast of the Caspian Sea.

Conclusion

The fishing industry of the peoples of Dagestan during the 19th and early 20th centuries is deeply rooted in the economic and cultural traditions of the region. The advancement of fishing activities was supported by the existing economic practices and traditions. Based on the available material, the article highlights the shared traditions and unique ethno-local characteristics, as these evolved within the distinctive context of the natural-geographical environment, socio-economic conditions, and political landscape of the societies. These developments were influenced by the complex and varied relationships with neighboring peoples in the region.

Multiple factors drove the growth of the fishing industry during this period. Firstly, the diminishing red fish catches in the latter part of the 19th century shifted attention towards fishing in the Caspian Sea. Secondly, the abundance of raw materials and cost-effective labor made this sector lucrative for Russian investors, drawing significant interest for financial backing. Thirdly, the lack of strict catch regulations in Dagestan at that time served to further fuel the expansion of the industry in the Caspian region.

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