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Precious Animals: STATE-WILDLIFE RELATIONS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 1949 -1965

Kyuhyun Han
Introduction

1. Concept of Precious Animals
2. Comparison of early 1950s, 1959, 1964 precious animal lists
PRC categorization of animals

- Harmful Animals
- Beneficial Animals
- Precious Animals

Then what did it mean to be precious?

→ It changed over time
Precious Animals

International Exchange Value

Scientific Research Value

Threat to Extinction (population size)

Nationalism

Precious Animals (珍贵动物)
Early 1950s Precious Animals

- Animals Foreign Countries desired
- “economic value”
  “exchange value”
  “economic animals”
  “exhibitory value”
  “gift animals”
  “world famous”
Precious Animal in 1959

- Concern of extinction
- Stronger ties to nationalism
- Precious animals = "NATIONAL TREASURE"
- Regulate Export = increased control
  - 1st grade: under completely control of the central government
  - 2nd grade: only used in exhibition and international relations
  - 3rd grade: private exchange allowed but limited
Precious Animal in 1964

- First Grade Precious Animal = Animals live only in China small in number
- China equated animal habitat with national territory
- Bestowed nationality to animals
- Creating “Chinese animal”
Is there another secret criteria?
Out of 13 species that were newly incorporated into the precious animal lists, more than half of the new precious animals lived in Qinghai, Xinjiang and Tibet.

What was the reason behind the state’s increased attention to the borderland wildlife?
Territorial disputes

From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, China’s territorial integrity in Tibet-Xinjiang borders was threatened on multiple grounds.

Animals in borderland = weapon to secure territory
Beyond the Giant Panda Centered Frame

What do we miss when we only focus on giant pandas?

1. PRC developed a complicated system encompassing vast regions and a large number of animals
2. Between 1959 - 1964, motivation to secure territorial integrity enabled the state to place more attention to animals in Western borderlands
The end