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Origins of Silviculture in the Volga Region: The 19th – Early 20th Century

Abstract

The article is devoted to historical and cultural overview of the silviculture development in the Volga region; it reviews the process of searching for methods of artificial forest growing, specifics of afforestation, and particular qualities of the forests in the Volga region, as their territorial and natural features are of economic and social significance for the region. Nowadays, cultivators work with plurannual wood and progress in the creation of high-performance artificial plantations can be only seen in long-term. Published and unpublished historical sources help to reconstruct the history of reafforestation. They are known to scholars in Russian silviculture history. However, the term silviculture (lesokul'turnoe delo) is rarely used in regional

historiography. The author defines silviculture of the Volga region in the 19th – early 20 th century as process of reconstruction of forest plantations on the site of unsatisfactory natural renewal of felling. It is concluded that in the period under study a large-scale project of steppe afforestation was successfully implemented in the region for the first time. The research shows that scientist-practitioners were much involved in the silviculture. Agronomical expeditions were organized to study forest cultures of the region. Unpublished documents from the archives of Kazan, Samara, and Saratov provide evidence that reforestation works affected both rural and urban areas. It is revealed that the locals were involved in afforestation of woods and park areas. The author's view is that most important contribution to preservation of forest was protection of forestation. The facts and conclusions of the article can be used in studying the subsequent periods in the history of the Russian silviculture in order to identify the most successful reforestation practices.

Keywords

Sources, silviculture, Forest Protection Committee, forest protection, environmental protection, supervision, afforestation, forest areas.

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