

Abstract

Practical and theoretical contributions of V.V. Dokuchaev [1846-1903] to the emergence of landscape science in Russia

During the course of his extensive fieldwork in the steppe regions of European Russia towards the end of the nineteenth century, the soil scientist V.V. Dokuchaev [1846-1903] developed a deep understanding of the complex interplay between a variety of natural factors (i.e. relief of the surface, parent rock, vegetation type and the geological age of the land) which ensured that he conceptualised soil as an independent natural body (governed by natural laws and characterised by a distinctive geography) rather than simply a loose collection of material.

Reflecting on his work towards the end of his life and supported by contemporaneous initiatives within other branches of Russian natural science, Dokuchaev started to develop a zonal understanding of soil and related natural phenomena which implied, amongst other things, the existence of coherent natural units within the wider environment.

This paper explores the character and extent of the link between Dokuchaev's work on soil/natural zones and the later emergence of a distinctive Russian school of landscape science, placing particular emphasis on the conceptual work of the geographer Lev Semenovich Berg [1876-1950].