

Forgetting and remembering agroforestry in the Czech Republic

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Presentation:

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Trees are thought to have been a part of agriculture from its very beginning and in Europe the complex of agroforestry management techniques was once widely distributed and diversified. Nowadays however land use combining agriculture and forestry – while gaining momentum in the tropics, is declining in the temperate zone. While agroforestry systems here are becoming scarce or extinct, their ecological, cultural, socio-economic and historical value is starting to be recognized both on the theoretical and political level and incentives for their preservation, restoration or at least documentation are made.

In the Czech Republic both agroforestry research and practices are virtually non-existent phenomena. However with the use of Austrian-Hungarian stabile cadaster records from the years 1824–1845 it was discovered that in the near history - in the middle of nineteenth century, more than five different agroforestry categories were distinguished. Quantitative analysis of the tax records has further shown that some form of agroforestry could be found in all regions irrespective of the landscape type, land fertility, altitude and population density and nationality.

Meanwhile the discursive research of the textual parts of the cadastre as well as the contemporary 19th century Czech expert agricultural literature indicate otherwise. Agroforestry is rarely mentioned here while the focus on change, rationalization, and specialization prevails. On the specific example of agroforestry we can demonstrate the process of an active policy of forgetting the agricultural traditions during industrialization, as well as the resilience of rural peoples and landscapes to external changes and to the official discourse.

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