4 Colonisation and Russia's "Green" Civilising Mission in the Far East

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Abstract This paper aims to shed light on the environmental implications of Russian colonisation of Primor'e through a close examination of attitudes toward nature and its use in the late tsarist and early Soviet eras. It finds that Russian observers showed great concern for the region's environment(s) from an early stage but that such concerns, along with the conservationist measures they prompted, stemmed from the widespread belief that ecological degradation was a product of backwardness and barbarism, especially on the part of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese migrants, as well as peasant settlers. Tsarist elites associated environmental stewardship with civilisation and believed it was the empire's responsibility to bring rational, civilised nature-use to the Far East. This "green" civilising mission was remarkably consistent during the late tsarist era and continued into the early Soviet period.

Keywords Russian Far East, Primorskii Krai, environment, colonisation, nationality

Introduction

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many lands and waters around the Pacific—from Hokkaido to British Columbia to New Zealand—experienced an influx of migrants and changes in resource use as previously remote regions became increasingly tied to imperial and global economies. As many scholars have shown, colonisation—that is, settlement by migrants from a metropole and the installation of their ways of life—played an important role in the environmental transformations that took place around the Pacific during

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the modern era, in a manner analogous to the changes associated with early modern European colonisation of the Americas.[1]

One aspect of this broader transformation related to how newcomers' attitudes toward nature shaped its use. Colonisation brought not only material changes—population growth, the expansion of farming, commercial logging, etc.—but also new ways of thinking about nature, which in turn played a significant role in changing human–nature relations in colonial settings. Regarding the natural world as a collection of marketable commodities, for instance, rather than as part of a cohesive, sacred whole (as in many Indigenous traditions) could have a transformative effect. Similarly, in some contexts, cultural and aesthetic preferences shaped how colonists remade the landscapes they settled.[2]

Parts of the Russian Far East also experienced an influx of new migrants and economic expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though much of the Far East had long been claimed by Muscovy/Russia, relatively few migrants settled there before the late nineteenth century. At that point, migration to the Far East increased rapidly, particularly to the Amur and Primor′e territories, which the Russian Empire had seized from Qing China in 1858–1860. Agriculture, trade, transportation, and extractive industries—such as fishing, timbering, and mining—grew apace, and Russian and foreign merchants in the Far East became deeply involved in the developing Pacific economy.

While Russian settlement of the Far East has received considerable attention from scholars (though less so for the Soviet era), the study of the relationship between colonisation and Far Eastern environments remains in its early stages.[3] In exploring this broader question, the present study focuses on attitudes toward nature and its use in the Russian Far Eastern territory of Primor′e during the late imperial and early Soviet eras. Primor′e—roughly speaking, the area between the Ussuri River and Lake Khanka in the west

1 See, for instance, Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*; McNeill, *Environmental History in the Pacific World*; Murton, *Creating a Modern Countryside*; Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*; Demuth, *Floating Coast;* Beattie et al., *Migrant Ecologies*.

2 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*; Brooking and Pawson, "The Contours of Transformation"; Murton, *Creating a Modern Countryside*; Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*.

3 Notable works that address the intersection of colonisation and environmental change in the Far East include Demuth, *Floating Coast*; Jones, *Empire of Extinction*; Man′ko, *Lesnoe delo na rossiiskom Dal′nem Vostoke*; Gaponov, *Istoriia taezhnogo prirodopol′zovaniia Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo regiona*; and Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti rossiiskogo Dal′nego Vostoka (50-e gody XVII v. – 20-e gody XX v.)*.

to the Sea of Japan in the east, along with a coastal strip stretching south to Korea—was one of the principal areas of nineteenth- and twentieth-century settlement in the Far East, with more than half a million people migrating to the region from elsewhere in the Russian Empire, as well as from China, Korea, and other countries, between the 1850s and 1914.[4] For a variety of reasons, including its unique landscape and collection of wildlife, Primor'e's environment garnered a great deal of attention from Russian observers (that is, Russian imperial subjects, some of whom were not ethnic Russians), including naturalists, publicists, military officers, officials, and wealthy settlers. By examining their accounts, this paper aims to shed light on how the arrival of new understandings of nature and its proper use shaped approaches to a colonial environment.

While these commentators were a diverse group, they were remarkably consistent across the Imperial and early Soviet periods in their regard for Primor'e's environment and the proper use of natural resources. They evinced very little desire to "conquer" or "subdue" the land and little of the providentialism that marked westward expansion in North America—the view that God had created the land for (European) Americans and that the conquest of Indigenous peoples and capture of their lands was part of the divine plan. Instead, from the outset, and increasingly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were strikingly concerned with the ecological changes they witnessed in the Far East and sought to protect "nature" from misuse. Their concerns were consistent with the belief, detailed by Ekaterina Pravilova, that natural resources were a "public good" and that correct management of nature by experts was essential to advancing the national interest.[5] Indeed, in the Far East, the wise husbanding of natural resources and national/imperial interests were particularly closely aligned, given that natural resources were the principal source of wealth and their use generally fell within the purview of state organs.

Observers' works also show, however, that ideas of "rational" or "proper" resources had a strong national-imperialist and Eurocentric orientation and

4 The area discussed here (Primor'e) was, in the tsarist period, generally called the South-Ussuri *krai* (or, for a period, *okrug*), but its administrative divisions varied over time. It was part of Primorskaia *oblast'* until 1884 and the Priamur Governor-Generalship thereafter (with a brief spell as part of the Far Eastern Vice-Regency, between 1903 and 1905). In some cases, this paper addresses parts of the present day in Khabarovskii Krai. On the region's administrative permutations, see Matsuzato, "The Creation of the Priamur Governor-Generalship"; "Primorskaia oblast' (1856–1922)"; Stephan, *The Russian Far East*, 40–61.

5 Pravilova, *A Public Empire*.

effectively became part of Russia's "civilising mission" in the Far East. Observers in the territory consistently interpreted (unwanted) ecological changes as a product of the "barbaric" or "predatory" attitudes and practices they ascribed to 1) the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese migrants who lived in Primor'e or migrated there on a seasonal basis; and 2) "uncivilised" peasant and Cossack migrants. In this way, they espoused what Jeffrey Wilson, in his study of German colonisation of Polish lands, has called a "green" civilising mission: the belief that wise environmental management is a hallmark of civilisation—especially European civilisation—and that an imperial power has the right and responsibility to impose "civilised" nature-use.[6]

In this regard, Primor'e's experience echoes that of other colonial contexts, such as British India and the Progressive-era United States, where conservation—that is, the protection of nature for long-term human interests—often involved the displacement and prosecution of Indigenous and other local peoples.[7] It was a way to protect nature *from* some peoples, typically marginalised groups, and *for* others.[8] In the case of late-tsarist Primor'e, elites sought to protect nature—and, in some contexts, Indigenous peoples—from Chinese, Korean, and Japanese migrants and from supposedly backward and irrational peasants and Cossacks. The solutions they proposed, accordingly, focused on making the exploitation of nature more "rational": orderly, planned, informed by European science, and (often) industrial, rather than small-scale and haphazard. Such a response, from the outset, tended to support the case for imperial authority rather than critique it.[9]

This "green" civilising mission, moreover, carried forward into the Soviet period. Although it acquired a Marxist–Leninist gloss, the basic idea was the same: the juxtaposition of reason, Europeanness, and responsible environmental management on the one hand with disorder, irrationality, barbarity,

6 See Wilson, "Environmental Chauvinism in the Prussian East."

7 Scholars generally distinguish between conservationism and its contemporary, preservationism—the protection of nature for its own sake or for spiritual and aesthetic reasons. See Brain, *Song of the Forest*, 2; Oravec, "Conservationism vs. Preservationism," 444; Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 150–154.

8 See Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*; Guha and Gadgil, "State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India"; MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*; Pouchepadass, "British Attitudes towards Shifting Cultivation in Colonial South India"; Warren, *The Hunter's Game*; Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature*.

9 This contrasts with the experience of eighteenth-century naturalists in the North Pacific (where, as Ryan Jones shows, environmental concerns informed criticism of Russian imperialism) and with the "green imperialism" analysed by Richard Grove. See Jones, *Empire of Extinction*; Grove, *Green Imperialism*.

and Asianness on the other. The Bolsheviks were revolutionaries, but in their desire to replace exploitation and destruction with science and civilisation, they were traditionalists, in step with both their predecessors in Primor'e and imperial conservationists abroad.

The Green Civilising Mission and the "Yellow Peril"

Before and after Russia's acquisition of the Amur Valley and Primor'e in 1858–1860, explorers and naturalists travelled up the Amur and Ussuri rivers, along the coast of the Sea of Japan and the border with Chinese Manchuria, documenting the lands, waters, wildlife, and peoples they observed. They also encountered Primor'e's Indigenous peoples—the Nanai, Udeghe, Ul'chi, Orochi, Nivkhi, and Tazy—along with some Manchu and Chinese. Some early observers regarded the area as a wilderness—"virgin today and Russian tomorrow," as Yuri Slezkine puts it—with rivers teeming with fish, thick forests, a relatively mild climate, and access to the Pacific, which filled them with optimism about Russia's future in the East.[10] Some early visitors, particularly foreigners, lauded Russia's expansion into the Far East as part of the broader march of civilisation: "Here the tiger and leopard rule," wrote the English travel writer Thomas Atkinson, "but the time is approaching when Russian colonists will dispute their right and either kill or drive them into other regions."[11]

On the whole, however, few early commentators celebrated the "conquest" of the Far Eastern wilds. Instead, one finds almost immediate concern about the exploitation of Primor'e's flora and fauna—and, especially, about the Chinese hunter-foragers doing the exploiting. An estimated 1,000 Chinese lived in Primor'e year-round at the time of Russia's acquisition of the territory, and they retained extraterritorial rights as Chinese subjects. Many more travelled to the territory seasonally to hunt, fish, and trap, and to work as wage-labourers. (Chinese migrants' legal status varied over time, becoming generally more restrictive, even as their numbers grew.)[12] Tsarist officials complained of Chinese migrants enslaving Indigenous peoples in

10 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 96. For a discussion of early depictions of the region, see especially Sukhova and Tammiksaar, *Aleksandr Fedorovich Middendorf*; Bassin, *Imperial Visions*; Bassin, "Russian Geographers and the 'National Mission' in the Far East."

11 Atkinson, *Travels in the Regions of the Upper and Lower Amoor*, 375.

12 See Sorokina, *Khoziaistvennaia deiatel'nost' kitaiskikh poddannykh*, 29–39, 199–201; Pozniak, "Politika rossiiskoi vlasti v otnoshenii immigrantov na Dal'nem Vostoke vo vtoroi polovine XIX – nachale XX v.," 45–47; Lohr, *Russian Citizenship*, 35–36, 77–78.

debt bondage, overhunting, overfishing, and denuding forests.[13] Nikolai Przheval'skii, who travelled through the territory in the late 1860s, blamed local Chinese for all manner of environmental despoliation. He wrote of the destruction of forests by Chinese foragers, some of whom felled oak forests to grow mushrooms on the fallen logs. The "beautiful oak forests," he wrote, were being "methodically destroyed" as the Chinese cleared one stand after the next to create favourable conditions for growing mushrooms.[14] Another early visitor, Nikolai Aliab'ev, also lamented the "barbarous destruction" of forests at the hands of Chinese trappers and traders, while another account spoke of the "terrible, fearful harm" inflicted by Chinese trappers.[15]

By the 1880s, and increasingly thereafter, the image of avaricious Chinese wreaking havoc on flora and fauna became a common trope in writing on the Far East. One official, in an 1883 report for the Ministry of Finance, complained of Chinese illegally exporting timber from the territory—that is, not exporting through sanctioned ports and without paying duty[16]—and leaving signs of "profligate, foolish and terrible destruction" behind. The "destruction of forests," he wrote, "occurs throughout the territory [and is] not only merciless, but the most disgraceful that can be imagined."[17] A. Ia. Maksimov, a former naval officer, described the Chinese as "shamelessly" exploiting the region's animal wealth such that "places which were not long ago rich with diverse beasts" were becoming barren.[18] The writer Dmitrii Shreider, similarly, complained of "the reckless embezzlement of those gifts which nature has so generously provided" by Chinese migrants. It was not simply "exploitation" of natural wealth, he wrote, but "extermination."[19]

The notion of "predatory" Chinese was also evident in discussions of fishing and coastal gathering, and Japanese and Korean fishermen also drew

13 Matsuzato, "The Creation of the Priamur Governor-Generalship," 375.

14 Przheval'skii, *Puteshestvie v Ussuriiskom krae*, 85–86. Przheval'skii had a notable disdain for China in general and promoted Russian imperialism in the Far East. See Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun*, 34–42.

15 Aliab'ev, *Dalekaia Rossiia*, 49; Moscow Agricultural Society, *Amur i Ussuriiskii krai*, 110.

16 On the forestry regulations of this period, see Russian State Archive of the Far East (hereafter RGIA DV) F. 702, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 1–4; Man'ko, *Lesnoe delo na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke*, 85–86, 93; Anuchin, *Mery, prinimaemye k uporiadocheniiu ustroistva lesov Priamurskogo kraia*, 1–7.

17 Skal'kovskii, *Russkaia torgovlia v Tikhom okeane*, 41–44.

18 Maksimov, *Na dalekom vostoke*, 112.

19 Shreider, *Nash Dal'nii Vostok,* 334, 256.

criticism.[20] Vsevolod Krestovskii, who served as secretary to the commander of the Siberian flotilla in the early 1880s, described the "barbaric destruction" wrought by Chinese hunters in the taiga and the ravaging of marine life by foreign fishermen and gatherers. "It is said," he wrote, "that in former years the Korean coast was, no less than ours, rich in seaweed, but now there is none at all: all was destroyed as a result of the incorrectly conducted industry, which therefore was forced to turn further north, to our shores."[21] Another writer complained of the "predatory" methods employed by Korean fishermen, such as blocking the Ussuri River with nets, which he said had damaged fish stocks, and catching more than they could use while dumping unwanted, rotting fish into the river.[22] Other officials complained that Korean fishermen were overfishing and damaging salmon populations in the Tumen River and that Japanese fishermen were doing the same on the Amur.[23] In this way, ecological concern fit well with the so-called "yellow peril"—the fear of being attacked or overwhelmed demographically by neighbouring peoples, principally the Chinese and Japanese.[24]

Even Vladimir Arsen'ev, who was more judicious in his discussions of Primor'e's Chinese than many of his contemporaries, complained of the attitudes and trapping methods he found. Having encountered many Chinese hunters and trappers during his explorations of 1906–1907, along with storehouses packed with antlers and dried animal organs, he wrote that the Chinese were "by nature a cruel people," always looking to bring "suffering to some living creature," including wildlife and local Indigenous peoples. They were, moreover, perpetrating terrible "vandalism" in the taiga and robbing Russia through their "predatory hunt." Arsen'ev saw in Chinese exploitation an opportunity to win Indigenous allies. He believed that granting greater rights and property to *inorodtsy* could attract them to the Russian side and that they would gladly become forest guards or even Cossacks, since they competed with the Chinese for furs. The "eviction of [the Chinese]," he wrote, "would

20 Primor'e's coast had long been a destination for gatherers of seaweed, sea cucumbers, and molluscs. Indeed, the Chinese name for the site of present-day Vladivostok was *Haishenwai,* "Sea Cucumber Bay."

21 Russian State Naval Archive (hereafter RGA VMF), F. 410, op. 2, d. 4046, ll. 237–239, 241–242ob, 245–247.

22 Sil'nitskii, *Kul'turnoe vlianie ussuriiskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, 70.

23 RGIA DV, F. 1, op. 4, d. 975, ll. 1–4; Office of the Priamur Governor Generalship, *O rybnom promysle v Primorskoi oblasti*, 8–9.

24 On the "yellow peril" in Russian, see Stolberg, "The Siberian Frontier between 'White Mission' and 'Yellow Peril'; Siegelbaum, "Another 'Yellow Peril'," 307–330.

be met with sympathy" from native populations. In this view, Indigenous peoples were by no means a hindrance to colonisation; if anything, they were potential allies against the Chinese and, on the coast, the Japanese.[25]

Criticism of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean migrants on environmental grounds indicates a contrast with the situation in colonial North America. There, Anglo-American settlers had argued that Indigenous peoples did not make productive use of the natural bounty around them—they did not "mix their labour" with it, through agriculture—and did not reside on it year-round, and thus had no claim to it.[26] The tsarist government, similarly, did not allocate land grants to Indigenous groups in the Amur or Primor′e because they were nomadic (or semi-nomadic) and were thus thought not to need fixed land allotments.[27] But the denial of Indigenous territoriality had nothing to do with a belief that they were misusing land. Rather, officials charged that competing migrants—particularly the Chinese, Japanese, and, in some cases, Koreans[28]—were *overusing,* not underusing, land and resources and thus should be removed and replaced by a more civilised people, one that could better protect nature.

Nature-Use and the Peasant Question

Who that more "civilised" people might be was far from obvious, however, since Russian migrants—that is, tsarist subjects from elsewhere in the Russian Empire, including many Ukrainians, and smaller numbers of Balts, Finns, Poles, and others—also garnered their share of criticism on environmental grounds. Nearly half a million Russian subjects migrated to Primorskaia *oblast′* between 1860 and the First World War, with most settling in Primor′e and on the Amur. Along with temporary exemption from military service and certain taxes, these migrants received substantial land allotments (100 *desiatinas* per

25 Arsen′ev, "Polevye dnevniki ekspeditsii V.K. Arsen′eva 1906 goda," 12, 22–26; Arsen′ev, "Polevye dnevniki ekspeditsii V.K. Arsen′eva 1906 goda (prodolzhenie)," 48; Arsen′ev, *Kratkii voenno-geograficheskii i voenno-statisticheskii ocherk*, 195.

26 As discussed, for instance, in Cronon, *Changes in the Land*.

27 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*; Arsen′ev, "Polevye dnevniki ekspeditsii V.K. Arsen′eva 1906 goda," 96.

28 Koreans were relatively welcome in the Russian Far East and received land allotments like those granted to Russian subjects, though they were smaller. After 1905, Korean migrants faced many more restrictions. See especially Glebov, "Exceptional Subjects"; Babrenko, "Otnosheniia russkikh krest′ian i koreiskikh pereselentsev," 17–23.

family until 1901, then fifteen *desiatinas* per adult male household member thereafter).[29] Settlers affected the territory's lands, waters, and wildlife in many ways. They cleared forests, burned fallow fields—often sparking forest fires in the process—hunted game, and fished. They also quickly became involved in the lucrative trade for various forest products bound for China.[30]

Tsarist elites tended to attribute changes at their compatriots' hands less to colonisation itself and more to what they believed were the "predatory" or "barbaric" habits of peasants and Cossacks. As Jane Costlow and other scholars have shown, there was a broad post-Emancipation discourse linking deforestation and other ecological changes with poverty, backwardness, and/or moral decline. In several parts of the empire, elites sought to protect nature from misuse, often by peasants.[31] We find a similar pattern in late-tsarist Primor'e, as officials and other educated observers viewed unwanted ecological changes as evidence of the failings of Russian colonists—the "poor whites," as Alexander Morrison puts it with regard to settlers in Russian Turkestan, who were essential to empire-building but whose behaviour sometimes undermined claims to being a bearer of civilisation.[32]

Deforestation and changes associated with Russian settlement were evident by the 1880s, and observers tended to ascribe them to settlers' short-sightedness, barbarism, or "predatory" attitudes. Maksimov, for instance, complained that colonists around Vladivostok had "cut down the forest impulsively, without calculation, without judgement […] It's a sad, typical result of the predatory relations of people to the bounty of nature."[33] A forester who toured Primor'e in 1886 warned of possible wood shortages due to settlers' "barbaric" relationship with the forest.[34] Another writer lamented that settlers destroyed forests without thinking—evidence, in his view, of a "barbarian attitude" and a "predatory approach" to nature. A "feeling of

29 One *desiatina* was equivalent to 1.09 hectares. Settlers were also permitted to purchase the land and convert it to private property if they wished. Kabuzan, *Dal'nevostochnyi krai v XVII – nachale XX vv.*, 226–228; Vashchuk et al., *Etnomigratsionnye protsessi v Primor'e v XX veke*; Kabuzan, *Kak zaselialsia Dal'nii Vostok*, 52–54; Goncharova et al., *Dal'nyi Vostok Rossii v materialakh zakonodatel'stva*, 203–5; Osipov and Galliamova, "Osvoenie Primor'ia (XIX–XX)"; Vlasov, *Istoriia Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii*, 45–47.

30 On settlers' involvement in cross-border trade, see especially Sorokina, *Khoziaistvennaia deiatel'nost' kitaiskikh poddannykh*, 63–67.

31 Costlow, "Imaginations of Destruction"; Moon, *The Plough That Broke the Steppes*; Pravilova, *A Public Empire*, 60–80.

32 Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and the 'Civilising Mission' in Russian Turkestan."

33 Maksimov, *Na dalekom vostoke*, 97.

34 Man'ko, *Lesnoe delo na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke*, 37–46.

respect for the forest is completely unknown among the local population," he wrote, because they lived among abundance; they considered forests a "gift from God" to do with as they pleased. They plundered the taiga in "pursuit of easy living"—weakening their energy and "distracting their minds from agriculture."[35]

One frequently finds a paternalistic, "they know not what they do" attitude toward peasant settlers on this question. Nikolai Kriukov, for instance, an agronomist who penned a major 1894 study of the Far Eastern economy, critiqued settlers on the Amur and Ussuri for their "predatory methods of fishing," such as catching more than they ate, and warned that they threatened to "destroy natural riches." In a striking passage, he wrote that "one cannot leave fisheries, the people's wealth, to the arbitrariness of that people [*na proizvol etogo samogo naroda*]." Instead, it was necessary, he argued, to "care for the people's descendants."[36] Arsen'ev, similarly, lamented that among peasant settlers, an understanding of the harm they caused forests "had never entered their heads" (in contrast to Indigenous and Chinese hunter-foragers, whatever their faults, because their livelihoods depended on the taiga).[37] V. F. Romanov, a member of the Amur Expedition—a major fact-finding study of the peoples, flora, fauna, and resources of the Far East conducted between 1909 and 1912—likewise criticised settlers for their "foolish" destruction of animals and forests, writing that "our simple folk [*narod*] and non-Russians [*inorodtsy*]" were simply not developed enough to understand the harm they caused.[38]

During the regime's final decade, as tens of thousands of migrants came to the Far East, concern with deforestation, overfishing, and overhunting combined with elites' frustrations about what they saw as settlers' deficiencies as colonists. According to this view, peasants and Cossacks, by using low-intensity agricultural practices, such as swidden and long-fallow farming, were destroying flora and fauna without producing much agricultural surplus, while they could have been running productive farms and leaving the forests to rational, modern timbering. Pavel Unterberger, for instance, governor-general of the Primaur from 1906 to 1910 and the leader of the Amur Expedition, was

35 Shreider, *Nash Dal'nii Vostok*, 314, 332–333.

36 Kriukov, *Nekotorye dannye o polozhenii rybolovstva v Priamurskom krae*, ii, 46–47.

37 Quoted in Beu, "A Journey towards Environmental Wisdom," 88.

38 Romanov, *Nuzhdy Nikolaevskago raiona Primorskoi oblasti*, 161. The *inorodtsy* Romanov referred to were probably Indigenous peoples, rather than Chinese or other non-Russians, though the meaning of the term was quite flexible, as discussed in Slocum, "Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy?"

highly critical of peasant settlers. He complained that peasants managed their lands in a "predatory fashion," "completely stripping it from their lot" before moving on to start the process anew.[39] Another Expedition member likewise complained of the "extensive character" of agriculture around Nikolaevsk as one cause of slow growth and an example of settlers' "predatory relationship with the bounty of nature."[40]

To some, such behaviour seemed to indicate not only economic failures but moral and cultural problems as well. N. V. Sliunin, an envoy from the Ministry of Finance, reported in 1907 that settlers' low productivity stemmed from their "extensive predation": their tendency to farm a single plot until it was exhausted, then log new forest plots and start again. "Having in a predatory manner destroyed the forests near their allotments," Sliunin wrote, settlers "soon move on to a new place, loudly complaining of the unsuitability of the soil for farming," even as their Korean neighbours enjoyed bumper crops. Settlers had imported their "old, barbaric, patriarchal method of working the soil" and were merely "predator-exploiters of the land and forest plots allotted to them."[41] Such practices, in his view, also created opportunities for "yellow labour," since lacklustre farming led peasant and Cossack settlers to rent their lands to Chinese and Korean migrants who could actually farm them competently, a practice that yielded "indifference, debauchery, and overwhelming apathy."[42] A committee on settlement of the Far East, for instance, which Unterberger chaired, reached a similar conclusion in a 1910 report, blaming peasants for "predatory destruction […] of a large area of forest without clear economic benefit, often [to finance] drinking"[43] and for selling off their land to loggers or renting their land to Koreans and Chinese, leading to "an idle and carefree life, [one that] does not accord with the tasks of colonisation."[44]

Protecting Nature

Not surprisingly, given the level of concern surrounding the "predation" of Far Eastern flora and fauna, the value of the region's natural resources, and the fact that they fell under the purview of the Ministry of State Domains

39 Unterberger, *Priamurskii krai, 1906-1910 g.g.*, 125.
40 Gluzdovskii, *Primorsko-Amurskaia okraina i severnaia man'chzhuriia*, 85.
41 Russian State Historical Archive (hereafter RGIA) F. 391, op. 3, d. 262, ll. 47–50.
42 RGIA F. 391, op. 3, d. 1152, ll. 25–29, 31.
43 RGIA F. 391, op. 4, d. 513, l. 79.
44 Ibid. ll. 40–41, 43.

and its successors,[45] Primor'e's administrators were deeply concerned with regulating the use of resources from an early stage. And since they interpreted environmental harm as a product of barbarism and backwardness, their efforts focused on constraining certain practices—and excluding certain peoples—while simultaneously encouraging exploitation using "rational" methods. Indeed, few were those who thought colonisation and economic development were at odds with conservation—though Arsen'ev, toward the end of his life, edged toward such a view.[46] Rather, the conservationist measures adopted suggest that tsarist elites regarded state management of natural resources as part of the state's mandate, and as something that would benefit both nature and the empire.

The first attempts at conservation aimed to create a rational forest industry. In 1863, the Siberian Committee promulgated forestry laws for the Far East, drawing on the recommendations of A. S. Budishchev, a forester who had surveyed the forests of the Amur and Primor'e in 1859 and advocated for the introduction of "rational" timbering. The Committee opened Far Eastern forests to Russian and foreign loggers and permitted exports through Imperial (now Soviet) Harbour while also setting aside stands of valuable timber to be off-limits to logging. In keeping with a long-established practice, protected stands included those with timber appropriate for shipbuilding, but they also extended to areas deemed particularly fire-prone. Regional authorities were empowered to appoint forest overseers, foresters, and guards to enforce the new laws and collect duties.[47]

Such measures did not prevent mounting forest destruction, so further regulations followed: in 1877, the military governor of Primor'e, G. F. Erdman, banned throughout the Murav'ev-Amurskii Peninsula, where Vladivostok is located, the logging of oaks to grow mushrooms and the use of fence-and-pit traps (long fence systems, sometimes hundreds of metres long, that channelled game toward deadfalls) favoured by Chinese hunters. He also placed limits on logging operations and outlawed activities such as the burning of fallow fields. His successor, I. G. Baranov, enacted similar regulations throughout the whole South Ussuri region, and he also attempted to enrol the Amur Cossacks

45 That is, the Ministry of Agriculture and State Domains (1894–1905, 1915–1917) and the Main Administration of Agriculture and Land Management (GUZZ) (1905–1915).

46 Beu, "A Journey towards Environmental Wisdom."

47 Man'ko, *Lesnoe delo na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke*, 85–86, 93; Anuchin, *Mery, prinimaemye k uporiadocheniiu ustroistva lesov Priamurskogo kraia*.

in assisting with fire prevention and controlling illegal logging.[48] Likewise, in 1881, the military governor of Vladivostok, Rear-Admiral Fel'dgauzen, imposed similar measures around the increasingly denuded city to put forestry on a "rational footing." He unconditionally forbade the oak-mushroom trade as well as the construction of fence-and-pit traps. Notably, Fel'dgauzen also set aside some parts of the Vladivostok region as protected (*zapovednye*) groves.[49]

Meanwhile, D. G. Anuchin, who became governor-general of Eastern Siberia in 1880, empowered foresters to fine and even evict Chinese migrants, citing "complete disorder" and rampant destruction of Far Eastern forests.[50] Roundups of Chinese trappers and hunters occurred sporadically in the following decades. In 1895, citing illegal activities, police removed Chinese from the Suchan (now Partizanskaia) Valley, and in 1899 conducted a similar operation along the Suchan and in the vicinity of Ol'ga Bay.[51] Military detachments again swept through the taiga in 1907–1908, removing "hunters and vagrant elements" who had "illegally [*samovol'no*] occupied Russian land," some of whom may have lived in Primor'e for more than forty years.[52]

Officials also sought to control peasants' use of forests. Baranov and Fel'dgauzen emphasised fire protection and tried to restrict the manufacture of charcoal and tar in the forest, which could contribute to fires. Baron A. N. Korf, the first governor-general of the Priamur, outlawed the burning of fallow fields (except during the spring) and required rural communities to extinguish forest fires, when possible, around their settlements.[53] Forestry regulations promulgated in 1891 and 1898 further restricted the use of fire on peasant allotments and sought to involve village leadership in controlling fires and wanton logging.[54] Beginning in 1900, peasant communities were also supposed to elect local forest wardens and "fire elders" to help state foresters and guards stop illegal logging and fires.[55] In 1908, in a curious attempt to protect both forests and one of the region's Indigenous peoples, Priamur Governor-General Nikolai Gondatti directed foresters to stop logging within

48 Anuchin, *Mery, prinimaemye k uporiadocheniiu ustroistva lesov Priamurskogo kraia*, 82–84, 105–111; Skal'kovskii, *Russkaia torgovlia v Tikhom okeane*, 46; Man'ko, *Lesnoe delo na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke*, 62, 81–82.

49 RGIA DV F. 702, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 39–40.

50 RGIA DV F. 702, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 128.

51 Vashchuk et al., *Etnomigratsionnye protsessi v Primor'e v XX veke*, 39.

52 RGIA DV F. 1, op. 4, d. 1910, ll. 1–10, 59–60, 102–103, 159ob.

53 RGIA DV F. 1, op. 5, d. 502, ll. 1–5.

54 RGIA DV F. 94, op. 2, d. 23, ll. 37–41, 39; RGIA F. 1273, op. 1, d. 409, l. 111; Shreider, *Nash Dal'nii Vostok*, 320–321.

55 RGIA DV F. 1, op. 4, d. 169, ll. 1–1ob.

one kilometre of Nivkhi villages, claiming that logging would threaten the Nivkhis' property and would lead to moral corruption.[56]

Tsarist authorities also sought to regulate hunting, which was decimating some animal populations. Korf established a hunting season for sable in 1886, and in 1899, hunting rules were expanded to protect deer, goral (wild goats), elk, sable, and other animals, with new bans on the use of fence- and pit-traps and other methods.[57] In 1910, in response to concerns among traders, Governor-General Gondatti enacted a two-year suspension of sable trading in the Priamur. The following year, his office issued a set of hunting regulations that stipulated all manner of restrictions on the killing of deer, elk, moose, and other valuable species. (No such restrictions applied to killing predators, which were thought to be part of the problem.)[58]

At the same time, during the last decade of the regime, administrators also sought to boost industrial, export-orientated industries, which they believed would be more amenable to both economic production *and* conservation. Such a view was particularly evident in approaches to forest management. Thus, A. N. Mitinskii, a member of the Amur Expedition, wrote that while the typical settler was "an enemy of the forest," unable to manage their woodlands wisely, a "large influx of capital" could help introduce "correct forestry."[59] Governor-General Unterberger and his successor, Gondatti, adhered to this view, criticising resource depletion while promoting industrial timbering and other extractive industries. Unterberger held that industrial forestry and timber exports would bring about "rational exploitation" of Far Eastern forests, which would otherwise be just "dead capital." Accordingly, he granted timber concessions to foreign and Russian subjects, permitting the harvesting of 1.5 million trees in various parts of Primorskaia *oblast'* between 1904 and 1911. Timber exports through Vladivostok rose rapidly after 1905, reaching a high of 2.8 million cubic feet in 1918.[60] The Resettlement Office, similarly, promoted the development of local timber processing facilities in

56 RGIA DV, F. 1, op. 94, d. 17, l. 4.

57 RGIA DV F. 1, op. 5, d. 502, l. 4; RGIA DV F. 702, op. 2, d. 299, ll. 3–4.

58 State Archive of Primorskii Krai (hereafter GAPK) F. 1351, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2ob.

59 Mitinskii, *Materialy o polozhenii i nuzhdakh torgovli i promyshlennosti na Dal'nem Vosoke*, 113–116.

60 Unterberger, *Priamurskii krai, 1906-1910 g.g.*, 123–124; Ivanov, "Lesnaia torgovlia Primor'ia," 48–49; Gaponov, *Istoriia taezhnogo prirodopol'zovaniia Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo regiona*, 153.

order to effect "rational exploitation of the region's natural riches."[61] While the scale of industrial timbering in the Far East was modest before the Soviet era, there was a trend toward state support for fostering a capital-intensive forest industry.[62] Officials increasingly looked to private, capital-intensive timbering, combined with state oversight, as the best means to ensure what they believed to be rational use of forest resources and rescue the Far Eastern taiga from predation.[63]

An analogous approach emerged with respect to wildlife conservation. Given the challenges of enforcing regulations in a vast area, state authorities and elements of Far Eastern civil society turned to "farming" valuable species and, eventually, setting aside protected reserves for more regulated use. An early manifestation of this pattern was deer farming. Because of the great value of spotted deer and elk antlers, settlers had begun penning in spotted deer to harvest their antlers as early as 1867, a practice long known in China and one that Russian migrants in the Altai had also adopted.[64] The practice spread late in the century, with large landholders in coastal Primor'e keeping hundreds of semi-domesticated deer on their allotments. By the First World War, there were perhaps 6,000 head of spotted deer on private farms of various kinds across the region.[65]

In addition, beginning in the 1880s, some of Primor'e's well-heeled residents began to create hunting reserves for their exclusive use. In 1887, with support from high officials, a group of Vladivostok-based hunters acquired exclusive hunting rights on islands in Peter the Great Bay and formed the Vladivostok Society of Amateur Hunters (VOLO). (A similar group formed in Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk in 1899.) During the following decade, VOLO created

61 Curiously, this initiative seems to have been inspired in part by a report from a tsarist envoy on colonisation of the west coast of the United States and Canada. The envoy observed "merciless destruction of forests" there and argued better state oversight and more efficient approaches were necessary to avoid the error. RGIA F. 391, op. 4, d. 1296, ll. 72–73, 81–82, 90.

62 The Far East produced only one percent of the empire's timber exports by the First World War. Man'ko, *Lesnoe delo na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke*, 93.

63 This was consonant with a broader trend toward export-oriented logging across the empire, as Steven Brain describes, though distinct from the rising suspicion of private (typically noble) ownership of forests in European Russia, which underpinned calls for forest nationalisation. See Brain, *Song of the Forest*; Bonhomme, *Forests, Peasants, and Revolutionaries*, 22–59; Pravilova, *A Public Empire*, 60–80.

64 Dudareva et al., eds., *Iz istorii issledovaniia i razvitiia maralovodstva na altae, XVIII – nachalo XX v.*, 3–14.

65 Aramilev, "Sika Deer in Russia," 479–480; Baikov, *Iziubr i iziubrevodstvo*, 11–12.

game reserves for deer and goral on several offshore islands, as well as on Lake Khanka, where members hunted pheasant, grouse, and waterfowl. On these reserves, they would conduct "proper" (*pravil'nye*) hunting and keep out those who had wrought "merciless destruction" and hunted in a "completely predatory way," driving game into remote areas where they were inaccessible to the "cultured" (*intelligentnoi*) part of the population.[66] Much like their contemporaries in India, Africa, and the United States, VOLO members sought to keep uncivilised local peoples from killing game—so they could do so at their leisure.[67] While the impact of VOLO and its Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk counterpart was limited, it is nevertheless indicative of the prevailing attitudes about proper nature use among Far Eastern tsarist elites.

These different threads—voluntary organisations, state conservation, and the "green" civilising mission of the tsarist elite—came together during the First World War to yield the territory's first nature reserve. Beginning in 1908, foresters operating in the Kedrovaia Valley, west of Vladivostok, had begun working to create a sanctuary for rare species, including Korean pine, sable, and spotted deer. They soon won support from the Society for the Study of the Amur Region (OIAK) and from Governor-General Gondatti. In 1914, Gondatti had requested funding to form armed detachments to drive Chinese and Korean hunters and trappers—an estimated 40,000 of them—from the taiga. Alexander Krivoshein, the head of the Main Administration for Agriculture and Land Management (GUZZ), denied the request but suggested that Gondatti create *zapovedniki* (inviolable reserves) instead. Policing the whole Priamur, he warned, was unrealistic, but protecting a bounded area might be possible.[68] In 1916, a group of volunteers created the Priamur Forest Society and won Gondatti's recognition for the creation of the Kedrovaia Pad' (Cedar/Pine Valley) reserve (*zakaznik*), from which human activities were prohibited—one of the first in the empire.[69]

66 RGIA DV F. 1, op. 4, d. 1889, ll. 1, 13; Obshchestvo liubitelei okhoty, *Otchety*, 11–13, 51–52; Khisamutdinov, *The Russian Far East*, 2, 53, 83–84.

67 VOLO was particularly similar to the Boone and Crockett Club, whose founding members looked upon poor whites, blacks, Italian immigrants, and others as unsporting. See Taylor III and Klingle, "Environmentalism's Elitist Tinge Has Roots in the Movement's History."

68 State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereafter GARF) F. 387, op. 19, d. 67789, ll. 1–3ob, 19, 29.

69 Man'ko, "Istoriia lesnykh obshchestv na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vosoke"; Organ Primorskogo gubernskogo ekonomicheskogo soveshchaniia, *Sovetskoe Primor'e*, 131; Shtilmark, *History of the Russian Zapovedniks*, 92–94; DVO RAN, "Gosudarstvennyi prirodnyi zapovednik Kedrovaia pad."

The Red–Green Civilising Mission

The Far East experienced a chaotic interregnum after the revolutions of 1917 that lasted until 1922. While much changed under Soviet rule, the "green" civilising mission persisted, in part because it dovetailed with aspects of Marxism–Leninism, especially its Eurocentrism and emphasis on the promises of industrial progress and scientific management. Soviet officials—some of whom had served the tsarist government, the Far Eastern Republic, and/or the Kolchak regime, and many of whom had been educated before the Revolution—were, like their predecessors, quite concerned with environmental problems in and around Primor'e, including overfishing, overhunting, deforestation, and flooding. They continued to associate environmental problems with backwardness and Asianness while seeing development based on (European) science, state planning, and industrial methods as a path toward economic growth and environmental protection.

The "green" civilising mission *à la Sovietique* was perhaps most evident in the realm of fisheries, where, as Robert Kindler shows, the sense of being outcompeted by a non-European power, Japan, was particularly acute.[70] In 1923, the Far Eastern Revolutionary Committee created a Far Eastern Hunting and Fisheries Agency, Dal'rybokhota, to oversee fisheries management in the region. Among its major concerns early on was the imminent "exhaustion of natural [salmon] reserves," especially on the Amur, where the catch peaked in 1910, and in the Sea of Japan.[71] In 1925, a fisheries official warned that the population of chum salmon in the Amur "ha[d] been almost entirely destroyed, reserves of pink salmon ha[d] been completely ruined." The once renowned sturgeon of the Amur and Ussuri, another wrote, had become "a thing of the past."[72]

Dal'rybokhota officials tended to ascribe both ecological decline and slow economic development to backwardness, as had their predecessors, while inflecting their concerns with the prevailing ideology. The agency's first director, F. I. Adrianov, blamed peasant settlers and Indigenous peoples on the Amur for much of the decline, writing that they were responsible for the "catastrophic" reduction in salmon stocks. The piecemeal distribution of fishing plots

70 Kindler, "Troubled Waters," 23–41.

71 State Archive of Primorskii Krai (hereafter GAPK) F. 633, op. 4, d. 64, ll. 4–6; Augerot, "An Environmental History of the Salmon Management Philosophies of the North Pacific," 61.

72 Rusanov, "K zapreshcheniiu lova osetra i kalugi v basseine reki Amura," 77.

to them was an "SR-like decision" that had engendered "predatory fishing" practices that damaged salmon stocks without achieving the industrial scale needed to compete with the Japanese. As a result, the region was in danger of regressing to a "primitive condition."[73] Another Dal'rybokhota official, V. O. Kolobov, who had also served the Kolchak government during the Civil War, attributed the decline of salmon and sturgeon fisheries to merciless over-exploitation and a "provincialism and amateurishness" that was "specifically Asian."[74] Kolobov recommended rationalising the industry through scientific studies of fish populations, a shift toward other fish species, the development of local canning and processing industries, and the construction of a telegraph network to coordinate fishermen. He wrote that such measures would enable the Soviet Far Eastern fishing industry to "shed its centuries-old clothes of amateurishness and yellow provincialism and enter the wide road of global, concentrated production."[75]

Shedding "amateurishness" and "yellow provincialism" while achieving "concentrated production" demanded science and state oversight. In 1925, a group of ichthyologists and OIAK members established the Pacific Scientific–Industrial Station (TNPS) in southern Primor′e to gather knowledge of fish populations and find "the most rational means of exploitation of this or that fish without the loss of its natural abundance."[76] The TNPS sought to document and restore salmon and other fish stocks, shift away from over-exploited areas and species, protect forests around spawning grounds and along migratory rivers, and promote fish-farming.[77] Dal'rybokhota pursued some such measures in its effort to rationalise the industry. It immediately imposed a seven-year ban on sturgeon fishing in the Amur and Ussuri systems, citing declining yields and fish size.[78] Beginning in 1927, it sought to regulate fishing more broadly in the Amur basin, restricting the use of certain types of nets, the catching of undersized sturgeon, and fishing in spawning waters, among other measures. Indigenous peoples—who were conspicuously absent from these discussions—were permitted in spawning areas if they did not have access to fishing grounds near their village.[79] Dal'rybokhota officials also

73 GAPK F. 633, op. 7, d. 13, ll. 1–4, 7.
74 Kolobov, "Perspektivy Dal'nevostochnykh rybnykh promyslov," 347–352.
75 Ibid., 343–357.
76 Zasel'skii, *Razvitie morskikh biologicheskikh issledovanii na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1923–1941 gg.*, 42–43.
77 GAPK, F. 633, op. 7, d. 43, ll. 9–10.
78 Rusanov, "K zapreshcheniiu lova osetra i kalugi v basseine reki Amura," 76–79.
79 GAPK F. 633, op. 4 d. 2, ll. 87-89; GAPK F. 633, op. 7, d. 62, ll. 1–2.

encouraged fishermen to diversify, facilitating the creation of a small herring fishery in Peter the Great Bay and supporting experiments with fish hatcheries. The agency also attempted to consolidate small ("SR-like") fishing plots, since larger operations would "be easier to establish and simpler to control" and thus more amenable to conservation.[80]

At the same time, Dal'rybokhota (Dal'ryba from 1931 onward) sought to push Japanese fishermen from Soviet waters, an indication of how conservation and anti-foreign sentiment continued to dovetail. The Japanese had enjoyed broad fishing rights because the Fishing Convention of 1907, one of the agreements resulting from the Russo-Japanese War, dominated fishing along much of Russia's Pacific seaboard, and they were able to operate with impunity during the Civil War. The Soviet–Japanese Fishing Convention of 1928 was more favourable to Soviet fishing operations but maintained many fishing areas and continued to allow Japanese firms to bid on fishing plots in Soviet waters.[81] From the mid-20s, there had been efforts to favour Soviet fishermen and push the Japanese from Soviet waters by peaceful means.[82] The agency's fishing inspectors also sought to ensure Japanese fishermen complied with the boundaries stipulated in the fisheries agreements and to prevent "predation of our natural riches," efforts that were sometimes accompanied by violence.[83]

During the 1930s, conservation took a back seat to increasing demands from the centre for output, though such demands dovetailed with the pursuit of "concentrated production"—and, in practice, with a kind of Russification. There was heavy state investment in industrial fishing during the first two Five-Year Plans, including the purchase of ocean-going, refrigerated fishing vessels from abroad, the construction of shipbuilding facilities and

80 Zasel'skii, *Razvitie morskikh biologicheskikh issledovanii na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1923-1941 gg.*, 25–28, 35–36.

81 Kindler, "Troubled Waters"; Kaminaga, "Maritime History and Imperiology"; Kaminaga, "International Fisheries Conflicts in the Bering Sea in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," 43–64; Mandrik, "Rybnaia promyshlennost' Primor'ia v period novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki"; Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka (1927-1940 gg.)*.

82 Wertheim, "The Russo-Japanese Fisheries Controversy," 193–194.

83 GAPK F. 633, op. 7, d. 53, l. 30b. See also Kindler, "Troubled Waters," 33–38; Sokolsky, "Fishing, Settlement, and Conservation in the Russian Far East, 1860–1940," 234–238; Sokolsky, "Fishing for Empire: Settlement and Maritime Conflict in the Russian Far East."

fish-processing plants, and the directed migration of settlers to the coast.[84] While fish conservation in the '30s seems to have done little, efforts to compete with the Japanese bore fruit: Japanese vessels were excluded from certain areas, concessions were curtailed, and Soviet fishermen began to predominate in the Sea of Japan and in the Amur basin. Whether Far Eastern fisheries became more "rational" during the Stalin era is debatable, but they certainly became more "national."[85]

A similar convergence of conservationism with nationalism emerged in discussions of rice farming. Wet-rice cultivation had emerged among Primor'e's Korean communities during the Civil War and expanded rapidly in the early 1920s, as did the cultivation of soybeans.[86] Soviet officials, like their predecessors, were keen to populate Primor'e and establish intensive forms of agriculture. To that end, they established a state company, Dal'ris, to oversee rice growing and processing. Dal'ris officials saw in planned, irrigated agriculture a solution to the "predatory use of arable land" about which tsarist officials had long complained, and created plans for a network of damming and drainage works in Primor'e to support the new crops.[87]

However, state officials soon took issue with Koreans' rice farming practices, which did not seem adequately modern. To flood their rice fields, Koreans built small dams, partitions, and ditches using fascines, rocks, timber, earth, and other materials. Occasionally, these structures leaked or collapsed, and water spilled into adjacent fields used for dry-land crops, prompting complaints. In 1923, in response to such concerns, a regional economic council cited the "improper" and "primitive" methods of irrigation found on Korean

84 Lee and Lukin, *Russia's Far East*, 36–37; Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka (1927-1940 gg.)*, 41–52. The Japanese, as Kaminaga Eisuke shows in the first volume of this series, made similar investments in their fishing fleets, though they shifted toward pelagic fishing. Kaminaga, "International Fisheries Conflicts in the Bering Sea in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," 49–50, 53–55.

85 GAPK F. 633, op. 5, d. 95, 1–3ob; Augerot, "An Environmental History of the Salmon Management Philosophies of the North Pacific," 61–63, 70; Bilim, "Pereselenie rybakov na sovetskii Dal'nii Vostok (1928-1941 gg.)"; Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka (1927-1940 gg.)*; Mandrik, "Rybnaia promyshlennost' Primor'ia v period novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki"; Primorskaia oblastnaia planovaia komissia, *Primorskaia oblast' v tsifrakh*; Sokolsky, "Fishing, Settlement, and Conservation in the Russian Far East, 1860–1940."

86 See GAPK F. 1166, op. 1, d. 115, ll. 1–3; Voeikov, "Uspekhi razvedeniia risa v Primorskoi Oblasti"; Charnetskii, "Mestnoe risoseianie," 7; Charnetskii, "K voprosu o razvedenii risa v Primorskoi oblasti," 230–240.

87 GARF F. A310, op. 16, d. 337, ll. 11–17.

farms, which, one official wrote, threatened to aggravate flooding and damage fisheries. The preferred alternative was state-supported irrigation systems based on experimental fields, electric pumping stations, and hydrological observations.[88] Similarly, in 1927, Dal'ris promoted the idea of interesting "the Russian population in the development of rice and [soy]beans, since at present these crops remain purely Korean," an initiative that seemed to demand systems other than those used by Koreans.[89]

The Sovnarkom in Moscow, in the process of outlining the goals of the first Five-Year Plan in the Far East, also made ecological arguments (among others) to devalue Koreans' economic activities, emphasising that Korean rice-farming was spontaneous and wasteful, "regulated by nothing and no one," "leading to waterlogging of the soil," and contributing to flooding. It advocated instead "more modern technical approaches, as occurred in Italy and America, where a rice farmer works without soaking his feet in a swamp." One Korean farmer's request to manage his own waterworks was rejected on the grounds of his "primitive irrigation works" and "predatory use of rice fields and water resources," which threatened "total anarchy in land usage and water usage." Officials were also concerned that rice agriculture might function as a kind of agricultural fifth column; one report proposed that it was a Japanese scheme to provision its army in the event of invasion. With thousands of Koreans growing rice, the Sovnarkom argued, Japan killed two birds with one stone: "on the one hand, it frees Korean territory […] for settlement by Japanese, who are not acclimatised to Primor'e, and on the other hand it creates a food base for its occupying army." Thus, it was necessary to create "conditions under which rice-farming can be undertaken by Russian settler[s]."[90]

That, in effect, was what occurred: most of the Korean and Chinese populations in the Far East were deported in 1937–1938, and their farms were taken over by new, mostly Russian settlers.[91] Several new state farms were created on

88 GAPK F. 1506, op. 1 d. 1, 93; GAPK F. 1506, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 16–18; GAPK F. 1506, op. 1, d. 28, l. 1-ob; Charnetskii, "Mestnoe risoseianie," 7–11; Charnetskii, "K voprosu o razvedenii risa v Primorskoi oblasti," 231, 234–235.

89 GARF F. 1235, op. 122, d. 77, 11ob, 17. As Maya Peterson has shown, Soviet officials were similarly contemptuous of local water-management practices, though for different reasons. See Peterson, *Pipe Dreams*.

90 GARF F. A406, op. 1, d. 814a, ll. 34–40; GARF F. A310, op. 16, d. 337, 6, 13.

91 On the deportations, see especially Chang, *Burnt by the Sun*; Kim, "On the Preparation and Conduct of the Repression of Koreans in the 1930s Soviet Union"; Toropov, "Koreiskaia emigratsiia na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii, vtoraia polovina XIX v. - 1937 g."; Gelb, "An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation," 389–412.

the lands previously tilled by Koreans, under the direction of Dal'ris, which also oversaw the creation of pumping stations and new irrigation works.[92] Such techniques do not seem to have brought improved output, or at least could not compensate for the general upheaval in the countryside in the near term. The production of rice and soybeans fell by forty to fifty percent during collectivisation, and at the end of the 1930s were but a fraction of what they had been a decade earlier.[93] As one scholar has observed, the deportation of Koreans ushered in "a sustained agricultural crisis, which only resolved in the course of several decades."[94] Like fisheries, agriculture in Primor'e became more "national," if not more "rational."

Soviet-era wildlife protection also retained a modified form of the "green" civilising mission, though it lacked the nationalist, "use it or lose it" dimension we see in fisheries and agriculture. One account, for instance, attributed the disappearance of local flora and fauna during the late imperial and revolutionary period to "predatory capitalist exploitation" and argued it had fallen to Soviet scientists to restore these populations.[95] The zoologist G. F. Bromlei blamed the Civil War and foreign intervention for forest destruction and the dwindling numbers of sable, deer, goral, and tigers—an act of "plunder" that halted only with the arrival of the Red Army.[96] Similarly, in 1936, the forester A. A. Tsymek ascribed losses in the region's natural riches to Russian and foreign capitalists and praised the regulations, reserves, and breeding programs of his own era.[97] There was some truth to such claims: during the Civil War, a combination of lawlessness and privation brought renewed pressure on the taiga and its wildlife. Hunters flouted tsarist-era restrictions to gain access to food, furs, and antlers, and the number of elk, deer, goral, tigers, and other mammals likely declined.[98]

With the establishment of Soviet rule, naturalists and officials picked up where tsarist-era conservationists had left off, seeking a combination of protection and rational production of taiga products under state direction, typically at scale. In 1925, for instance, a group of academics, including members of the Forest Society, appealed to Soviet authorities to expand the

92 GAPK F. 853, op. 2, d. 61, ll. 1–9, 22–25.
93 Lykova and Proskurina, *Derevnia rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka v 20 - 30-e gody XX veka.*
94 Kim, "On the Preparation and Conduct of the Repression of Koreans in the 1930s Soviet Union," 282.
95 Liverovskii and Kolesnikov, *Priroda iuzhnoi poloviny sovetskogo Dal'nego Vostoka*, 28–31.
96 GARF F. A-358, o., 2, d. 437, l. 14–15.
97 Tsymek, "Introduction," 3–4.
98 Gaponov, *Istoriia taezhnogo prirodopol'zovaniia Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo regiona*, 169.

Kedrovaia Pad reserve, citing its economic and ecological value.[99] Regional officials agreed that there was an economic interest in protecting valuable sable and spotted deer populations—and a scientific interest in studying a relatively undisturbed forest ecosystem—and agreed to the expansion in 1926. Up the coast, near Ol'ga bay, K. G. Abramov, a long-time Bolshevik who became enamoured with the Far Eastern taiga—and dismayed by the anthropogenic damage he found—convinced other officials that they needed to create both protected zones and consolidated deer farms. He argued that existing deer farms were too small to preserve the species and were concentrated in the hands of well-to-do settlers and kulaks. He proposed instead a combination of *zapovedniki* and large, collectivised deer-farming operations, which would yield greater productivity and a large, diverse breeding pool of wild deer.[100] While such a line may have been an act of what Douglas Weiner calls "protective colouration"—a reframing of nature-protection to suit the prevailing ideology and protect oneself—it was also consistent with the "big (and modern) is beautiful" idea that had been circulating since the late tsarist era: that state-led, scientifically informed development would be better for the region's economy and ecology.[101]

As a result of the efforts of Abramov and others, the vast Sikhote-Alin *zapovednik* was created in southeastern Primor'e in 1935, and other protected areas followed. Those reserves, as planned, served an important economic function, producing pelts, deer antlers, and other valuable commercial products. In 1940, for instance, the Sudzukhinskii (now Lazovskii) *zapovednik* sold over 30,000 roubles' worth of pelts harvested from the reserve. Zapovednik staff also hunted predators to help protect the valuable species. Meanwhile, state-run deer farms thrived and ultimately proved critical to replenishing wild populations after the Second World War.[102]

In this way, early Soviet wildlife conservation in Primor'e built on pre-revolutionary precedent. As before the Revolution, a conservationist regime—one orientated toward sustained output for human ends—made a great deal

99 GAPK F. 1506, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 15–16ob; GAPK F. 1506, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 1–1ob; Korkeshko and Miroliubov, "Gosudarstvennyi zapovednik 'Kedrovaia Pad', 33; Aramilev, "Sika Deer in Russia," 479, 483; Bromlei and Kucherenko, *Kopytnye iuga Dal'nego Vostoka SSSR*, 156; Organ Primorskogo gubernskogo ekonomicheskogo soveshchaniia, *Sovetskoe Primor'e*, 131; Baikov, *Iziubr i iziubrevodstvo*, 11–12.

100 Bromlei, "Dal'nevostochnye Zapovedniki," 213–227; Bromlei and Gutnikova, *Suputinskii Zapovednik*; Suvorov, *Zapovednoe Primor'e*, 19–38.

101 Weiner, *Models of Nature*; Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*.

102 GAPK F. 1351, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 1–2; Aramilev, "Sika Deer in Russia," 479.

of sense. Forest resources remained a key source of wealth; they fell largely under the purview of the state (though private enterprises persisted through the NEP era); and the need to square development (now "building socialism") with natural limits led experts to seek planned, rational development, much as it did elsewhere in the contemporary world.[103] In this sense, the "green" civilising mission dovetailed well with Bolshevism, as it had with tsarist-era imperialism.

Conclusion

While Soviet rule brought many wrenching changes to Russia's Pacific coast—collectivisation, industrialisation, the deportation of Chinese and Koreans, renewed migration (along with exile) from the centre—there was a great deal of continuity in ideas about how natural resources should be used and by whom. Both Soviet and tsarist-era authorities, along with other observers, expressed notable concern for the ecological changes they witnessed (or feared), such as deforestation, wildfires, and a decrease in certain animal populations. They tended to interpret such changes in civilisational terms: they cast Chinese, Korean, and Japanese migrants as barbaric and rapacious invaders, and peasant and Cossack settlers as backward souls (and incompetent colonisers) in need of correction. Accordingly, the solutions proposed (and sometimes adopted) focused on criminalising "predatory" behaviours and practices and promoting "rational" ones, including exploitation by modern industrial methods. In this version of the "green" civilising mission, economic advancement and nature protection were two sides of the same technocratic coin—and the correct approach was a European one.

In this sense, this study accords with works that have found lines of continuity in technocratic attitudes and practices of rule across both the revolutionary divide and national boundaries.[104] The sources of such continuity were many. There were, as in many areas of early Soviet government, continuities in personnel, at least until the purges of the 1930s. Others had trained under the old regime and thus shared some of the same assumptions

103 See, for instance, Murton, *Creating a Modern Countryside*; Pouchepadass, "British Attitudes towards Shifting Cultivation in Colonial South India"; Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*.

104 Pravilova, *A Public Empire*; Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses*; Hoffmann, "European Modernity and Soviet Socialism"; Peter Holquist, "'In Accord with State Interests and the People's Wishes'."

and biases, Eurocentricity and a horror of "backwardness" among them. Also, in the broader context of the early twentieth century, statist approaches to natural resource management—and derision toward local and Indigenous practices—were far from unusual. Soviet authorities, moreover, retained a strong ethnocentric bias against migrants from China, Korea, and Japan, though it was less overt than during the tsarist period, and confronted the same basic strategic situation in the Far East until 1945.[105] Whether in the realm of fisheries, forestry, or wildlife management, there was, in discussions of Primor'e's environment, a merging of nationalist and conservationist arguments, with the prevailing assumption that state coordination, scale, and European science would conserve the resources of the Far East while advancing the state's objectives. And by 1940, whether by intent or by accident, the Soviet regime had fulfilled some aspects of Russia's "green" civilising mission, including the removal of most of the region's Chinese and Koreans from the interior; an expansion of industrial fishing and logging; and the displacement of Japanese fishermen from some Soviet waters, though those waters remained contested until after the Second World War.

To be sure, this is not to say that the pursuit of "rational" development was necessarily futile or misguided. Like "sustainable" development today, it was an understandable response to the attempt to meet people's needs without compromising their future. Yet a critical analysis of "rational" development underscores how rationality—perhaps like sustainability today—was, to some degree, in the eye of the beholder. Viewing nature as something to be claimed and saved through rational development dovetailed well with the broader goals of colonisation, in both tsarist and Soviet eras, which may well have contributed to its prevalence.

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105 On the question of "race" in interactions between tsarist and Soviet states in the Far East, see especially Chang, *Burnt by the Sun*; Babrenko, "Otnosheniia russkikh krest'ian i koreiskikh pereselentsev"; Weitz, "Racial Politics without the Concept of Race."

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