

Sergei Winogradsky's 'Direct Method' and the Formation of an International Network of Soil Microbiologists including: C.B. van Niel, H.J. Conn, S.A. Waksman, L.G. Rommell, A.J. Kluyver, and others. (Z06-ackert104736-Oral)

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Abstract:

In the 1920s-1930s soil scientists vigorously debated the development and application of explicitly ecological methods in their discipline. At the Fourth International Conference of Pedology (Rome, 1924), S.N. Winogradsky challenged his audience to adopt his 'direct' ecological method for investigating the action of soil microbes in the complexity of their natural environment. At 68 years old he was not a young radical upstart, but a respected figure who had made foundational contributions to soil microbiology dating back to the 1880s. Winogradsky's 'direct method', became central to the ecological debates in soil science conducted between researchers at agricultural experiment stations and soil microbiology institutes throughout Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union. An analysis of Winogradsky's correspondence with these researchers illuminates how ideas migrated through an international scientific community. I will discuss the network that formed between: Sir John Russell, H.G. Thorton, and I.P. Cutler at the Rothamsted Experimental Station, H.J. Kluyver at the Laboratorium voor Microbiologie in Delft, L.G. Rommell at Cornell, H.J. Conn at the N.Y. State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, S.A. Waksman at Rutgers, and B.L. Isachenko in the Soviet Union.

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