

Elena MININA & Natalya BRYANCHANINOVA
Lydia PROKHOROVA's Minerals Collection (19th - 20th Century)
in Vernadsky State Geological Museum

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Among its collections of great historic value Vernadsky State Geological Museum in Moscow carries the minerals collection of Lidiya PROKHOROVA (1882 - after 1927), a daughter of an influence manufacturer and Maecenas. She was one of the first female - naturalists and scientists in Russia. The collection is a systematic mineral assemblage containing three thousands samples which characterize three hundreds mineral species. The samples represent hundreds of mineral deposits of Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

Especially well-represented is the mineralogy of the Urals, Siberia and European deposits, among them there are 250 samples from Erzgebirge, Harz and other well-known geological objects of Germany. The piquant of L. PROKHOROVA's mineralogical collection are Japanese mineral ones: more than 150 pieces representing 70 mineral species from 80 deposits of Japan. They are rock-forming minerals, gem-stones and rare minerals. To the outstanding pieces should be also referred: prismatic antimonite crystals from famous Ichinokawa mine and Japanese quartz twins (Otomezaka). Noteworthy, a large part of her collection was gathered by Lidiya PROKHOROVA herself, as she undertook long expeditions to Siberia, the Urals, to the deposits in Europe and to the remote Japan.

In 1922 L. PROKHOROVA's collection was nationalized and given to the Museum of Moscow Mine Academy. The discovery of Lidiya PROKHOROVA's letters to the famous Russian mineralogist and academician FERSMAN A.E. in the Russian Academy of Sciences archive played the critical role in the recreation of the history of the collection and the life story of its author. The letters were written between 1915 - 1927 and were dwelled upon mineralogy, collecting, and geological trips. The selection of the minerals for the collection was done by her loyal mentor A.E. FERSMAN himself.

Without a doubt, L. PROKHOROVA should be considered as one of the first female - naturalists and scientists in Russia. She was a student of the Department of the Natural sciences of the Publishing University of Moscow in that time when higher education was unobtainable for women.

Her life story was a tragedy. After the revolution 1917 PROKHOROVA lost her husband and son, they were shot down in the Red Terror period in Crimea. We have evidence, that in 1921 - 1925 she was working as a mineralogist in the Soviet scientific institutes often without any salary. At the end of 1925 she immigrated to Germany, the city of Berlin. There upon FERSMAN's instructions she summarized scientific articles, tried to open Russian mineral and scientific publications' shop. To the end of 1927 L. PROKHOROVA ran out of money and her traces were lost.

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