



The Glinka Memorial Soil Monolith Collection: a treasure of Soil Science

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The first World Congress of Soil Science, held in 1927 in Washington DC, USA, had as one of its highlights the exposition of soils from all over the world. The Russian delegation had planned the presentation of 50 soil monoliths. The soil profiles were collected under the supervision of Konstantin D. Glinka, then director of the Leningrad Agricultural Institute. The soil profiles included a geographical sequence from St Petersburg to the Caucasus and soils from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Amu Darya region and the Siberian Far East. Due to shipping problems they did not arrive on time for the congress, and ended up in an USDA storage facility, where they remained untouched in their original wooden boxes. At first congress Glinka gave a lecture on Dokuchaev's ideas and the Russian developments on soil science, and joined the transcontinental field trip of 30 days that followed the congress. At that congress, Glinka was elected president of the International Soil Science Society, and was in charge to organize the next congress in Russia. However, he passed away a few months after the congress. In the 1970s, after a consultation with Wim Sombroek, then director of the International Soil Museum (ISM) in the Netherlands, the collection was donated to ISRIC by the US Soil Conservation Service. The soil profiles were shipped over in 1980 to become part of the collection of the Museum. The collection was named as "Glinka Memorial Collection" in agreement with the Dokuchaev Soil Institute, Moscow and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Washington. The monoliths were treated with a sugar solution by the Russians before shipment to the USA, this way keeping a good preservation quality. They were aimed for a single exhibition and for that they were poorly documented and lacked additional samples. In the early 1990s a project for revisit the sites was set up and six sites around St Petersburg were sampled for a comparative study of the soils within a time span of 70 years of great environmental change. The Glinka Memorial Collection is a special collection of the World Soil Museum, a scientific and historical treasure that offers possibilities to dig into the history of soil science and the history of the soils themselves.