



Mineralogy and Lithology. History of the collections: the collectors

Adolfo Ciampi

The Ciampi collection, purchased by the Museum in 1938, represents a testimony of the immense mineralogical richness especially of Sardinia, but also of Tuscany, when the mines were still open and mining in progress. Particularly famous are the samples of covellite and azurite, unique in the world for the beauty of their crystallization.

The collection totalling over 5000 items, consists of over 800 different species of minerals, with particular reference to the Sardinian mines of Monteponi and Calabona. Well-represented and of remarkable beauty are cerussites (170 specimens), phosgenites (95) and anglesites (140) among the lead and covellite minerals (62), cuprites (30) and azurites (35) among the copper ones. Alongside these, there are also numerous Tuscan samples with 50 cinnabars from Mount Amiata, 80 pyrites from Gavorrano and Elba and 60 hematites also from Elba. Due to their very high aesthetic value, some of these specimens were requested - and granted - in the exchange operation which in 1947 brought the large 151 kg topaz crystal to Florence.

Adolfo Ciampi, born in Florence in 1876, graduated in engineering in 1900 and worked in the mining field, becoming director of the Ribolla mine and then of that of Castelnuovo, advancing as a technical inspector for mines in the Alti Forni Society of Piombino and in the Tuscan Society of Agricultural and Mining Industries, studying the iron mines of Nurra and Perda Niedda in Sardinia and in Tuscany those of the Campiglia area. He died in Florence in 1934. While still alive, Ciampi had offered his collection to the Museum, but negotiations with the director P. Aloisi did not come to a positive conclusion. In 1937 the heirs decided to renew the offer, which was accepted after "Magona d'Italia" granted a contribution, necessary to supplement the Museum's funds to cover the expense, since the University had declared that no funds of its own were available for the operation. Aloisi's insistence on seeking the necessary amount was motivated: the collection was comparable in consistency, aesthetic value and scientific importance to the Elban collection, purchased in two lots towards the end of the nineteenth century. The collection is described in a type-written catalogue flanked by an alphabetical index by species and variety. In the catalogue, in addition to the progressive number, the name of the species (or variety), the place of origin and, added by hand in pencil, the dimensions with a synthetic description together with the money value are shown.



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The alphabetical index is a key tool, otherwise it would be difficult to navigate because the catalogue is ordered according to a fairly complex classification, developed by G. D'Achiardi, who had been a professor of Ciampi's in Pisa. Systematic research over the years has involved numerous specimens of the Museum's collections; almost 300 samples of the Ciampi collection were examined, allowing a verification of the mineralogical attributions with modern analytical techniques.