

The Chinese probe returned to Earth with lunar rocks

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China became the third country after the United States and Russia to bring samples from the lunar surface to Earth. Two to four kilograms of rocks and earth from the Moon is the first material in the last 44 years to return to Earth.

The unmanned Chang'e 5 spacecraft landed in the steppes of Inner Mongolia in northern China on Wednesday. As it is difficult to access terrain covered with snow and a temperature of less than -20 degrees Celsius, the probe was searched by helicopters with infrared cameras. The landing area was as large as 21,000 square kilometers. Chinese scientists have already announced that they will share samples with other countries in accordance with international cooperation agreements.

The mission to the moon was considered one of the most difficult in space history of Chinese spaceflight. China is the first space power to maneuver robots in a controlled, unmanned landing in Earth orbit. The take-off module also reconnected to the probe after landing and loaded rocks and earth from the Moon.

The rocks from the Moon brought by the Chinese probe are significantly younger than all the specimens of the United States and the former Soviet Union, so investigations could yield new insights into volcanic activities and the history of the Moon. The first material from the Moon was brought more than 40 years ago by the American Apollo mission, which collected a total of about 380 kilograms of rocks, and Soviet unmanned robots Luna, which brought about 300 grams.

Chang'e 5 landed on the moon in a volcanic area named after the German astronomer Karl Rümker (1788-1862), which lies in the "ocean of storms." This area in the upper left part of the Moon, facing the Earth, is 1.2 billion years old. The lunar rocks collected by the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s are estimated to be between 3.1 and 4.4 billion years old.

With the return of the probe to Earth, China has reached an important milestone and joined the great space powers. China has set itself an ambitious space program, which envisages a manned landing on the moon by the end of the decade.

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