

Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

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Poretsky, Platon Sergeevich

Born Elizavetgrad (Kirovograd, Russia), 15 October 1846

Died Zhoved (Chernigov Governorate), Russia, 22 August 1907

Platon Poretsky was a Russian mathematician and astronomer who developed a strong interest in mathematical logic. The son of an army doctor, Poretsky graduated from the physics and mathematics department at Kharkiv University. In 1870, he was awarded a fellowship by the astronomy department and worked as an astronomer at the Kharkiv Observatory. In 1876, Poretsky moved to Kazan University, where he was appointed its chief astronomical observer. There, he conducted meridian observations of stars in a zone assigned to the Kazan Observatory and published two volumes on the results.

In 1886, Poretsky defended a master's thesis that addressed the nature of errors associated with the observatory's meridian circle. Its theoretical part dealt with reducing the number of equations and unknowns in systems of cyclical equations relating to practical astronomy. But by a decision of the Department of Physics and Mathematics, Poretsky was awarded a doctorate in astronomy instead, based on the extraordinary quality of his work. He then became a lecturer in spherical trigonometry at Kazan University. Poretsky was also appointed secretary and treasurer of the physical-mathematical section of the Kazan Society of Natural Scientists (1882–1888) and supervised the publication of its *Proceedings*

In subsequent years, Poretsky developed a deep interest in the emerging discipline of mathematical logic and became the first Russian scientist to lecture on the subject in 1888. His publications on mathematical logic (from 1884 until his death) were extensive and focused on the elaboration of Boolean algebras, the study of the logics of classes and propositions, and the application of logical methods to the theory of probability. His influence on the development of mathematical logic was substantial, as is evidenced, for example, in the works of Archie Blake and Louis Couturat. Poretsky's poor health, however, forced him to take early retirement in 1889.

Poretsky's mathematical papers are preserved in the Kazan University Archives.

Yuri V. Balashov

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