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Czech Academy of Sciences

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# A library weighing two tons is heading from Jerusalem to the depository in Jenštejn

****The generous gift of 3,000 titles devoted to the problem of Jerusalem were taken over today, on Wednesday, 14 October, by the Institute of Art History of the CAS. The extraordinary book collection was donated to the institute by Bianca Kühnel from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem based on her collaboration with Klára Benešovská from the Department of Medieval Art. Both researchers have devoted their entire academic careers to the Middle Ages.****

*“Bianca Kühnel addressed me in 2015, when she read my article on Mons Sion in Prague. She came to Prague in the summer and since then we have been in contact, which paid interest in the offer to donate the library that was created within her project SPECTRUM to the institute and in the resolution of the grant project of the CSF Jerusalem and its reflection in the culture of the medieval Czech lands,”* says Klára Benešovská from the Institute of Art History of the CAS (IAH).

The library has travelled a long journey from Jerusalem – packed into 165 boxes, it voyaged by boat from the port of Ashdod to Hamburg, then by train and road transport all the way to the depository of the Library of the CAS in Jenštejn, where it found its place with the help of Magdaléna Vecková, Director of the Library of the CAS.

Thanks are owed to the President of the CAS, Professor Eva Zažímalová and Ambassador of the Czech Republic in Israel, Martin Stropnický, who contributed to the successful organisation of the book transport. Ambassador Stropnický entrusted this task to Delana Mikolášová, the Scientific, R&D and Innovation Counsellor in Tel Aviv, without whom the academic workplace in Prague could have only with great difficulty overcome the distance that separated the two countries. *"As a diplomat, I encounter various situations. However, I had never faced such an extraordinary task, because we are talking about the relocation of a valuable historical library with more than 3,000 volumes and a weight of more than two tonnes,”* stressed Delana Mikolášová.

**The gift will be called The Jerusalem Library**

If all the books were arranged side by side, this series would reach a length of 100 meters, according to Scientific, R&D and Innovation Counsellor Delana Mikolášová. *“We moved this “morsel” from Jerusalem to Prague, thus a distance of over 3,600 km. All this in a situation where Israel was preparing to close the whole country due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a small miracle that symbolically, on the eve of the Jewish New Year’s holiday Rosh Hashanah, the library successfully set out from the port of Ashdod on its voyage. The day after, Israel declared a nationwide “lockdown”, restricted traffic to ports and airports, and issued a ban on moving more than 1 km from your house. So, we were really lucky! I am pleased that, in close cooperation with Taťána Petrasová, I was able to help Professor Kühnel’s library arrive safely at the IAH of the CAS,”* Delana Mikolášová summarizes her experience.

After the official delivery of the shipment of books to the depository in Jenštejn, the collection will be taken over by the IAH library. Here, the team of cataloguers was expanded by Hebrewists so that the books would be available to all researchers as soon as possible, especially to the research team of the CSF project Jerusalem and its reflection in the culture of the medieval Czech lands. This project responds directly to the recently completed *SPECTRUM* project: *Visual Translations of Jerusalem*, guided by Bianca Kühnel and funded by the European Research Council.

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|  | *All of the publications from the gift for the book fonds of the Institute of Art History of the CAS have an* ex libris *with the names of Bianca Kühnel and her husband Gustav Kühnel*  *Source: Institute of Art History of the CAS* |

The time coordination of processing and cataloguing reflects the date of the grant workshop in February 2021, when a catalogued book gift, at the request of Bianca Kühnel named The Jerusalem Library, will be presented to the public. *“Our project opens up other topics that will be able to be treated thanks to the library in the coming years,”* added Lenka Panušková, principle investigator of the Czech project.

The Jerusalem Library focuses mainly on the literature on Jerusalem as the centre of the medieval universe and on its reflection not only in the context of medieval Christianity.

Valuable publications are also collected here, in which Jerusalem and its topography are viewed from the point of view of late-ancient and medieval Jewish and Muslim culture. The larger part of the library was created as part of the already mentioned *Spectrum* project and contains around 3,000 books, periodicals, offprints and dissertations. The books are predominantly from the second half of the 20th century, although the oldest book dates from 1889. The publications are mainly in English and German, but we can find titles in French, Italian, Russian and also Hebrew. The books have an *ex libris* with the names of Bianca Kühnel and her husband Gustav Kühnel pasted in them. *“It is a valuable addition to the IAH library collection, most of the publications cannot be found in other libraries in the Czech Republic,”* says Sabina Adamczyková, head of the IAH library, about the acquired book collection.

Academic cooperation between the Czech Republic and Israel will continue. In February 2021, the Institute of State and Law of the Czech Academy of Sciences is organizing the second joint conference with the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities on the topic of Law between State and History.

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