

Volumen hoc deest. Volumen hoc desideratur. On Items Missing from the Princes Czartoryski Library Manuscript Collection

Summary

In the catalogues and the inventory of the Princes Czartoryski Library a reader can find laconic information that although the manuscript he or she is looking for is officially there, in fact *volumen hoc deest* ('the volume is not there') or *volumen hoc desideratur* ('the volume is sought'). The first two volumes of the catalogue contain 227 remarks of this kind; the next ones and the inventory – 23. However, when talking about titles missing from the Princes Czartoryski manuscript collection, we must remember that we should refer to the terminology used while stocktaking, in the case of which one distinguishes between relative and absolute book losses.

The former include those volumes which, although once entered into our inventory, due to different circumstances are now part of other collections. When looking for materials, readers should know where to look for the manuscripts which, though listed in the catalogues of the Princes Czartoryski Library, are stored in other libraries. 69 manuscripts of this kind have been found.

The other category covers real book losses suffered by the Princes Czartoryski Library. We do not know the exact number of manuscripts which, having been taken out of the country after the fall of the Kościuszko Uprising, have never returned to Poland. Similarly, some of the manuscripts taken out of the country after the November Uprising, without making note of it in the catalogues at the time, were irretrievably lost. The family also lost manuscripts from the Princes Czartoryski Home Archives which did not become an integral part of the collection until the end of World War II. The irony of fate is also the history of the manuscripts recovered after the Treaty of Riga of 1921, including the Czartoryski family's archive materials. Almost all burnt down during the Second World War in Warsaw together with the collections of Warsaw's libraries and archives. Other losses suffered during World War II included manuscripts lent to Warsaw's libraries and archives and burnt down during the September Campaign of 1939 and after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Documents concerning the city of Sieradz, handed over to Warsaw in 1943, did not return to its place, and neither did the Sanskrit manuscript, probably taken to Germany. In total, 182 manuscripts are described as irretrievably lost.

It is worth realising again and showing, based on the preserved records, the magnitude of losses suffered by the Princes Czartoryski Library. The list of missing items presented above is not complete, as it would be difficult to compile one. We can only talk about the approximate number of lost manuscripts, amounting to thousands of volumes. This article only attempts to show the losses that an attentive reader will find both in printed catalogues and the inventory.