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Tsar's classic text is gift to scholars of Russia's past

A lavish reproduction of an epic medieval text has been gifted to the University of Edinburgh.

A newly created copy of *The Illustrated Chronicles of Ivan the Terrible* was presented by the Russian Consul General in Edinburgh, Andrey Pritsepov.

The original 10-volume work was created between 1568 and 1576, but was separated and lost for more than 400 years. Only recently has the entire text been recovered, compiled in order and reproduced by a charity called the Society of Ancient Literature Lovers.

With 17,000 illustrations, the text will be a key resource for staff and students seeking to better understand one of the most turbulent periods in Russian history.

Also known as the Tsar Book, the text deals with four major themes: Biblical History, the History of Rome, the History of Byzantium and the History of Russia.

Created by Decree of Ivan the Terrible, the Chronicles were intended to provide education for the successors of the Tsar. Ivan ruled at a time when Russia grew in size and international importance, but as he aged his reign became increasingly erratic.

When Ivan died in 1584 without a legitimate successor, Russia was plunged into the Time of Troubles, when the empire was without a ruler and suffered famine, war and unrest.

The University is home to the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, founded in 2010, which builds on a history of academic contacts and exchange of ideas between Scotland and Russia.

Mr Pritsepov, who presented the text to the University's Principal, Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea, said: "It is a great privilege to present this text to the University. For hundreds of years, the Chronicles were scattered in the remote places of Russia, and only a few people were able to study these invaluable pieces. Only now has the text been recovered, providing a glimpse through the eyes of a medieval man of the turbulent currents of our distant history."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea, said: "I am very pleased to accept this great text on behalf of the University. It will provide an excellent opportunity for scholars who seek to gain more detailed knowledge of the circumstances that had led to this fascinating period of Russia's past."

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