

Belarus marks 500 years of book printing

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Belarus Ambassador to Korea Andrei Popkov has donated copies of works by renowned author Francysk Skaryna to the National Library of Korea to mark the 500th anniversary book printing in Belarus.

The envoy and National Library of Korea Chief Executive Park Joo Hwan had discussed ways to cooperate and boost cultural exchanges between the countries. Belarus presented 21 of the author's works.

Skaryna, born in Polatsk, studied in Krakow where he received a bachelor's degree in Liberal Sciences. He continued his studies in Padua, Italy, and published books in Prague, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania.

His life and activities are connected with many European countries that associate themselves with Skaryna's heritage.

The author started his career as a compiler and then a translator of Holy Scripture books. Although the basis was written in religious Slavonic text, Francysk Skaryna adapted the text to the everyday language of Belarus in the 16th century.

Skaryna, in the spirit of the Reformation, translated the biblical texts into the language of his people so his knowledge was accessible to common citizens as well as the elite.

"The books of Francysk Skaryna are not only the first printed editions in Belarus but also in the whole of



Belarus Ambassador to Korea Andrei Popkov, left, poses with National Library of Korea Chief Executive Park Joo Hwan, at a ceremony to mark the Belarus donation of renowned author Francysk Skaryna's 21 works to the library to mark the 500th anniversary book printing in Belarus at the library in Seoul, Dec.28.

Courtesy of Embassy of Belarus

Eastern Europe," the embassy said. "He laid the foundation for mass publication of books in the Cyrillic script, which was continued in several neighboring countries."

A difficult historical past, a series of wars, uprisings and foreign invasions resulted in Belarus, which gave the world its first East Slavic printer, having only a few of Skaryna's works.

Until recently, the country had only 10 books (preserved at the National Library of Belarus), published by the Belarusian enlightener in Prague in

1517-1519.

In total, about 520 copies of Skaryna's works are held in the libraries, museums and archives of Germany, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Russia, the U.S., Ukraine and Czech Republic.

The National Library of Belarus began searching for Skaryna's original works in 2013, and then digitized them.

The facsimile publications presented to Korea are based on electronic copies held in libraries and museums

in various countries.

Scientific comments were prepared for each publication. The prefaces and commentaries were translated into modern Belarusian, English and Russian.

The facsimile publication of Skaryna's books includes all his works — which are a significant part of Belarusian cultural heritage — published in Prague and Vilna.

The collection will become a valuable resource for historical, linguistic and cultural studies.