“The times have changed enormously, but I think that even a Jew, at least this Jew, may be allowed to approach you, at least on a purely academic matter.” Issues of the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* owned by Samuel Krauss at the Vienna University Library

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**Abstract:** Samuel Krauss’ library was looted by the National Socialists in Vienna in 1938. As rector of the Israelite Theological School in Vienna, Krauss was in academic exchange with the head of the Oriental Institute of the University of Vienna, Viktor Christian. Instead of helping Krauss, Christian commandeered part of the Krauss library for the SS Ahnenerbe as a “loan”. In 2014, the Nazi provenance research department at the Vienna University Library was able to restitute the holdings and received them on “permanent loan” from the heirs for safekeeping. The only known volume with surviving handwritten notes by Samuel Krauss was digitized for an exhibition.

**Keywords:** Samuel Krauss, Victor Christian, National Socialism, library looting, library history, University of Vienna, restitution, digitalization

„Die Zeiten haben sich gewaltig geändert, dennoch glaube ich, dass auch ein Jude, und wenigstens dieser Jude, und wenigstens in einer rein wissenschaftlichen Angelegenheit, sich Ihnen nähern darf.“ Bände der *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* aus dem Eigentum von Samuel Krauss an der Universitätsbibliothek Wien

Introduction

The Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums, mouthpiece of the Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums [Association for the Promotion of Judaic Studies] was founded in 1851 by rabbi Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875) in Dresden. It served as an outlet for the positive historical school of Judaism founded by him. This school was positioned between the reform and the new orthodox movements: conservative in terms of religion and belief but more critical when it came to historical research. The magazine also
served for the promotion of Judaic studies, as the association’s name indicates. It was forced to cease publication in 1939.²

As one of the main journals on Judaic studies, it was collected by the Jewish scholar Samuel Krauss (1866–1948). Krauss was born in Ukk, Hungary. He attended the rabbinical seminar and the University of Budapest. After studying further in Berlin, Giessen (doctorate in 1893) and Budapest, he became a lecturer in Bible studies, history and liturgy at the Jewish Theological Institute (ITLA) in Vienna in 1906 and was its director from 1932 and rector from 1937.³ The ITLA was the training college for rabbis and Jewish religion teachers in Vienna from 1893 to 1938.⁴

Krauss’s extensive academic œuvre is impressively demonstrated by his 1937 bibliography listing over 1,300 papers. Apart from 34 books and 325 lemma in encyclopedias, there are also 956 essays and reviews.⁵ Chief rabbi David Feuchtwang (1864–1936) rightly pointed out on the occasion of Krauss’s seventieth birthday that “he [can] look back on forty-five years of academic scholarship covering all aspects and periods of the huge area of Jewish studies.”⁶ After the annexation of Austria 1938 to the German Reich, Krauss was persecuted as a Jew under the Nuremberg Laws.

Fig. 2: Principal Professor Doctor Samuel Krauss, Detail of a photograph in front of the ITLA, 1934/35 (© Norbert N. Kristianpoller)
1. Nazi library looting

Although Krauss had received an offer from Cambridge University, his wife Josefa Irene (née Tedesco, 1872–1938) was seriously ill, and it was not until after her death in September 1938 that he joined his daughter Maria Heimberg (1899–1958) in Hamburg, where he prepared to leave for Great Britain. He was unable to take his huge library of over 3,000 books with him and left it in his locked apartment in Vienna.

Like the chief rabbi Israel Taglicht (1863–1943), he had lived at Ferdinandstraße 23 in the 2nd district, which also housed the main Jewish Community (IKG) library of over 33,000 books. In the opposite wing of the building in Tempelgasse was the Leopoldstadt Temple and also the extensive ITLA library with around 23,000 books.

While the IKG library was closed in March 1938 and forcibly taken over by Adolf Eichmann (1906–1962), head of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration from Vienna, on behalf of the Nazi regime, the ITLA library was taken away by the Gestapo in March/April 1938. The Leopold Temple burnt to the ground during the November Pogrom, and the IKG library was sealed by the Gestapo. The homes of rector Krauss and chief rabbi Taglicht were looted by the SS, SA and Gestapo, and the private libraries were carted off. Edith Morgenstern (1896–1976), Samuel Krauss’s daughter later stated:

“I was present and witnessed this looting. There were two open trucks, at least four or six men in Nazi uniform brought all these books down from the libraries and loaded them. [...] I saw the looted apartments of my father and chief rabbi Dr Taglicht. They were in great disarray, and the furniture was broken. Nothing was left [...] of my father's library.”

Worried about his library, which Cambridge University – where he was to function “for a small amount” as “adviser to the scholars and students in the Department of Near Eastern Studies” – had agreed to install, Krauss wrote in late November 1938 from Hamburg to Viktor Christian (1885–1963), new provisional dean of the Philosophy Faculty at the University of Vienna, whom he had known for many years as a fellow scholar.
“A man who has fallen into great misfortune dares to speak to you. You will be spoken to by the former rector of the ITLA in Vienna, who in previous years often had the honor of speaking to you and serving science with you. The times have changed enormously, but I think that even a Jew, at least this Jew, may be allowed to approach you, at least on a purely academic matter. But if I have taken a wrong step here, I would like to apologize a thousand times in advance.”

Viktor Christian obtained his habilitation in 1922 in the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Vienna on Semitic, particularly cuneiform, writings. He was appointed extraordinary professor in 1924 and six years later ordinary professor of ancient Semitic philology and Middle Eastern archaeology. He was a member of the Bärenhöhle [bear’s cave], an antisemitic network of professors seeking to prevent the appointment and habilitation of Jewish and/or left-wing academics at the University of Vienna. He applied to join the NSDAP in 1933 and was dismissed for his National Socialist activities a year later. No doubt as a result of the July agreement, he was rehabilitated and worked again as a professor from 1936. In May 1938, he applied once again to join the NSDAP, and from November became a member of the SS, ending up in 1943 with the rank of SS Sturmbannführer.

Following the annexation, Christian became involved in academic policy in various functions – particularly as dean of the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Vienna until 1943, as president of the Anthropology Society in Vienna (AGW) until 1945 and from April 1938 to January 1940 as director of the Ethnology Department of the University
of Vienna and head of the SS Ahnenerbe (ancestral heritage) department. He was admitted to the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna in 1938. After resigning as dean, he was prorector from 1943 until the beginning of 1945 and in spring 1945 the last rector of the University of Vienna during the Nazi period.\textsuperscript{11}

It was to this person that Samuel Krauss turned in an attempt to recover his library.

“Immediately after the new order, the valuable library at the said institute [the ITLA] was cleared and the library closed and dismantled. However painful that was for me, I was not personally affected. Then came the terrible days in November for the Jews. I believe it was on 12 November that in building II at Ferdinandstr. 23, which belonged to the Jewish Community, the community library [note: the IKG library was sealed during the pogrom and transported to Berlin in 1939 or 1941, depending on the source consulted], then the chief rabbi’s library in the same building and finally my own library were removed. The same thing happened to the two libraries on the other side of the temple building. I assume that no attention was paid to the fact that my library was my own private property and that it was due to the fact that it was close to the other libraries that it was removed. I am writing to you, professor, in this matter with the respectful and trusting request that you intervene.

I have no need to tell you as a scholar and researcher what the loss of a cherished and carefully compiled library signifies. Added to this is the fact that a large amount of academic material, some of it in my own works and articles, some in the form of unfinished handwritten works and articles and a huge amount of correspondence, was also probably taken. These things, which are of little significance to anyone besides myself, have no doubt been destroyed.

Without boasting, I think I can claim that this is also a threat for scholars in general and the Middle Eastern department under your outstanding direction in particular. That is why I make so bold as to appeal to you for assistance. You actions will not be for me or the Jews, but for the academic world in general.”\textsuperscript{12}
Although his library was to be installed at Cambridge University, which had already protested in vain against its destruction, Krauss continued:

“I have no objection to my library remaining in the German Reich, but I would make the following condition or request: first, that my library is not destroyed but stored in its entirety at a suitable site; secondly, that the items containing handwritten notes and handwritten manuscripts in preparation for works or articles are returned to me; and thirdly, that my son’s property, which can be easily identified, is returned to him.

Professor, I must apologise again for bothering you with this matter. As a Middle Eastern scholar I would appreciate it if you were to intervene with the appropriate authority and point out the danger of losing valuable and irreplaceable items. [...] I assume that you will not be taking any risks with these steps but rather that you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are preventing a great misfortune and injustice.”

Christian wrote back to Krauss just three days later and promised to attempt to “determine which authority seized your books and to pass on your request to it.” Krauss wrote again to Christian from Hamburg in mid-December to ask about the situation. There is no record of a reply, but Krauss’s books were extremely useful for the research activities of the head of the teaching and research section for the Near East of the SS Ahnenerbe, and in late January 1939 requested information about the whereabouts of the Krauss library from SS Sturmbahnführer Dr. Fritz Polte. Selectively paraphrasing Krauss and twisting the conditions mentioned by him, Christian wrote: “S. Krauss has agreed to his library remaining in the German Reich but understandably requests that it be stored in its entirety at a suitable site.” Christian naturally regarded the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Vienna as this “suitable site”, not least as he hoped “to attract an established Aryan Talmud researcher to Vienna”. He concluded his letter by asking whom he should consult with regard to the allocation of the library to him. By chance, Christian had already found the right person, because Polte replied to him in February 1939 that “we are already attempting to reorganize and consolidate the library of the Jew Samuel Krauss[s], which became disorganized as a result of the urgent mea-
sures taken at the time. [...] I cannot at present say what will happen to the library but I will attempt at all events to ensure that the Department is taken into account when Jewish material arrives.”

In August 1939, Christian was informed that “the books stored here on Jewish history and theology will be loaned” to the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Vienna and could be collected at any time from the office at Spiegelgasse 1 in the 1st district. Christian authorized the librarian and assistant Karl Ammer (1911–1970) to collect the books from Samuel Krauss made available to the Department. The surviving list contains 226 books accepted by the Department from the SS Ahnenerbe as “loan B” [„Leihgabe B“]. Most of Krauss’s library was probably transported to Berlin with the majority of the IKG library and lost without a trace or possibly destroyed in the fire at the Reich Security Main Office building on 22 and 23 November 1943.

2. Nazi provenance research at the Vienna University Library

As a consequence of the 2002 Universities Act, books in the Vienna University Library published before 1800 would remain the property of the State, while those published thereafter would be transferred to the University of Vienna.

Although the Art Restitution Act initially applied only to federal museums and the Austrian National Library, Nazi provenance research began at the Vienna University Library in 2004 as in the federal institutions with a view to achieving a “fair and just solution” as specified in the 1998 Washington Principles. It was not until the 2009 amendment to the Art Resti-
tution Act that provenance research was extended to all State collections and the remaining items owned by the State became the concern of the Commission for Provenance Research and Art Restitution Advisory Board.

The provenance research at the Vienna University Library established that at least 8,014 books and a stone with a cuneiform inscription were taken over by the Department of Near Eastern Studies. They included works from the Burgenland Jewish communities, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, and the library of the Munich lawyer and publisher Ludwig Feuchtwanger (1885–1947). It may be assumed, however, that not all of the problematic books accepted by the Department have been documented to date.

At all events, Kurt Schubert (1923–2007), a student and later founder of the Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Vienna, handed over forty-four boxes in May 1945 containing around 20,000 books to the IKG from the Department of Near Eastern Studies. Most of the books were from the ITLA that Schubert had brought to the Department during the Nazi period from the basement in Tempelgasse but not classed as a loan from the SS Ahnenerbe. There must also have been Ahnenerbe books, however. This is certainly true of the books from Samuel Krauss, while Feuchtwanger’s library, called “loan A”, was kept and not returned to the heirs until 1956, with a supplementary list in 2012. In the immediate post-war period, it would appear that no one was interested in “loan B” and its identification as having belonged to Krauss. Many of the books handed to the IKG were later transferred to Israel.

Because the expropriated library was probably transported to Berlin in the Nazi period, the Krauss family sought after the war to obtain compensation. A small amount was finally granted by the Berlin district court in 1977 after proceedings lasting twenty years. It was not until the discovery of the files in the course of the Nazi provenance research that the former owner of “loan B” was identified. In 2011 it was listed as being worthy of research, and – under improved research conditions – the missing data was finally provided in 2012.

The seven bound volumes and fourteen separate issues of the journal *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* have now been identified as having belonged to Samuel Krauss on the basis of the letter “B” stamped on the label. They are also included in the
On the labels of the duplicate volumes in the Jewish Studies library is not only the letter “B” but also a provenance mark indicating that they came from the IKG library. These are not books stolen from the IKG library but items given to the IKG in 1945 and donated by it in 1994 to the Department of Jewish Studies, as can be seen from an acknowledgement list in the year 2000 with the heading “books from the IKG to the Department of Jewish Studies”.

As a consequence of the 2012 publication, a further volume of “loan B” coming from Samuel Krauss was found at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in 2013, no doubt from Viktor Christian. It was handed over to the Vienna University Library for restitution. The list of Samuel Krauss’ books taken by the Department of Near Eastern Studies contains an item entitled “Lexikographie v. Samuel Krauss”. This volume in fact contains five special issues, four from Samuel Krauss from his personal library bound together with numerous handwritten notes. It is thus one of the few surviving documents in which some of his scholarship and method of working can still be seen.

In 2014 the two print items were restituted to the heirs, who then graciously donated them to the Vienna University Library as a “permanent loan from the Krauss family”. They are now in the Jewish Studies library and listed accordingly in the catalogue and institutional repository.

The Nazi provenance research at the Vienna University Library thus makes a positive contribution to the memory of the victims of the Nazi regime and is part of the diverse research and commemoration projects on the history of the University of Vienna and on the Nazi period.
In dieses Feld, wenn erforderlich, gekürzte oder abgewandelte Überschriften 3. Ordnung reinschreiben und die Zeichenstilvorlage »v kolumnentitel« zuweisen, dieser Text wird dann in den laufenden Kolumnentitel übernommen.

Kaufmann schreibt: „Je ne puis accepter l’intépretation donnée jusqu’à présent de ce mot… Prendre le ‘τ’ comme un signe conjonctif… c’est sans exemple. Le mot grec σικών, qui a de nombreux dérivés, en latin icona..., en italien ancea, ona, onetta, cornula..., en arabe iknin, au plural aknim, se dit en syriaque σικών. Peut-être le ττ dans σικών doit-il être considéré comme une extension du son ‘τ comme nous voyons Jonas transformé en Diunas… Comp. VII, 58. diurnus et jor et tant d’autres exemples dans les langues romanes.

De même, je m’explique la forme σικών par οκὼνος. Il n’y pas de ‘τ ajouté…“ — Dem gegenüber geben wir folgendes zu beachten: 1) Die angenommene „Extension des J-Lautes“ kommt bei dem Worte σικών in den genannten Sprachen nicht vor, ja, eine „Extension“ dieser Art kommt überhaupt nicht vor, denn bei diurnus und jor ist das Verhältnis eben ein umgekehrtes, und jenes Diunas ist viel zu unsicher, vielleicht nur ein Schreibfehler, als dafs es als Beweismittel dienen könnte. 2) Arab. iknin kann nur — gr. σικών, also — jüd. σικών sein; im Orient war demnach σικών nicht einheimisch, syr. μονα nicht verbreitet; 3) die von Kaufmann angenommene Extension des J-Lautes müßte an sicheren Beispielen im Jüdischen nachgewiesen werden; σικών — δικώνος ist kein Beweis hierfür, weil hier anharten des τ lediglich aus der Einwirkung der Analogie von Wörtern wie σικών, σικών, σικών, δικώνος, δικώνος, etc. etc. entstanden ist; in der That läst Fränkel) S. 273 unser σικών auf diese Weise entstehen.

Da nun σικών der Form und Bedeutung nach mit δικώνος sich völlig deckt, so wird es am geratensten sein, die beiden Wörter mit einander zu identifizieren. Endung wie in μελέτων, μελέτων... 

1) Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen. Leyden 1886.

Fig. 6: Annotations by Samuel Krauss in his offprint „On Greek and Latin Lexicography from Jewish Sources“ (© Markus Stumpf)
Fig. 7: Excerpt from the catalog with the information about the restitution and the loan of the heirs (© Markus Stumpf)

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5 Eli Strauss, Bibliographie der Schriften Prof. Dr. Samuel Krauss’ 1887–1937, published by the Festkomitee zur Feier seines 70. Geburtstages (Vienna 1937).


7 Evelyn Adunka, Der Raub der Bücher (Vienna 2002 (= Bibliothek des Raubes 9), p. 226.


13 Ibid.


16 Ibid., letter, Viktor Christian to Dr. F. [Fritz] Polte, SS-Hauptsturmführer, 26 January 1939.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., letter, Fritz Polte, SS-Sturmbannführer, to Viktor Christian, 28 February 1939.
20 Ibid., letter Dekan Viktor Christian to Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS, SD – Unterabschnitt Wien, 16 August 1939.
21 Ibid., [list of titles].
22 The precise date of the handover is not known; including the handwritten items, the total increases to 229 books, although the date when the handwritten checks were made on the list is not known.
25 https://bibliothek.univie.ac.at/provenienzforschung.html.
26 Zechner, "Bibliothek", pp. 82–103, p. 89.
27 Evelyn Adunka, Die vierte Gemeinde (Berlin/Vienna 2000), p. 305; the various sources cite different numbers and provenances of the books.
30 The Ahnenerbe portfolio was handed over by the Department of Near Eastern Studies to the Nazi provenance research at the Vienna University Library in 2006. It was then given to the archive of the University of Vienna on 11 September 2012, where it was incorporated in the Near Eastern Studies holdings.
35 University of Vienna, Jewish Studies Library, list of books transferred from the library of the Jewish Museum Vienna to the Department of Jewish Studies from the (former) holdings of the IKG, compiled by Domagoj Akrap, 2000.
37 The special reprints in this volume with annotations by Krauss have been digitized and are available for research as “Sammlung Samuel Krauss” in the institutional repository of the University of Vienna, https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/detail/o:1539040.
38 Part of the estate of Samuel Krauss is in the University of Southampton Special Collections (Papers of Samuel Krauss/GB 738 MS 163); most of this estate refers to his time in exile.