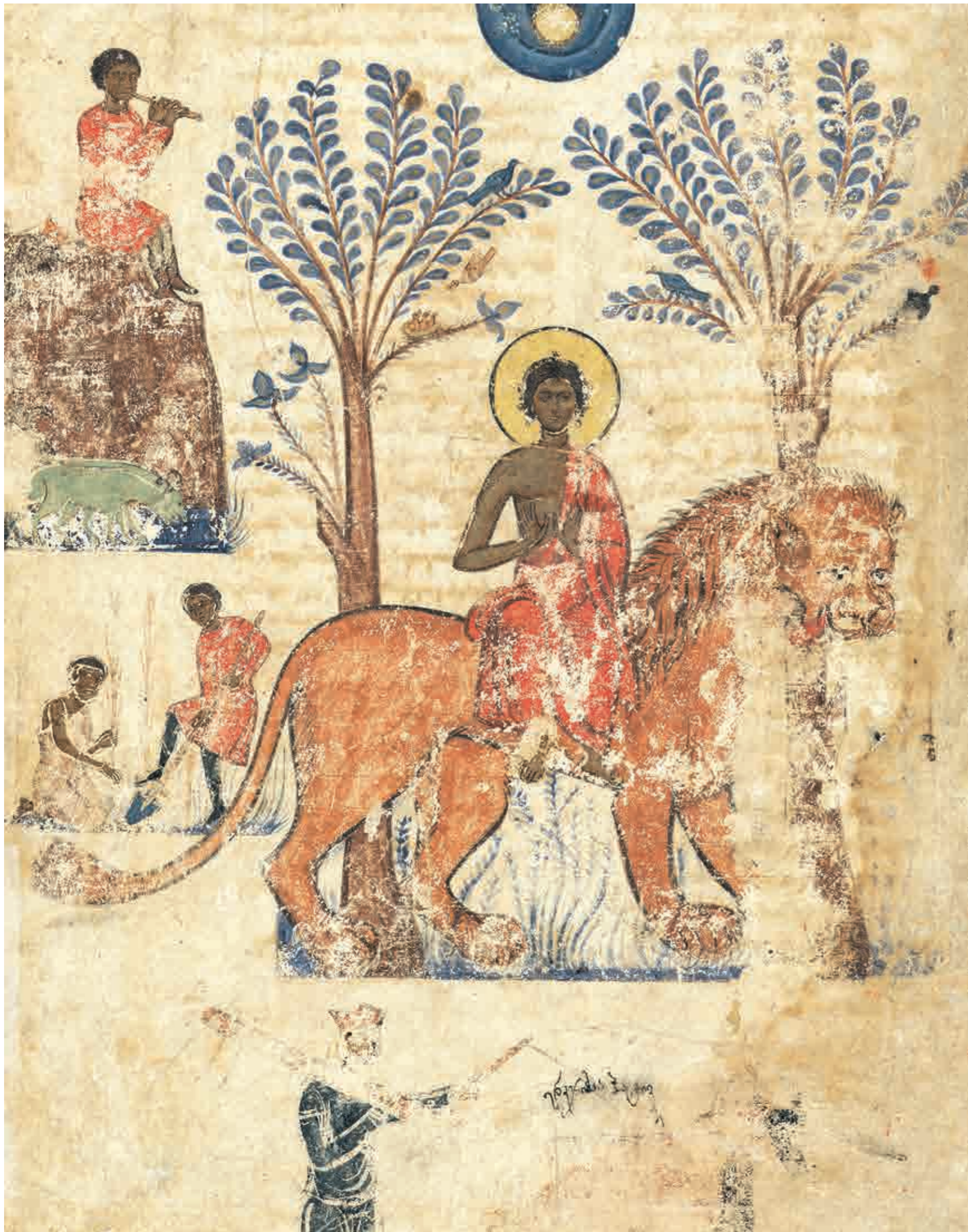




GEORGIAN
MANUSCRIPT
HERITAGE



Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts

GEORGIAN MANUSCRIPT HERITAGE

5th-19th cc.





Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National
Centre of Manuscripts



საზოგადოებრივი ივერიისა

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FROM THE SOCIETY IVERIISA

Cultural heritage is a nation's foremost treasure, reflecting people's national values and identity. The collection of manuscripts, which includes unique samples created throughout various epochs, is an essential part of this treasure. The interdisciplinary study of these manuscripts is crucial not only for Georgian history, but also for global scholarship.

These manuscripts illustrate our nation's rich history of literacy. Language and literacy are not only the means of communication, transmission of information and knowledge, but they also enable individuals and nations to realize their inherent aspirations, namely, to comprehend their identity and develop a world-view. This process, above all, implies the adoption and hierarchical arrangement of values – that is to say, value-based education.

Georgians are one of the few nations which embraced Christianity with their own script. The script of our nation spans nearly two millennia.

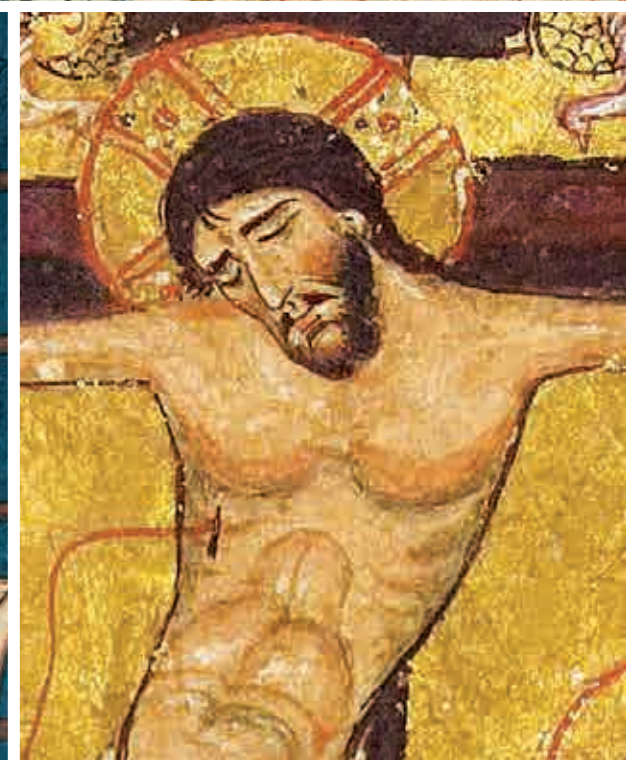
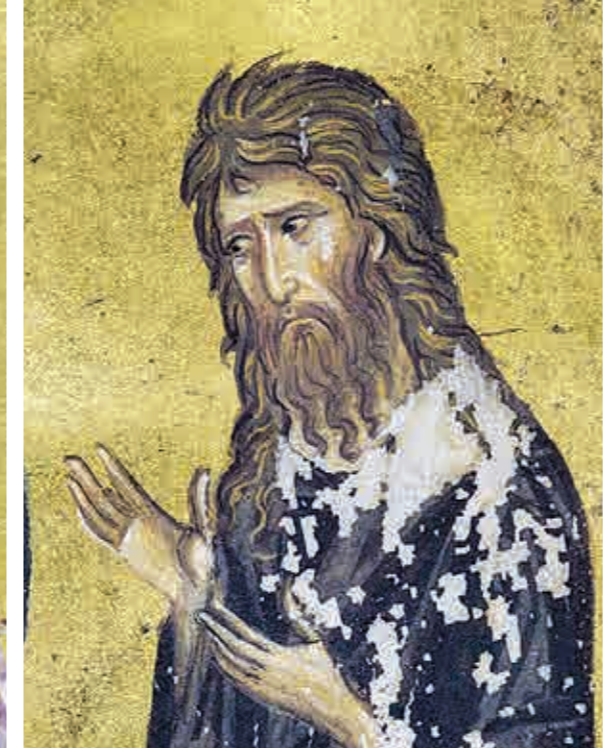
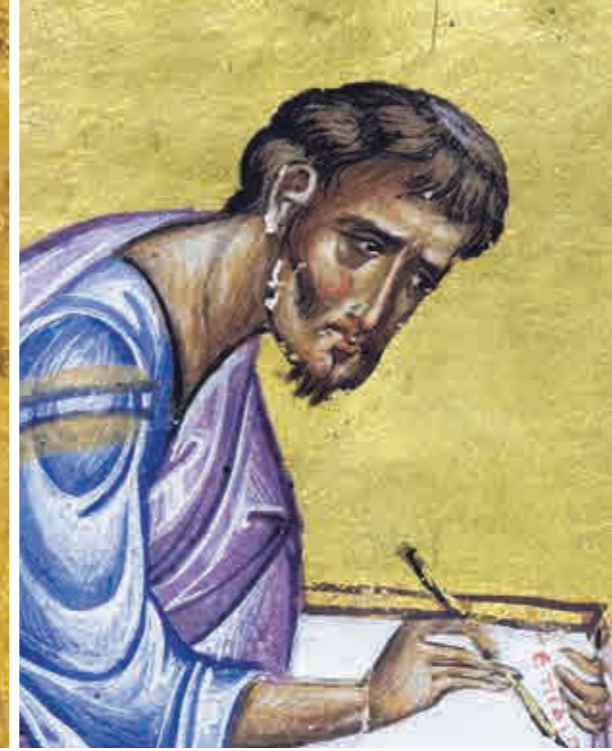
Consequently, Georgians, empowered with the alphabet and literacy, have been reflecting on their identity, refining their philosophy of life, and sharing it with others through the educational process for a very long

time. This process, in the history of Georgians and other similar peoples, was particularly enriched and deepened by the spread of Christianity. Christianity unprecedentedly inspired literacy and the search for the meaning of life among Georgians. Ancient Georgian manuscripts are a clear testament to this.

The Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, with the support of the "Society Iveriisa", has undertaken the endeavor to create an English-language publication presenting part of this heritage.

The "Society Iveriisa" brings together individuals who believe that the strength and well-being of any society is based on the principle of the unity of knowledge and faith. It sees the search for the foundations of national homogeneity as our primary task. In modernity, this task is accomplished through the cooperation of faith, knowledge, religion and science. This work serves this same purpose.

Our goal is to support the preservation and research of national heritage following the highest contemporary standards. We believe this book will vividly demonstrate to readers both the sacred and the scientific significance of our treasure.





FROM THE EDITOR

Over the centuries, Georgia has developed a unique culture and art, with its distinctive monuments being an integral part and jewel of the global Christian heritage. Among these monuments, Georgian manuscripts hold a special place. They reflect the history of the Georgian language and writing, the long path of spiritual and intellectual development of the Georgian people, stages of the formation of artistic and philosophical thought, and the cultural interactions of Georgians with the outside world.

Georgian written heritage, which includes both original literary works and translations from various languages, is distinguished by its ancientness and diversity. It encompasses key areas of Christian literature, such as bibliology, exegesis, liturgics, dogmatics, ascetics, hymnography, hagiography, homiletics and more.

Manuscript heritage has preserved numerous significant monuments of literary and historical writing, which are today recognized as masterpieces of world literature. Georgian manuscripts and documents are now preserved both in Georgia and beyond its borders – in Greece, Israel, Russia, Armenia, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Poland, France etc. Most of Georgian manuscripts are kept in Georgia – in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Mestia, Akhaltsikhe, and other regional libraries or museums.

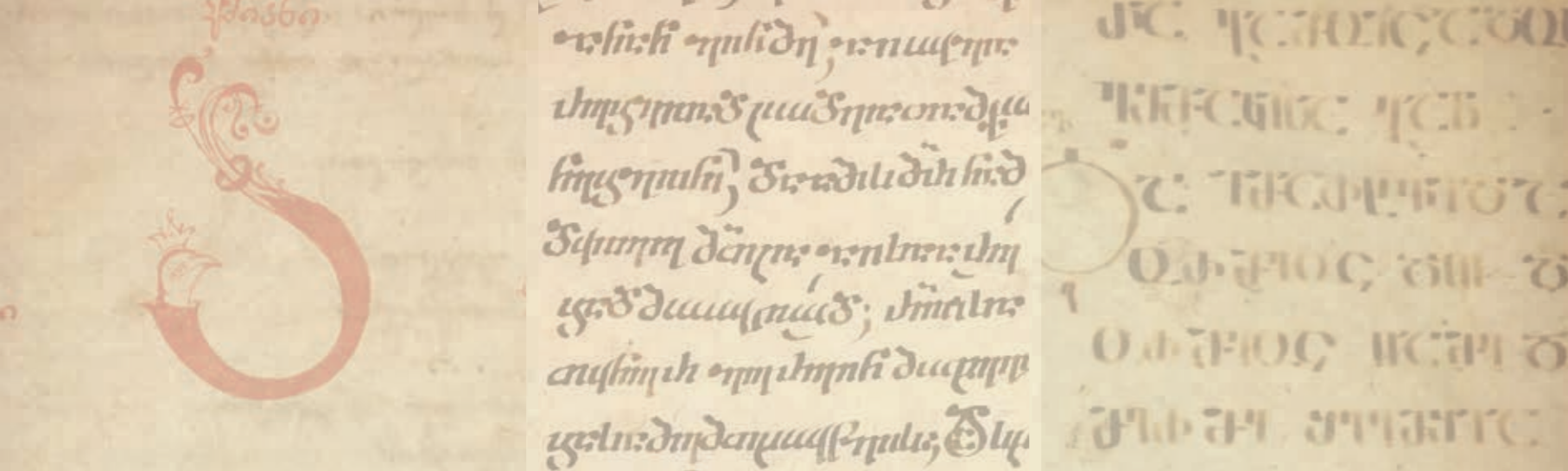
The largest and most diverse collection of Georgian manuscripts and historical documents is preserved at Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manu-

scripts (known as the Korneli Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts until 2007), the scholarly research institution, which was established in 1958 under the initiative of the famous scholar Ilia Abuladze. The Centre became the home to all the manuscripts that were previously housed at the Georgian State Museum. In turn, all the manuscripts that had been acquired, collected, and discovered in the 19th and early 20th centuries and were gathered in the repositories of three institutions (the Society for Spreading Literacy, currently the S Fund, the Ecclesiastical Museum, currently the A Fund, and the Historical-Ethnographic Society, currently the H Fund) were transferred to the museum in 1929. Evidently, since 1958, the Institute of Manuscripts' collection has been expanding and continues to grow (now the Q Fund), being filled with new manuscripts, historical documents, and personal archives.

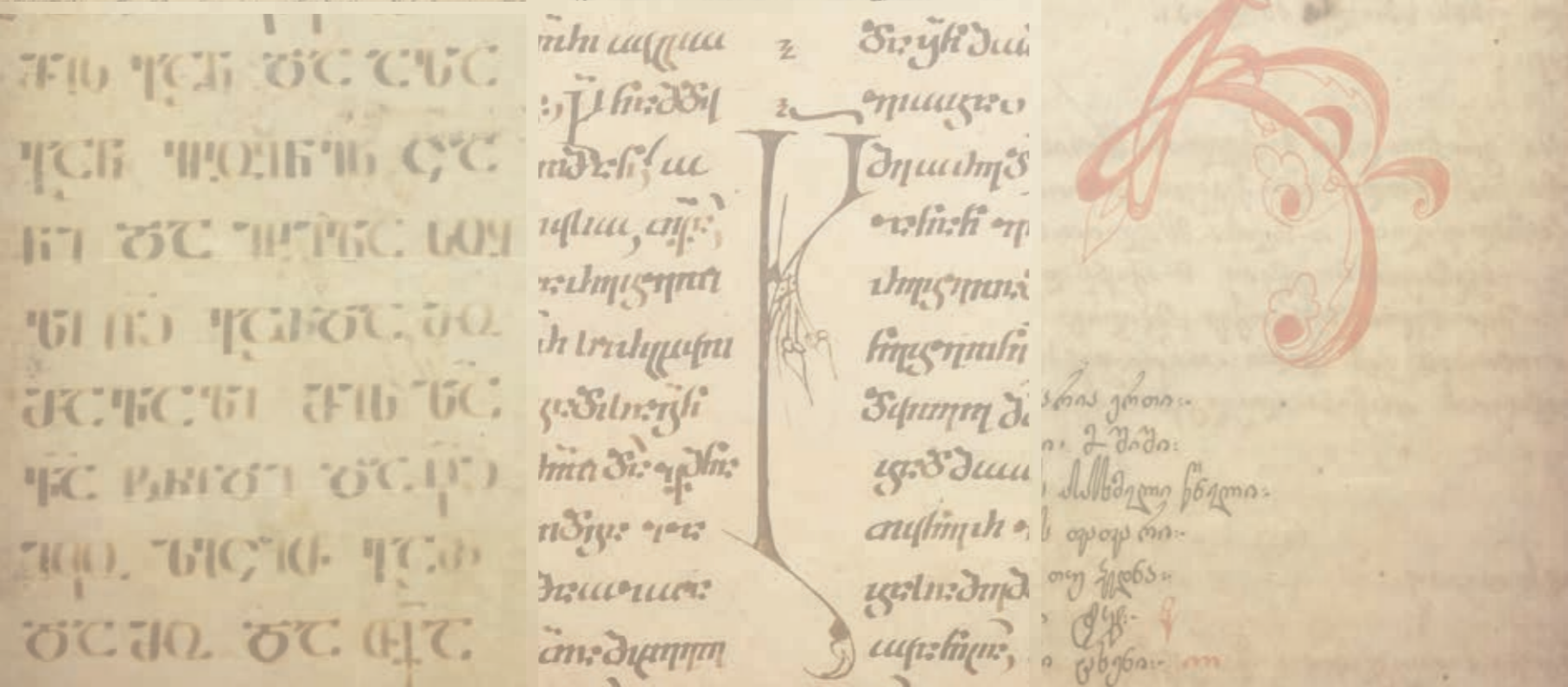
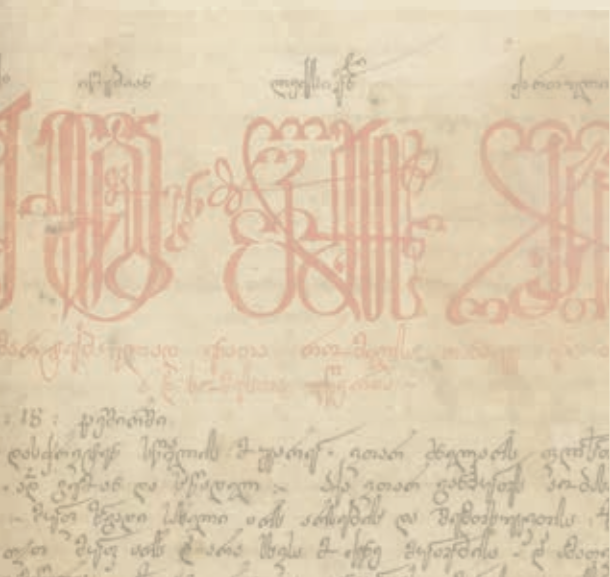
This album represents especially interesting and outstanding specimens of calligraphy, binding, and miniature painting from the manuscripts and historical documents preserved at the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts.

The Society Iveriisa initiated and funded the publication of this book. The Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts sincerely appreciates this effort.

Zaal Abashidze



INTRODUCTION



The history of Georgian literary culture and manuscript production is closely related to the declaration of Christianity as the state religion. Simultaneously with the conversion of Kartli to Christianity in the first quarter of the 4th century and the construction of the first Christian churches, translation of the most important books of Christian worship and composition of original Georgian Christian literary works, especially of hagiographical genre were initiated. Indeed, the 5th-7th centuries translations of the books of Bible and hagiographical works survived in the lower layers of the Georgian palimpsests (parchment folios, on which old writing has been removed and replaced by new one). The 5th-6th centuries dedicatory and commemorative inscriptions written in *asomtavruli* script (majuscule) on walls of the churches or stone crosses from the Kartli region (Bolnisi Sioni Cathedral, Lamazi Gori, Jvari Monastery in Mtskheta, Ukangori, Urbnisi Sioni, etc.) are also important witnesses of the ancientness of the Georgian written culture.

In the 8th-10th centuries, the political and cultural life of Georgia flourished in the historical south-western part of Georgia – the Tao-Klarjeti principality (present-day Artvin and Erzurum, provinces of Turkey). Most important scriptoria were founded there in major monastic centers of Shatberdi, Oshki, Khandzta, Opiza, Tsqarostavi, Tbeti, Parkhali, Ancha, and Bana. In general, these scriptoria became the basic intellectual nourishing space for the Georgian monastic centres outside Georgia.

However, Georgian manuscripts were not produced exclusively in Georgia. From early times, the books of the Bible, the liturgical collections and some works of early Christian literature were translated, copied and distributed by Georgian clerics settled in historical Palestine, mostly in the Monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem. Georgian epigraphic inscriptions in Palestine, as well as the so-called *Founder's Typikon* of the St. Sabas



STELE OF DAVATI
Early georgian inscription
6th c.

KING DAVIT III THE GREAT (966-1001)
Bas-relief from Oshki Monastery, Tao-Klarjeti.



Monastery composed in late antiquity, preserve evidence of the active role of Georgians in this region of the Christian Near East. According to the *Typicon*, the non-Greek speaking monks of the Monastery, the Georgians among them, gained the right to sing the selected verses from the *Psalms* in their own language, and read the *Apostle* and the Gospels as well. In addition to active involvement in monastic life, the great pilgrimage movement of Georgians to the Holy Land began in the same epoch. For example, the famous figure of the Christian East, the descendant of the royal family of Iberia Murvanos visited the Holy Land the mid 5th century. After being ordained as a monk, he changed his name to Peter the Iberian and became a bishop of Maiuma. According to the Georgian version of his *Life*, he initiated the construction of the Georgian monastery in the Judae-an desert. The oldest translations of the Old and New Testaments, the canonical book of the organization of the church and monastic life – *Typikon*, important collection of the liturgy of Jerusalem rite – the *Jerusalem Lectionary*, the collection of hymns – *Iadgari*, the collection of works of different genres of Christian literature – *Mravaltavi* (*polykephaleion*, *multi-chapter*) and many others are related to the Georgians living and working in Jerusalem and its surroundings. Georgian manuscripts translated and copied in the multicultural environment of historical Palestine preserved the texts reflecting the earliest stage of the Holy Scripture, Christian liturgy and religious thought in general. These translations are known as texts of Jerusalem tradition. The contributions of the Georgians in the Holy Land are evident in how Iberia (Kartli) was regarded as a trusted ally of the Christian world.

The Georgian monks were settled in monasteries of the Holy Land such as the Lavra of St. *Chariton* (*Palavra*), the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Lavras of St. Basil, St. Theodore, St. Samuel, St. Nicholas and in the nunneries of Deltavi, Dertupha and Kappata, all located

near to Jerusalem. The Georgian Monastery of the Holy Cross, established in the 11th century in Jerusalem, became one of the most important centres of the religious and literary activities in the Holy Land.

In the 9th century, due to the oppression of the Monastery of St. Sabas by the Muslim Arabs, Georgian monks partially moved to Mount Sinai, where in the 10th century they established a strong Georgian community involved in literary and scribal activities. Ioane Zosime was one of the most prominent figures of this com-



KING DAVIT IV THE BUILDER (1073-1125)
Fresco from the Gelati Cathedral.

Mount Sinai turned into an important center of Georgians, where prayers were held for the peace of Kartli, strengthening of the borders, soothing of the kings and nobles, turning away of the enemies, and strengthening of Christianity. Georgian manuscripts and fragments preserved today in the library of St. Catherine's Monastery are proof of the strong position of Georgians in this one of the most important centres of Christianity.

From the 10th century, Georgian monasticism became active in Byzantium. Georgian monks were living and working in the monasteries of Constantinople (Holy Romana, Mangana, the monastery of St Maria Peribleptos Triakontaphyllos, etc.) as well as establishing Georgian monasteries, for example, the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos (built in 980-984), the monastery of Gialia on Cyprus and the Petritsoni Monastery in Bulgaria which was founded by Grigol Bakurianisdze (†1086), a Georgian military commander in the Byzantine service.

The primary work of the fathers of Iviron, Euthymius (955-1028) and Giorgi (1009-1065) the Hagiorites, was the translation of the most significant works of Christian literature. Their focus was particularly on translating texts directly from Greek, rather than through intermediary languages (Arabic, Syriac, Armenian) as had been common before. The Hagiorite fathers were associated with the introduction of genre diversity in the manuscript tradition, thanks to which, the enlightening of the Georgian nation was expanded to the level of advanced Byzantine culture. To enhance the translation efforts for the education of Georgians, the fathers of Iviron developed and refined translation principles and language. The aim of the scholars of the theological-literary school of Iviron was marked by a shift from the Jerusalem tradition to the Constantinopolitan tradition.

After the liberation of historical Antioch from the Arabs in the second half of the 10th century, the attention of Georgian literati monks was drawn to the monasteries of St. Symeon, Kalipos, Kastana, Ezra, Tvali, Valley

community in the 10th century. According to the reports of chroniclers and some manuscript colophons, Georgian churches were founded on Mount Sinai (for example, the church of St. John the Theologian and the church of St. George the Martyr on the territory of the monastery of St. Catherine). According to Georgian historical sources, the Georgian monks of the Mount Sinai were financially supported by the kings of united Georgia – Davit IV Aghmashenebeli (the Builder) (1073-1125) and Queen Tamar (1160-1213; named in Georgian historical sources as the “King of Kings” – a title reflecting her exceptional skills and contributions to the country). The

QUEEN TAMAR THE GREAT (1184-1213)
AND KING GIORGI III (1156-1184)
Fresco from the Vardzia cave Monastery



of Reeds and St. Barlaam, located on the Black Mountain in the basin of the river Orontes (present-day Hatay region of Turkey). A strong theological school was formed there, the outstanding representatives of which were hellenophile scholars Ephrem Mtsire (second half of the 11th century) and Arsen of Iqalto (1050-1127). Hellenophilism – a new intellectual current was reflected in various activities of the Georgian scholars. Besides the formation of new concept of verbatim translation, it played a large role in establishing a new literary repertoire for translation and shaped medieval Georgian manuscript production. The Black Mountain fathers introduced significant innovations in the construction and organization of codexes, including the prefaces and annotations of explanatory character in the margins of manuscripts.

In the 11th-12th centuries in Georgia, the activities connected with copying of manuscripts and commenting on texts were conducted by the literary school of the Gelati Monastery. The latter, established by the Georgian King Davit IV the Builder, became the most important educational centre of Georgia and was referred to as “another Athens and the second Jerusalem” in medieval Georgian sources.

Starting from the late Middle Ages, based on Georgia's political connections, the Georgian manuscript book is oriented towards the introduction of European and at the same time Persian-Iranian natural science knowledge, as well as secular literature into the Georgian space. The trends reflecting the influence of the Isfahan artistic school appear in the decoration of the manuscripts of secular literature. These artistic trends are clearly visible in several richly illuminated manuscripts of the most important Georgian secular poem, Shota Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, composed in the 12th century.

In the 18th century in the conditions of the forced life of the representatives of the royal family of Georgia in

Russia, the Georgian manuscript book familiarized and shared the experience of Slavic religious books. Catholic religious books are also translated and copied. At the same time, European literature is introduced to the Georgian readers via Russia.

Georgian manuscripts continued to be written and produced up until the 19th century, in parallel to the Georgian printed books, which started from a Georgian alphabet with prayers and a Georgian-Italian dictionary printed in 1626 in Rome, Italy. In Georgia the first printing house was established in Tbilisi in 1708-1709 on the initiative of King Vakhtang VI (1675-1737).

THE LOCATION
OF THE SCRIPTORIUMS
OF GEORGIAN MANUSCRIPTS
(V-XV CC.)



Bulgaria

Petritsoni Monastery

Constantinople

Chora Monastery
Mangana Academy
Monastery of St. Maria
Peribleptos Triakontaphyllos

Athos

Iviron Monastery
Church of John the Evangelist

Olympus

Hellas

Byzantine Empire

Georgia

Moqvi
Odishi
Gelati
Samtskhe
Tbilisi
Khandzta
Opiza
Parkhali
Otkhta
Oshki
Tskarostavi
Tbeti
Shatberdi
Bana
Ishkhani
Tao-Klarjeti
Davit-Gareja

Syria

Antioch

Kalipos
Kastana
Ezra monastery
Tualta Monastery
St. Symeon's Monastery
St. Barlaam's Monastery
Holy Romana Monastery
Chapel of the Burning Bush
Valley of Reeds' Monastery

Cyprus

Gialia Monastery

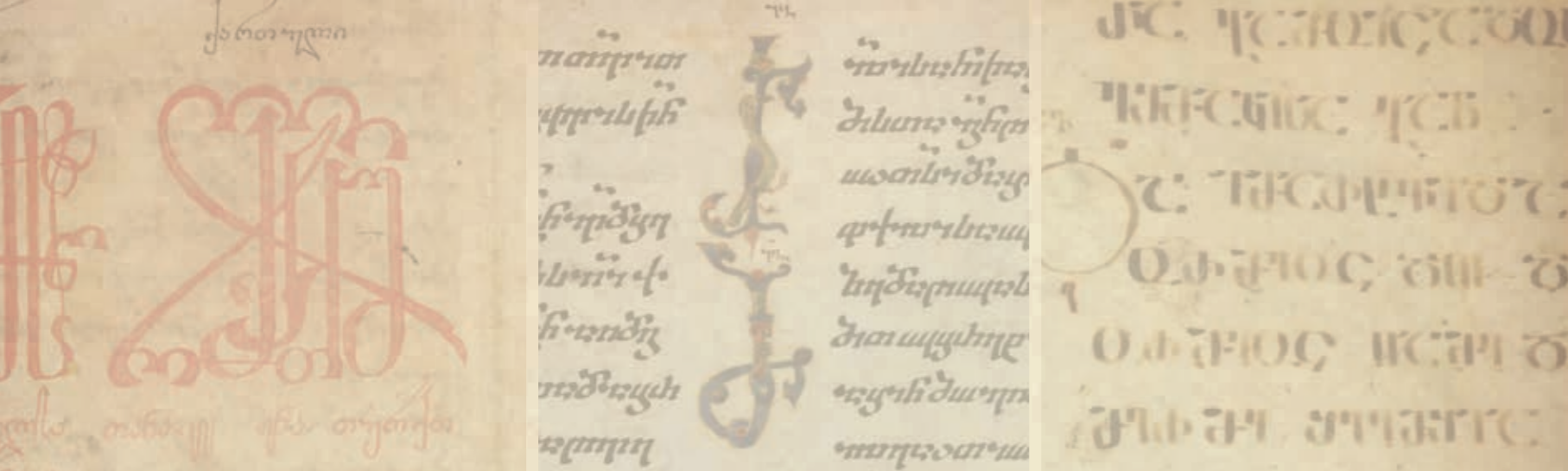
Holy Land

Jerusalem

Holy Sepulchre-Golgotha-Church of the Resurrection
Monastery of the Holy Cross
St. Sabas Monastery
St. Chariton Laura
Gethsemane
Kappata
Dertupha
Deltavi
Shehani

Mount Sinai

Saint Catherine's Monastery



GEORGIAN ALPHABET



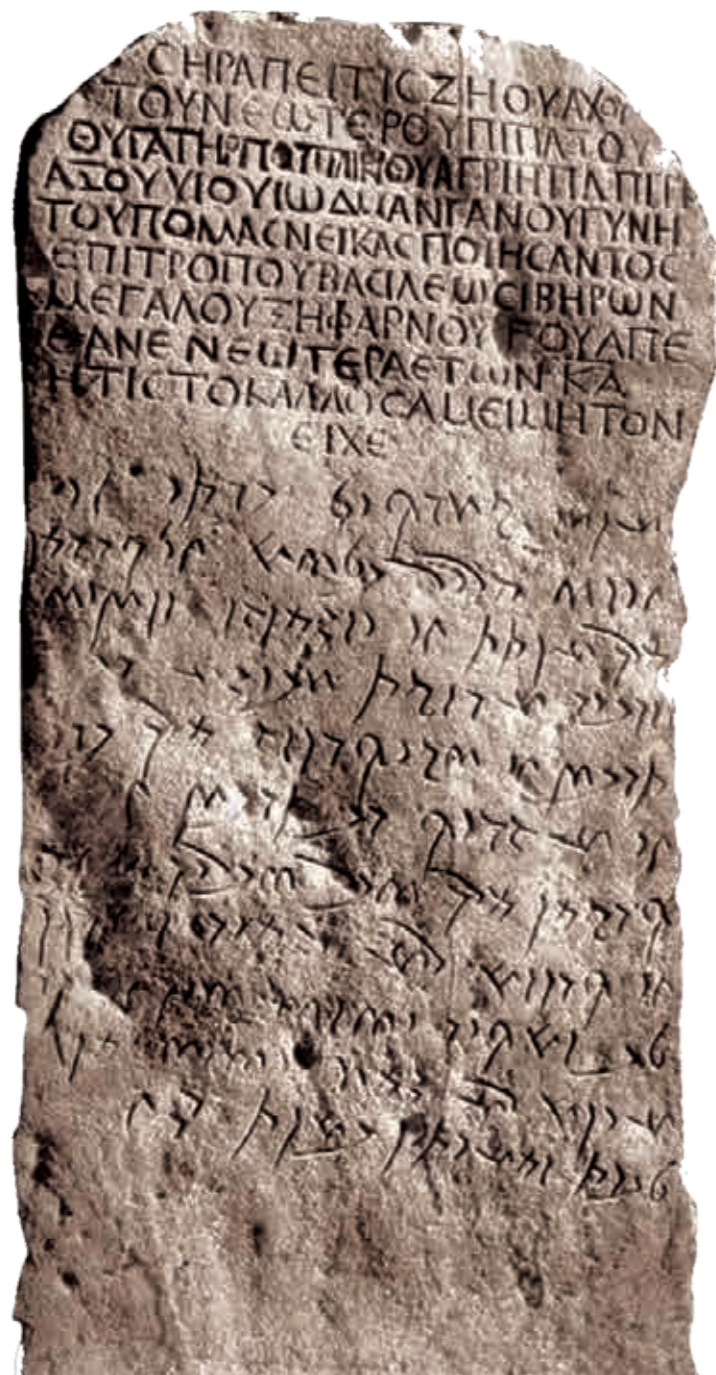
CHAPTER I

When was the Georgian alphabet created, what triggered this fact – these questions have long concerned Georgian scholars, as the Georgian alphabet is the main pillar of Georgian statehood and its cultural heritage. Georgian script played an essential role in the consolidation of Georgians and the formation of a unified state. It is no coincidence that the political formula, formed in Georgia in the 10th century, is as following: “Kartli (Georgia) is the country, where the liturgy and every prayer is performed in the Georgian language” (*Life of Grigol of Khandzta*).

Information about the date of origin of the Georgian alphabet can also be found in historical sources. The 11th century Georgian historian, Leonti Mroveli, in his work *The Lives of the Georgian Kings* links the creation of the Georgian writing system to the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC, attributing it to King Parnavaz I of Iberia. *The Lives of the Georgian Kings* narrates: “Parnavaz was the first king in Kartli, a descendant of Kartlos. He spread the Georgian language and, apart from Georgian, no other language was spoken in Kartli. And he created the Georgian writing.” This passage entry may highlight the state significance of literary activity as a whole.

It is worth noting that the ancient stone inscription found in the territory of Kartli, namely in Armaziskhevi – Seraphite’s epitaph, in which the king Parnavaz is also mentioned, is written in two alphabets – Greek and a modified version of Aramaic, which is called Armazuli. The inscription dates back to 150 AD. The stela of Roman Emperor Vespasianus (39-81 AD), was discovered in Armaztsikhe, dated back to 75 AD, mentions the fact that the Emperor strengthened the Armazi wall. The Greek and Aramaic inscriptions can be found on everyday objects – jugs and seals. According to the artifacts found to date, epigraphic monuments written in the Georgian alphabet can be found only from the 5th century

The Georgian alphabet is a universal system, the number of graphemes or letters corresponds to the num-



STELE OF SERAPIETIS
Greco-Aramaic Epitaph from
Armazi. 150 AD

EARLY GEORGIAN INSCRIPTION
Bas-relief from
Bolnisi Sioni Cathedral. 5th c.



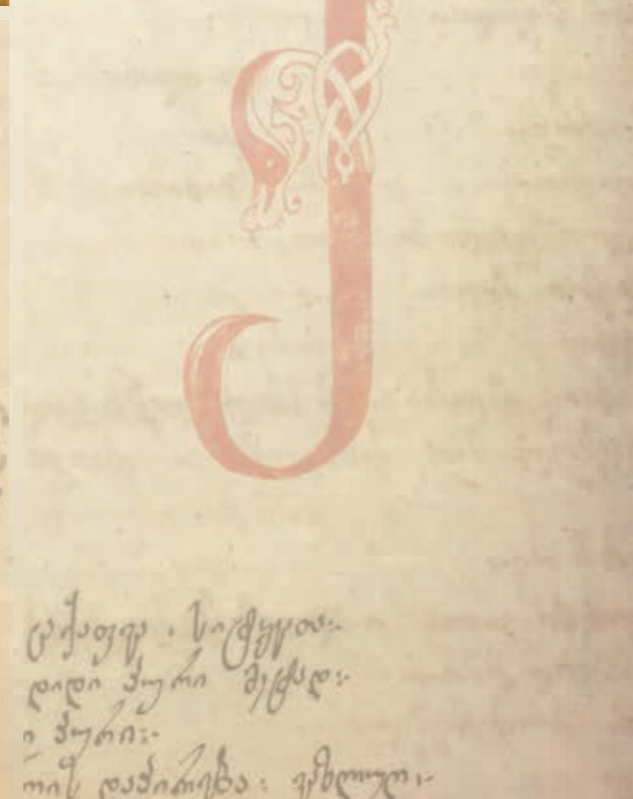
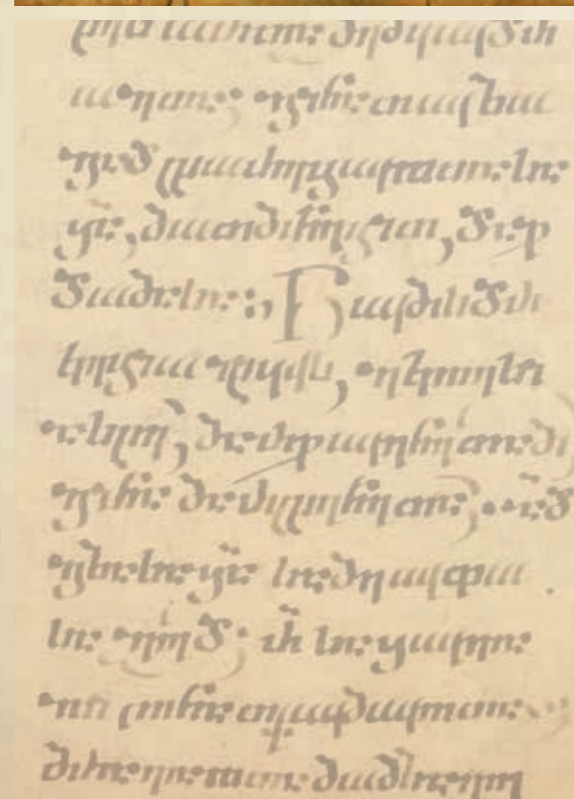
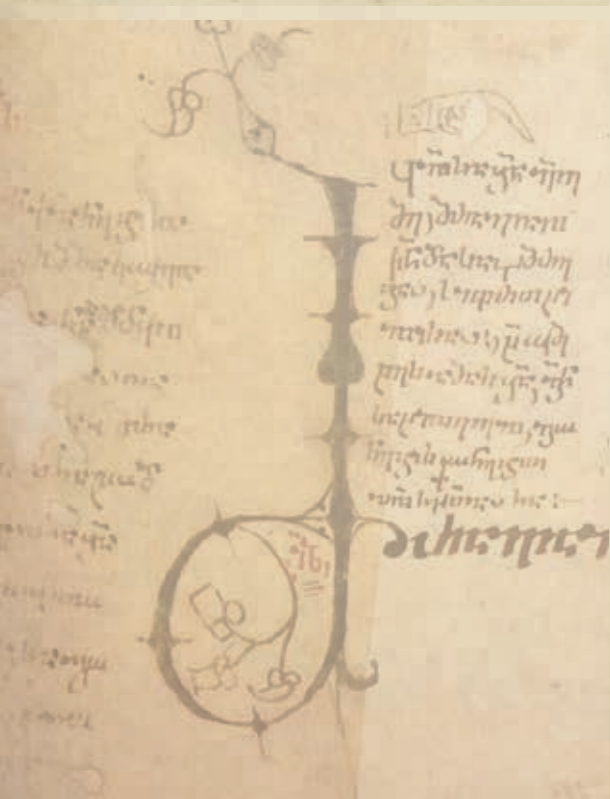
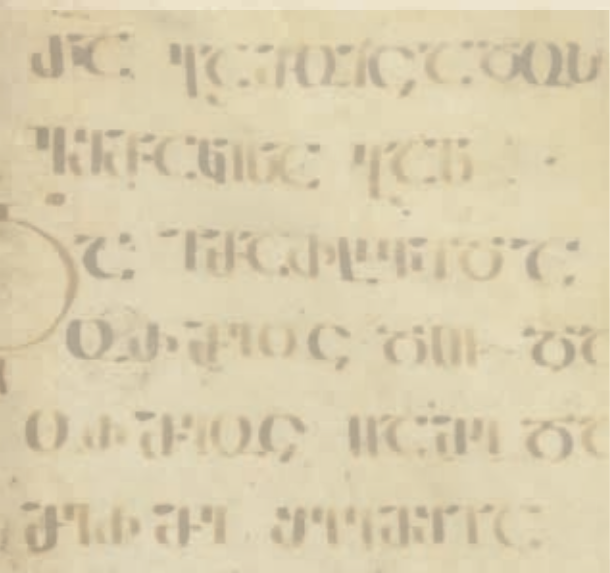
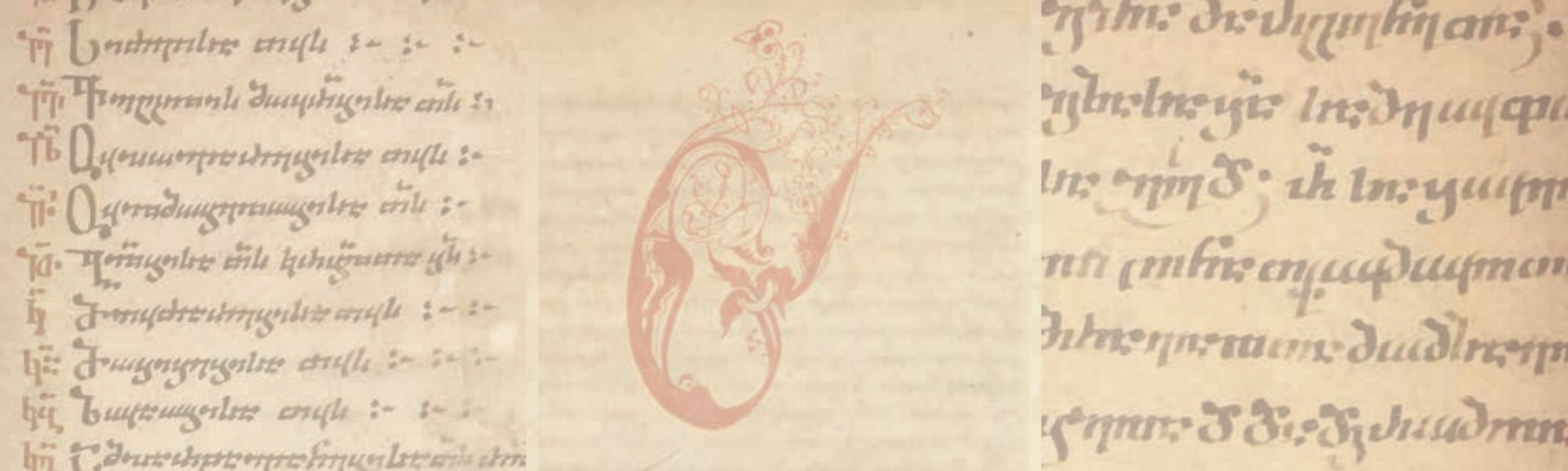
ber of phonemes. The alphabet underwent three stages of graphic development: round or *asomtavruli* (majuscule), epigraphic monuments and manuscripts of the 5th-10th centuries are written in this script. From the 9th century, the angular or *nuskhuri* (minuscule) script developed parallel to the *asomtavruli*. In manuscripts copied using *nuskhuri*, the titles and initial letters were written in the *asomtavruli* script, which also served a decorative function.

From the 11th century, alongside these two graphic forms, the *mkhedruli* script emerged, initially used for

historical documents and later predominantly for manuscripts of a secular nature. Currently, the *mkhedruli* script is universally recognized as the principal graphic form of the Georgian alphabet. However, all three types of scripts are actively used in the Church of Georgia today. At the end of 2016, UNESCO inscribed “Living Culture of Three Writing Systems of Georgian Alphabet” on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Ⴀ	Ⴁ	Ⴂ	Ⴃ	Ⴄ	Ⴅ	Ⴆ	Ⴇ	Ⴈ	Ⴉ	Ⴊ	Ⴋ	Ⴌ	Ⴍ	Ⴎ	Ⴏ	Ⴐ	Ⴑ	Ⴒ	Ⴓ
Ⴔ	Ⴕ	Ⴖ	Ⴗ	Ⴘ	Ⴙ	Ⴚ	Ⴛ	Ⴜ	Ⴝ	Ⴞ	Ⴟ	Ⴀ	Ⴁ	Ⴂ	Ⴃ	Ⴄ	Ⴅ	Ⴆ	Ⴇ
Ⴈ	Ⴉ	Ⴊ	Ⴋ	Ⴌ	Ⴍ	Ⴎ	Ⴏ	Ⴐ	Ⴑ	Ⴒ	Ⴓ	Ⴔ	Ⴕ	Ⴖ	Ⴗ	Ⴘ	Ⴙ	Ⴚ	Ⴛ
Ⴜ	Ⴝ	Ⴞ	Ⴟ	Ⴀ	Ⴁ	Ⴂ	Ⴃ	Ⴄ	Ⴅ	Ⴆ	Ⴇ	Ⴈ	Ⴉ	Ⴊ	Ⴋ	Ⴌ	Ⴍ	Ⴎ	Ⴏ
Ⴐ	Ⴑ	Ⴒ	Ⴓ	Ⴔ	Ⴕ	Ⴖ	Ⴗ	Ⴘ	Ⴙ	Ⴚ	Ⴛ	Ⴜ	Ⴝ	Ⴞ	Ⴟ	Ⴀ	Ⴁ	Ⴂ	Ⴃ
Ⴄ	Ⴅ	Ⴆ	Ⴇ	Ⴈ	Ⴉ	Ⴊ	Ⴋ	Ⴌ	Ⴍ	Ⴎ	Ⴏ	Ⴐ	Ⴑ	Ⴒ	Ⴓ	Ⴔ	Ⴕ	Ⴖ	Ⴗ
Ⴘ	Ⴙ	Ⴚ	Ⴛ	Ⴜ	Ⴝ	Ⴞ	Ⴟ	Ⴀ	Ⴁ	Ⴂ	Ⴃ	Ⴄ	Ⴅ	Ⴆ	Ⴇ	Ⴈ	Ⴉ	Ⴊ	Ⴋ
Ⴉ	Ⴊ	Ⴋ	Ⴌ	Ⴍ	Ⴎ	Ⴏ	Ⴐ	Ⴑ	Ⴒ	Ⴓ	Ⴔ	Ⴕ	Ⴖ	Ⴗ	Ⴘ	Ⴙ	Ⴚ	Ⴛ	Ⴜ

PALIMPSESTS



CHAPTER II

The earliest examples of Georgian texts (5th-7th centuries) are preserved in palimpsests, attested beneath later writing on the parchment folios of various manuscripts.

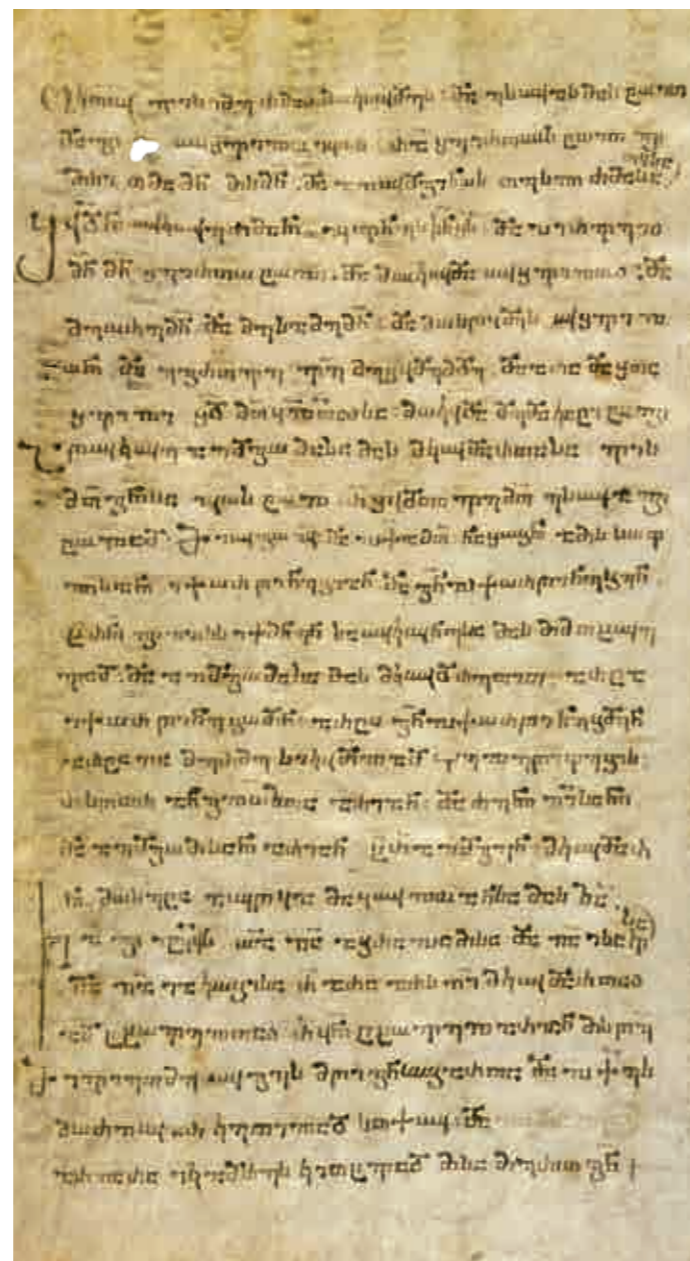
Today, the largest number of Georgian palimpsests – nearly 5000 folios – is kept in the collection of the National Centre of Manuscripts. However, except for the Centre, Georgian palimpsests are preserved in the National Archives of Georgia, the Kutaisi State Historical Museum and the Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography (Mestia, Svaneti), in the church of the village Lakhamula, Svaneti.

A large number of Georgian palimpsests are preserved in the depositories abroad: in the collection of the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, in the fund of Georgian manuscripts at the the Library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in the collection of the Georgian manuscripts of Iviron, in the libraries of Cambridge and Oxford Universities, etc.

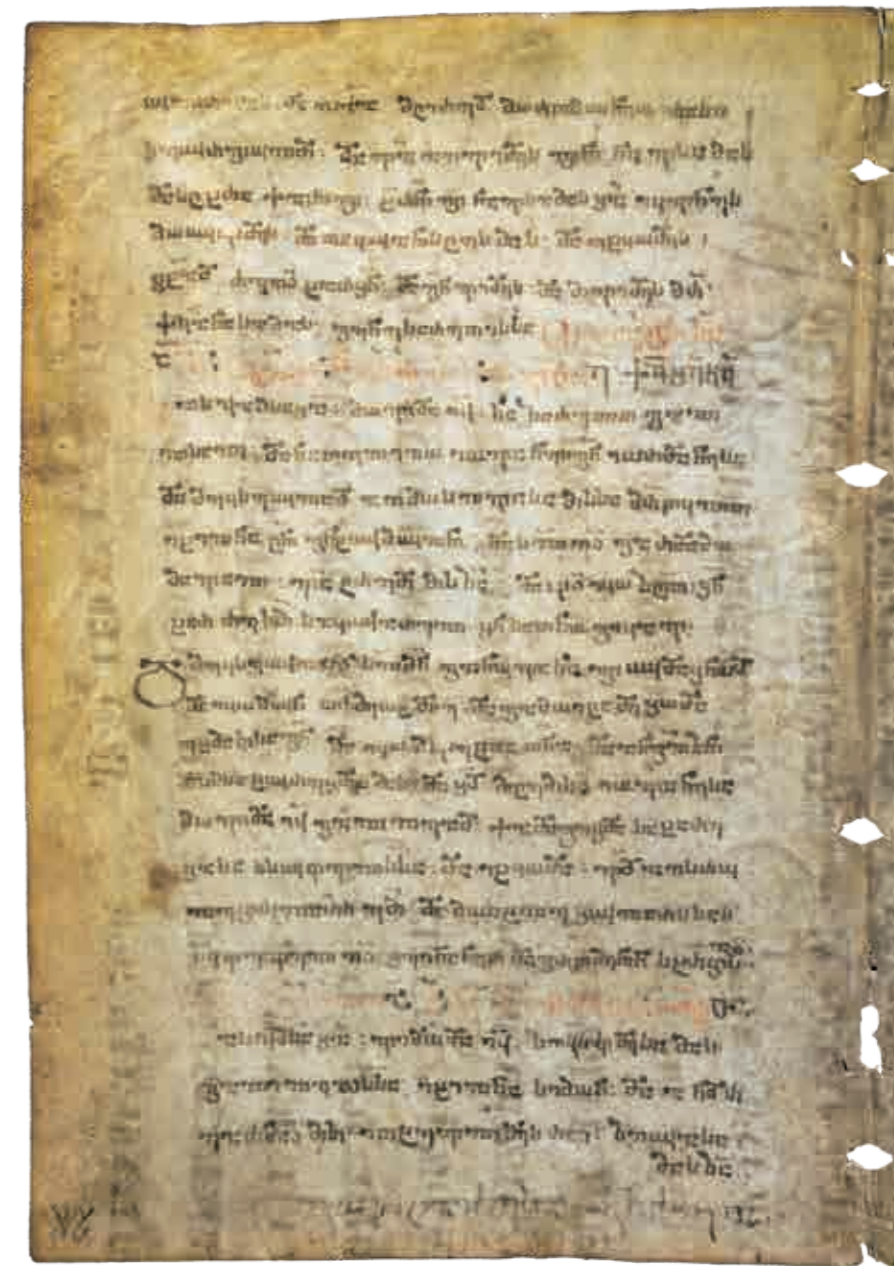
Georgian palimpsests attracted the attention of scholarly circles from the 20s of the 20th century, after Ivane Javakhishvili, the founder of Georgian Palaeography, had the opportunity to study the photocopy of the Georgian-Jewish palimpsest preserved in the collection of Oxford University. Later, in 1929-1932, the Georgian-Hebrew palimpsest folios kept at the University of Cambridge were studied by Akaki Shanidze, the founder of the Georgian Linguistic School, and the American orientalist Robert Pierpont Blake. The manuscripts were dated by analogy with epigraphic inscriptions of the 5th-7th centuries. Similar to those dated inscriptions carved on stone, the graphemes ლ (b), ვ (w), and ჟ (q) of the texts in palimpsest folios were with closed loops. Such a graphic peculiarity was characteristic of the Georgian *asmotavruli* script only until the 7th century. In addition, the dating of the texts was confirmed by the linguistic-grammatical norms existing in the texts, which are called *khanmetoba* (“kh” prefix overuse) and *haemetoba* (“h” prefix overuse) and means the excessive use of the

prefix **ბ** (kh) in the 5th-7th centuries, and the prefix **ჰ** (h) in the 8th century in particular positions. It became clear that the palimpsests, preserved in Oxford and Cambridge, are the oldest specimen of Georgian writing and language. This discovery was followed by a revision of Georgian manuscript collections and intensive work on Georgian palimpsests began. It turned out that all the texts of the palimpsests were *khanmeti*. Soon, during the study of the palimpsests, the *haemeti Jerusalem Lectionary* was discovered. Compared to *khanmeti* texts, *haemeti* texts have reached us in small numbers.

In the 1960s, under the initiative of Ilia Abuladze, the scholarly head of the K. Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts (now the K. Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts), a thorough review of all Georgian manuscript collections held at the Institute was conducted to identify palimpsest manuscripts. A list of manuscripts containing palimpsest folios was compiled, and in 2017, a catalogue of palimpsests, preserved at the National Centre of Manuscripts, was published. The lower layer of some palimpsests dates back to the 5th-6th centuries, a period when Georgian ecclesiastical practices were closely integrated with the multicultural environment of the Christian Near East, particularly in historical Palestine. By the turn of the 10th-11th centuries, the centre of Eastern Christianity shifted to Constantinople. As a result, the Georgian literary and manuscript tradition began to align with the trends and requirements for the canonization of liturgical practices that were legitimized by the Byzantine Empire's centre. In this context, the Georgian palimpsests, the lower layer of which date back to the 10th-11th centuries, deserve special attention. To evaluate the palimpsests of this period, we should consider the fact that the monastic scriptoria used secondary writing folios only from the collections that were not relevant in that epoch for ecclesiastical and monastic practice.



The study of Georgian palimpsests extends beyond the realm of Georgian writing and written culture, as they preserve archaic editions of the Holy Scriptures, Christian liturgy, hagiography, and hymnography, the originals of which are considered lost today. As a result, these manuscripts hold particular significance for the study of the written culture of the Christian East.



BOOK OF ISAIAH. GOSPEL OF MARK

66 ff.; parchment; 420x230 mm. (reconstructed); lower layer: *asomtavruli*; brown, red, and brick-color ink. A-844; 6th-7th, 11th cc.

A manuscript consists of 212 parchment folios, 66 leaves of which are palimpsests. On the lower layer of the palimpsest, the separate verses of the *khanmeti* texts of the Book of Isaiah and of the Gospel of St. Mark of the 6th-7th centuries have been copied. The lower layer of the palimpsest is written in bold *asomtavruli* script. The varying ink colors of the lower layer – brown, red, and brick-color – across different folios suggest that the codex was assembled in the 11th century using folios from various manuscripts.

The upper layer of the collection of the 11th century is written in *nuskhuri* script. It contains those verses selected from the Gospel, that were read during the first seven days of Great Lent in the 11th century. The manuscript was intended for the Monastery of Sveti in historical Klarjeti (present-day Seyitler, Artvin Region, Turkey).

The *khanmeti* text of the *Book of Isaiah* is a Georgian translation of the Bible developed by Lucian of Antioch in the 4th century. Interestingly, Greek manuscripts of the Lucian Bible can be found only from the 10th century. Thus, the Georgian palimpsest of the *Book of Isaiah* is the oldest version of this book and the most important manuscript for the study of the history of this text.



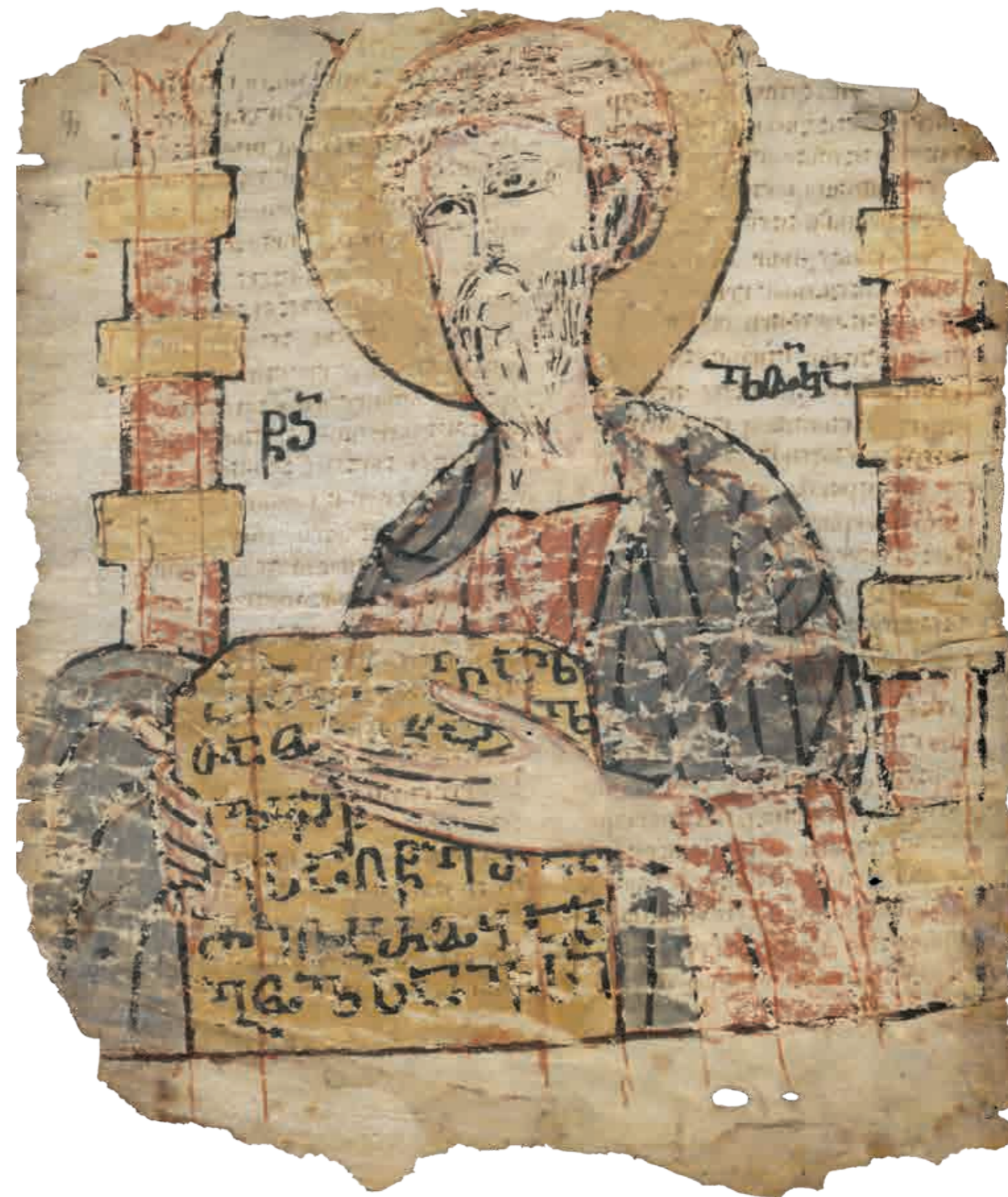
**HAEMETI
LECTIONARY**

51 ff.; parchment; 170x140 mm. (restored);
lower layer: *asomtavruli*; brown ink, red ink (for initials).
H-1329; 8th, 13th-14th cc.

The lower layer of the palimpsest, written in *asomtavruli* script, is a Lectionary, representing one of the earliest stages of Georgian language development, known as *haemetoba*. It dates back to the 8th century. The *Haemeti Lectionary* is preserved in two manuscripts – H-1329 and Q-333. This liturgical compendium contains readings only from the Gospels. It represents the earliest stage of development of the *Jerusalem Lectionary*. On the upper layer of the palimpsest the liturgical collection *Parakletike* (contains proper office hymns for each weekday), established in the 11th century, is copied. The text of the upper layer of the manuscript dates back to the 13th-14th centuries. The fact that in the mentioned period the folios of the old liturgical collection of Jerusalem rite were used as writing material, once again emphasizes that the collections of the earliest tradition were excluded from the monastic practice.

**KHANMETI GOSPELS.
PSALTER**

13ff.; parchment; 320x260 mm.; *asomtavruli*
lower layer: *asomtavruli*; red ink.
H-999; 5th, 13th-14th cc.



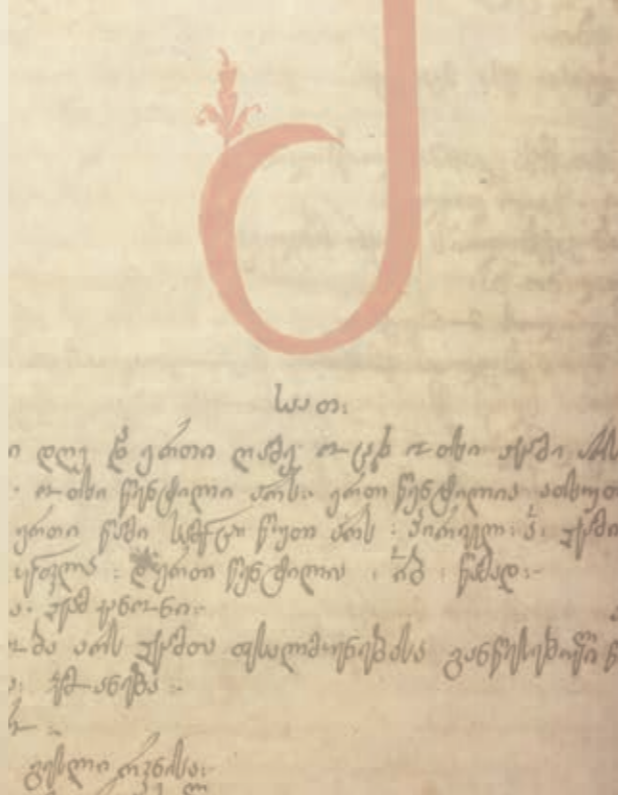
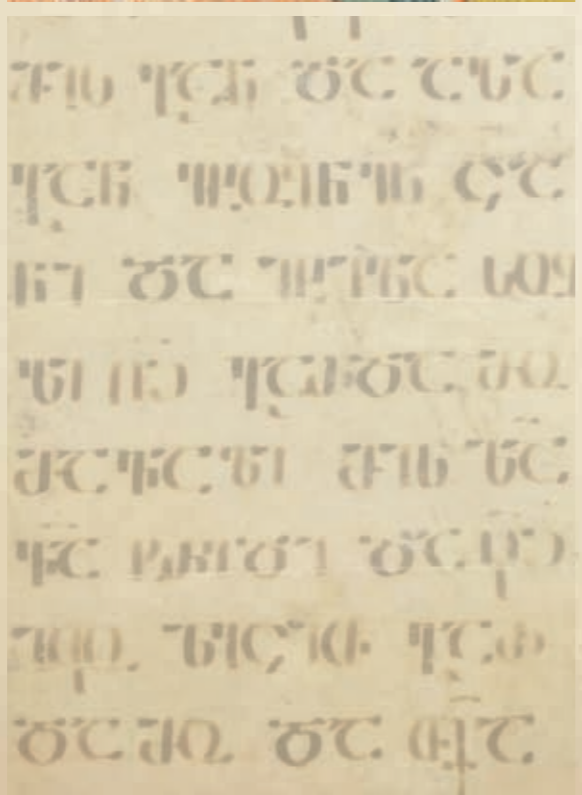
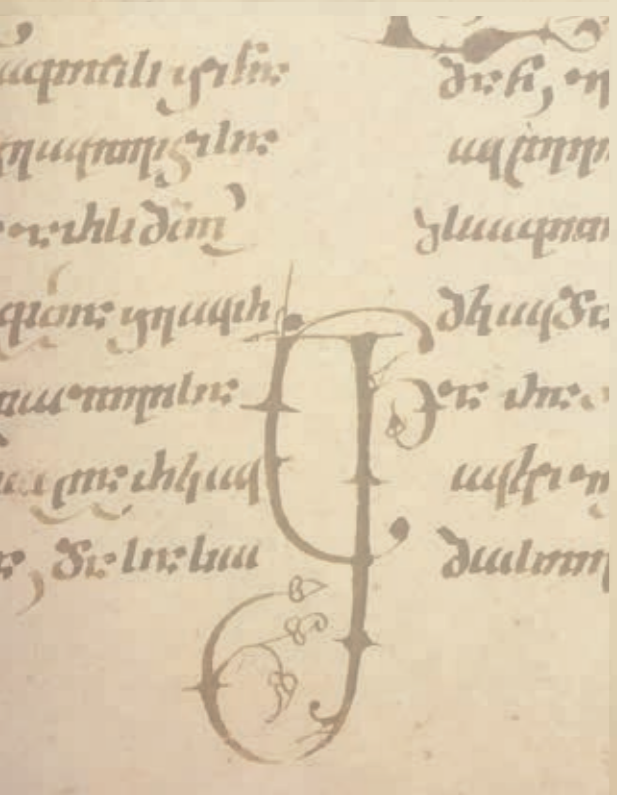
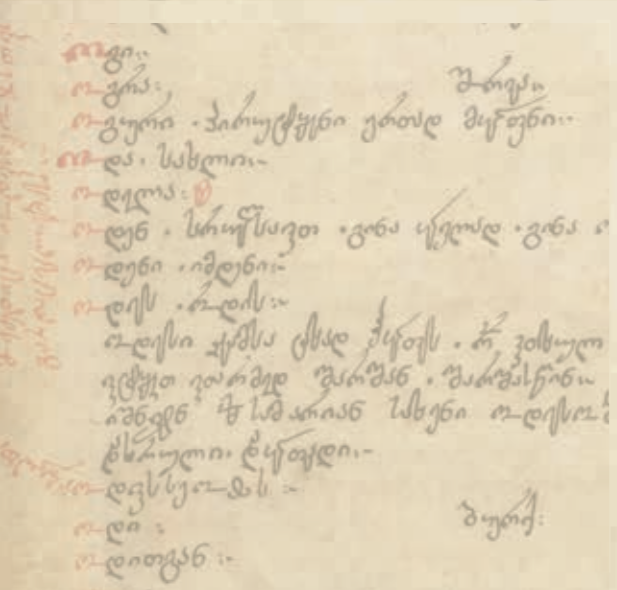
JERUSALEM LECTIONARY

4 ff.; parchment; 250x250 mm.; lower layer: *asomtavruli*; black ink, red ink; for paintings red, green and brown inks are used.
H-2065; 10th, 15-16th cc.

The fragment consists of four palimpsest folios of parchment. The lower layer dates back to the 10th century. It represents fragments of the main book of the Jerusalem liturgy – the *Lectionary*. The first includes versis of *Genesis* 41:32-45, read on September 4, the second part – verses 20-25 of the *Gospel of John*, 1-3 of *Daniel the Prophet* and *Acts of the Apostles* verses 1, 15-21. The palimpsest is a fragment of two different manuscripts. In the 15th-16th centuries, fragments of old manuscripts were used as manual stencils for wall painting. The Mother of God, St. Luka the Evangelist and Archangel Michael are depicted on the plates above.



BIBLE

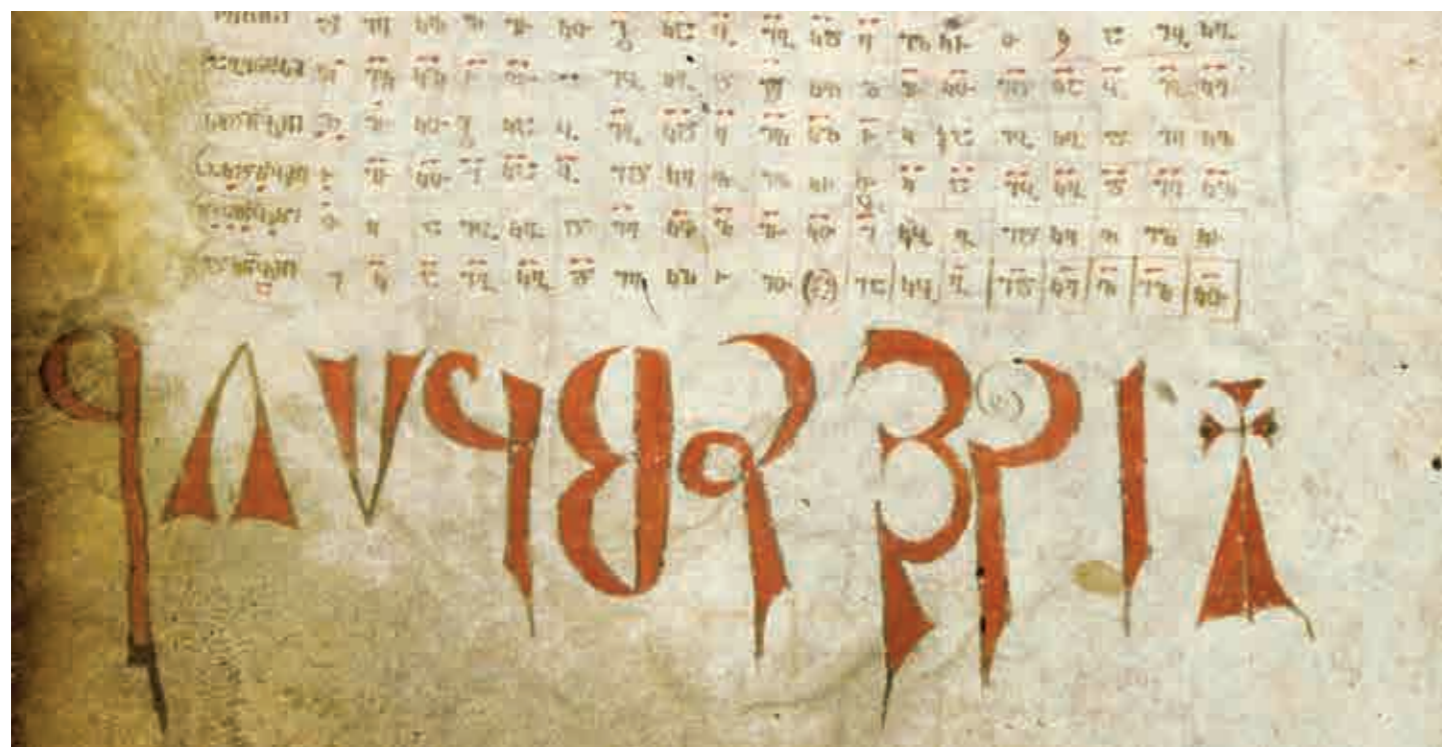


CHAPTER III

The Georgian manuscript tradition, being crucial to the education and religious life of Georgians, naturally prioritized the translation, copying, and reproduction of the Bible. The key questions regarding the translation of the Bible are: when, from which language and in what volume did the Georgians translate the Bible?

For almost four centuries from the first period of Christianity, Georgia and its culture had to exist under difficult conditions of defense against the Mazdian Iran or the Muslim Caliphate. Thus, it is not so surprising that the Georgian handwritten books of the 5th-8th centuries survived only in the forms of palimpsests and protective folios of manuscript covers (forsatz). These fragments provide valuable insight into the origins the Georgian translations of biblical texts. They indicate that during the early stages of the Georgian literary tradition, the Old Testament books – such as *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Numbers*, *Parables of Solomon*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezra Zorababel*, *Ruth*, *Psalms*, – as well as the the New Testament texts, including the *Gospels*, *Acts of the Apostles*, *Epistles of Paul* – were primarily translated from Greek into Georgian.

In 978, in Tao-Klarjeti, in the scriptorium of the Oshki Monastery, with the financial support of the great feudal house of Chorchaneli, the complete collection of the Old Testament, known as the Oshki Bible, was copied. The very fact testifies to the existence of translations of the books of the Old Testament made in different times and various locations. Why are we talking about different times or locations? The texts included in the Oshki Bible are translations of various ancient Greek recensions of the biblical books. The book, currently containing 954 parchment folios, is incomplete – the *Book of Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, *Book of Joshua* and three books of *Maccabees* and *Psalms* are missing. The Oshki Bible was copied for the Georgian Monastery of Iviron on the Mount Athos and was one one of the books sent from Tao-Klarjeti to Iviron's library after the establish-



ment of the Monastery. Currently, the book is kept in the collection of the Iviron Monastery, owned by the Greek Patriarchate. After the Oshki Bible, the complete collection of the Old Testament was copied only in the 17th-18th centuries and is known as the Bible of Mtskheta. The book was compiled by the prominent political figure and the man of letters Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani. In addition to these complete collections, the National Centre of Manuscripts preserves 10 incomplete Old Testament manuscripts of various compositions, dating from the 12th to the 17th centuries (A-1108, Q-1152, A-570, H-885, A-646, H-1207, A-179, H-885, A-179, A-244). The most eminent out of them is the Bible with Catenas or the Bible with commentaries in the margins, copied in the scriptorium of Gelati literary school.

From the books of the Old and New Testaments, the *Psalms* and the Gospels were copied as separate codices, their earliest samples can be found from the 9th-10th centuries. Of the Biblical Books, the manuscripts of the *Psalms* and the Gospels are the most numerous. Georgian translations reflect all stages of the development of Greek texts – from the oldest recensions spread in the Christian Near East to the recensions of the Constantinopolitan era. The Georgian manuscripts of the Gospels of the 9th-10th centuries testify that even before the formation of the Greek text of the Constantinopolitan period, the earlier text of the Gospels was not homogeneous and it underwent many significant corrections, re-

flected in the texts copied in the Georgian manuscripts of the Gospels. A similar situation can be observed in the Georgian translations of the *Psalms*.

When discussing Georgian manuscripts of *Psalms* and Gospels, it is important to note that they include both copies made for monastic and practical use, as well as elaborately decorated manuscripts created on special writing materials. Both the text and the artistic-decorative system of the Georgian handwritten Gospels and *Psalms* provide us with very important material for the study of the history of the Byzantine book of the Middle Ages. Along with the complete books of the *Psalms* and the Gospels, collections containing separate verses from the Gospels, the *Psalms*, and *Acts of the Apostles* were copied according to the annual church calendar. The books of this type are simple, without any decorations, and are mostly employed in monastic services.

The text of the *Apocalypse (Book of Revelation)* was translated the latest from the books of the New Testament – in the end of the 10th century. This is not surprising, since the Eastern Christian world has been arguing about the canonicity of this book for a long time. This fact once again confirms that the Georgian manuscript book provides us with a lot of significant material for the study of the history of Byzantine ecclesiastical writing.



MTSKHETA PSALTER

261 ff.; parchment; 198x160 mm.; *asomtavruli*; brown ink, red ink (for headpieces and initials). A-38; 10th-11th cc.

One of the earliest manuscripts featuring the complete text of the *Psalms* presents a unique recension of the Georgian translation and holds significant importance for the history of *Psalms* translations into Georgian. The manuscript is richly decorated, with a braided cross made with colored (blue, yellow, green) inks at the beginning and canon tables at the end of the book. The manuscript features stylized Arabic numerals, which is one of the earliest cases of their use in Georgia.

The manuscript preserves a compilative text *For times and years, decrescent (moon) and intercalary*, where the Easter calculation system and related chronological issues are presented. In Georgian scholarly circles, three different versions of dating the Psalter prevail: 904, 974 and 1016, based on the analyses of the data presented in the abovementioned text.



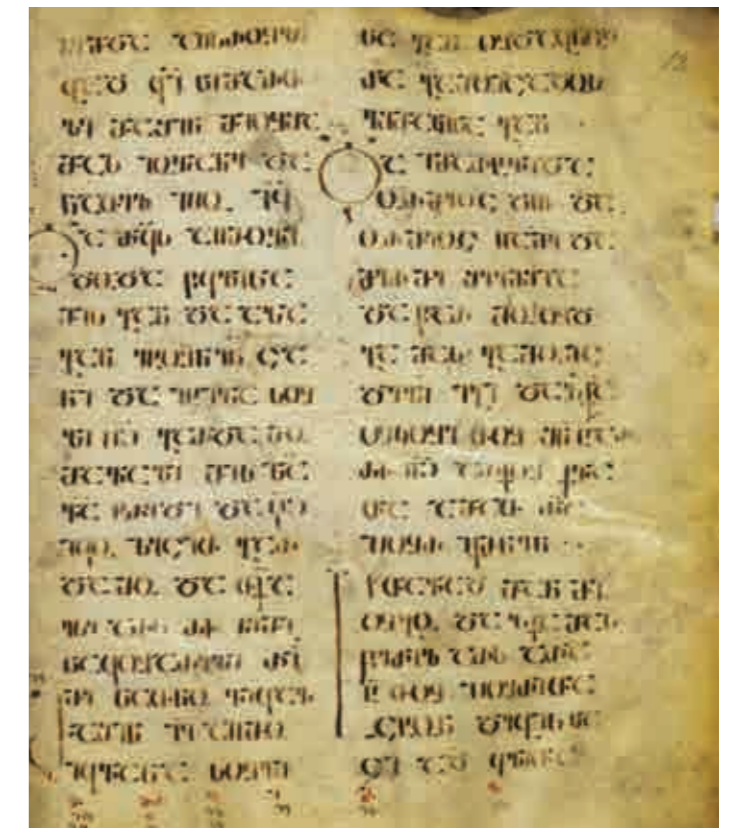
JRUCHI I GOSPELS

297 ff.; parchment; 385x300 mm.; *asomtavruli*; brown ink, black ink, red ink (for initials and titles); illuminated. H-1660; 936-940

One of the outstanding books among Georgian Gospels was copied in the Shatberdi Monastery located in Tao-Klarjeti. The Monastery was built in the 9th century with the financial support of the King of Tao-Klarjeti Bagrat I Curopalates (826-876). In the 9th-11th centuries, Shatberdi became one of the largest centres of Georgian literacy. It played a special role in the monastic life and literary activity of Tao-Klarjeti. Shatberdi was called “the Great Lavra”. It was in this Monastery that the Jruchi I Gospels was copied in 936. From the late Middle Ages, the Gospels was kept in the Jruchi Monastery in Upper Imereti (West Georgia). That is where the name of the Gospels originates from. Since Jruchi II Gospels, the second, richly painted Gospels of the 12th century was preserved in the same Monastery, the book copied in 936 was called the Jruchi I Gospels.

Currently, the book contains 297 folios. It is acephalous. The first part of the traditional beginning of the Gospels – the *Epistle of Eusebius of Caesarea to Carpianus* – is missing. According to the colophon (291r-v), the commissioner of the Gospels was Grigol, son of Mirdati, and the scribe – Gabriel, a priest from Shatberdi, who was assisted in the copying process by 2 clerks from the same Monastery – certain Gabriel and Giorgi. At the beginning of the Gospels,





from the inscription written in *nuskhuri* in the image of the Cross, we learn that the Gospels, copied in Shatberdi, was redeemed from captivity in Khorasan in the 16th century by the priest Iovane Artsaishvili. The history of the arrival of the Gospels in the Jruchi Monastery is unknown. In 1920, in order to collect and protect the Georgian cultural heritage, Ekvtime Taqaishvili contributed the Gospels to the Historical-Ethnographic Museum Fund (present H Fund, NCM).

The Jruchi I Gospels includes an earlier Georgian translation of the Gospels' text, recognized by scholars as one of the most important document in the history of the Bible. In addition to the aincientness of the text, the Jruchi I Gospel is also distinguished by its artistic features. It is one of the earliest illustrated Georgian books. In 940 AD, 4 years later after copying, the book was decorated with 15 artistic images. On the title page of the Gospels (1v) there is a quadrifoliumshaped Cross drawn in a square. On top of the image of the Cross, there is a beseeching inscription made by Tevdore "the scribe of the canon tables" in *asomtavruli*. The term "canon table" in the 10th century meant not the artistic arches framing the miniatures but a concordance of related passages, that describe the same events in more than one of the four Gospels, presented in the columns. Thus, Tevdore is the scribe, who wrote the canons of the Gospels in the decorated arches. The image of the Cross is followed by the decorated arches distributed on 8 folios

(2r-5v), 8 canons of the Gospels. At the beginning of each *Gospel* (St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John) two adjacent folios of the book are presented in arched frames decorated with different foliage, one of which depicts the figure of the standing Evangelist and the other – the scenes of healings from the Gospels. The miniatures are paired as follows: St. Mark the Evangelist and the Healing of the Blind (92v-93r); St. Luke the Evangelist and the Healing of the Possessed Man (143v-144r); St. John the Evangelist and the Healing of the Paralytic (228v-229r). An exception is the artistic decoration of St. Matthew the Evangelist. Here the icon of the Mother of God with Child (6v-7r) is paired with the miniature of St. Matthew (6v-7r). The image of the Mother of God with Child is a rare occurrence in the decoration of the Gospels of the Middle Ages. The Gospels is accompanied by an index of lections.

In the 16th century, after the Gospels was brought to Georgia and handed over to the Jruchi Monastery (9v), the book underwent its first restoration. The faded text was intensified with black ink. The loosened leaves were rebound into the cover. During the rebinding, the top margin of the book was narrowed.

The Jruchi I Gospels was exhibited at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. in 2006 among the books of the Bible copied into various languages in the first millennium AD, as one of the most important samples of human written culture.

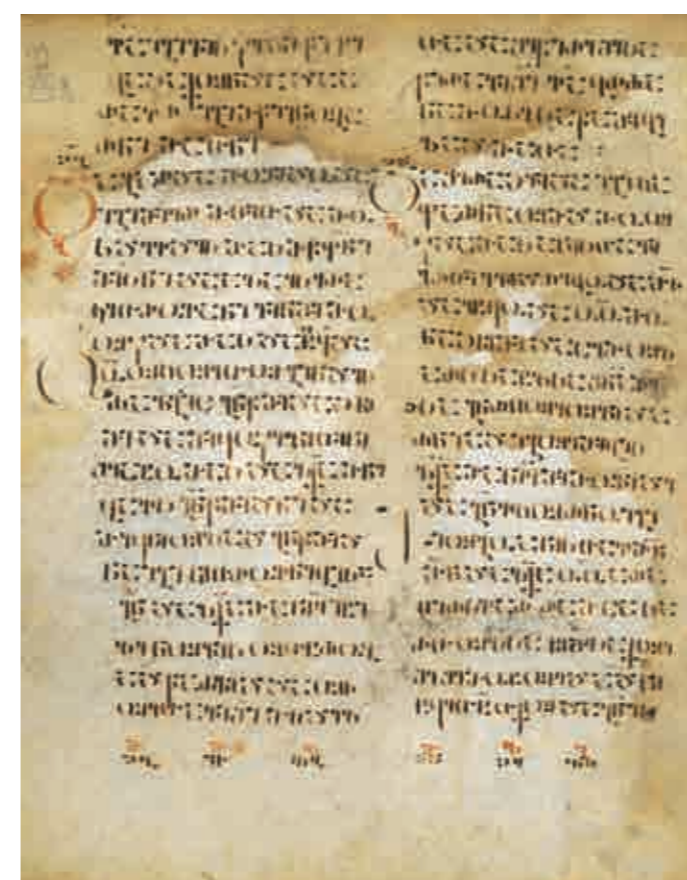


TSQAROSTAVI GOSPELS

216 ff.; parchment; 220x190 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
A-98; 10th-11th cc.

The Tsqarostavi Gospels are regarded as a significant monument of the 10th century. The Gospels' recension follows the old Opiza version. The extant colophon reveals only the names of the scribes: Gabriel (ff. 76v, 110r) and Theodore (f. 3r). The place and exact time of copying is not evident from the colophon. Tradition holds that the scriptorium of the Monastery of Tsqarostavi (Klarjeti, South Georgia), dedicated to the Mother of God, is the place where the manuscript was copied. However, there is another opinion. The point is that there were several places named Tsqarostavi in Georgia at that time, and there are different opinions about this. The date of the manuscript – the end of the 10th century – has been established based on paleographical, codicological and stylistic analysis. In 1074, the codex was rebounded by Iovane (4v). In the manuscript, following the early Christian tradition, the

miniatures are grouped at the beginning of the Gospels' text. Paired portraits of the Evangelists – St. Matthew-St. Mark (f. 3v) and St. Luke-St. John (f. 4r) precede the canon table series (ff. 5r-8v). Oriental types of evangelists, with large expressive eyes, naive faces, simple graphic drawing, modeling of the body with thin parallel lines, share the traditions of Georgian folk art and are distinguished by their expressiveness. The system of canon tables became more varied, and to the single and two-spans system of arches, a three-spans form was added. The illustrations on the natural parchment background use the range of colors characteristic of Eastern Christian art. The canon tables have lost their architectural perception and become completely flat. The artist's unskilled hand is emphasized by schematically executed birds, animals and fabulous creatures included in the decoration of the canon tables.







PALESTINE GOSPELS

243 ff.; parchment; 220x165 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for the initials and titles).
H-1741; 1048

The manuscript, known in the academic circles as the Palestine Gospels, contains the text of the pre-Athonite recension of the Gospels. The manuscript was copied in 1048 in Jerusalem, in Gethsemane, by Mikael Mtsiri (pilgrim), a monk from Mtskheta. The commissioner of the manuscript was Stefane of Palavra, who is referred to as “the son of Mtskheta” in the colophon.

Two different types of indexes of readings are attached to the Gospels. The first one, compiled by Mikael, according to the colophon, was created according to the “Greek order” and is of early Christian or the St. Sabas provenance. The second index, presumably added to the manuscript in the 14th century, is of the Constantinopolitan tradition and is a complete palimpsest. These folios should have been attached to the Gospels in Svaneti, as the manuscript contains the inscriptions in *mkhedruli* from the 14th century. The authors of these inscriptions are the residents of Latali, Yenashi, Lapskeldashi and Lachograshi (villages in Svaneti, Georgia).

The decoration of the Gospels is represented by the image of the cross inserted in the beginning of the manuscript (title page), which is contemporary with the codex, and the image of St. Matthew the Evangelist (1v) and a canon table (2r) executed in green, orange and yellow paints, dated to the 15th-16th centuries.

ALAVERDI GOSPELS

324 ff.; parchment + 4 f. paper; 240x190 mm.;
nuskhuri; black ink, red ink (for initials and titles).
A-484; 1054

A manuscript featuring elegantly calligraphic *nuskhuri* script on high-quality parchment was copied by special commission. Besides the Gospels, the manuscript contains the apocryphal *Epistula Abgari*, a text connected to the miraculous icon of the Savior, believed to be not made by human hands, from early Christian literature. It consists of 324 parchment and 4 paper folios. The paper pages were added later, probably in the 17th century when a new cover was made to replace the original missing cover of the manuscript. The book was copied in the Monastery of Kalipos near historical Antioch (present-day Hatay province of Turkey). The commissioner is the priest Svimeon, and the scribes – Giorgi and Iovane Dvali. The text of the Gospels reflects the initial stages of work on canonical recensions within the Byzantine sphere, dating back to the 11th century and beyond.

The book is richly decorated. The text of the Gospels is preceded by the *Epistle of Eusebius to Carpianus* (1v-2r), 14 canon tables (2v-9r) and the leaved flowering cross (9v) inserted in the decorated arches. Each *Gospel* is preceded by the images of the Evangelists, St. Matthew (14v), St. Mark (101v), St. Luke (156v) and St. John (243v). The beginning of the text is decorated with a headpiece and decorated initial letters. The colors used for painting are blue, red and ocher, gold leaf is used to fill the background of the image. Written in *asomtavruli* the *Epistula Abgari* is decorated with 6 narrative miniatures and colorful initial letters. The Mandylion, the image of the Savior not made by human hands, is especially important in the artistic decoration of the Apocrypha.

The book is accompanied by three colophons and several inscriptions written at various times and by different persons, which serve as important documents of Georgia's political history. The first colophon, with



an extensive theological introduction, is composed by Svimeon, the commissioner of the manuscript (311v-314r). The colophon names the Georgian figures who settled in the Monastery of Kalipos. The manuscript does not provide the exact date of execution. The time of copying, 1054, is determined based on the fact mentioned in the colophon – the visit of King Bagrat IV (1018-1072) to Byzantium. The second colophon was compiled by Ivane Proedros, the son of Liparit IV Baghvashi, the governor of Kldekari, after his captivation in 1059. According to the colophon, after receiving the Deed of Grant and the estate of Katskhi from Bagrat IV, Ivane donated this manuscript and a large treasure to the Monastery of Katskhi (314v-316r). As stated in the colophon, the book was “enclothed” by a gilded repoussé cover of the 11th century. In the 16th century this book, stolen from Katskhi, was redeemed and donated to the monastery of St. George in Khandzta by certain Giorgi (1r). In the 17th century, following the devastation of Kartli and Kakheti by Shah Abbas (1571-1629) and the martyrdom of Queen Ketevan (13.09.1624), this book was acquired by Amba Zebede of Alaverdi. With the assistance of Levan II Dadiani (1591-1657), the ruler of Samegrelo, it was purchased in Geguti and transferred to the Alaverdi Monastery, which had been raided by the Persians. The looted Gospels were rebound at Levan II Dadiani's workshop, under his sponsorship.





MARTVILI GOSPELS

186 ff.; parchment; 230x190 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; brown ink, red, yellow and green inks used for the decoration of initial letters. S-391; 11th c.

In scholarly circles, the manuscript is known as the Martvili Gospels. Copied in Chqondidi (West Georgia) by Ioane Stylite. The manuscript artist was Arseni, the commissioner – Ivane Parjaniani.

The book is a compilation of three distinct manuscripts. The first manuscript's only surviving elements are miniatures of the standing Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, which are characteristic of earlier Gospels. Notably, the folios containing these miniatures are smaller than the rest of the manuscript. The second part, comprising folios 3r-140v, is derived from another, prior manuscript written in *asomtavruli* and contains text from the early Byzantine recension. The third part, spanning folios 141r-186v, written in *nuskhuri*, was added by the compiler of the complete manuscript. This section is richly decorated with elaborate initial graphemes, created by the artist Arseni. The initials are rendered in a graphic style, with frequent use of green, yellow, and brown. Compilation of the deficient manuscripts into one book and filling of missing pages was done by the order of Ivane Parjaniani. The Parjanianis are a well-known family living in the Ipari community in Svaneti in the early Middle Ages. In 1031, by order of Ivane Parjanian's father, Vakhtang, the scribe of the Martvili Gospels, Ivane Chqondideli, copied for Parjaniani family another manuscript, which contained the *Lives* of St. George and St. Theodore (Q-240). Parjaniani family also donated a silver cross to the Ipari community. The Martvili Gospels is an interesting specimen proving the existence of private collections.





GELATI BIBLE WITH CATENAS

302 ff.; paper; 370x276 mm.; *nuskhuri*; black ink, red ink (for the initials and titles).
A-1108; 12th c.

An acephalous collection of the Old Testament biblical text accompanied by commentaries in the margins catenas. It begins with the VII chapter of the *Book of Leviticus* and contains the *Book of Numbers*, the *Book of Deuteronomy*, the *Book of Joshua*, the *Book of Judges and Prophets*. The text of the Bible is written in the central part of the page; in the margins the explanations of the famous church fathers – Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, Apollinarius, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Severus of Antioch, John Chrysostom, Olympiodorus of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea and others – are inserted. According to scholars, the Bible with Catenas should have been compiled in the 12th century in the literary school of Gelati. The manuscript dates back also to the 12th century. A conventional sign system is attached to the text. The manuscript is copied in a peculiar cursive *nuskhuri* handwriting.



GELATI GOSPELS

293 ff.; high-quality parchment; 260x188 mm.; *nuskhuri*, *asomtavruli*; brown ink, gold and red ink for initial letters.
Q-908; 12th c.

The Gelati Gospels holds a special place among Georgian illuminated manuscripts. The name of the manuscript, the Gelati Gospels, was established from its last place of storage, where the manuscript has been seen since the 80s of the 19th century. The text follows Giorgi the Hagiorite's recension of the Gospels. The place of execution of the manuscript is unknown. The approximate date of the copying and decoration, the 12th century, is established based on the study of the Gospels' text, calligraphy and the style of miniatures. Taking into account the studies of the Gospels, and artistic features of its decoration, several Georgian literary and artistic centres are assumed to be the place of execution of the manuscript: Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos, the unknown Georgian-Greek scriptorium in Constantinople and one of the Georgian monasteries of the Black Mountain.



The Epistle of Eusebius to Carpianus opens the text of the Gospels. The letter is arranged in two columns and holds four folios, the index of chapters that precede each *Gospel*, repeats the same principle of the text and the head-piece distribution on the parchment. *The Epistula Abgari*, featuring 10 miniatures (ff. 287r-292r), is appended to the Gospels.

The text of the Gospels, written in a single column, is interspersed with inserted miniatures and initials. On the right side, when copying, the common principle of attaching miniatures to the area specially left for them is always strictly obeyed. In the manuscript, the 14-paged series of canon tables is followed by the three-full-figure composition of "Deesis" (f. 11r). At the beginning of each chapter of the *Gospel*, miniatures of the Evangelists are presented (St. Matthew-f. 15v, St. Mark-f. 91 v, St. Luke-144r, St. John-223v).



Initials are characterized by refined, moderate use of gold, colorfulness and flexibility of line. The miniatures included in the appropriate place reflect the unfolding of the visual narration of the Gospels' text, the tradition of its full illustration. Thus, St. Matthew's Gospel contains 75 compositions, St. Mark's – 62, St. Luke's – 71, and St. John's – 43 plot scenes (251 miniatures in total). The miniatures included in the text of Gelati Gospels sequentially illustrate the important stories from the New Testament. They are separated from the text by a simple red line frame. Several cycles of miniatures are notable, including those illustrating the life of Christ. These cycles combine scenes from Christ's childhood, depictions of the Great Feasts and significant events, the Passion cycle, and post-Resurrection moments. A substantial portion of the illustrations in the manuscript is dedicated to Christ's healings and miracles, which form the majority of the miniature depictions. The narrations dedicated to the theme of St. John the Baptist can be distinguished as a separate cycle in the manuscript. The illumination of the Gospels is distinguished by the work of several (probably four) different artists, each exhibiting varying levels of skill and expertise.

The Gelati Gospels is a unique sample of Georgian miniature paintings. The decoration of the festive manuscript created on the background of Georgian and Byzantine cultural relations and traditions reflects the high artistic level of Georgian book art of the 12th century, the advanced ideological, iconographic and stylistic tendencies of the Komnenian era, the influence of the cultural environment, the skill of the artist and the refined taste of the commissioner.







JRUCHI II GOSPELS

278 ff.; 245x186; parchment; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
dark brown ink, red ink.
H-1667; 12th-13th cc.

In 1919 Ekvtime Taqaisvili brought the 12th-13th century manuscript known as the Jruchi II Gospels from the Monastery of Jruchi. The Codex containing the text of the Gospels revised by Giorgi the Hagiorite is distinguished by the abundance of miniatures created with high artistic skills, presenting a complete decoration system of the Gospels' text. 334 miniatures are inserted in the manuscript.

The location where the manuscript was copied and illuminated remains unknown. The book lacks contemporary colophons. In the middle of the last century, the name of one of the scribes, Mikael, was revealed: "Jesus, have mercy on Mikael and protect him". His name was inserted in one of the miniatures, in the ornamental decoration of the Savior's chair.

Mikael is also regarded as one of the four artists of the miniatures. In the selection of scenes, the priority is given to Christological themes, the Passion cycle, the story of St. John the Baptist, Parables, and symbolic compositions

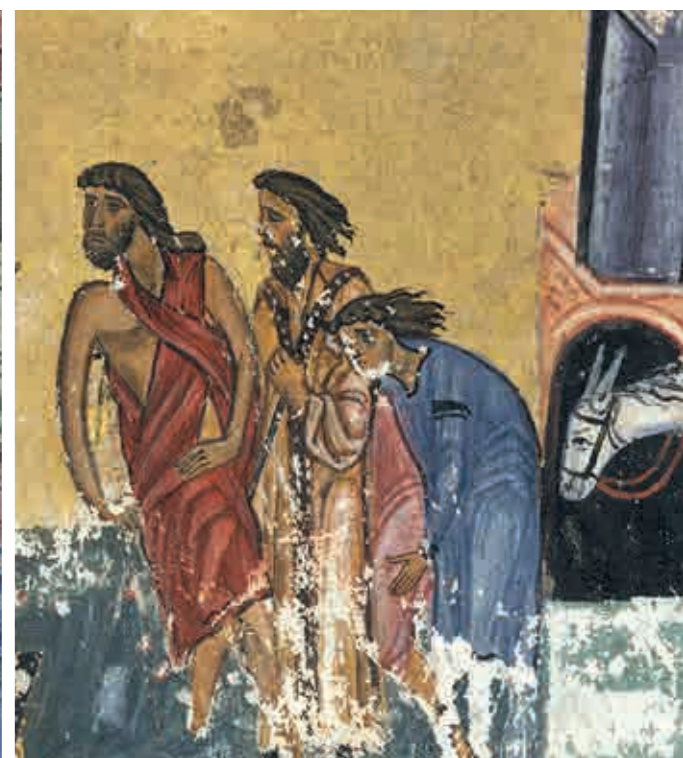
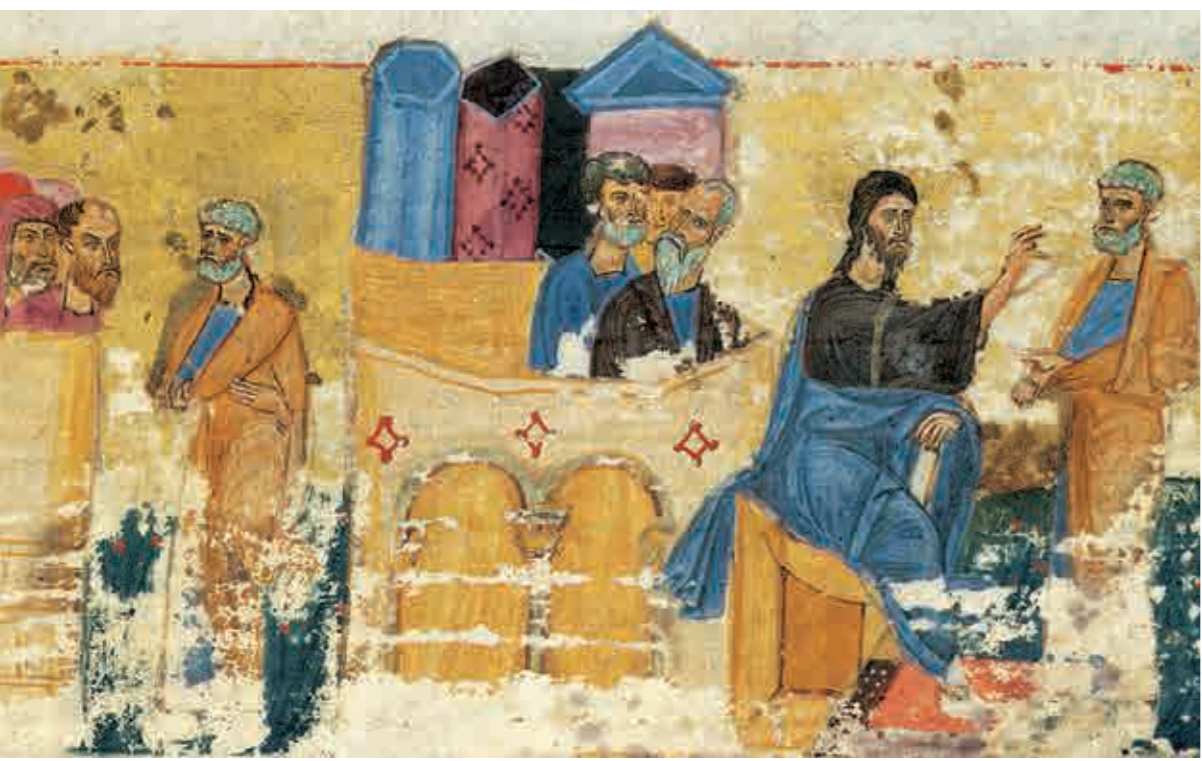




related to the Second Coming and Salvation. However, parables and sermons of Christ are given special priority. Like the Gelati Gospels, in the Juchi II Gospels the miniature “Deesis” (f. 6r) is also presented as the frontispiece (title page) composition. The decoration of Juchi II Gospels canon tables also follow the tradition and is distinguished by the abundance of gold, refined and gentle color combinations. Next to the canon tables, the Gospels is characterized by the peculiarity of the decoration of the initial letters: the initials composed of birds, animals, and various fantastic and fabulous creatures are impressive. At first glance, the colored layer of the miniatures seems to be thin, and therefore, the linear rhythm of the contour drawing and forms is striking. Emotionality, plasticity, and spatiality are very important elements in the manuscript decoration.

In order to reveal their artistic vision, the illustrators of the Juchi II Gospels did not follow the strictly defined rules of including miniatures in the text. Colorful scenes,

enriched with architectural and landscape elements, mostly multi-figure compositions are distinguished by their expressiveness and emotionality. The relationship between the text and the miniature makes a unique impression – landscape elements of plastic and refined silhouette penetrated the text, displayed at the edge of the composition, perceived as frames, seem to correspond objecting to the architectonics of the *nuskuri* text. The artistic decoration of the manuscript is characterized by the continuation of the compositions on the margins. Moreover, the narrative figures entering from the edges, directed towards the centre of the folio (especially where the prophecy about the Fall of Jerusalem (f. 64r) and the Crucifixion (f. 75v) compositions are presented) create a unique dynamic. Furthermore, the special rhythmicity expressed in every component of the Juchi II Gospels’ illustrations distinguish the manuscript from other works of Georgian fine art.





BICHVINTA GOSPELS

230 ff.; parchment; 310x230 mm.; *nuskhuri*,
asomtavruli; brown ink, red ink.
H-2120; 12th-13th cc.

The Bichvinta Gospels is named after the place of its recent preservation. Until the 1970s, the manuscript was in possession of the Church of the Mother of God in Bichvinta (West Georgia). The manuscript has reached us in a rather damaged condition. In the codex there is no colophon indicating the place where it was copied, the name of the commissioner, or the identity of the scribe. The inscription that accompanies the manuscript on the front and back sides of the repoussé silver cover, is visible below scenes of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. According to the inscription, the cover of

the manuscript was ordered by Solomon Sharvashidze and his son, Azraqan, as a sign of victory over Gurieli and Liparit Dadiani, and donated to the Church of the Mother of God in Bichvinta. The *mkhedruli* inscription at the beginning of the text informs us of the names of Saustan and Savarekh Sharvashidzes (f.1r).

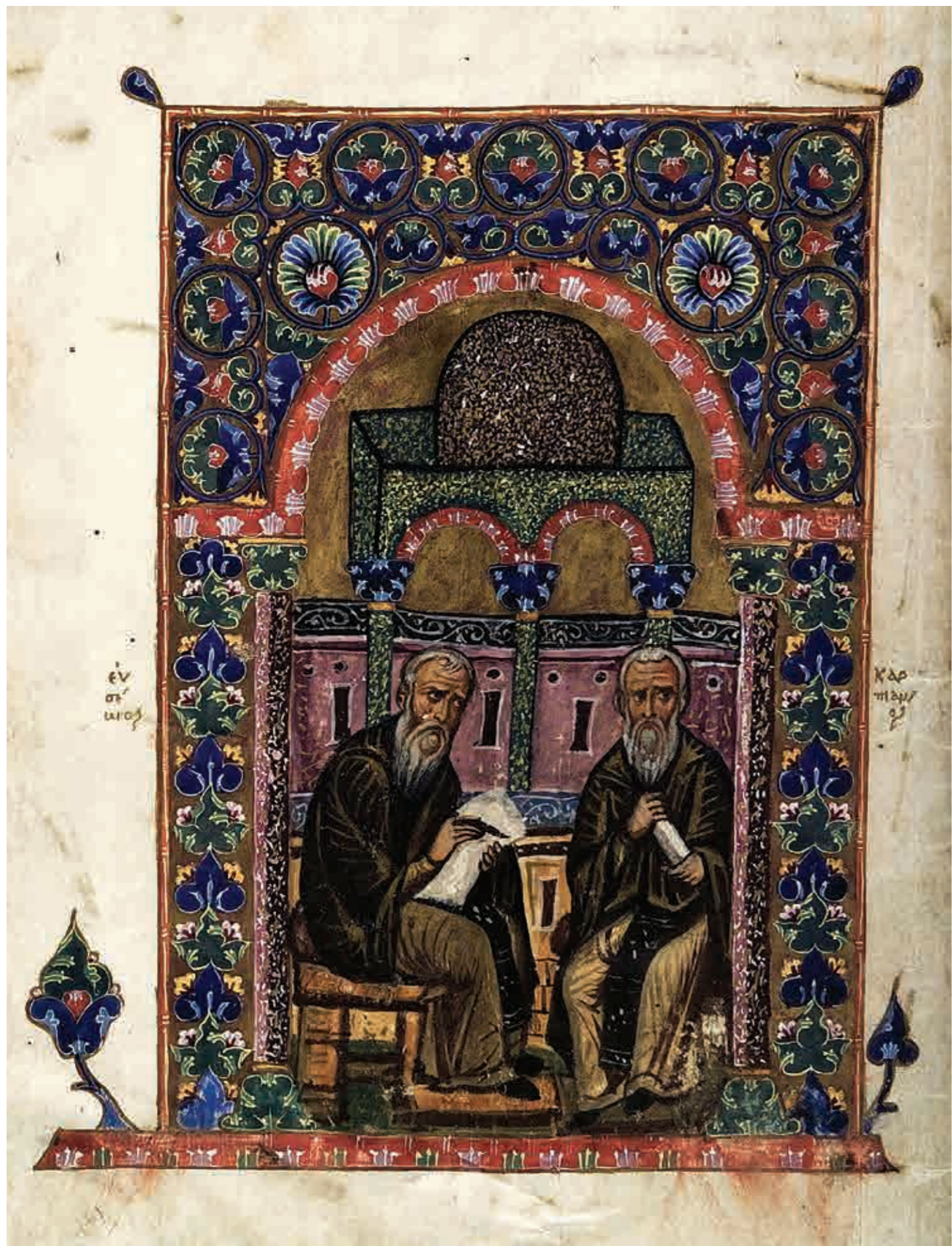
Only two miniatures have survived in the manuscript – the portraits of the Evangelists St. Mark (f. 52v) and St. Luke (f. 103v). They are depicted in the act of writing the Gospel, set against a golden background, within arched frames. The entablature of the arch of St. Mark is decorated with the image of a two-headed winged bird (probably an eagle), while the scene with St. Luke is embellished with the composition of a rooster sitting on a plant grown from a dragon's mouth, adding symbolic character to the miniature. The rooster is considered a sign of a new day, a new faith. The proportions of the Evangelists are broken. They are characterized by a slightly enlarged right hand. The expressive faces of the Evangelists from the Bichvinta Manuscript differ from the refined, elaborately modeled faces of the 12th-13th centuries miniatures.

The color of the arched frames alternates between blue and pink mixed with white. The same principle applies to their monochromatic garments, giving the scenes a kind of dull color effect.

On the background of common Byzantine influences of the 12th-13th centuries, the figures of the Evangelists of the Bichvinta Gospels are an apparent example of the presence of local artistic traditions with flat modeling of the figures and somewhat mottled, watercolor-like coloring.

In addition to the Evangelists, the Gospels' decoration also contains ornamental headpiece, which significantly differs from the figurative images in its craftsmanship. The braided ornamental headpiece extends beyond the frame and penetrates between the lines of the Gospels' text. It merges with the initial letter and forms a whole entity. Colorfulness is limited. The ornaments are painted with cinnabar and treated with blue tones. Here, the artist of the Bichvinta Gospels uses even the color of ivory parchment in the sense of color, which is a characteristic sign of the 12th-13th centuries. The illustrations were likely done by a scribe.





VANI GOSPELS

274 ff.; parchment; 290x210 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, golden ink, mixture of red and golden inks.
A-1335; 12th-13th cc.

Among the Georgian illustrated manuscripts of the 12th-13th centuries, the Vani Gospels, copied and illuminated in the Romana Monastery, in the vicinity of Constantinople, stand out. The text of the Gospels follows the recension of Giorgi the Hagiorite.

The Vani Gospels belong to the rare exception in the Georgian tradition, in which the place of copying, the names of the scribe and the artist have been preserved. The colophon written by the secretarial skilled hand, informs us of the scribe and the place of copying: "This Gospel was written by me, unworthy Iovane the cripple and the well-wisher for the Holy Queen Tamar, in the city of Constantinople" (f. 272v). The copyist also reveals that he copied the Gospels from the original brought from the Holy Mount Athos in the Romana Monastery: "The Monk Zacharia went to the Holy Mount, searched for the Gospels book revised by Giorgi (the Hagiorite) and found the book copied by Stepane, the monk from Shatberdi, in the great library of the books he filled with gladness, and upon his arrival to Romana, I, Iovane, the sinner, labored to copy the holy Gospels that have I been longing for my soul from my earliest times" (f. 266v).

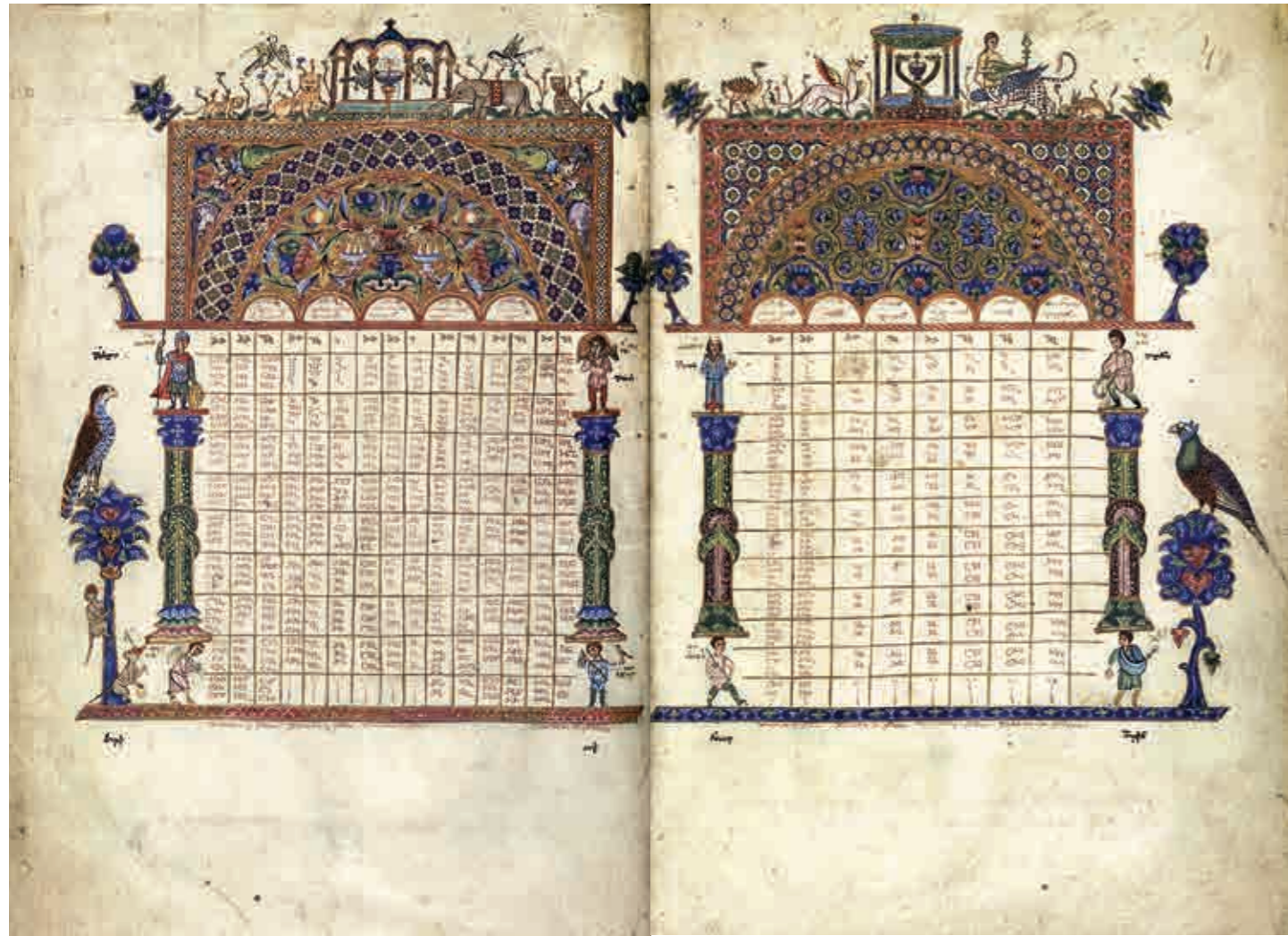
At the end of the manuscript, along with the copyist's testament, there is also a Greek colophon by the artist Mikael Koreseli: "This book was decorated with gold by Mikael of Koresi" (f. 272v).

The main elements of the manuscript's decor, buckled (knotted) canon tables, headpieces and initials are done with high artistic skill. What is interesting here is that the figures inserted in the decoration of the canon tables, represent the symbolic images of the months. The personifications appear as the bases of the canon tables and the supporting figures of the entablature. The peculiar way of distributing them on three folios is also important.



Starting from the month of March, the countdown continues as a horizontal line and sequentially arranges the personifications located in the upper part of the canon tables (supporting the entablature) on the sides 3r, 4r-v. Then the countdown starts again from f. 3r (this time, from the bases) and continues sequentially on the following pages. The personifications present us with the following figures: January sits at the table, February is an old man in a fur coat warming himself by the fire, March – an armed warrior, with a spear and a shield, April – a young man with a lamb on his shoulders, May – figure with a bouquet, June reaps and July winnows the harvest, August drinks from a vessel, September is presented as a harvester with a basket; October – a hunter with a sparrowhawk (f. 3v); November – digs beds; December – sows (f. 4r).

On top of the canon tables and headpieces, various exotic animals and birds appear abundantly, drinking water from the life-giving font. Separate stories taken from urban life (a bear and its tamer, a fight between a lion and a man (according to some opinions, Samson and a lion), a man with a camel carrying water) were well absorbed by the decor of the canon tables.



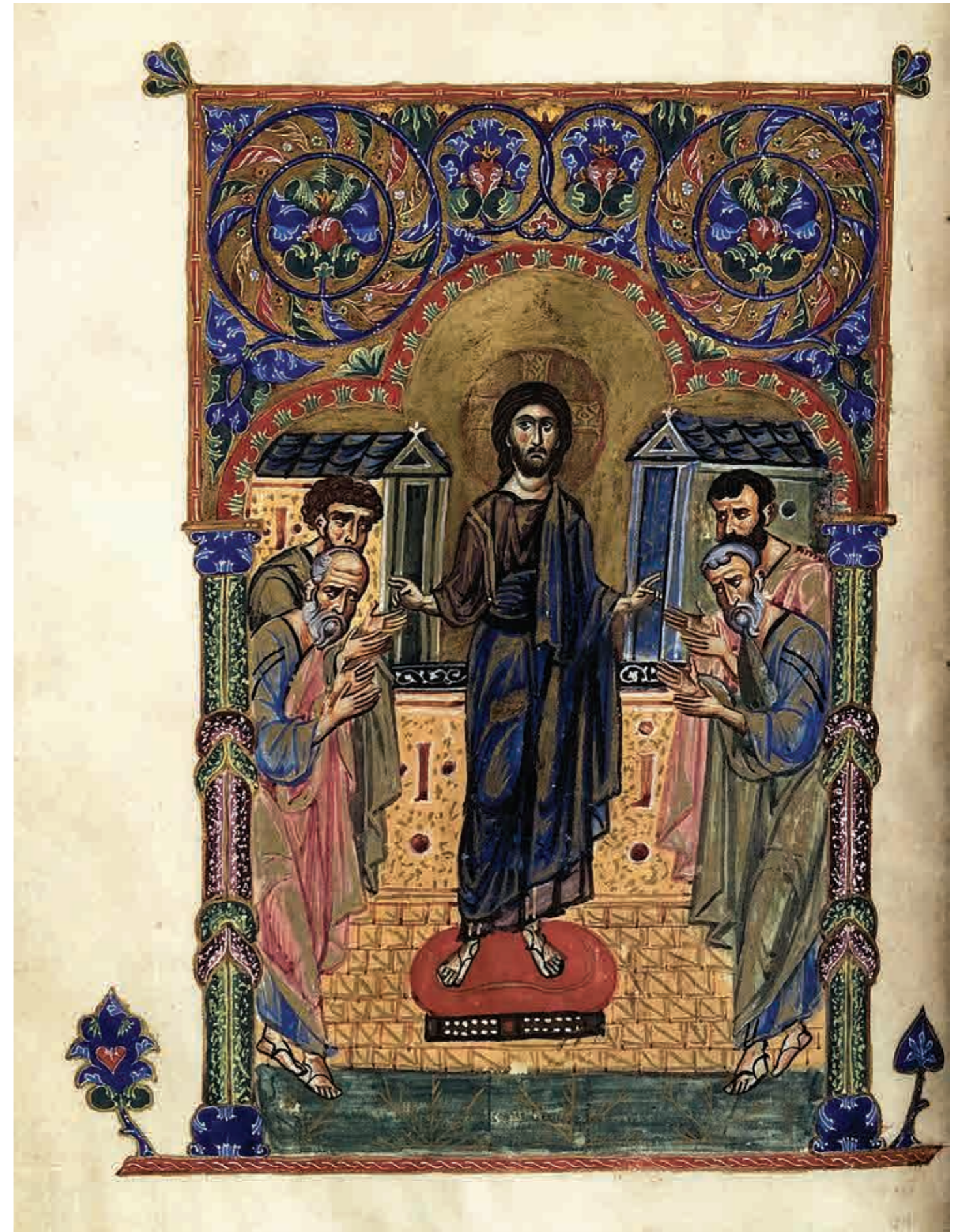
At the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, the number of miniatures in the illumination of Gospels decreases significantly, and the artist of Vani Gospels offers a unique rethinking of this system. In the beginning of the manuscript is presented the miniature of the paired figures of Eusebius and Carpian, they are depicted under the canopy, against the background of the characteristic for Vani Gospels canon table (f. 1v). The miniature is followed with canon tables and at the beginning of the Gospels' text, the artist presents Christ surrounded by the Evangelists (f. 8v). The stories from the Gospels are paired with the images of the Evangelists and inserted in arched frames. Thus, St. Matthew pairs with Christmas (f. 9v), St. Mark – with Epiphany (f. 81v), St. Luke – with Annunciation (f. 131v), and St. John – with Anastasis (f. 210v). There is no doubt that the artist of Vani Gospels was inspired by the best samples of Greek miniature painting and shares the artistic traditions of the leading scriptoria of Constantinople. Pictorial sculpture of figures, a rich gamut of colors, a special load for gold, diversity of ornamental decor, and

use of gold assists, in general, indicate the strengthening of the colorful decorative tendencies of the epoch.

It seems that the manuscript should have had a contemporary silver-repousse case (with images of the Crucifixion, Anastasis and the Evangelists). For the protection of the book, in the 17th century, a family of Chijavadzes commissioned a new case. Both are missing today.

There are several copies of Vani Gospels. One is the Lap-sqaldi Gospels, preserved in the Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography (Mestia, Svaneti), and the other is a Georgian manuscript housed in the Matenadaran treasury in Armenia (so-called Artvini Gospels).

The manuscript was kept in the church of Michael the Archangel in Vani. The inscription of 1776 attached to the manuscript informs that Joseph, the Catholicos of Abkhazia and the brother of King Solomon, extricated the Gospels and donated again to the Church of Sachino, Vani (f. 273v). Earlier, the manuscript was donated as an obituary to the Church of Shorati by the patron Natia and her spouse Beka, the son of Shalva of Artanuji (f. 274r).





MOKVI GOSPELS

329 ff.; parchment; 300x123,5 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; light brown ink, a mixture of cinnabar and gold (for initials and titles). Q-902; 1300

The Mokvi Gospels is an outstanding specimen of Georgian calligraphic art and miniature painting of the turn of the 13th-14th centuries. The manuscript was likely copied in 1300 (ff. 325v-326r) by the monk Ephrem (ff. 103r, 325r) under the direction of Daniel, Archbishop of Mokvi at the scriptorium of the Mokvi Monastery in a village Mokvi in Abkhazia. Ephrem is also considered to be an artist of the manuscript. The text of the Gospels follows the recension of Giorgi the Hagiorite. The unique artistic look of the manuscript is determined by the miniatures included in the text and the characteristic details of decoration. The pursuit of innovation, as well as the incorporation of advanced artistic trends of the time, underscore the significant landmark status of the illumination in the Mokvi Gospels. These artistic features highlight both a creative departure from earlier traditions and a reflection of the evolving aesthetic sensibilities of the epoch. The manuscript is distinguished by the abundance of unusual miniatures from the 13th-14th centuries. Its special artistic feature is the miniatures made on gold leaf; 155 narrative miniatures, 10 canon tables, 4 portraits of the Evangelists, about 530 initial letters present the visual image of the codex. In the decoration of the Mokvi Gospels, compositions are presented on the whole page (Genealogy of Christ – 14r, Pentecost (Descent of the Holy Spirit), Dormition of the Virgin Mary – 327v, Archbishop Daniel kneeling before the Virgin Mary with child – 328r) as well as the scenes included in the text. In the Gospels, several distinct cycles depicting the life of Christ can be identified. These are illustrations of Christ's childhood, scenes portraying the major feasts and significant events, the Passion cycle, and moments following the Resurrection. Each cycle serves to visually narrate key episodes from Christ's life, contributing to the rich iconographic tradition of the Gospels' illumination. In



the decoration of the manuscript, an important place is given to scenes of healings and miniatures confirming the miracles of Christ. The stories dedicated to St. John the Baptist can be singled out as a separate cycle.

The iconographic redactions of the scenes inserted in the decoration of the Mokvi Gospels are nourished by the advanced achievements of the epoch. It is equally saturated with the early, Eastern-Christian and Byzantine artistic traditions marked for Paleologian iconography. The Mokvi Gospels, along with the Alaverdi Gospels of Alaverdi (A-484), is a rare exception preserved in the Georgian tradition, in which the Evangelists are accompanied by their inspiring figures: St. Mark – St. Peter, St. Luke – the Mother of God, and St. John – the divine ray. The last miniature of the Mokvi Gospel presents Daniel, the Mokvi archbishop, kneeling in front of the Mother of God with a child and addressing her with a gesture of supplication. The depiction of the portrait of the commissioner or the customer, in contrast to Georgian wall painting, is not found in miniature painting before this. Such an iconography of the Mother of God with Child belongs to one of the diverse faces of the Hodegetry type *Ἡδεῖα Ἐλπίς* (True Hope). The Mokvi Gospels, illustrated at the turn of the 13th-14th centuries, is imbued with iconographic, coloristic and artistic-stylistic explorations, showcasing pre-Paleologian theological tendencies and aesthetic values.

The rich colorful nuances of the miniatures and the depth of the colored texture acquire pre-Renaissance artistic associations. The miniature painting from Mokvi Gospels is a unique monument of Georgian and, one might say, Byzantine pre-Paleologian book painting, which laid the foundation for the development of this style and, in general, defined the character of Georgian fine art of the 14th century.

PSALTER

168 ff.; 100x750 mm.; parchment; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; black ink, gold ink (for initials and titles). A-351; 1494

The Psalter is a manuscript from the scriptorium of the Atabag court of Samtskhe (South Georgia), probably copied for the Jaqeli family for their personal use. The text follows the recension by Giorgi the Hagiorite. The codex belongs to the group of manuscripts, created in the multicultural environment of Atabag court in the second half of the 15th century. The manuscript was copied by Ambrose, a prominent figure of the time – a scribe, artist, and trusted associate of Atabags, high rank officials of the Samtskhe principality in Southern Georgia. The commissioner of the manuscript was Mzechabuki, the son of Kvarkvare the Great (1416-1498). The manuscript dates back to 1494. In the colophon of the manuscript together with Mzechabuk, we find the names of his mother, Dedisimedi, and brothers Kaikhosro and Baadur.

The codex is quite remarkable for its tiny size and abundant use of gold. The only illustration inserted is that of the biblical king David playing the lyre (f. 2r). This miniature reflects the traditional iconography of the king-prophet, seen both in earlier and later periods. It features a Greek inscription and depicts the king, inspired by divine revelation, singing psalms against the backdrop of a luminous, classically constructed building. The golden background, in general, the abundance of golden details, the image of the Prophet in calligraphic drawing, the proportionality, and the refined manner of writing reveal the skillful hand of the master. A characteristic detail of the epoch is the fluttering curtain-velum, which stands out as a sharp red accent together with the pillow and boots of the King. The overall color scheme is distinguished by its elegance. The image of the Prophet David from the Atabags' Psalter is one of the best miniature paintings of the epoch.

The abundance of gold is felt in the text as well. The names of the *Psalms* and the beginnings of individual lines are uniquely written in golden ink.



Subsequently, the manuscript came into possession of the Agarians, but Rostom Chavchavadze managed to rescue it (f. 165v). Since 1855, the Psalter, belonging to the Atabag family, became the property of the Kvatakhevi Monastery library (f. 23r, 167v).



PSALTER

288 ff.; paper; 230x175 mm.; *nuskhuri*;
dark brown ink.
H-75; 16th c.



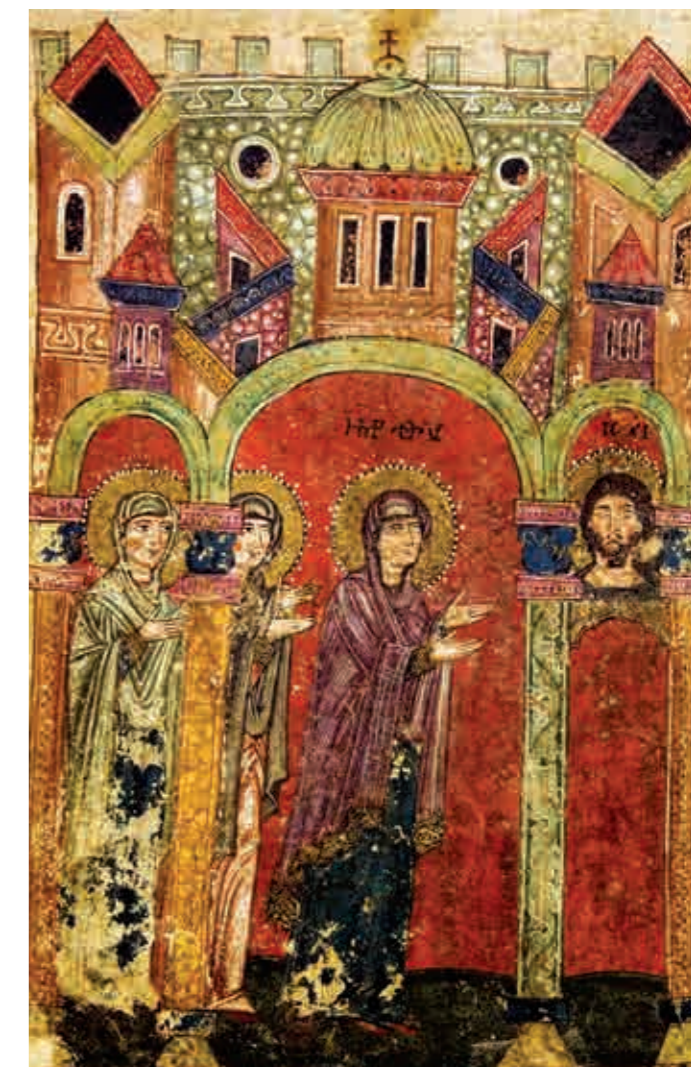
A richly illustrated Psalter, preserved in the Georgian manuscript tradition, is a manuscript known as the *Tetrosani Psalter*. The Psalter was copied under the commission of Tamar, the daughter of Atabag, and her son Kaichosro I (the Head of the Guria Principality, West Georgia in 1641-1660): “glorify... the queen, the daughter of Atabag Lord, Tamar and her son Gurieli Lord Kaichosro in both lives... who commissioned this holy Psalter and its decoration” (f. 262). The manuscript was copied by Germanoz, the priest of Tetrosani Monastery. The reign of Kaichosro I Gurieli must date back to the years 1641-1660. His name, Kaichosro, should be considered as a kind of respect for Jaqeli family, the Atabags of Samtskhe, traditionally a common name in the family. The manuscript was probably copied towards the end of the 16th century. The 55 miniatures included in it are distributed throughout the text. The miniatures predate the text itself. They follow a well-established pattern, although more rigidity is observed. In contrast to the Jruchi Psalter, lighter colors are noticeable. Despite the seemingly thick local spots (still intense red dominates in the background), some miniatures even leave the impression of watercolor. A kind of pictoriality, characteristic for Jruchi Psalter, is replaced by linearity emphasized in Tetrosani Psalter. The influence of secular art is evident in the battle scenes and Old Testament illustrations. The eastern element is also felt here. The figures of birds (e.g. an owl – f. 93r) or animals are particularly expressive.



JRUCHI PSALTER

236 ff.; paper with watermark; 250x175 mm.;
nuskhuri, *asomtavruli*; brown ink, red ink.
H-1665; 17th c.

Among the illustrated manuscripts of Georgian *Psalms* the Jruchi Psalter is particularly outstanding. The text of the Psalter follows recension of Giorgi the Hagiorite. The manuscript was kept in the Monastery of Jruchi (Imereti, Western Georgia), from where it was brought by Ekvtime Takaishvili in 1919. The text of *Psalms* was copied in the 17th century under the commission of Prince Zilikhan (Batonishvili), the miniatures attached to it seem to have been removed from an earlier manuscript. It should also be noted that the miniatures are gathered at the end of the text (ff. 171r-236v). The large number of narrative



miniatures (132 in total), along with their distinct styles and the presence of various artistic traditions, clearly suggests that the depiction of David’s text was integral to Georgian painting.

The inscription on one of the miniatures of Jruchi Psalter and its interpretation have led to various opinions in scholarly circles about the date of the miniatures: a group of scholars believes that the miniatures were commissioned by Tamar – Gurji Khatun, the daughter of the Queen of Queens Rusudan, the wife of Kias-ed-Din Kaykhusraw II, Sultan of Iconium (1236-1245) and was dated to the 13th



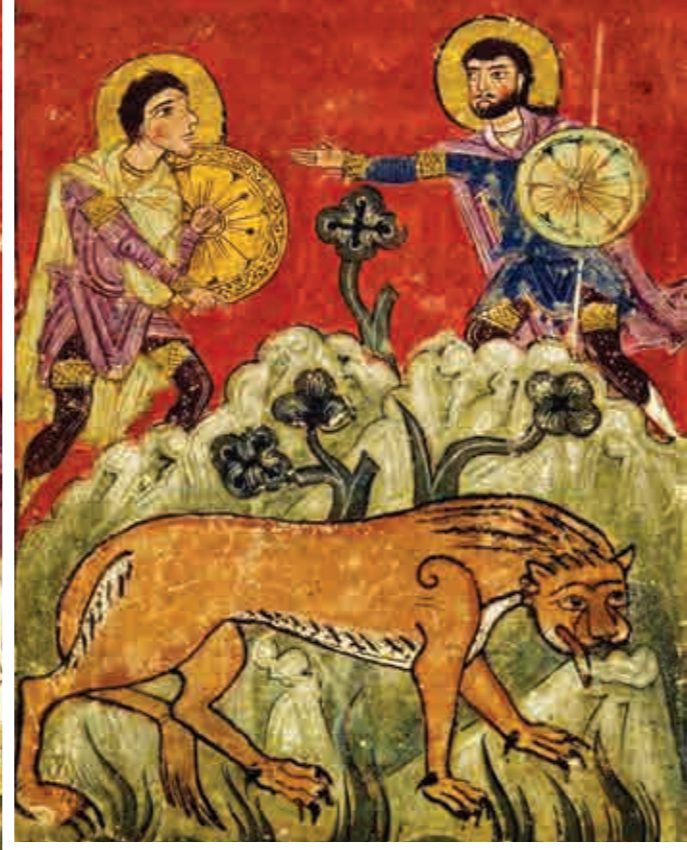
century (Sh. Amiranashvili), while others date the manuscript miniatures to the 15th century (L. Shervashidze, R. Shmerling, I. Songhulashvili, E. Machavariani, etc.).

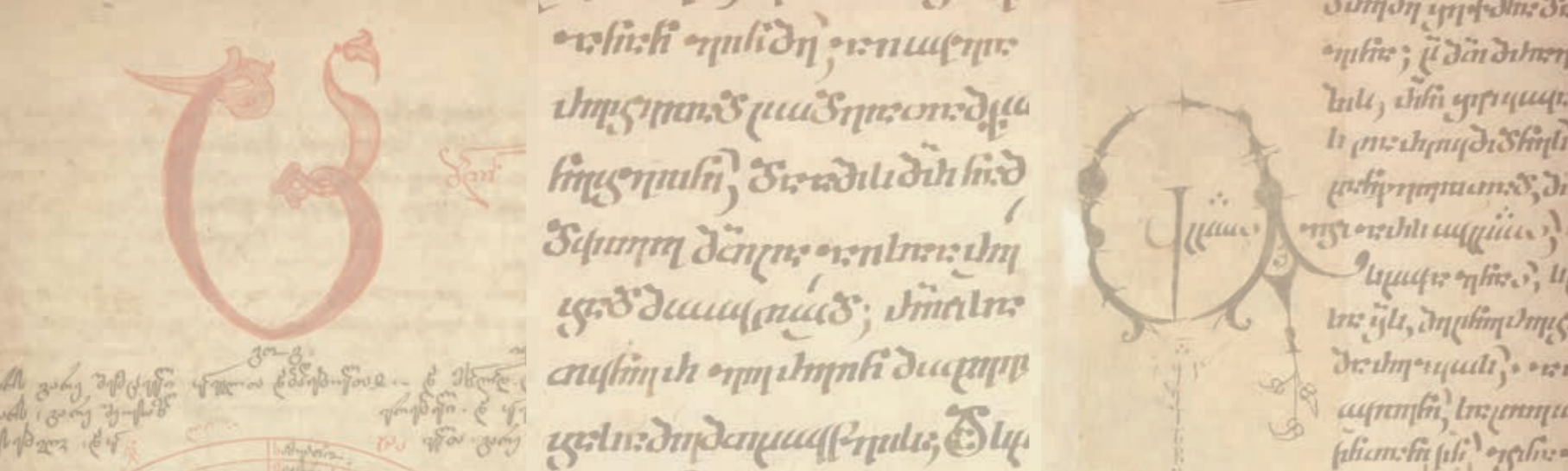
The narrative compositions attached to the manuscript can be divided into several cycles: Old Testament stories, which detail the biblical history, the history of David and his battles, the disagreement with Absalom, the history of the Jews after David; also the story of Joseph and his brothers, the story of Judith, the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Biblical fathers and prophets are presented on separate folios: Melchizedek, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Angia, and others. The manuscript contains many images of the biblical King David, to whom the *Psalms* are attributed. David is presented kneeling in praying, beseeching, mourner positions, often with a scroll in his hand. The Psalter compositions are exceptional for their abundance of battle scenes.

Symbolic and allegorical stories and solemn miniatures based on the themes of the New Testament can be singled out as a separate cycle. Upon examining the miniatures,

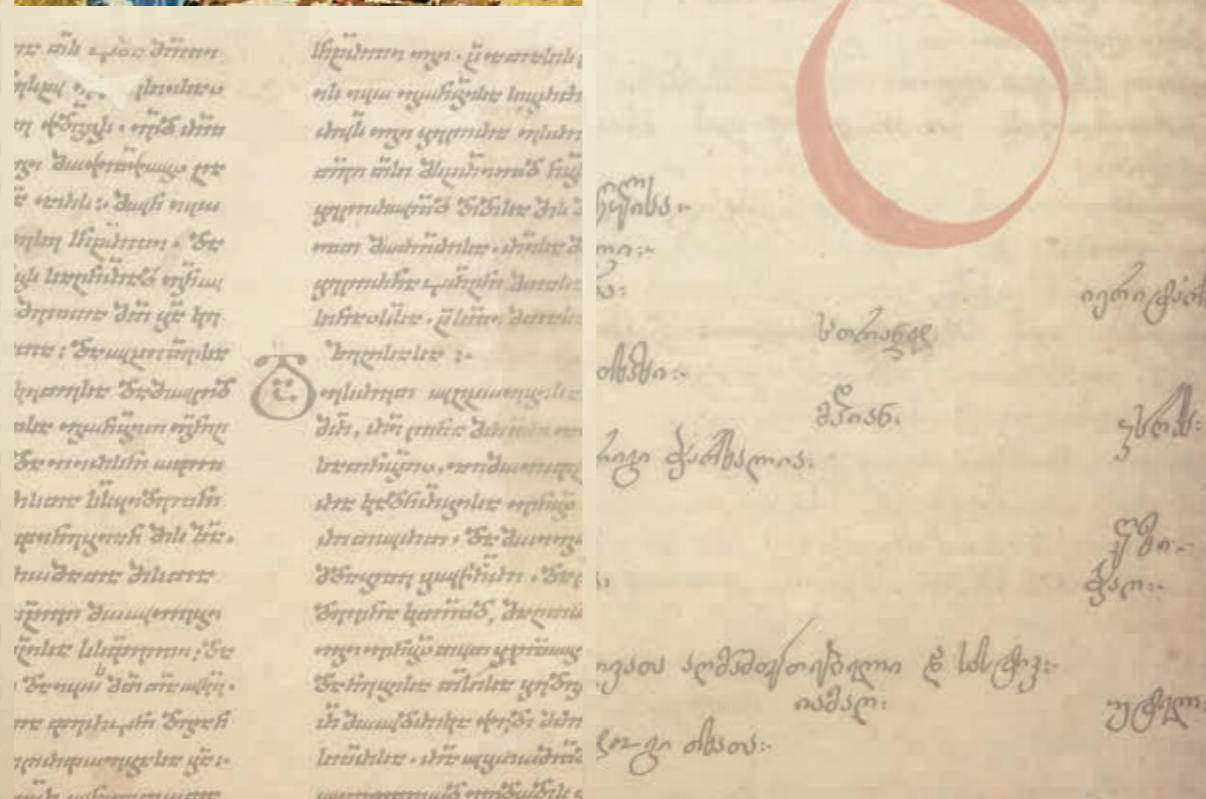
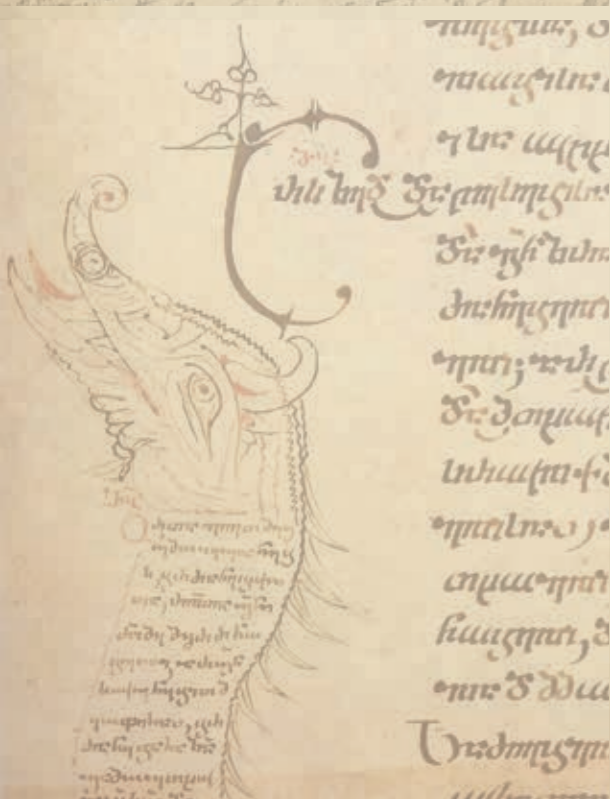
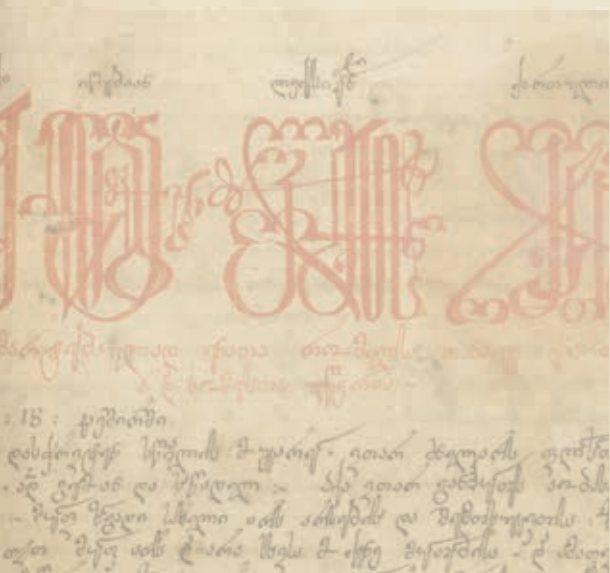
it becomes evident that two artists with entirely distinct styles worked on the Psalter simultaneously.

Red backgrounds, arched framing of compositions, accurate rendering of clothing, architectural and living details point to the realities of the secular life of that time. If the iconographic rules and artistic traditions are strictly followed in the depiction of the great feasts of the New Testament, there is a noticeable strengthening of secular artistic trends in the presentation of biblical stories. When depicting battle scenes, the obvious flatness, the absence of voluminous forms, ornamental stylization, and the rendering of individual details of clothes and military equipment point to the reflection of Islamic art.





LITURGICAL MANUSCRIPTS



CHAPTER IV

The 1700-year history of Christian worship in the Georgian language begins with the Christianization of Kartli and continues to this day. Over the centuries, Georgian liturgical tradition has gone through several periods of development: the oldest is the liturgical service of the 5th-10th centuries, which follows the Jerusalem rite. The Georgian liturgical collections from this period are the most important sources for the study of the Jerusalem liturgy. From the 80s of the 10th century started the transition of Georgian church to the Constantinopolitan rite, driven by both the state's political ambitions and the desire for renewal and development in ecclesiastical life, which were closely linked to the rising influence of Constantinople.

Jerusalem Liturgy

Jerusalem Lectionary – is an essential compendium of the Jerusalem liturgy, covering the entire liturgical year. It includes readings from the Holy Scripture and separate hymnographic canons. The Georgian *Lectionary* reflects all stages of the development of this oldest liturgical book. One of the oldest texts of the *Lectionary* – the *Khanmeti Lectionary* (which is housed today at the University of Graz), along with the Armenian and Albanian *Lectionaries* (5th century) illustrates the early stages of the development of the *Jerusalem Lectionary* (7th century). Certain Georgian manuscripts of the 10th century have preserved the 8th century type of this canonical church book. Despite the growing influence of Constantinopolitan liturgical practice, until the 11th century the foundation of Georgian liturgy was based on the old Jerusalem texts, as evidenced by two 11th century *Lectionaries*, one of which – Q-1376, dated to 1049 is the only dated manuscript presenting the Jerusalem rite.

Iadgari (hymnographic collection – *Tropologion*). In the initial stage of the development of Jerusalem liturgy, verses from the *Psalms* were primarily used for chanting; only later were special hymns created for worship services, both for the Great Feasts and in honor of indi-

vidual saints. The oldest hymnographic collections in the Georgian language are known as the *Oldest Iadgari*, which has no analogs in other languages of the Christian East. Like a *Lectiary*, *Iadgari* has gone through a long way of evolution. The oldest copies of the *Iadgari* are mainly housed in the collection of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. In the second half of the 9th century, a new compendium, textologically distinct and revised from the *Oldest Iadgari*, began to take shape – known as so-called *New* or *Great Iadgari*. The most important sample of this compendium is the *Great Iadgari* (S-425) by Mikael Modrekili, the famous Georgian cleric, hymnographer and calligrapher of the late 10th century.

Since the 11th century, when the Georgian Orthodox Church switched to Constantinopolitan liturgical rite, *Iadgari* was no longer used as a liturgical manual. And yet, a significant part of the hymnographic material of *New Iadgari* was incorporated into *Menaion* (a liturgical book with hymns, prayers, and readings for each day of the year, commemorating saints and feast days on fixed dates across twelve volumes, one for each month), *Triodion* (a liturgical book used in the Eastern Orthodox Church during Lent, containing services from the pre-Lenten period to Holy Saturday), *Pentecostarion* (covers the period from Easter to Pentecost, guiding services for the Paschal season) and *Parakletike* (or *Oktoechos* is a weekly cycle of hymns and prayers used throughout the year, divided into eight modes or tones).

Mravaltavi (polykephaleion, multi-chapter) – is considered to be the homiletic appendix to the *Lectiary*. It contains homilies to the Great and major Feast delivered by holy fathers: John Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory the Theologian, Severian of Gabala, Cyril of Alexandria and others. Books of this type were translated into Georgian already in the 4th-5th centuries. The oldest example of *Mravaltavi* – known as *Khanmeti Mravaltavi*, is presented in the form of a palimpsest, the

manuscript dates back to the first half of the 7th century. The following manuscripts of *Mravaltavi* have survived to this day – *Mravaltavis* of: Sinai (864), Udabno (9-10th cc.), Athos (10th c.), Tbeti (10th c.), Klarjeti (10th c.) and Parkhali (10th c.).

Constantinopolitan liturgy

A key role in establishing the Constantinopolitan rite was played by the founding of the Georgian Iviron Monastery (979 AD) on Mount Athos. The translation of significant books of the Constantinopolitan liturgy, such as *Synaxarion*, *Menaion*, *Triodion*, *Pentecostarion*, *Annual Apostle* (contains readings from the *Acts of the Apostles*, the *Epistles*, and sometimes the *Book of Revelation*, which are read during the Divine Liturgy and other services), *Annual Gospel* (includes selected passages from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) designated for reading during various services throughout the year), *Parakletike*, and others, is associated with the names of the Hagiorite Fathers – Euthymius and Giorgi Hagiorites.

But the influence of the Constantinopolitan liturgy can already be proven in the liturgical collections copied and edited by Ioane Zosime, a famous Georgian clergyman of the 10th century, serving in the St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. It was the "Greek" or Constantinopolitan source that Ioane Zosime used along with the sources originating from Jerusalem and St. Sabas when compiling the well-known "Calendar of commemorations of the saints" (Sin. georg. O. 34). This calendar is unique and has no equivalent in the ecclesiastical practice of the Christian East and West.

The I redaction of Menaion – a collection of hymns for the saints of each day of the twelve months reflecting the Constantinopolitan liturgy – and the *Parakletike* (*Oktoechos*) must have been created at the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century. Only a few manuscripts of these have survived to this day. The first



GREAT SYNAXARION
11th c.
Ink on paper

redaction of the *Menaion*, with its structure, represents a transitional phase between the Jerusalem redaction of the *Iadgari* and the Athonite redactions of the *Menaion*, making it a unique collection for studying early Constantinopolitan practices.

Synaxarion – This collection containing movable and unmovable feasts, commemorations of the saints and services arranged by feast for the complete liturgical year, was translated into Georgian for the first time by Euthymius the Hagiorite. This translation has survived in only one manuscript, and even that is a defective or incomplete copy (A-648). Between 1042 and 1044, Giorgi the Hagiorite translated the *Great Synaxarion* from Greek into Georgian, which, according to the translator,

had no equal except in Hagia Sophia and the Monastery of the Studios. The collection quickly spread throughout Georgia and remained the primary book for conducting liturgical service for several centuries.

Triodion – The *Lenten Triodion*, an independent liturgical-hymnographic collection of hymns for the Lenten period, must have been compiled at the turn of the 10th-11th centuries. Georgian written tradition attributes its creation to Euthymius the Hagiorite. However, early Georgian manuscripts (Sin. georg. O. 5 and Sin. georg. O. 75), produced in Jerusalem, do not confirm Euthymius' involvement in its compilation. Later, the version of the *Lenten Triodion* by Giorgi the Hagiorite was widespread in Georgia. In general, Giorgi the Ha-

giorite is associated with the creation of a whole corpus of liturgical books of the Constantinopolitan rite. He translated hymns for all twelve months, supplemented them with older translations, and created unique compendia that are remarkable for both the quantity and diversity of material. Giorgi the Hagiorite is also credited with translating the *Pentecostarion*, which contains hymns and readings from Easter to Pentecost.

Sabbate Typicon – In the first quarter of the 12th century, alongside the *Synaxarion* of Giorgi the Hagiorite, a new redaction of the *Typikon*, known as the *Sabbate Typicon*, began to spread in Georgia. This version, adopted at the Monastery of St. Symeon on Black Mountain (present-day Turkey), was first introduced at the Monastery of Shio Mghvime (Kartli, Georgia) under the guidance of Arsen of Iqalto and Ioane, contemporary clerics of King Davit IV the Builder. A document dated to 1123-1124, the testament of King Davit IV to the Monastery of Shio Mghvime, confirms the transition of the Monastery to the new liturgical rite. From the 13th century onward, the *Sabbate Typicon* gradually spread and established itself in monastic churches and monasteries, not only within Georgia but also in Georgian monastic sites beyond its borders.

The 12th and 13th centuries were a crucial period for the development of Georgian hymnography. A trend emerged of enriching the hymnographic tradition with new hymns dedicated to Georgian saints and feast days. During this time, relatively late, new types of collections were copied, which included not only hymns but also readings. One such collection is the *Sadghesastsaulo* (Feast Hymn Book), the earliest redactions of which date back to the 12th century. These collections changed over time, but their updated redactions are still used in Georgian liturgical practice.

The period from the second half of the 13th century until the beginning of the 16th century is considered one of decline and fall of the ecclesiastical literature. This pe-

riod coincided with the invasions of the Mongols and later the Ottomans, during which the Georgians struggled to preserve their very existence. Later, at the end of the 16th century, the changes in the country's political life and the intensification of the struggle for independence found expression in Georgian writing, including ecclesiastical literature, specifically hagiography and hymnography. There was a need to evaluate the merits of Georgian historical figures and saints in a new way and establish them in church practice. There were collections in which the lives and martyrdoms of Georgian saints and figures were included, accompanied by the hymns dedicated to them. One of the first such collections was dedicated to Syrian fathers and their deeds. Part of the hymnographic material included in the collection was written specially for this compendium. At a later stage, much more complete collections were compiled, including almost all Georgian saints. These collections contributed to the development of original hymnography, and religious poetry gradually became the leading genre.

Gulani – From the 17th century, an original Georgian liturgical collection called *Gulani* was developed. *Gulani* is a large-format and voluminous collection that contains all the essential liturgical books, including the Gospels, *Acts of the Apostles*, *Epistles*, *Menologion*, *Triodion*, *Pentecostarion*, *Parakletike*, *Prophetic books*, *Psalter*, *Hours*, *Synaxarion*, *Typikon*, *Lives of the Saints* and homiletic writings that were read during major feasts. *Gulani* collections differ from one another in their composition. These differences are largely due to the fact that the compilers of *Gulani* used various older editions, some of which originated from Giorgi the Hagiorite's redaction, while others were later versions – revised versions of Giorgi the Hagiorite's redaction or corrected according to Slavic-Russian liturgical books.



CHIL-ETRATI IADGARI

313 ff.; papyrus, parchment; 112x100 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli* (informal handwriting); brown ink, red ink.
H-2123; The beginning of the 10th c.

The so-called Chil-etrati (papyrus-parchment) Iadgari – three separately stitched volumes created using both, parchment and papyrus, dated to the beginning of the 10th century, is the oldest hymnographic compendium containing the complex of original and translated ecclesiastical hymns. Its repertoire is of the 5th century Jerusalem provenance but adjusted to the 5th-8th centuries liturgical customs of St. Sabas Monastery. The supposed liturgical provenance from Jerusalem makes the *Papyrus-Parchment Iadgari* especially significant. The fact that it also contains several Georgian-Greek (5th c.) and Georgian-Christian-Palestinian-Aramaic palimpsest folios (5th-7th cc.) adds special importance to this collection.

The manuscript traveled from historical Palestine to Georgia via Russia. It was discovered and taken from the

Monastery of St. Sabas in the second half of the 19th century by the Bishop Porphyry Uspensky, a member of the Russian Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Uspensky considered the manuscript to be Aethiopic. On the spine of the volumes, the title is still readable: “Codex aethiopicus, Pars I, II, III, A. Porfirius”. According to Alexandre Tsagareli, who elucidated that the manuscript was a collection of Georgian hymns, Uspensky made an inscription on the first depository page of the volume I: “These are three Georgian church books written on papyri, but neither Evangelium nor Book of Apostles or Psalter, E. Porphyry” (in Russian). It was housed in the St. Petersburg Public Library (now the National Library of Russia) before being sent to Georgia in 1923.



GREAT IADGARI

272 ff.; parchment; 375x295 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; brown ink; initial letters ornamented with red, yellow, and green inks. S-425; 978-988

The *Great Iadgari* is the most complete 10th century copy of the hymnographic collection of the early Jerusalem liturgy – the *Iadgari*. The *Great Iadgari* is often referred to by the name of its compiler, scribe and hymnographer, as Mikael Modrekili's *Iadgari*. This unique neumed (notated) *Iadgari* was copied in Tao-Klarjeti by Mikael Modrekili, Euthymius, and an anonymous copyist in 978-988, the manuscript dates to the years of the rule of Davit Curopalates (978-1001), King Gurgen (978/994-1008) and Sumbat of Artanuji (941/966-988). The compendium includes numerous Georgian translations of Greek ecclesiastical hymns from the Jerusalem period. In Modrekili's *Iadgari*, we find significant historical and literary information about notable Georgian hymnographers, such as Ioane Minchkhi, Kurdana, Stepane Sananoisdze of Tchqondidi, Ioane of Tbeti, Ezra – a whole generation of Georgian hymnographers whose original or translated hymns form the foundation of Georgian hymnography of the 10th century. Mikael Modrekili is credited with the addition of a second hymn in a liturgical sequence – *Moikhilesa* (examining), to each rite (set of hymns) in the *Great Iadgari*. The repertoire of Mikael Modrekili's *Iadgari* is divided into three main groups of hymns: original Georgian hymns with authorial inscriptions, Greek hymns with references to Greek authors, anonymous hymns. The manuscript is attached with numerous colophons and inscriptions by the scribes, as well as explanatory notes, some of them in the Armenian language, highlighting the multicultural environment of Tao-Klarjeti.

The decoration of the *Great Iadgari* features highly artistic and finely crafted headpieces, along with initial letters adorned with colorful inks. The manuscript preserves only one miniature, depicting Basil of Caesarea and Ioane of Tbeti (f. 60r).



KALA LECTIONARY

222 ff.; paper; 345x295 mm., 340x285 mm.; *asomtavruli*; brown ink, red ink (for initials and titles). Q-1653; 10th c.

One of the oldest *Lectionaries*, a collection containing the liturgy of the Jerusalem rite, is lacunose. Currently, it contains only the readings from the first Friday of Great Lent to June 12th. This manuscript must have been copied in the middle of the 10th century, in one of these monasteries located in the Palestine region, in which Georgian scribes copied the most important collections of religious services and theological education. The scribes of the manuscript, Giorgi the Scribbler and Mikael, are also known for creating another significant book of Jerusalem liturgical practice –

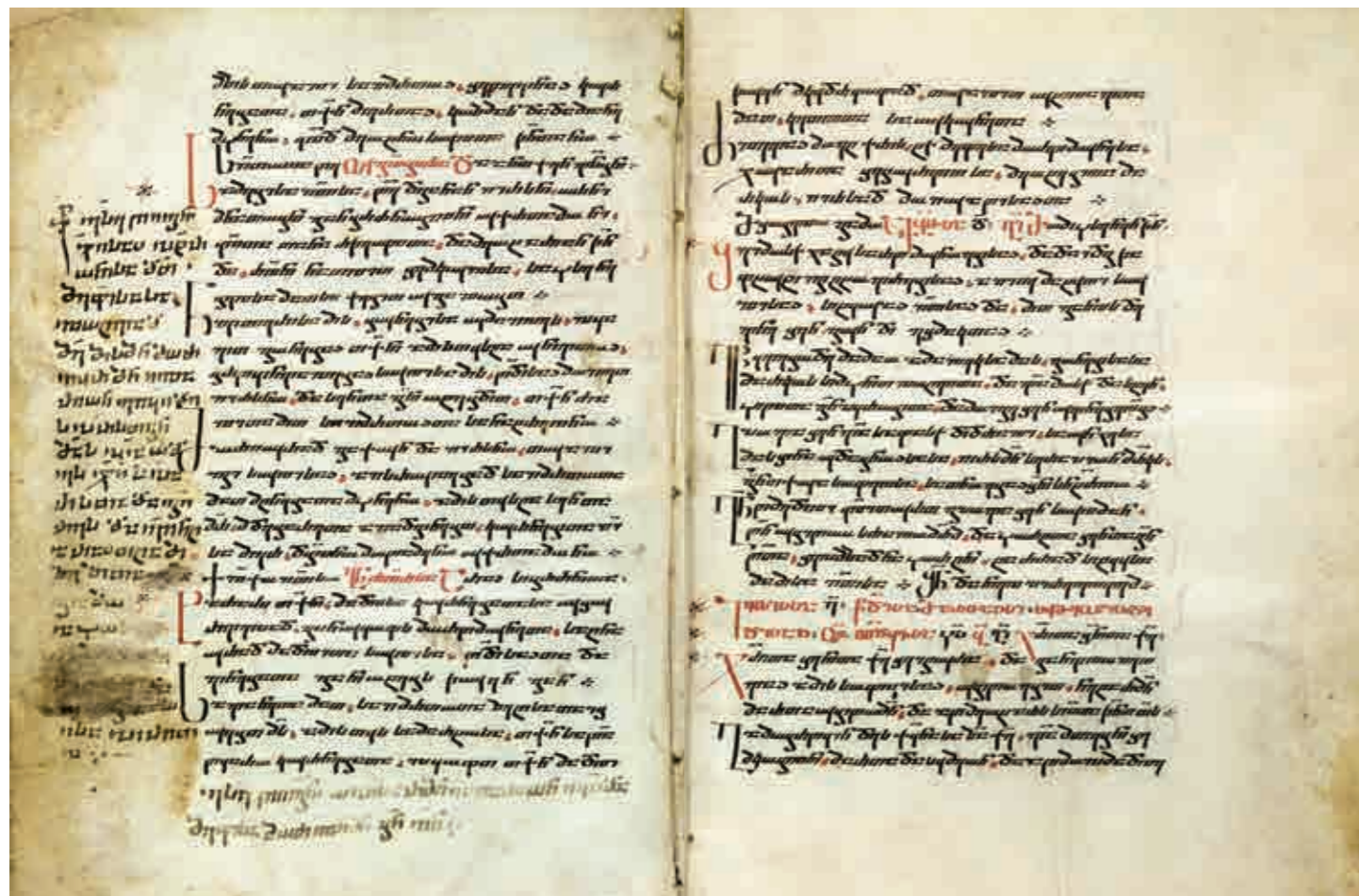
Tsvirmi Iadgari. This manuscript is currently housed in the Svaneti Historical-Ethnographic Museum (Mestia, Svaneti, Georgia). Apart from the ancientness of its text, the Kala Lectionary is notable for its distinctive artistic decoration. Unlike other old *Lectionary* manuscripts, this one feature miniatures executed in brown and red ink: an eagle and a small bird; two pairs of fighting birds: roosters and fire-birds; a horse wrestles with a wolf; and simple decoration on some of the folios at the lower margin.



MENAION

285 ff.; parchment; 255x170 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
H-2337; 1049

The first redaction of *Menaion*, contains the hymns for July-August. It was copied in 1049, in Jerusalem in the Monastery of Golgotha; commissioned by the prominent Georgian ecclesiastic figure Ioane of Golgotha. The manuscript is attached with the inscription by Hilarion of Opiza, the father superior of King Davit VIII of Georgia (1293-1311), stating that he “redeemed the manuscript from Persian captivity”. This fact is related to the return of the monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem to the Georgians in 1305, negotiated by Davit VIII with the Sultan of Egypt, following its occupation by Muslims.



MINOR SYNAXARION

72 ff.; parchment; 266x216 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, red ink.
A-648; 1030

The manuscript is the only surviving copy of the *Synaxarion*, an essential collection of early Constantinopolitan liturgy, translated by Euthymius the Hagiorite, commissioned by Bishop Zakaria of Valashkerti. The manuscript was copied in 1030 at the Pege (Pighuri in Georgian) Monastery in Constantinople by Zakaria’s spiritual son, Basil Etrata.

Zakaria of Valashkerti is known from colophons and inscriptions of the Georgian manuscripts. Unfortunately, Georgian historiography has preserved only scant information about this interesting public figure from the early 11th century. It is presumed that Zakaria, raised by Davit Curopalates, was from a noble family of Tao and was actively involved in negotiations between Byzantine Emperor Basil II (958/976-1025) and King Giorgi I (†1027) of Georgia. According to the Armenian historian Aristakes Lastivertsi, Emperor Basil II punished Zakaria of Valashkerti by cutting out his tongue and exiling him to Constantinople. Zakaria was one of the key figures who supported the dissemination and popularization of the translations of Euthymius the Hagiorite.

The *Minor Synaxarion*, commissioned by Zakaria of Valashkerti, was richly illustrated. Unfortunately, less than one-third of the manuscript has survived to the present day. The 72 preserved folios contain 74 miniatures, executed with exceptional skills. These miniatures are followed by explanatory inscriptions, most of which are in Greek. The high artistic quality of the miniatures makes scholars believe that the illustrations in the *Synaxarion* were created by Greek artists in the imperial capital of Constantinople, with the participation of Georgian masters.

The manuscript includes a Greek-language testament by the commissioner, Zakaria of Valashkerti (f. 72v). From a later inscription in *nuskhuri* in the margins of the miniatures of Simeon the Stylite and St. Mamas at the beginning of the *Synaxarion*, we learn that in the 15th century, the



manuscript was rescued from “Tatar captivity” in Shamakhi by Mkhitar Shabshvili and was handed over to Shalika Qaralashvili. The colophons and inscriptions also inform us that at various times, the manuscript belonged to a certain Spyridon (f. 1r), then to Grigol, son of Iagundi (f. 3v), and later to the Samtavro Monastery (f. 1r).

წმინდის თანხმად...

ქრისტიანული... სწავლება...

აბა-
ნაციი.
ალექ.



სწავლება... დიდებულნი...

წმინდის
თეოდოსი



სწავლება... დიდებულნი...

წმინდის თანხმად...

წმინდის თანხმად...

ქრისტიანული... სწავლება...

სწავლება...

თეოდ.



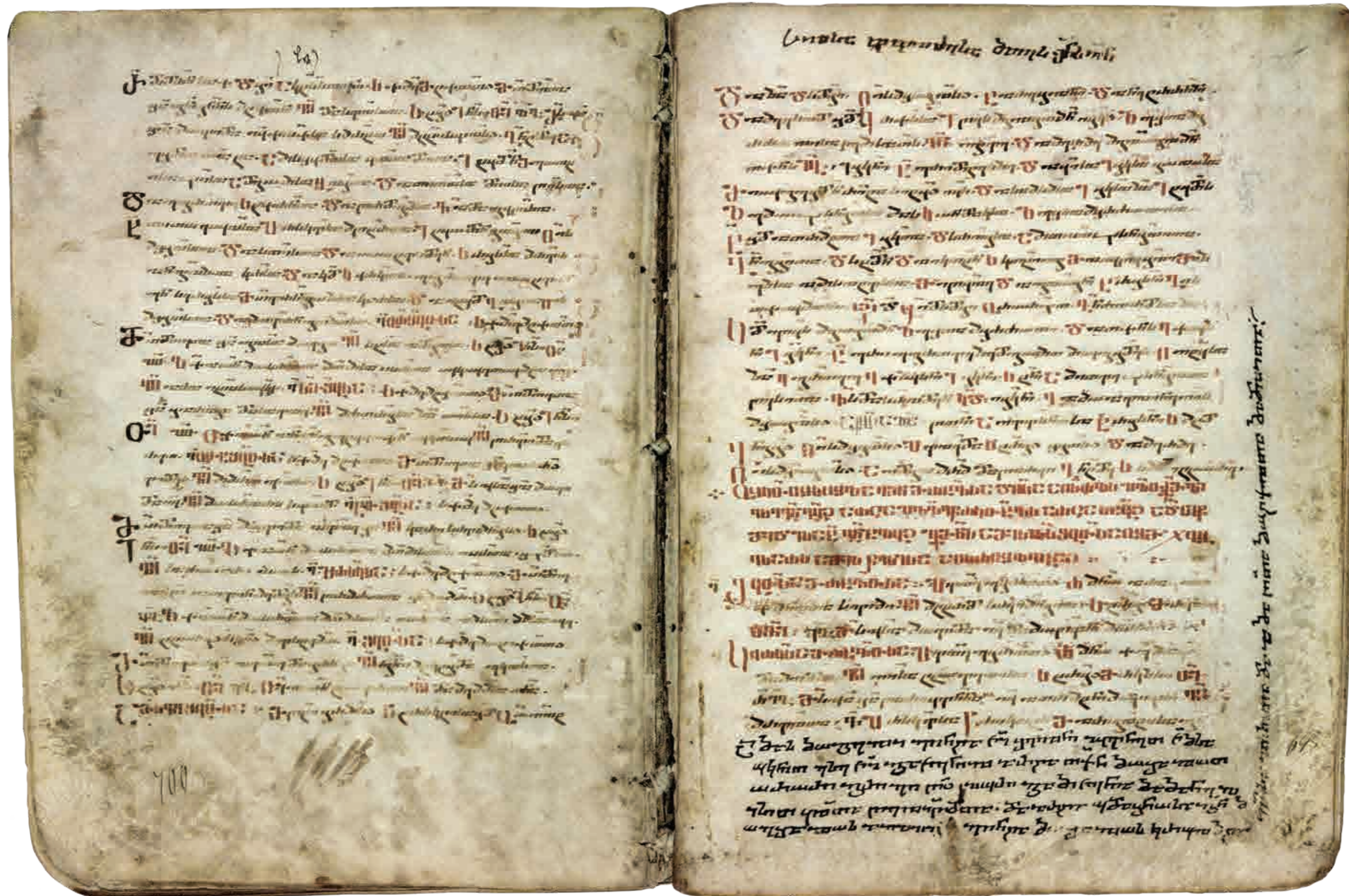
სწავლება... დიდებულნი...

წმინდის თანხმად...

GREAT SYNAXARION

369 ff.; parchment; 270x190 mm.; nuskhuri, asomtavruli; brown ink; red, blue, and green ink used for decoration.
A-97; 11th c.

One of the earliest copies of the *Great Synaxarion*, translated and compiled by Giorgi the Hagiorite in 1042-1044 at the Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos. Giorgi the Hagiorite's translation quickly spread throughout Georgia, and this particular manuscript was copied in historical southern Georgia, likely in the Tao region. This is confirmed by the commemorations of Georgian saints, such as Archil the Martyr, Abibos of Nekresi, Konstanti-Kakhi, Shushanik, etc., written by the copyist in the margins of the *Synaxarion*. The manuscript's decoration features elegant braided headpieces in red ink. Later, the *Synaxarion* was housed in the Midznadzori Monastery (historical Tao).





GREAT SYNAXARION

453 ff.; parchment; 220x117 mm.; *nuskhuri*, *asomtavruli*;
brown ink, red ink, initial letters ornamented with
red, yellow and green inks.
H-2211; 1044-1065

The manuscript was copied in the monastery of Holy Romana (Romantsminda in Georgian) on the Black Mountain by Ivane Jibisdze, a member of a feudal family renowned for its patronage, associated with the Shatberdi literary school. It was commissioned by his uncle, Davit Jibisdze. The *Synaxarion* is thought to have been copied during the lifetime of its compiler, Giorgi the Hagiorite, between 1044 and 1065.

It is particularly noteworthy that the *Synaxarion* preserved the original form of Giorgi the Hagiorite's

translation, as it does not include the interpolations present in other 11th century copies. According to the scribe's colophon, the *Synaxarion* was specifically copied for placement in the Georgian Church of the Wood of Life (Dzelitskhoveli), built by David Jibisdze in the Antioch region. In this same colophon Ivane Jibisdze states that if the Georgian church on the Black Mountain was ever to be abandoned, the *Synaxarion* should be relocated to Shatberdi Monastery.

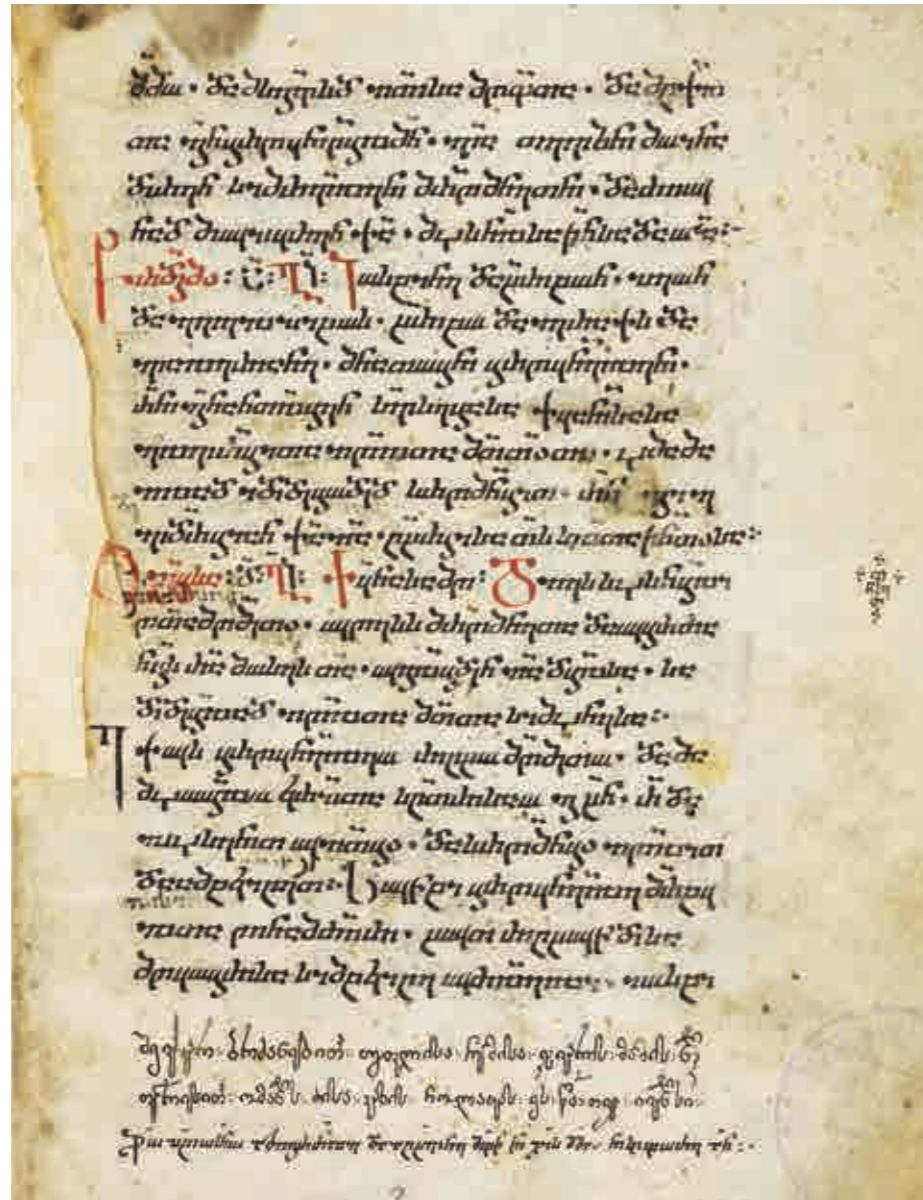


LECTIONARY

43 ff.; parchment; 225x193 mm.; *asomtavruli* (ff 1-5, 8-10, 14-16, 29),
nuskhuri (ff. 6-7, 11-13, 17-28, 30-43);
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
Q-1376; 1049

The manuscript was likely copied in southern Georgia, specifically in Tao-Klarjeti, by Mikael Inchukhi. It is the only dated copy of a *Lectionary* of Jerusalem rite that has survived to the present day. According to Mikael Inchukhi's colophon, the manuscript was copied in 1049. The colophon not only provides the copying date, but also commemorates the significant event of Liparit IV Bagvashi's release from "Turkish captivity". Liparit Bagvashi, a prominent Georgian

historical figure of the 11th century, was the Eristavi (duke) of Kldekari (Central Georgia) and the de facto ruler of Georgia due to the juvenility of Bagrat IV (1018-1072). Later, Liparit rebelled against Bagrat and received support from the Byzantine Empire. In 1048, Liparit fought against the Seljuk Turks alongside the Byzantines and was captured. Before the discovery of Inchukhi's *Lectionary*, Liparit's release from captivity was believed to have happened in 1051.



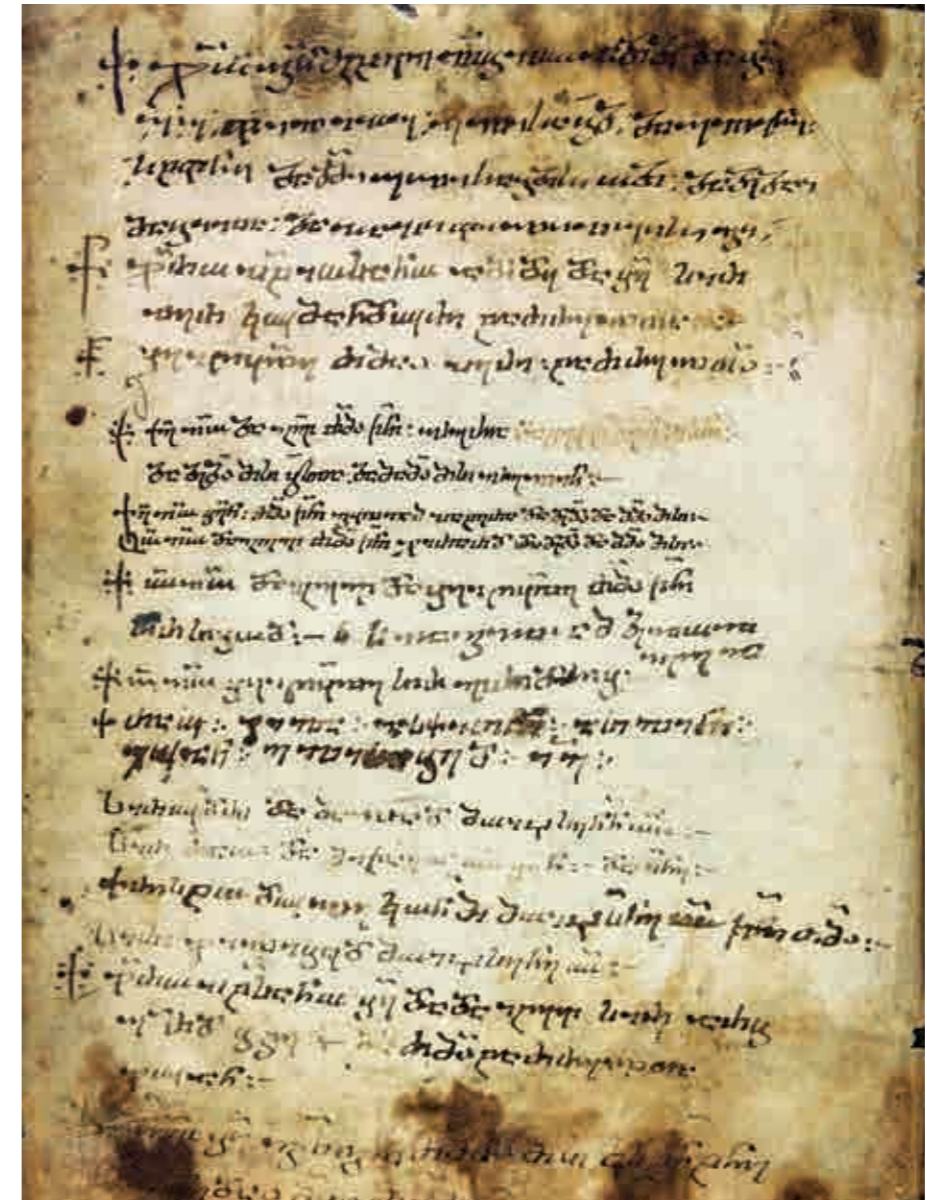
MENAION

175 ff.; parchment; 225x193; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; black ink, red ink. H-2339; 11th c.

The manuscript contains Giorgi the Hagiorite's recension of the *Menaion*. The manuscript is dated to the 11th century. According to the inscription preserved in the manuscript (172r-v), it was bound by Grigol the Deacon in 1649, at the Holy Cross Monastery in Jerusalem. Another inscription (173v-174v) tells us about Father Nikiphore (Nikoloz) Cholokashvili (c. 1585-1658), the father superior of the Holy Cross Monastery, who initiated the restoration of the Holy Cross. A Georgian-Greek building inscription

dated to 1642, placed above the entrance gate of the monastery also contains information about the restoration work and its commissioners: Nikiphore Cholokashvili and Levan Dadiani, the governor of Samegrelo (West Georgia).

In 1820, the Georgian diplomat and bibliophile Giorgi Avalishvili took the manuscript from the Monastery of the Holy Cross to Russia (1v) along with eight other Georgian manuscripts. Later they became the property of the Russian Asiatic Museum (now the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences). In 1923 four Georgian manuscripts from Giorgi Avalishvili's collection, H-2339 among them, were handed over to the Soviet Republic of Georgia.



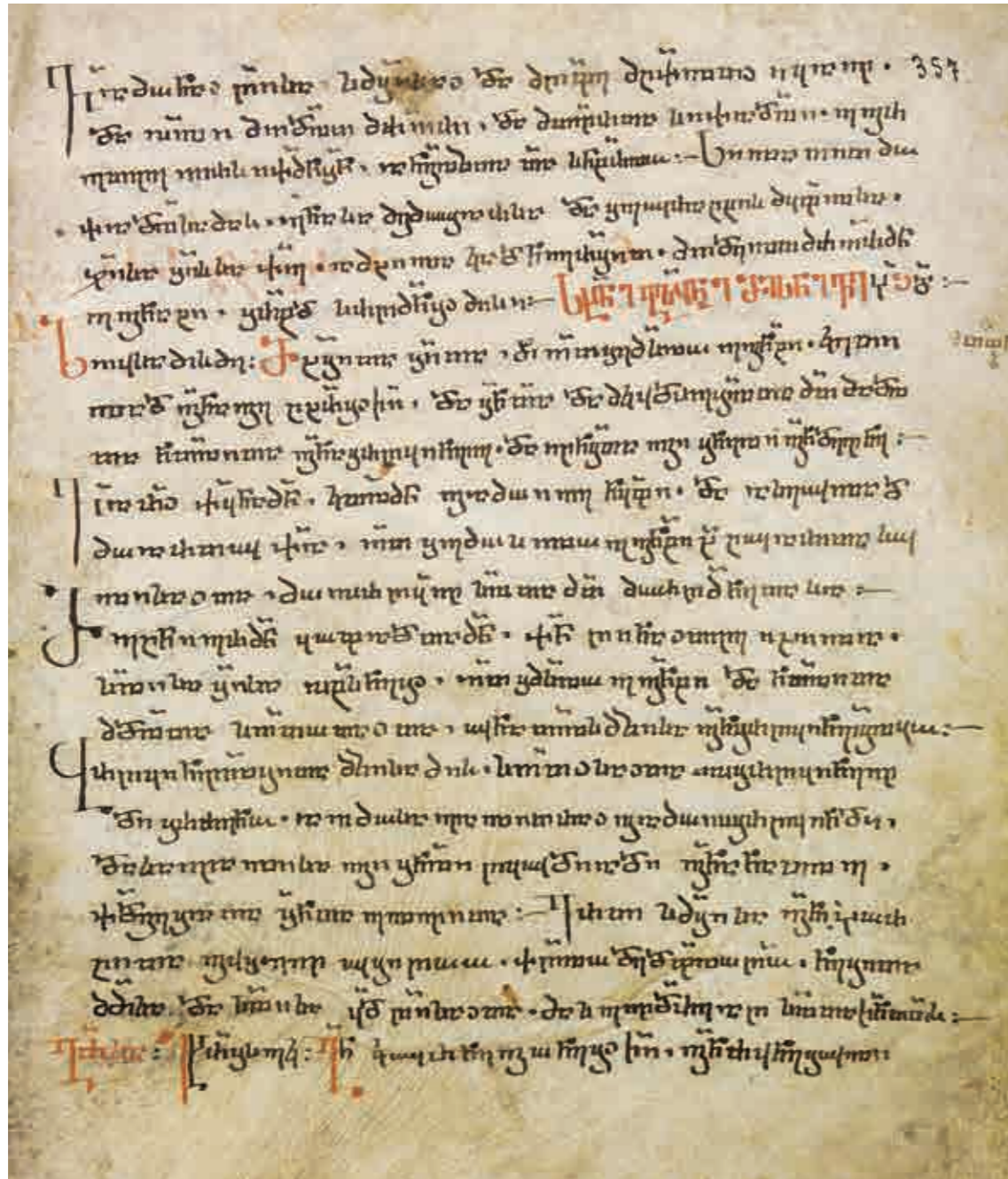
GOLGOTHA SYNAXARION

340 ff.; parchment; 249x192 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; brown ink, red ink (for initials and titles). H-1661; 1156

The *Great Synaxarion* of Giorgi the Hagiorite, also known as the *Golgotha Synaxarion*, was copied in 1156 in Jerusalem, in the Monastery of the Holy Cross by Giorgi Dodo. It was originally part of the Golgotha (a chapel in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) collection. The manuscript is notable not only as one of the earliest copies of the *Great Synaxarion*, but also for the numerous colophons preserved in its margins. These colophons detailed the rights of the Georgians, their participation and obligations at Golgotha

during the divine services. The Golgotha Synaxarion contains important commemorations of the Knights of the Templar order, serving as a primary source for studying the relationships between the Georgian community in Jerusalem and the Crusaders. The only decoration in the manuscript is an illustration of the Cross of Golgotha at the beginning of the text (3r).

In the 1670s, the manuscript was kept at the Monastery of the Holy Cross and was among several manuscripts, restored by Vlasi of Urbnisi (Saakadze), the bishop of the Urbnisi Eparchy in Shida Kartli (1566-1570). In the first half of the 19th century, the manuscript was brought to Georgia by Father Lavrenti of Okriba (Gogeladze).



MENAION

322 ff.; parchment; 215x275 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for initials and titles).
S-4999; 10th, 12th c.

The manuscript containing the *Menaion* of Giorgi the Hagiorite was copied in the 12th century at the Monastery of Khandzta in Tao-Klarjeti. It includes hymns for the month of December. The book was copied by Deacon Stephane at the Monastery of Khandzta. The commissioner of the manuscript was Anthony, the cellarer of the Monastery

of Sveti in Klarjeti. The manuscript originally belonged to the Monastery of Sveti. Interestingly, the scribe used the *ladgari*, a collection of hymns of the Jerusalem rite that was already outdated at the time, as a source, and accordingly, the manuscript is a palimpsest in its entirety, with the lower layer dating back to the 10th century.

PENTECOSTARION

7 ff.; parchment; 220x140 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli, mkhedruli*; brown ink, red ink.
A-734; 12th c.

In this manuscript are preserved only seven miniatures without text. When examining these miniatures, their content predominantly follows the liturgical readings from the Gospels, emphasizing Christ's earthly life and His life after the Resurrection.

The miniatures of the *Pentecostarion* present the following scenes corresponding to the weeks from Easter to Ascension:

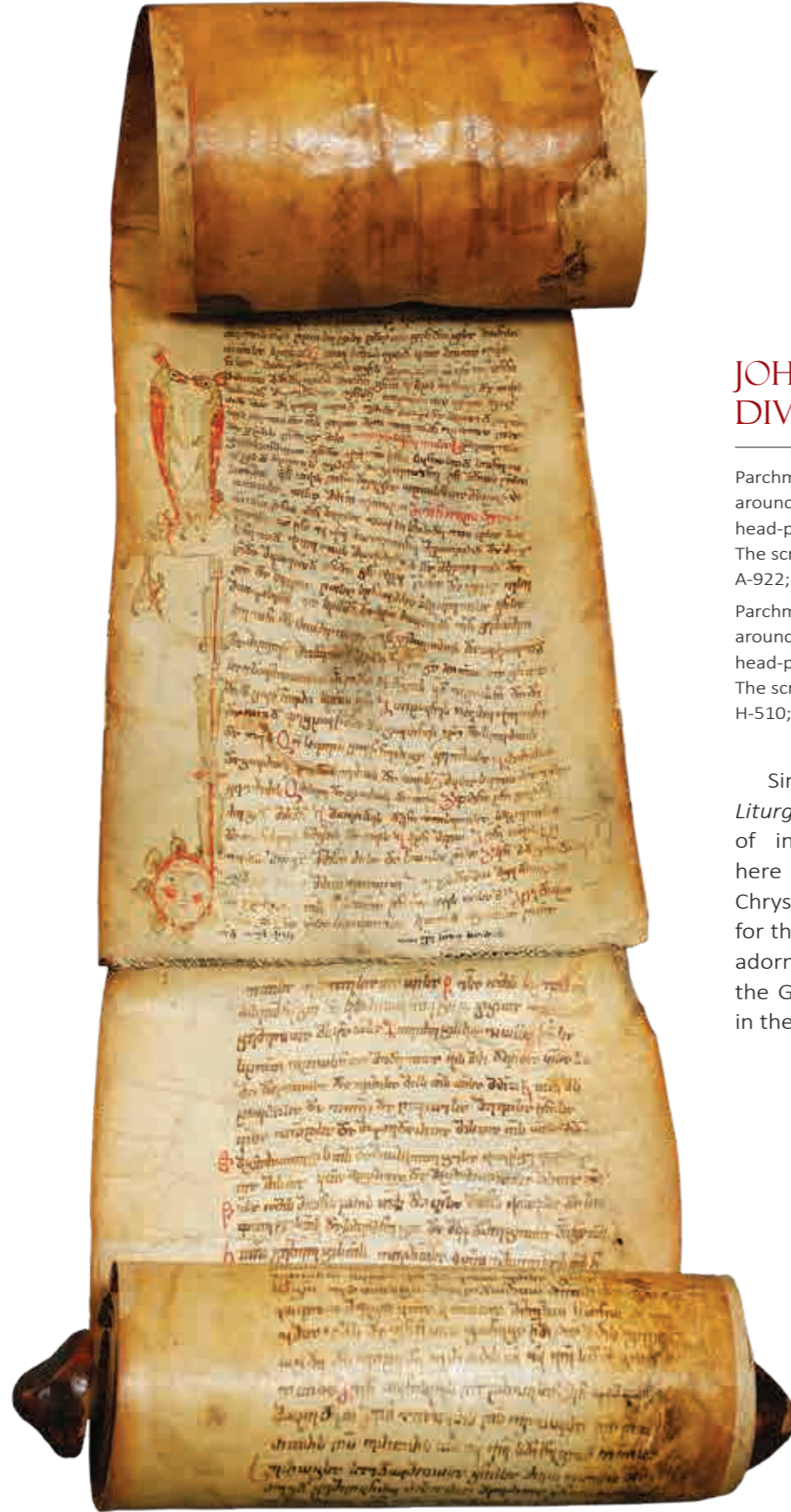
1. The Incredulity of St. Thomas: The golden background features the inscription in cinnabar;
2. The Myrrh-bearing Women and Joseph of Arimathea;
3. The Healing of the Paralytic;
4. Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well;
5. The Healing of the Blind Man;
6. The Ascension;
7. Pentecost.

The miniatures of *Pentecostarion* are dated to the first half of the 12th century. They exhibit similarities to the frescos in the narthex of the main church of Gelati Monastery (the scenes depicting the Ecumenical Councils). The compositions, spread across entire folios with gold backgrounds, are notable for their extraordinary orderliness and symmetry. These miniatures follow iconographic traditions that became prevalent in Byzantium and its neighboring regions by the late 11th century. The use of laconic architectural and landscape backgrounds in these miniatures serves to enhance the narrative, emphasizing both the primary and secondary figures in the scenes. The flexible, elegant, and at times virtuoso contour lines outline monumental and proportionally structured figures, with restrained gestures and movements. The delicate system of shading and highlighting is particularly noteworthy in the rendering of the forms. The dominance of blue



tones imparts a special grandeur to the *Pentecostarion* miniatures. Despite the use of multi-layered painting techniques, the color layer of the miniatures appears almost transparent. In terms of execution and refinement, the miniatures are comparable to the best examples from the leading scriptoria of Constantinople.

Despite the uncertainty regarding the exact date and place of copying, the miniatures are undoubtedly considered to be of Georgian origin. On the verso of the last page of the manuscript, there are several inscriptions. One of these inscriptions, written in *nuskhuri*, belongs to Giorgi Vakhakhishvili, who redeemed the manuscript from the Turks. Here, a 1685 colophon in *mkhedruli* mentions Nikoloz (a bishop), the son of Amilakhori.



JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, DIVINE LITURGY

Parchment; scroll, contains 3 leaves pasted together and wrapped around a wooden axis; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli* (for titles); brown ink, head-pieces and initials – in red ink.
The scroll is copied and illuminated by Gabriel.
A-922; 13-14th cc.

Parchment; scroll, contains 6 leaves pasted together and wrapped around a wooden axis; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli* (for titles); brown ink, head-pieces and initials – in red ink.
The scroll is copied by Giorgi the Chanter.
H-510; 15th c.

Since the 13th-14th centuries, the text of the *Divine Liturgy* was often transcribed onto scrolls for the use of individual churches or monasteries. Presented here are two such scrolls, containing the text of John Chrysostom's *Divine Liturgy*. These scrolls are notable for their exquisite decoration. The opening sections are adorned with miniatures of John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, accompanied by corresponding inscriptions in the *asomtavruli* script.



LARGVISI PENTECOSTARION

175 ff.; parchment; 260x260 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
A-25; 15th c.

The manuscript is copied by certain Barnaba, presumably, in the 15th century. The manuscript was under the patronage of the noble family of Eristavi of Ksani, with several mentions of Eristavt-Eristavi (duke of dukes) Shalva and other members of this feudal house in the colophons.

The manuscript is illuminated. It includes miniatures that accompany the hymns to be performed during Sunday liturgies. The readings are primarily based on the Gospel of John the Evangelist, supplemented by readings from the other Gospels and the *Acts of the Apostles*.

The Largvisi *Pentecostarion* includes the following miniatures related to the liturgy:

1. The Incredulity of St. Thomas/Discussion of the Side (18v);
2. The Myrrh-bearing Women and Joseph of Arimathea (37v);
3. The Healing of the Paralytic (59v);
4. Jesus Christ and the Samaritan Woman (86v);
5. The Healing of the Blind Man (120v);
6. The Ascension of the Savior (134v);
7. The Council of Nicaea (146v).

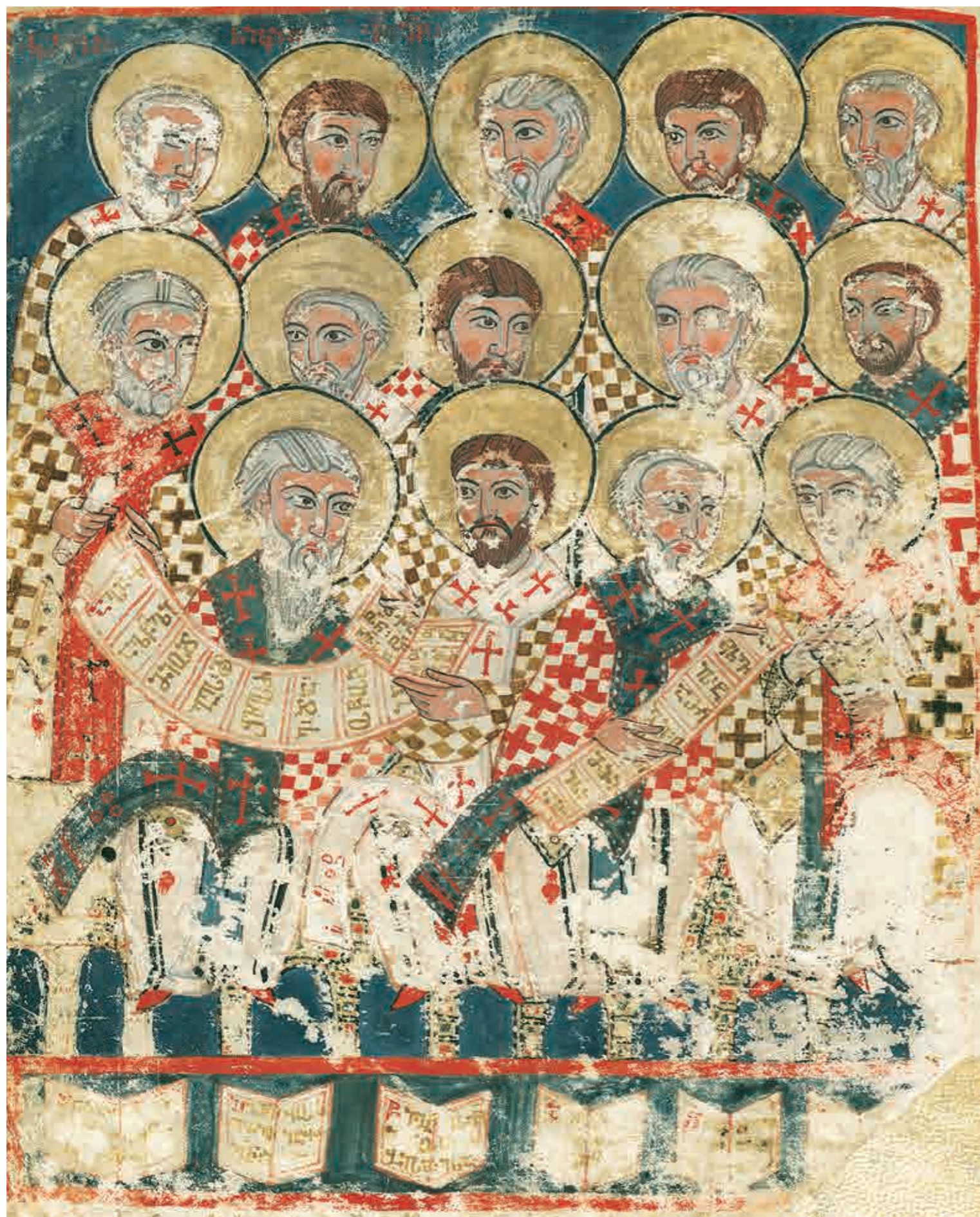
From an iconographic perspective, the miniatures of the Largvisi *Pentecostarion* are unique, showcasing numerous details that are rarely found in the decoration of similar manuscripts. For example, the depiction of Christ enthroned against a domed architectural background, extending his hand toward St. Thomas in the scene of the Doubting of Thomas, is remarkable. Similarly, the portrayal of the Pool of Siloam in the two-part scene of the Healing of the Blind Man stands out. The miniature illustrating the Council of Nicaea is particularly distinctive, with the expressive faces of the Holy Fathers, their characteristic attires, liturgical codices opened on the table, etc. This scene is thematically unrelated to the miracles of the Savior and was not typically included in earlier manuscripts of the *Pentecostarion*.



The common color scheme of the miniatures in the Largvisi *Pentecostarion* is defined by a muted bluish-green background, against which the figures, rendered in various tonal gradations of blue, red, pink, gold, and cinnabar, stand out as sharp accents. These figures, painted with a technique that includes subtle shading and whitening technique, appear somewhat heavy and substantial. Beyond the miniatures, the manuscript features artistic accents such as titles written in red ink, initials, and a single braided ornament decorating the headpiece at the beginning of the manuscript.

The artistic and stylistic characteristics of the Largvisi *Pentecostarion* miniatures reveal a path of continuous development of miniature painting based on local traditions (with an emphasis on the importance of line), considered to be closely related to contemporary Georgian art, indicating a strong connection with the broader trends of the period.





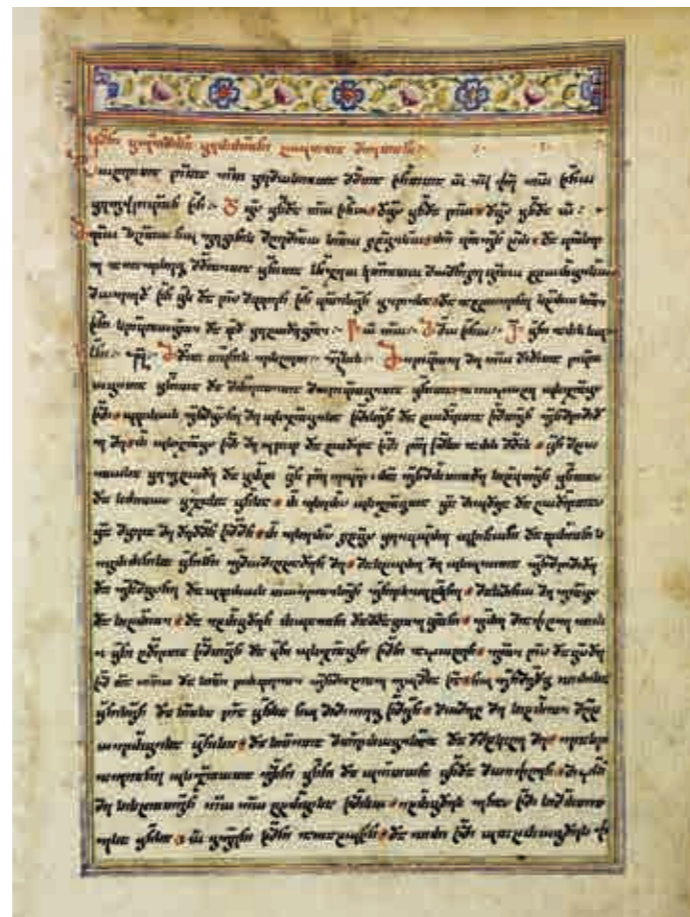


QANCHAETI ZHAMN-GULANI

577 ff.; paper; 243x185 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
dark brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
H-1452; 1674

The Qanchaeti Gulani was copied in 1674 and donated by its commissioner Evdemoz Ratishvili to the family crypt, the Church of the Theotokos in Kabeni, known as Gethsemane (Lower Kartli, Georgia). Kabeni has been a significant and developed cultural centre since the early Middle Ages. Evdemoz Ratishvili, a prominent ecclesiastical figure of the 17th century and the commissioner of this manuscript, held various episcopal positions at different times, as mentioned in the manuscript: “Initially, I was the bishop of Urbnisi, then of Manglisi, and later the Archbishop of Kartli” (f. 339v). He is referenced multiple times in the manuscript.

The manuscript, lost from the Church of Kabeni, was retrieved by the Prince of Aragvi, Grigol Khartchashneli, and returned back to Evdemoz, who had donated it again to the Church of Kabeni. In return, Evdemoz made a vow that the father superior of Kabeni Church would commemorate the Khartchashneli family every year on the day of the Annunciation.



The *Zhamn-Gulani* (*Horologion*) is a liturgical collection and represents a concise edition of the *Gulani*, containing abridged versions of the *Hours* (*Zhamni*) and the *Synaxarion*. The manuscript had several scribes: Zakaria (23v), Onophre Mtiuli (202r, 211r), and Priest Saba (516v).

In the first illustration, Evdemoz Ratishvili is depicted in front of the Virgin Mary with the Child, holding a codex and praying.

Based on its contents the manuscript is divided into two parts. The first part includes a quire containing scenes from the Book of Genesis:

1. The creation of the sky and the sea (f. 6r).
2. The creation of day and night (f. 7r).
3. The creation of the plants (f. 8r).
4. Adam naming the plants and animals (f. 9v).
5. The creation of Eve from Adam’s rib (f. 10r).
6. The fall of man (f. 11r).
7. The gathering of angels and the destruction of demons with a sword (f. 12r).



The miniatures are not related to the text content of this part of the manuscript.

The biblical scenes of the “Creation of the World” are quite unusual themes for Georgian miniature painting and are primarily characteristic of Western European art. The seemingly eclectic figures in these scenes follow artistic tendencies different from Georgian tradition and likely are influenced by the European painting trends brought in by missionaries of that time.

The second part of the manuscript includes the *Hours*, *Hymns*, *Synaxarion*, and the cycle of years – *Kinklos*

(liturgical services). Traditionally, this section also features Old Testament narratives, Gospel scenes, themes from the *Akathist* hymn, individual depictions of saints, and scenes depicting the lives of saints. The miniatures reveal the work of several different masters. Originally, the manuscript contained 60 miniatures, but only 48 illustrations have survived to this day. It is believed that the sequence of the miniatures was disrupted during later restorations, and the manuscript’s cover was also changed.

Ekvtime Taqishvili brought the manuscript from the Monastery of Kabeni in 1912.



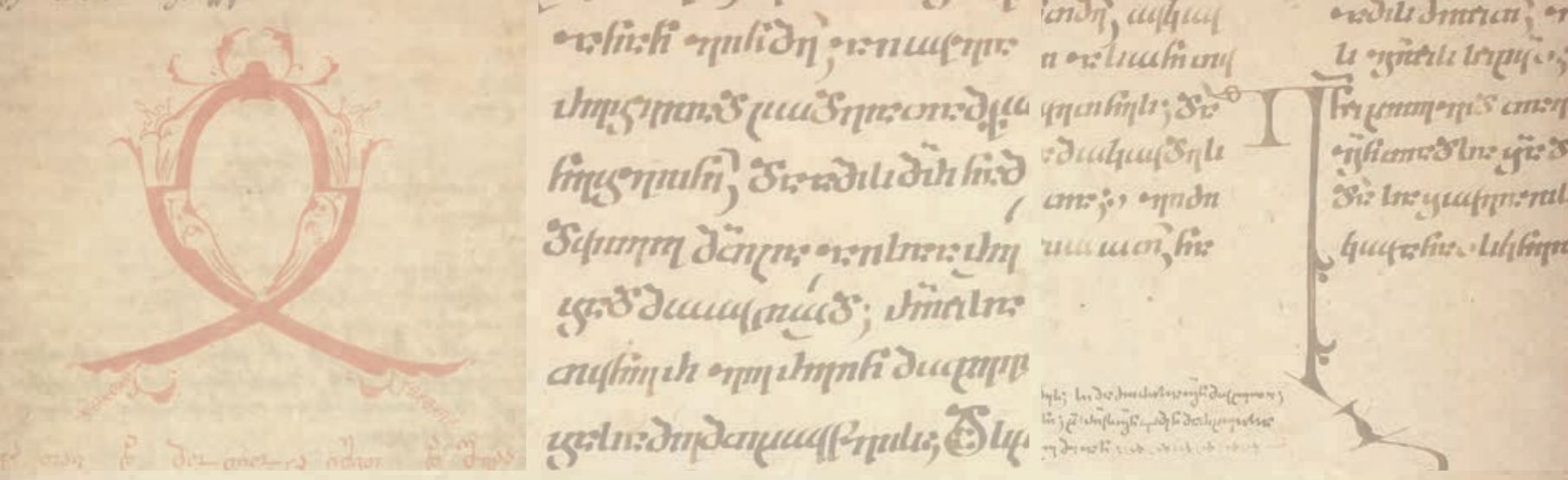
ANCHISKHATI GULANI

430 ff.; paper; 350x240 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
A-30; 17th c.

The Anchiskhati Gulani, also known as the Svetitskhoveli Gulani, was commissioned and copied in 1681 specially for the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral by the Catholicos Nikolaos, the son of Iotam Amilakhvishvili. It was copied by five different scribes. The manuscript is incomplete and is now divided into three separate parts or manuscripts: A-30 (containing the part of *Menaion* from September to February), A-31 (March to August), and A-32 (containing *Triodion* and the beginning of *Pentecostarion*). The manuscript is richly illustrated with colorful miniatures of saints and major feasts. These illustrations were created by the royal court arch-priest Mikela and Priest Saba. The artistic work of

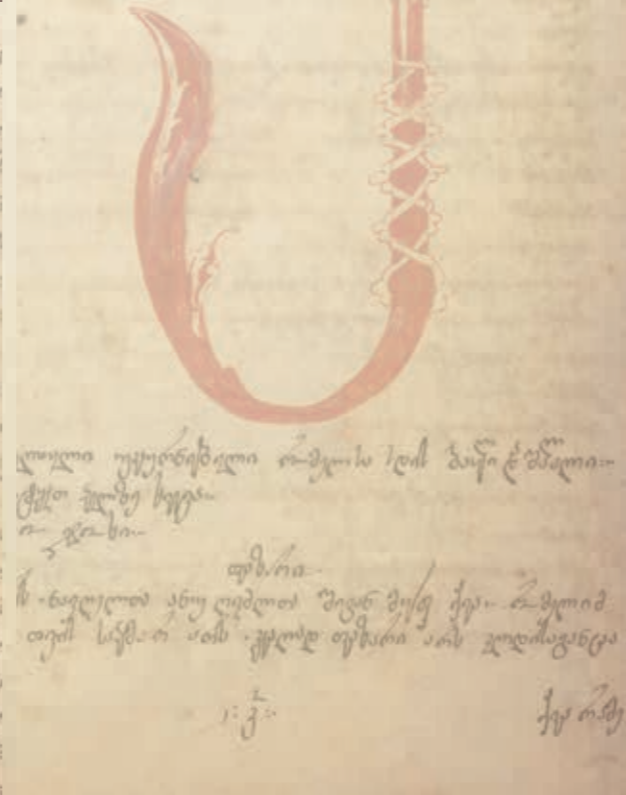
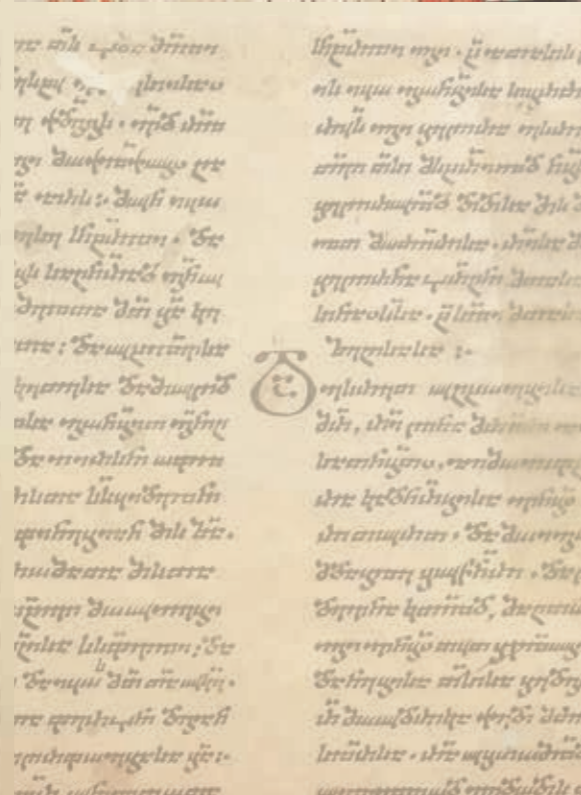
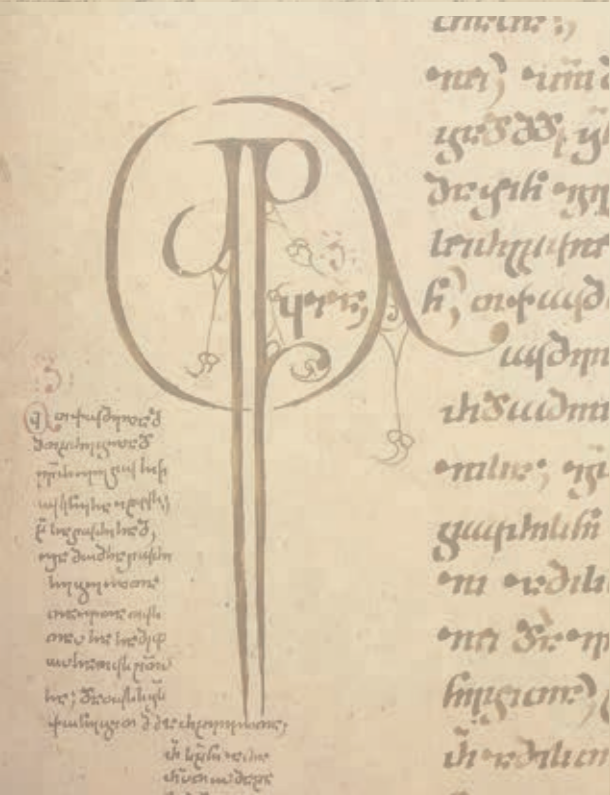
both illustrators in the Anchiskhati Gulani is nourished by post-Palaeologan sources and shows subtle, yet noticeable influences of Western European artistic traditions. The manuscript primarily contains illuminated texts of *Menaion*. The thematic content remains unchanged: Christological cycle, episodes from the life of Christ, significant events of the Christian Church, and effigies of saints. Specific emphasis is given to the illustrated versions of the Theotokos hymns. In the illustrations of the Anchiskhati Gulani, characteristic details typical of Georgian manuscript tradition are evident, reflecting the unique style of manuscript illumination.





COMPENDIA

(EXEGETICS, HOMILETICS, ASCETICS,
DOGMATICS, CANON LAW)



CHAPTER V

One of the most important genres of religious literature, *Exegesis*, is fully and diversely represented in the ancient Georgian manuscript tradition. Georgian translators have translated almost all significant exegetical works of Christian literature, including the most important commentaries on the books of the Old and New Testaments.

The translations of exegetical works of the early period of Georgian Christian literature (5th-10th centuries) were mostly done from Greek. However, translations from other Christian Eastern languages, such as Armenian, Arabic, and Syriac, are also attested. The Georgian translations of exegetical writings from this period are mostly anonymous, with a distinct interest in the books of the Old Testament, particularly the Hexaemeron texts (*Genesis* creation narrative). During the earliest phase of Georgian literary development, in the first half of the 5th century, Severian of Gabala's *In Cosmogoniam Homiliae* 1-6 was translated from Greek. Another work from this period translated into Georgia is Basil the Great's *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*. Most of the exegetical works translated during the pre-Athonite period are found in a manuscript, known as the "Shatberdi Collection", copied in Tao-Klarjeti in the 70s of the 10th century.

Among the exegetical works translated on Mt Athos by Euthymius the Hagiorite, the most noteworthy are the commentaries on the New Testament books, that had not previously been translated into Georgian. These include John Chrysostom's *In Matthaеum Homiliae* 1-90 and *In Iohannem Homiliae* 1-88, Gregory of Nyssa's *De Oratione Dominica*, Andrew of Caesarea's *Commentarii in Apocalypsin*, and the compilatory texts to the commentaries of the *Acts of the Apostles*. Among the commentaries on the Old Testament books, Basil the Great's *Commentaries on Psalms* are particularly distinguished.

In the tradition of Bible *Exegesis* translation, Giorgi the Hagiorite is renowned for his translations of *Hexaemeron* texts. He translated anew the commentaries on the book of *Genesis* that had previously been trans-



JOHN OF SINAI LADDER 1160
Ink on paper

lated during the pre-Athonite period, including Basil the Great's *Homiliae in Hexaemeron* and Gregory of Nyssa's *De Hominis Opificio*. In general, Giorgi the Hagiorite is particularly associated with the translations of the works of the Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa, into Georgian. He translated the following works of this author: *Explicatio Apologetica in Hexaemeron*, *In Canticum Cantorum Homiliae* and *De Beatitudinibus*. From the same period, there is also a translation of John Chrysostom's hexaemeron text *In Genesim Homilia* 1-67, by Theophile the Hieromonk.

The renowned man of letters of Black Mountain, Ephrem Mtsire, made a significant contribution to the translation of exegetical collections into Georgian. He

translated the *Commentary on the Psalms*, a compilatory text that unites the interpretations by Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, as well as other authors' commentaries on the book of *Psalms*. Ephrem's translation of the *Commentary on the Praxapostolos* is also a compilation in nature. He selected for translation a concise commentary compiled by Cyril of Alexandria based on the extensive comments of John Chrysostom, which was supplemented by interpretations of other Byzantine authors. During this period, three exegetical works by Theophylact of Bulgaria were also translated: *Commentarii in Marcum*, *Commentarii in Iohannem*, and *Commentarii in Lucam*. An important monument created by the Gelati literary school is the Bible with Catenas, a Bible text translated at the end of the 12th century, featuring commentaries by various authors in the margins.

The work on exegetical texts, distinguished by their logical structure and diverse themes, played an important role in the intellectual development of Georgian literati, in the formation of an academic style of thought. The translation of the exegetical works, access to and understanding of the commentaries of the texts of the Bible and holy fathers contributed to the formation of a new style of academic thinking in the literary circles of Georgians in the 11th-12th centuries and to some extent determined its direction.

The significant genres of ecclesiastical literature, such as *asceticism* and *mysticism*, are predominantly represented in the Georgian literary tradition through Athonite translations. Euthymius the Hagiorite, who was particularly dedicated to the moral upbringing and spiritual refinement of his monastic community, expanded and developed these genres, which are crucial for monastic life. Among his translations are Isaac of Syrian's *Teachings*, which was earlier translated from Syriac, the *Teachings* of Pseudo-Macarius, Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, and others. Euthymius also translated John Climacus' the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, previously translated

JOHN OF SINAI LADDER 1160
Ink on paper



from Arabic and subsequently re-translated and revised several more times after Euthymius' translation. From the translations of the post-Euthymius period, the Hellenophile translation of the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* by Petre of Gelati stands out. Giorgi the Hagiorite also made significant contributions to this field. Among his translations, the ascetic-mystical collection by Theodore the Studite, named in Georgian sources as *Stodieri* is particularly important. Ephrem Mtsire also translated collections of ascetic writings, including the *Lausiac History* of Palladius Helenopolis, Basil the Great's *Asceticon*, and the *Teachings* of Ephrem the Syrian, presented in Georgian manuscripts as two volumes, titled *Ephrem the First* and *Ephrem the Second*. According to Ephrem Mtsire's notes these works were also presented in two volumes in the Greek manuscripts preserved in the libraries of the Georgian monasteries in Antioch region – monasteries of St. Symeon Stylites the Younger and Tvali. The *Teachings of the Fathers*, translated by Theophile the Hieromonk in the late 11th century also belong to this genre.

The foundation of the Georgian *canonical literature* is considered to be the compilation of the compendium *Minor Nomocanon*, translated by Euthymius the Hagiorite. The canonical collections saw further development during the Hellenophile period of Georgian literature. At the end of the 11th century, Arsen of Ikalto translated a more extensive work of this genre from Greek – the *Great Nomocanon*, a significant monument of Byzantine jurisprudence, known as the *Nomocanon* in 14 titles edited by Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople in 883. This collection played an essential role in establishing Georgian ecclesiastical legal terminology and laid the foundation for a principal canonical work – the Code of Law of the Ruisi-Urbnisi Church Council, compiled in 1105.

An important place in the Georgian literary tradition is defined by *dogmatic* collections. This is the type of compilation collection *Hodegos* (Guide) translated

by Euthymius the Hagiorite, which played an important role in ancient Georgian literature, particularly in the field of theoretical and dogmatic teachings. *Hodegos* essentially prepared the Georgian reader for the understanding of such an important manual of dogmatics, as *The Fountain of Wisdom* of John of Damascus, translated by Ephrem Mtsire in the last quarter of the 11th century.

Overall, Ephrem Mtsire's main contribution was laying the foundation for the translation of philosophical and dogmatic collections, thereby, establishing an entirely new perspective in medieval Georgian thought, which meant using the ideas of "outers" ("outer wisdom") in the service of Christian theology. This concept, based on the synthesis of faith and knowledge, originates in



the early Christian era, from the works of Clement of Alexandria and the Cappadocian fathers; however, it was established in the Georgian intellectual tradition only from the 11th century onwards. This was mainly due to two translations by Ephrem Mtsire. These are: two (first and third) parts of John of Damascus' *The Fountain of Wisdom – Dialectica* and *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, which have been the most important textbooks in Orthodox theology since the early Middle Ages, and also the most mystical book of the early Christian era – *the Corpus Areopagiticum* with Commentaries.

Acquaintance with the works by John of Damascus in the Georgian language provided the Georgians with a great opportunity for intellectual development. Through these writings Christians mastered the rules of syllogistic thinking developed by Plato and Aristotle in ancient philosophy, and later adopted by the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition, in order to, on the one hand, form Christian doctrines and, on the other hand, by using the methods of logical reasoning learned from them, i. e. from “outers”, protect Christian doctrines from opponents during debates.

The *Corpus Areopagiticum*, translated by Ephrem, is also part of the early Christian writings where the influence of “outers” thought plays a significant role. This theological work, which presents Christian doctrine veiled in the language of ancient philosophy, employs Neoplatonic terminology. The collection was translated early into Latin and various Christian Near Eastern languages, exerting a profound influence on thinkers across different eras. The *Corpus Areopagiticum* is the most frequently cited work in Christian literature.

At the end of the 11th century, the prominent Georgian scholar, theologian, and philosopher Arsen, son of Vache, created an extensive dogmatic and polemical collection known as the *Dogmatikon*. It is believed that Arsen received his education in Constantinople, where he began working on the *Dogmatikon*. The book features a

lengthy and diverse repertoire, including over 70 dogmatic, scholastic, and polemical works, which are translated into Georgian with high-quality translation techniques. With this collection, Arsen introduced Georgian readers to the richest theological and philosophical thought of the Byzantine world. Scholars believe that Arsen himself chose the works for his collection, choosing authors from the 3rd century through the 11th century. Notable works included are Anastasius Sinaita's *Hodegos*, John of Damascus' *Dialectica* and *The Exposition of Orthodox Faith*, anti-Nestorian treatises by John of Damascus and Cyril of Alexandria, dogmatic and polemical writings by Theodore Abu Qurrah, five polemical

speeches against the Armenians by Niketas Stethatos, and anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim works by anonymous authors, among others. This collection is represented by over 20 manuscripts, indicating its popularity. The composition of these manuscripts (the number of works and their sequence) varies considerably and is quite diverse. The *Dogmatikon* clearly reflects the interests, political and social attitudes, religious positions, and intellectual demands of the Georgian state and church of the time.

In the ancient Georgian literary tradition, *homiletic* collections – compendia of ecclesiastical preachings – emerge from the early period of Georgian literary development. Ephrem Mtsire describes this genre of Byzantine literature as “face-to-face discourse”. Among the ancient literature genres, *homiletics* is most closely associated with rhetoric. The practitioners of this genre were scholars highly skilled in rhetoric, as well as prominent thinkers and theologians. Their major goal, particularly in the early days of Christianity, was to guide people in the Christian faith. The thematic scope of homiletic literature has always been characterized by diversity. The key themes include biblical exegesis, moral teachings, the establishment of Christian doctrines among the parish, and debates against various heretical teachings. These themes highlight the exegetical, dogmatic, and polemical nature of homiletic works.

The earliest Georgian hagiographic and homiletic collections are known as the *Mravaltavi* (polycephaleion, multi-chapter), which contains sermons of the authors of the early Byzantine literature – preachings read during feast days and the commemorations of saints. It is now established that this ancient collection represented an appendix to the Jerusalem liturgy – it was used in the liturgical practices of the Georgian Church during its early (Jerusalem) phase.

The further development of the homiletic genre is exemplified by collections of homiletic sermons of the Cappadocian Fathers (4th century). Notable among

these are: Basil the Great's *Moral Homilies*, translated into Georgian by Euthymius the Hagiorite, Gregory the Theologian's Sixteen Liturgical Homilies, translated by Ephrem Mtsire, Homilies by Gregory of Nyssa, most translations of which are attributed to Giorgi the Hagiorite and are found in mixed collections. These translations reflect the continued growth and adaptation of the homiletic genre in Georgian literature, integrating influential theological and moral teachings from the early Christian period.

The Georgian versions of the homiletic collections of these authors are closely aligned with their Greek counterparts, both in their structure and, occasionally, in marginal attributes (for example, the collection of Gregory the Theologian's sixteen sermons). The homiletic legacy of John Chrysostom (4th century) has been almost entirely translated into Georgian, parts of which are presented in various collections, a significant portion gathered in the homiletic compendium known as *The Pearl*. Research has suggested that the Georgian translation of this collection is likely attributed to Euthymius the Hagiorite. However, its exact Greek counterpart has not yet been identified. Additionally, homilies by Ephrem the Syrian, Cyril of Alexandria, Sophronius of Jerusalem, and other Christian Fathers have also been translated into Georgian. These translations are preserved in various types of mixed compendia.

Ioane of Bolnisi, the 10th-11th century Georgian ecclesiastical figure, writer and preacher, is the author of original Georgian homilies. The survived homilies consist of interpretations of various episodes from the Gospels and also include moral and ethical admonitions. Sermons of Ioane of Bolnisi are notable examples of Georgian rhetoric and literary thought.

LIFE OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

258 ff.; parchment; 160x130 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
H-2124; 968

The manuscript contains a hagiographical work – the *Life of John Chrysostom* attributed to George of Alexandria. The work was translated from Greek into Georgian before the 10th century.

The manuscript is dated to 968. It was copied by Ivane of Sapara in Palestine, at the Monastery of St. Chariton (Palavra) and was sponsored by Michael of Panaskerti. The latter donated the manuscript to the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai where he lived. The manuscript is illustrated with a miniature of John Chrysostom depicted in a primitive manner along the whole page.

In the mid of 19th century, the Russian traveler and antiquarian Bishop Porphyry Uspensky took the manuscript from Sinai to Russia, where it was held at the Imperial Public Library in St Petersburg (Russia). In 1923 the manuscript was handed over to the Soviet Republic of Georgia.





SHATBERDI COLLECTION

288 ff.; parchment; 280x220 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).

S-1141; 10th c.

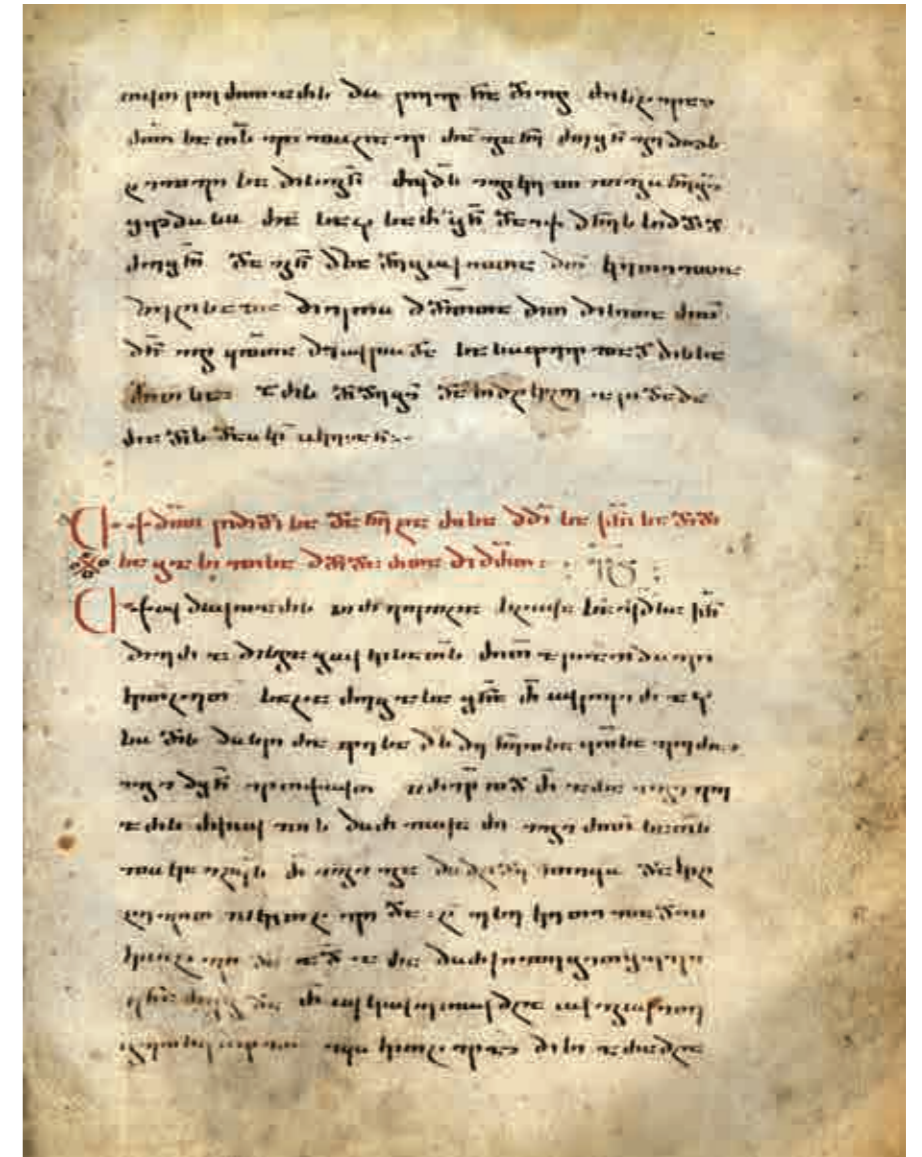
The collection presents exegetical works on biblical books compiled into a single volume. According to the colophon attached to the manuscript, it was copied in Tao-Klarjeti at the Shatberdi Monastery by Ioane-Bera, his brother Davit, their uncle Mikael Modrekili, and several others in the 10th century. The colophon also mentions historical figures such as Bagrat II, King of the Georgians (958-994), and the Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969-979), which helps to date the manuscript to the 970s.

Even the list of works included in the manuscript clearly demonstrates its cognitive and educational value, which is why the Shatberdi collection is often referred to as an “educational book”. The collection contains works by Christian Byzantine authors from the 3rd-4th centuries, including *The Commentary on David and Goliath*,

Commentary on the Song of Songs and others by Hippolytus of Rome, as well as Epiphanius of Cyprus’ *De Gemmis*, survived in fragments in Greek. The Shatberdi collection has also preserved the 2nd-3rd century Alexandrian School encyclopedic compilation *Physiologus*, Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Creation of Man*, and others. The works included in the Shatberdi collection were translated from Greek, Armenian, and Arabic.

One of the oldest redactions of the *The Conversion of Kartli* is preserved in the Shatberdi collection, described by the scribe as following: “This is a book of the *Conversion of Kartli*, by which God made to shine the commencement of his Holy Church which is the hardshell wall of Jesus Christ. This is our salvation from sins and savior of souls, like a talent hidden by ancestors, which we found after a long time and many years.”

Along the Georgian colophons, there are contemporary Greek and Armenian notes in the manuscript, indicating the multicultural environment of Tao-Klarjeti. Particularly interesting is the Armenian alphabet written in the margins of the manuscript, explaining that this very alphabet is the creation of “Mesrub” (Mesrop Mashtots, the author of the Armenian alphabet).



BASIL THE GREAT, TEACHINGS

419 ff.; parchment; 265x200 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).

H-2251; The end of the 10th c.

The manuscript contains Basil the Great’s *Teachings* translated from Greek into Georgian by Euthymius the Hagiorite at the end of the 10th century. As it is clear from the colophons, the manuscript was copied during Euthymius’ lifetime by the scribe Iordane who came to Iviron from Georgia (46r). It was Davit III Curopalates (930-1001), a Georgian ruler of Tao-Klarjeti, who sent Iordane to the Iviron Monastery on this mission. This is how Euthymius described the merit of father Iordane: “He took a laborious task and came from Kartli to the country of Greece, to the Holy Mountain, firstly for God’s sake and then because Davit, King of the Georgians ordered him to do so, and he took upon himself the hardship of copying this holy book”

(46r). Iordane himself described his journey to the distant land of Mount Athos: “Pray for me, poor Iordane, who walked from the far away country ninety-six days before reaching the Holy Mountain” (204r). The manuscript was probably brought to Georgia by Iordane himself.

Later the manuscript was held in the collection of a representative of the Georgian royal family, Ioane Batonishvili (Bagrationi) (1766-1830), a public person, writer, and scholar, whence it found its way to the Imperial Public Library (now the National Library of Russia) in St Petersburg. The manuscript was transferred to Soviet Republic of Georgia in 1923.



**PSEUDO-MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR,
LIFE OF THE THEOTOKOS**

332 ff.; parchment; 165x114 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
brown ink, gold ink (for titles and initials).
A-40; 10th-11th cc.

The manuscript, dated to the 10th century, contains Pseudo-Maximus the Confessor's *Life of the Theotokos*. According to the attached colophon, the text was translated by Euthymius the Hagiorite, while the scribe was the monk Benedict. The place where the manuscript was copied remains unknown.

At the beginning of the manuscript, there are miniatures of St. Luke and St. John the Evangelists, which were likely taken from a *Gospel* book. A later colophon by Ioseb, son of Khutuna, the binder of the manuscript, as well as the commemorations for his family members, are also preserved in the manuscript.



MIXED COLLECTION

224 ff.; parchment; 260x190 mm.; *nuskhuri*, *asomtavruli*;
brown ink, the titles are decorated in red, green and brown inks.
A-397; 10-11th cc.

A mixed collection from the turn of the 10th-11th centuries contains the texts of John the Theologian's *Life*, his *Revelation*, and the commentary on the *Revelation* by Andrew of Caesarea. The Georgian translations were executed by Euthymius the Hagiorite in the second half of the 10th century. The collection also includes early Georgian translations of *the Lives* of Symeon the Stylite, Symeon the Holy Fool and Daniel the Stylite.

The manuscript was copied by the scribe Dositheos. The artistic features of the collection, such as the green ink used in the headpieces and the ornamented initial letters, suggest that the manuscript was likely copied in the historical region of Tao, in Southern Georgia. The collection contains numerous commemorative inscriptions written in the informal hand. According to the historical sources, among these is the name of Abuqab Zolavari, a notable member of the Abuqabid dynasty. He was relocated from Tao to the heart of the Byzantine Empire and, in 1031, was appointed as the Duke of Edessa.



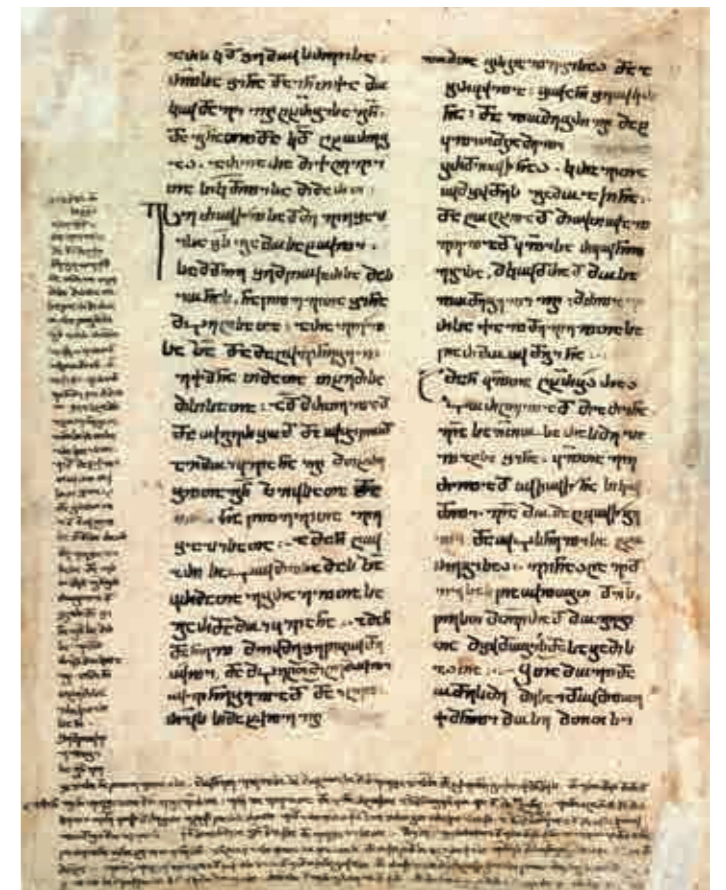
HOMILETICAL COMPENDIUM

Part I – 115 ff.; paper; 355x235 mm.; *nuskhuri*, *asomtavruli* (several handwritings); black ink, red ink (for titles and some initials).
S-1276; 11th c.

This codex is composed of two distinct manuscripts that have been stitched together. Part I of the manuscript is a collection of homiletical works by John of Damascus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and others. These works were translated from Greek into Georgian at the end of the 11th century by Ephrem Mtsire.

Research into the content and colophons of the manuscript, along with an analysis of its codicological and palaeographical data, suggests that parts of the manuscript (specifically folios 1r-24r and 72r-99r) were written by Ephrem Mtsire himself. The manuscript contains several important marginal notes of philological and historical character explaining certain words and expressions employed in the texts. Evidently, they are composed by Ephrem Mtsire.

Later annotations indicate that the manuscript was already in Georgia by the 14th century.





APOPTHHEGMATA

454 ff.; paper; 240x160 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli* (informal handwriting); brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
A-1105; 11th c.

The manuscript contains the *Sayings of the Christian Fathers (Apophtegmata)*, translated from Greek into Georgian by the renowned Georgian translator Theophile the Hieromonk in the last quarter of the 11th century. According to the colophon on f. 163v, Theophile himself wrote the manuscript, as he was also engaged in copying manuscripts in addition to his translation work. Alongside this manuscript, four other manuscripts of his translations, preserved today in the Iviron Monastery, are also his autographical works. In the early 20th century, the manuscript was brought from the Iviron Monastery to Georgia by the Georgian clergyman Ilia Pantsulaia.



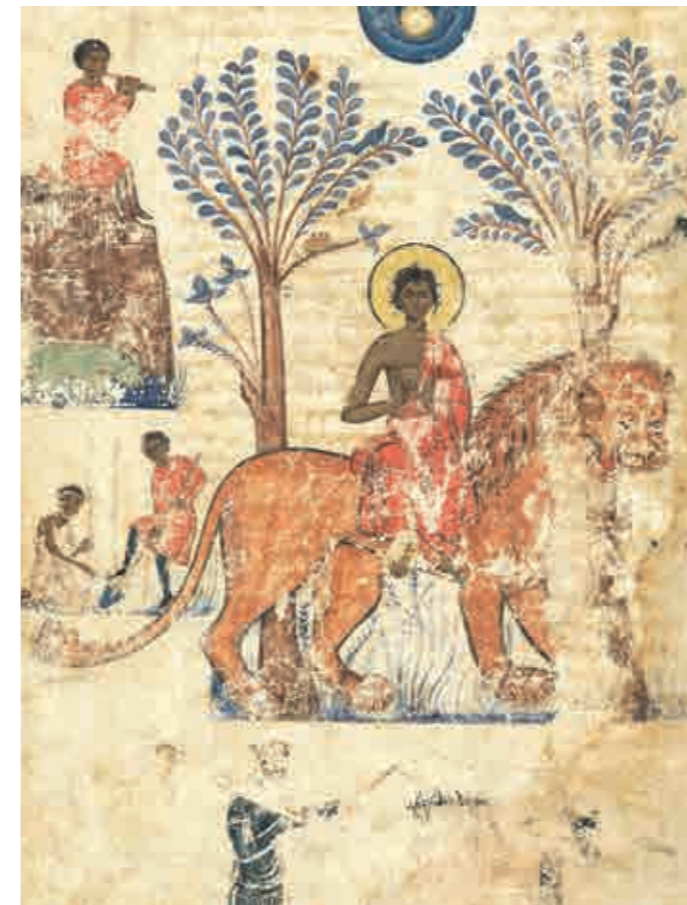
COLLECTION OF GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN'S SERMONS

269 ff.; paper; 425x310 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*; brown ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
A-109; 13th century.

The collection of sixteen liturgical sermons of the 4th century Cappadocian father, Gregory the Theologian, translated from Greek into Georgian by Ephrem Mtsire. The Commentaries on the sermons of Gregory the Theologian by the 10th-century Byzantine scholar Basilius Minimus, translated by Ephrem Mtsire, are placed in the margins of

the manuscript. In addition, the manuscript also includes *Gregory the Theologian's Life* by Gregory Presbyter, a compilatory version of *Iambic Verses* by Gregory the Theologian and the *Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Commentaries* on four liturgical sermons of Gregory the Theologian. According to paleographic data, the manuscript is dated to the 13th century.

Along with Basilius Minimus' *Commentaries*, the manuscript contains other notes in the margins, which must have been composed by Ephrem Mtsire himself. Most



of them are philological and serve as scholarly footnotes to the main text. There are also decorative heliacal signs and asterisks painted with red ink in the margins of the manuscript, which mark those passages, in which Gregory the Theologian discusses theological issues. They are designed to help the reader navigate through the vast and comprehensive writings.

All these additions and details of the collection must have been compiled with a deep knowledge of Gregory the Theologian's Greek manuscripts, in Ephrem's academic circle, with his initiative and under his direct supervision. A few of the details in the collection such as iambic verses, preceding some of Gregory's sermons must have been added at a later period.

In the collection, there are thirteen miniatures representing various scenes from Gregory the Theologian's sermons. They are drawn across the entire page. The figures are monumental revealing a close connection to the wall paintings of Georgian monasteries of the 11th-13th centuries. Among them, the image of St Mamas riding a lion stands out for its artistry.

In the 18th century, the collection belonged to a member of the Georgian royal family, writer, scholar and bibliophile, Davit Batonishvili (1767-1819). Later, it was donated to John the Baptist's Monastery in Davit Gareja (Cave Monastery complex in the Kakheti region, East Georgia).



CORPUS AREOPAGITICUM

224 ff.; paper; 385x265 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
A-110, 12th c.

The manuscript contains one of the most mystical books of the Early Christian period, the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, translated from Greek into Georgian in the last decade of the 11th century by Ephrem Mtsire.

The manuscript represents the amalgamation of two incomplete 12th century manuscripts; some missing parts, especially the beginning and the ending were restored in the 18th century.

The *Corpus Areopagiticum* includes five books: the *Divine Names*, the *Mystical Theology*, the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and the *Epistles*, each of which consists of a dozen chapters. They are preceded by the *Prologus*, in which the story of the conversion of Dionysius to Christianity at the Areopagus court is introduced.

The manuscript of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* stands out for the abundance of elements that were novelties introduced into Georgian manuscripts in the Hellenophile epoch and which were dictated by the Greek manuscripts. These are paratexts – marginal commentaries, explanatory notes (annotations), searching tools (indexes, marginal

signs, etc.) – additional material to the main text, which plays a significant role in its reception or interpretation by readers.

The manuscript contains commentaries on the *Corpus Areopagiticum* placed in the margins. Two individuals – Maximus and Germanus – are mentioned as the authors of some scholia. Contemporary academic consensus holds that John of Scythopolis is the primary author of the commentaries on the *Corpus Areopagiticum*. Maximus the Confessor and Germanus I of Constantinople are also recognized as contributors of some additions to Scythopolis' scholia. In certain instances, the commentaries in the manuscript feature figurative forms, like those found in the Greek texts.

In the manuscript, each of the five books of *Corpus Areopagiticum* is preceded by indexes containing numbered chapter titles, including, in some cases, summaries of the topics discussed.

The manuscript also includes metrical poems. Five such poems, known as *iambikos*, are placed at the beginning of each book, following the indexes. Each of these poems consists of five verses, each containing twelve syllables. They were translated from Greek by Ephrem, as indicated by his marginal notes appended to the verses.

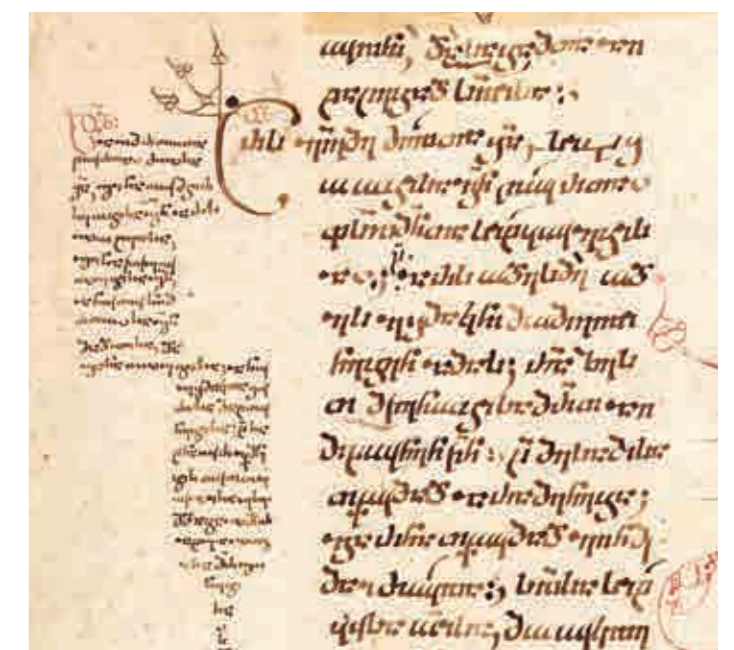
In the late Middle Ages, the manuscript was kept at the Monastery of John the Baptist of the Davit Gareja.

JOHN OF SINAI, LADDER

223 ff.; paper; 365x290 mm.; *nuskhuri, asomtavruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
H-1669; 12th c.

The manuscript contains the Georgian translation of John of Sinai's *Ladder*, translated into Georgian by the Hellenophile scholar Petre of Gelati in the 12th century. According to the marginal inscriptions, it was copied by the scribe Nikra. This same scribe copied a collection of ecclesiastic works, now housed in Vienna, in 1160 at the Monastery of Davit Gareja. Consequently, this manuscript was likely copied around the same period, possibly at the same monastic centre. In this manuscript, the translation of the *Ladder* by Petre of Gelati is acephalous; pages 1r-15v contain an earlier translation of the work by Euthymius the Hagiorite. The handwriting of this section differs from the translation by Petre of Gelati. The manuscript also appears to be atelous, as the last pages, written by the same hand as the beginning, reflect the Hellenophile version of the work. The manuscript features over a hundred numbered scholia to the *Ladder*, translated from Greek, and includes unnumbered short notes of an expositional nature, which may belong to Georgian scholars.

The manuscript is decorated with pen-flourished initials, incorporating geometric and foliate motifs in brown or red ink. The marginal scholia, written in tiny script, mostly have geometric forms, with some taking the shape of figural objects outlined by linear contours, such as houses with cupolas in the form of crosses, fish, vases, dragons, men, birds, and deer. Two images of the ladder are painted in red ink, one of which, with 30 rungs, appears alongside the table of contents at the end of the *Ladder*. A primitively painted head of a man is depicted at the top of the ladder, accompanied by the inscription: "Father Daniel has ascended the ladder."



Handwritten text in Georgian script, featuring a large, decorative initial 'A' and a large, ornate illustration of a dragon or serpent on the left side. The dragon has a long, coiled body and a large, open mouth.

Handwritten text in Georgian script, featuring a small illustration of a figure in a long, flowing robe at the top left. The text is arranged in a single column.

Handwritten text in Georgian script, featuring a small illustration of a bird or animal at the top left. The text is arranged in a single column.

Handwritten text in Georgian script, featuring a large, ornate initial 'A' and a large, ornate illustration of a figure in a tall, narrow, decorative frame at the top. The text is arranged in a single column.

Handwritten text in Georgian script, featuring a large, ornate initial 'A' and a small illustration of a bird or animal at the top left. The text is arranged in a single column.

Handwritten text in Georgian script, featuring a large, ornate initial 'A' and a small illustration of a figure in a long, flowing robe at the top right. The text is arranged in a single column.

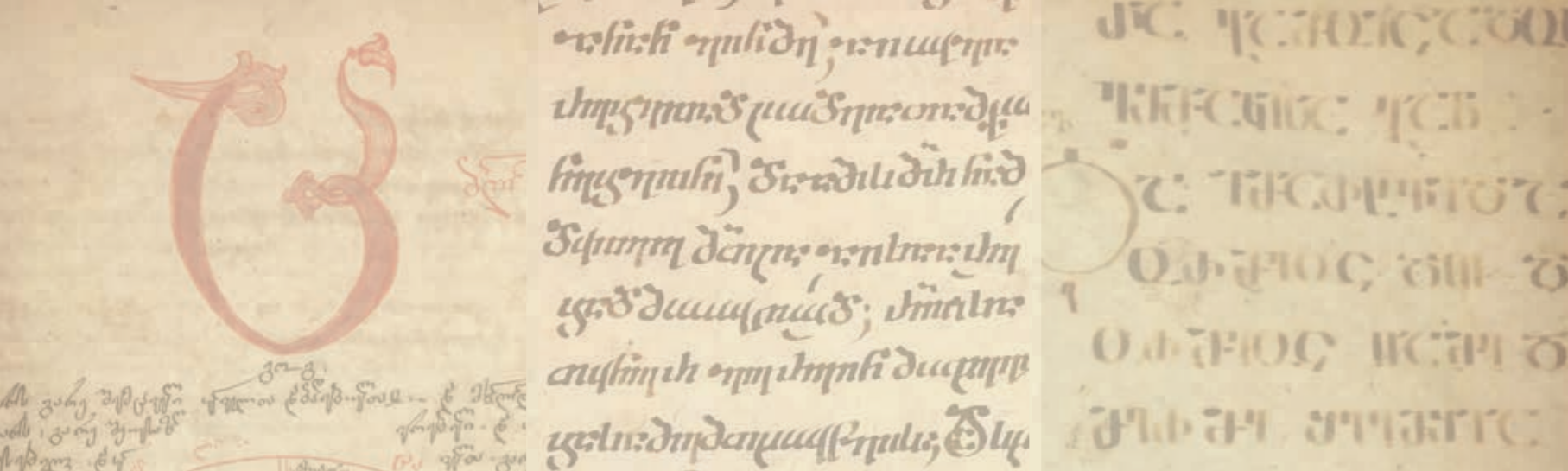


COMPENDIUM ASCETICAL AND HAGIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

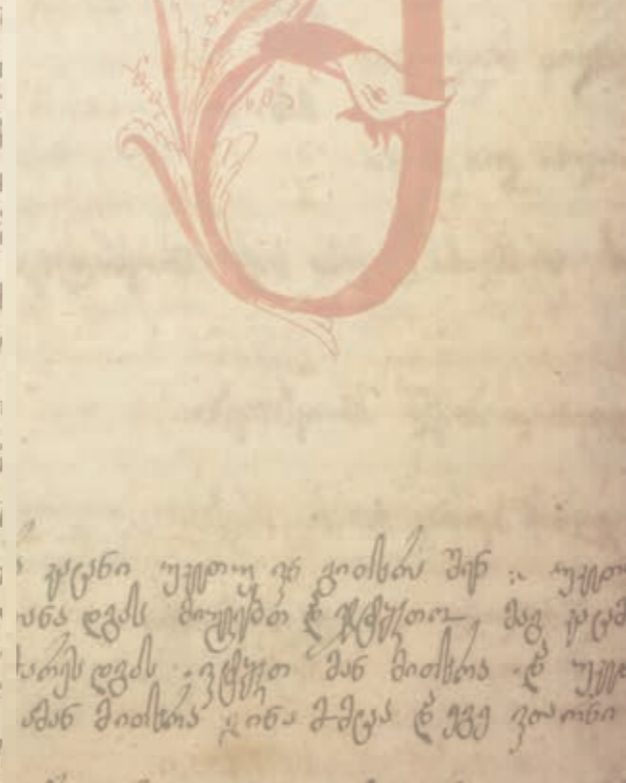
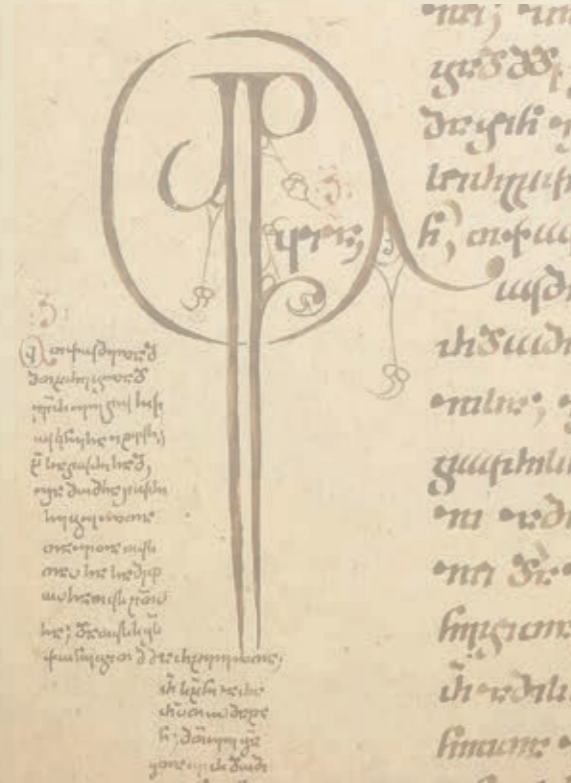
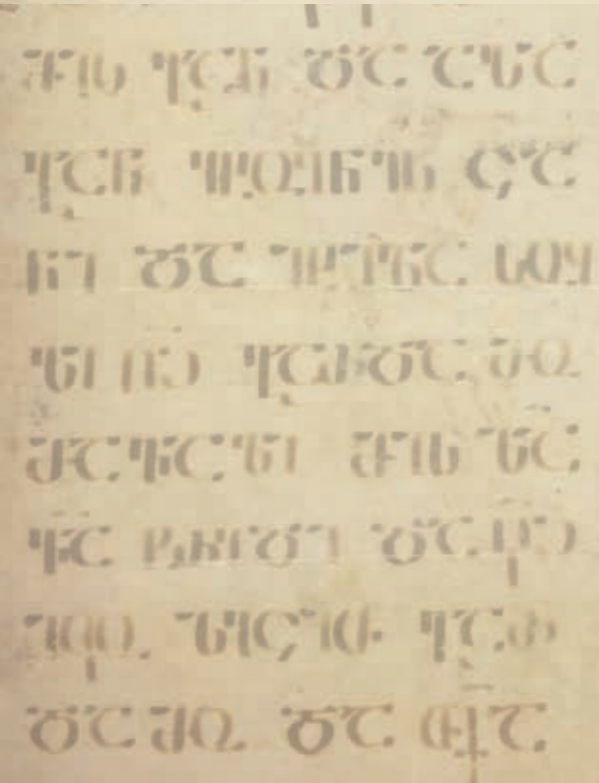
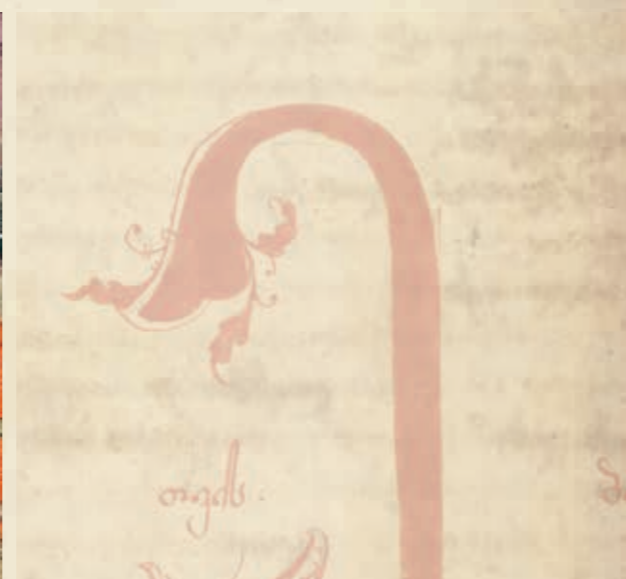
02+110 ff.; parchment; 270x180 mm.; nuskhuri, asomtavruli; black ink, red ink (for titles and initials). A-146; 10-11th, 14th cc.

The collection includes ascetic works such as Dorotheus of Gaza's (505-565) *Ascetica* (Monastic Instruction), epistles, and *Questions and Answers*; Pseudo-Maximus' *Spiritual Teachings*. The Georgian translation is attributed to Euthymius the Hagiorite. The manuscript also contains the *Life of St. Nisime*, of the 4th c. Egyptian ascetic from Tabennesi Monastery (Egypt), known in Latin as St. Isidora. The Georgian translation is close to the Arabic version found on the Mount Sinai.

The manuscript is decorated with ornamental braided initial letters and headpieces, including naïve-style miniatures of Dorotheus of Gaza, Ephrem of Jerusalem, Maximus the Confessor, Nisime the Nunny, anchorites and others. The manuscript was copied in the 14th century by Maximus the scribe. It is a complete palimpsest, with the lower layer containing *Psalms* in *nuskhuri*, dating to the 10th-11th centuries.



SECULAR MANUSCRIPTS

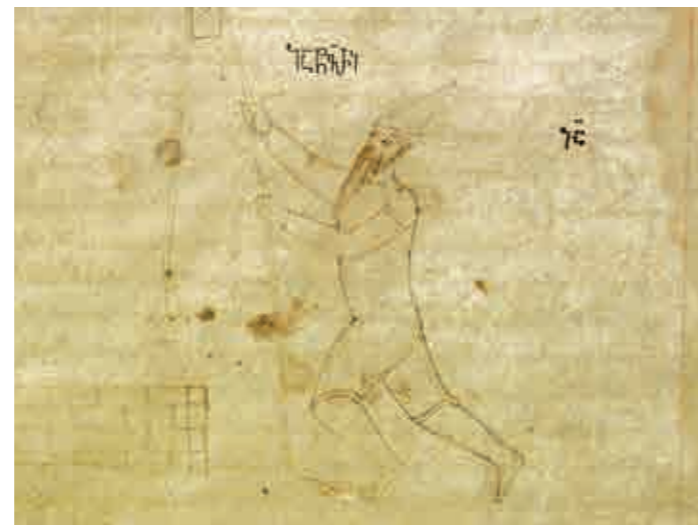


CHAPTER VI

Medieval secular manuscripts are handwritten books that contain texts unrelated to religious or monastic matters, often focusing on topics such as science, literature, law, philosophy, and daily life. They include works created by authors through artistic imagination, depicting stories of chivalric and romantic lives of kings and nobles, as well as panegyrics to royals. In the Georgian context, the existence of such literature is attested as early as the 11th-12th centuries. A particularly interesting source in this regard is the 12th century epic poem, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli. In the poem the names of well-known novels of that epoch are attested: the heroic chivalric work *Amiran-Darejaniani* by the Georgian author Mose Khoneli, the Georgian translation of the 11th century Persian poet Fakhr al-Din As'ad Gorgani's romantic novel *Vis o Ramin*, known as *Visramiani*, the *Dilargetiani* by Georgian author Sargis Tmogveli, and the *Abdulmesiani*, a panegyric to the kings by Ioane Shavteli. These writings are also mentioned by the authors of Georgian historical chronicles. Despite these pieces of information, secular-chivalric, romantic, panegyric, or generally philosophical rather than theological manuscripts have only survived from the late Middle Ages (14th-15th centuries) and modern times (16th-18th centuries). This is also a completely understandable fact, as the non-ecclesiastical and non-monastic books would have belonged to private collections and in the difficult circumstances, in which the Georgian state existed throughout the Middle Ages, it was practically impossible to protect personal collections. In general, Georgian culture and particularly its written tradition suffered greatly during the period of Mongol invasions and domination from 1220 to 1328. In such a situation, when the primary concern for Georgians was to protect the country and its population from the enemies, as might be expected, that there were no conditions for maintaining private libraries. Therefore, it is not surprising that only in

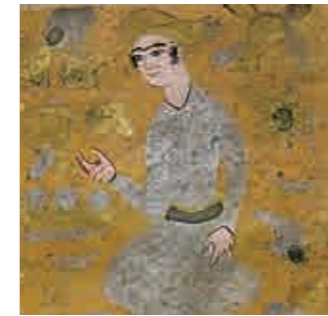
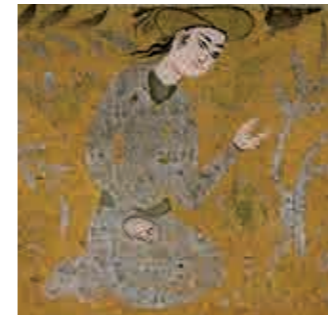


ASTROLOGICAL TREATISE. 1188-1210
Ink, paint, gold leaf on paper



the 17th and 18th centuries did Georgian society have the opportunity to produce and preserve manuscripts containing secular literary works. In this period, richly illuminated manuscripts of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, *Visramiani*, and the Georgian translation of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* were copied.

Alongside the literary monuments, significant attention was given to the creation of manuscripts with scientific and educational content. Historical, geographical and travel literature, as well as medical, lexicographical, grammatical, astrological, and astronomical manuscripts were translated and copied. There were also manuals on mathematics, chemistry, and artillery, and collections of state law codices. Medical and astrological texts are found in earlier collections as well. Thus, the Georgian manuscripts created in the 17th-18th centuries unified the knowledge from both Eastern, Persian-Arabic, and European, Latin sources. The Georgian society became acquainted with western European texts through books brought by Catholic missionaries to Georgia, as well as through Russian translations of European literature.



SHOTA RUSTAVELI THE KNIGHT IN THE PANTHER'S SKIN

260 ff.; Persian paper; 370x240 mm.; *mkhedruli*; black ink, gold ink (for titles and the beginning of stanza).
H-2074; 1590-1600

This manuscript is known as the Avalishvili copy of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was suggested that the manuscript was copied by Ioane Avalishvili, a well-known Georgian ecclesiastical figure, between 1590-1600. This was confirmed in 2005 when the scribe of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, Ioane, was identified as the same person who authored a donation letter from Teimuraz, the Prince of Kakheti, to the Alaverdi Monastery in 1612, upon the death of his wife, Ana.

The manuscript is copied in calligraphic *mkhedruli* script. The margins are adorned with unique artistic decoration, that is never repeated. It is obvious that the best traditions of Iranian miniature art are revealed in the artistic-decorative world of the manuscript. The Iranian schemes common

at that time are conveyed by exact analogy, complex ornamental compositions painted with gold ink on dark blue, dark green, purple, turquoise, yellow and marble (so-called *erbu*) backgrounds, individual figurative images inscribe texts in a colorful frame. A unique feature of these margins is that they were prepared independently and later attached to the text. The involvement of several artists is evident in the production of these decorative margins.

The repertoire of the colorful margins is quite extensive, the main theme is a garden inhabited by numerous real and fantastical animals and birds. The scenes of gatherings, festive events, musicians and harvests are interspersed with hunting and everyday life themes. Interestingly, in these scenes, names like Tinatin, Tariel, and others are written in *mkhedruli* script, directly onto the illustrations. Such borders are also found in Persian book art from the 16th century. The manuscript contains only three miniatures: 1. The scene of King Rostevan granting swords to Avtandil and Sograt and Tinatin's coronation; 2. The murder of Tchashnagir; 3. Avtandil mourning over Fridon. The criteria for selecting these miniatures for the manuscript remain unclear.

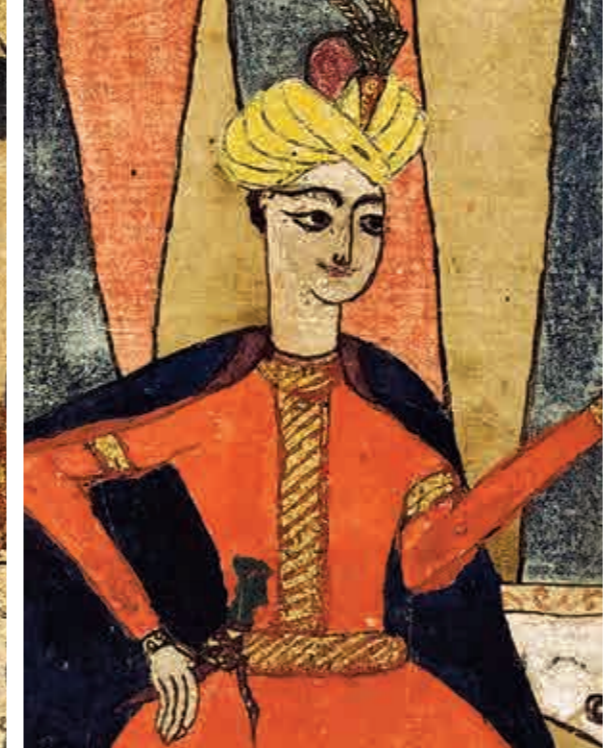
SHOTA RUSTAVELI THE KNIGHT IN THE PANTHER'S SKIN

267 ff.; paper; 385x300 mm.; *mkhedruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and the beginning of stanza).
H-599; 1646

The manuscript is among the oldest surviving complete texts of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and is known as the Tavakalashvili manuscript. In 1646, it was copied in the Principality of Odishi (present-day Samegrelo, Western Georgia) using the *mkhedruli* script with black ink, while the titles were highlighted in red ink. The scribe was Mamuka Tavakalashvili, the secretary and calligrapher of the King of Imereti royal court of Imereti, who copied the poem at the request and financial support of the Prince of Odishi Levan II Dadiani (1591-1657) during his captivity at the court of Odishi. The manuscript is illustrated with 39 miniatures, red, blue, and green pastel colors, and gold ink are used. In the upper register of the two-register miniature, Levan Dadiani is depicted with his family, while in the lower register, Shota Rustaveli is portrayed alongside the copyist, Mamuka Tavakalashvili, seated before him. The remaining 38 miniatures represent various episodes of the text.









SHOTA RUSTAVELI
THE KNIGHT IN THE PANTHER'S SKIN

263 ff.; thin oriental paper; 445x300 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink, red ink (for titles and the beginning of stanza).
H-54; 1680

This manuscript is known as the Begtabegi manuscript, one of the most distinguished handwritten copies of the famous poem. Commissioned by the King Giorgi XI of Kartli (1651-1709), it was copied in 1680 by the king's secretary, the renowned calligrapher and poet Begtabeg, the son of Avtandil Martirosashvili. The manuscript was copied for the king's library and, therefore, was richly decorated. The later copyist of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* added an extensive colophon in which he detailed the qualities of King Giorgi XI as a national figure and protector of the country, noting that the king expended a great treasure for the copying of this book. The manuscript also includes a poetic tribute by Begtabegi in honor of George XI. An inscription added to the book in 1893 reveals that this copy of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, taken to Moscow, was purchased and returned to Georgia in 1891 by Kaikhosro Cholokashvili, the grand master of the household at the court of Erekle II and the Amilakhvari. The book belonged to the Cholokashvili family. In 1909, Ekvtime Taqaishvili purchased this manuscript from the Cholokashvili family for the Fund of the Historical-Ethnographic Society.

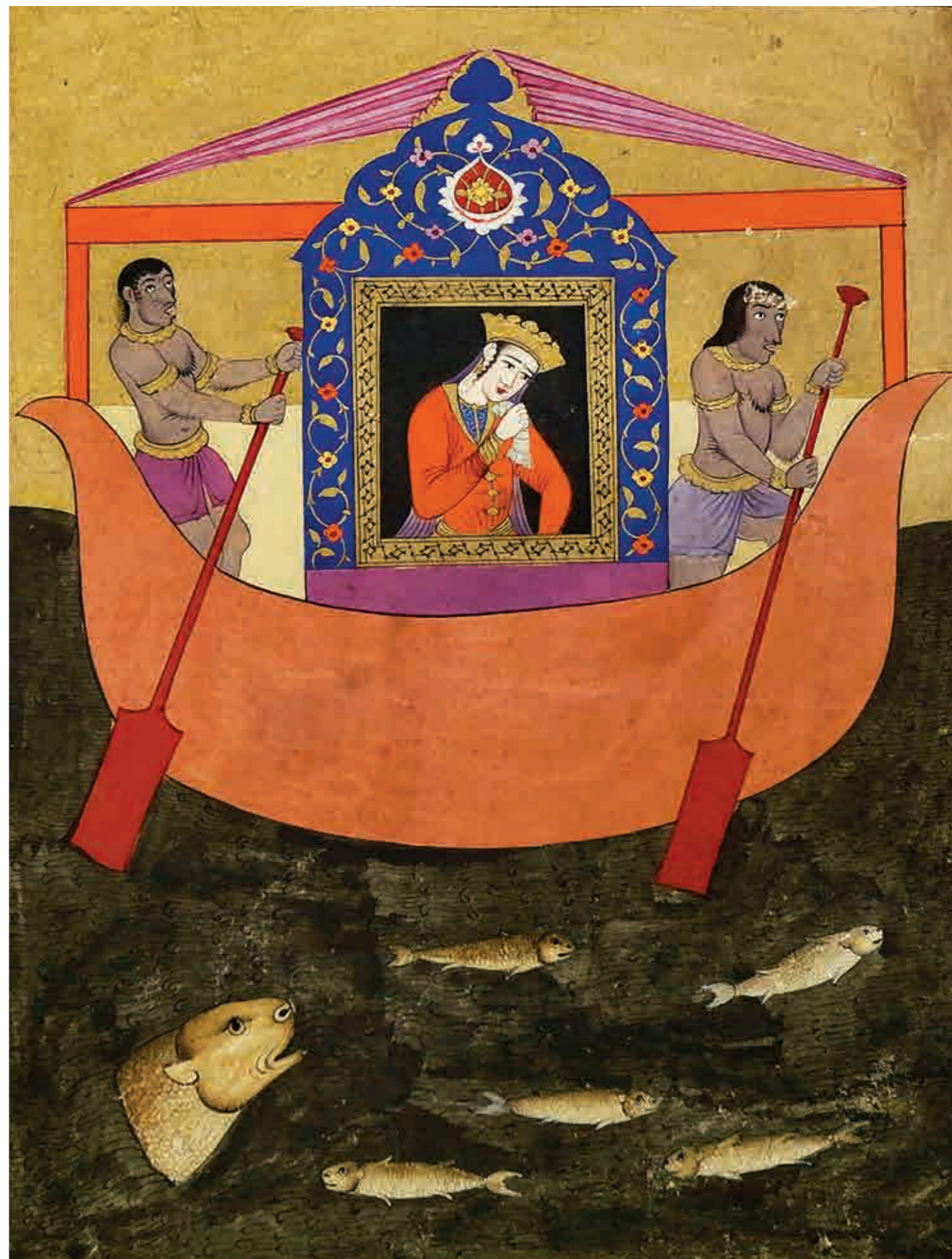
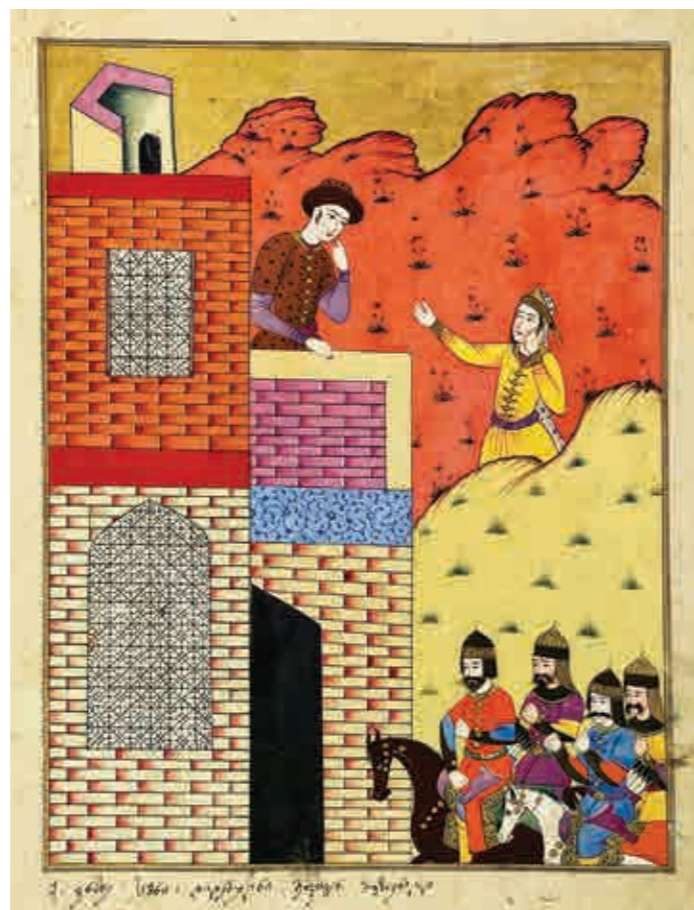
The Knight in the Panther's Skin is copied in refined calligraphic *mkhedruli*, with the framed text centred in the page. The emphasis of the text is enhanced by the contrasting colors of the decorated margins, created with gold ink. The artistic appearance of each page is formed by decorative elements featuring floral and animal motifs. No two-page compositions are repeated. The illuminator of the manuscript is unknown.

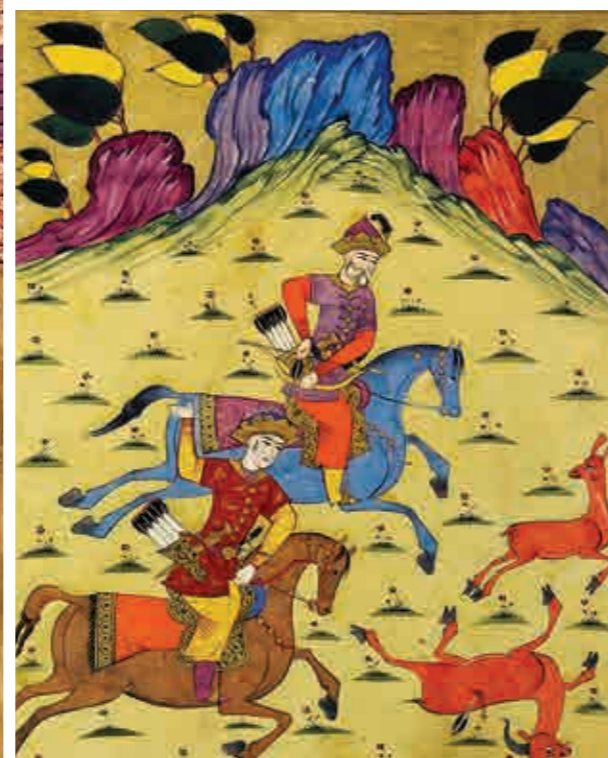
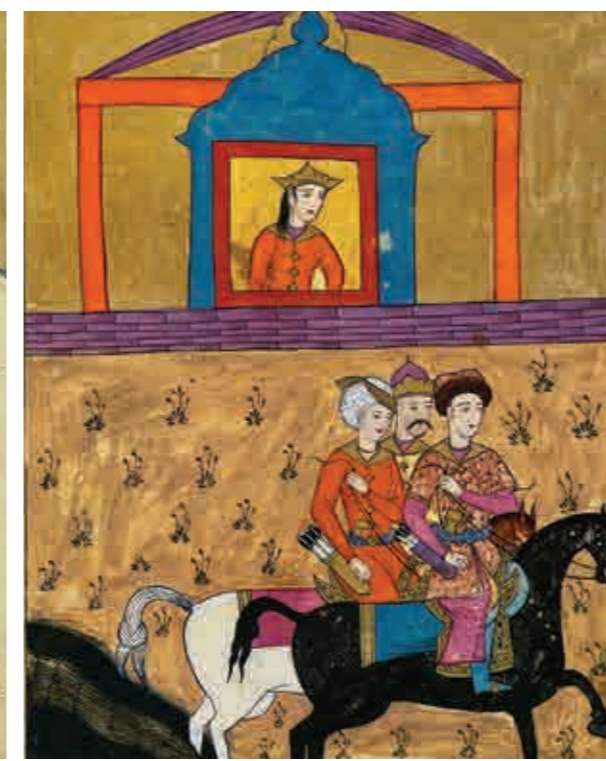
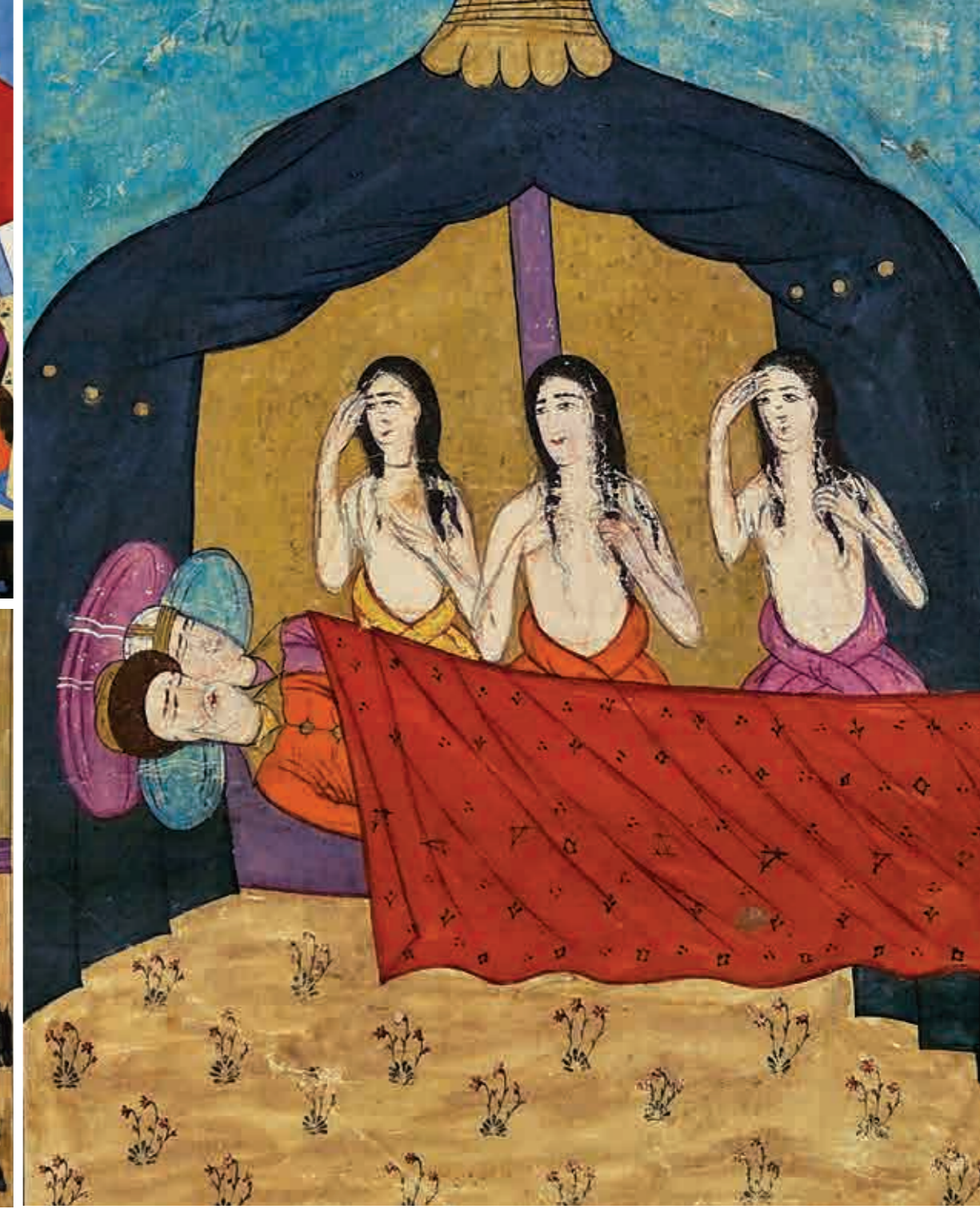
SHOTA RUSTAVELI THE KNIGHT IN THE PANTHER'S SKIN

289 ff.; paper; 330x220 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink, red ink (for titles and the beginning of stanza).
S-5006; 18th c.

This manuscript is known as the Tsereteli copy. The scribe copied the key story of the poem from the text established and published by Vakhtang VI, adding continuations to the poem. The book, which had become worn and lost its cover, was restored at the initiative of Solomon I, the King of Imereti (1735-1784). The manuscript was part of the dowry of King Solomon's daughter Darejan and was kept in the family of her son, Ivane Abashidze, one of the leaders of the 1819 Imereti rebellion against the Russian Empire. The rebellion was suppressed and its leaders, Ivane Abashidze and Kaikhosro Gurieli were exiled to the Ottoman Empire. *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* manuscript, as a dowry item, remained in the family of Gurieli's daughter Pelagia and her husband Nestor Tsereteli. The Tsereteli family took the manuscript to Tbilisi for restoration of its cover, but it was left in a carriage. The person who found it, brought the manuscript to Davit Sarajishvili, the founder of Georgian cognac production and a well-known philanthropist. Through his assistance, Ekvtime Taqaishvili deposited the manuscript in the Library Museum of the Society for the Spread of Literacy among Georgians.

The manuscript features 87 miniatures, crafted by two artists. One of these artists demonstrates the influence of the Isfahan miniature school. Additionally, the manuscript's tumultuous history has had an impact on its artistic decoration. At the end of the 19th century, during a temporary removal from the library by its previous owners, 10 artistic compositions were cut out and sold. The miniatures were later seen in Paris by the renowned British diplomat Oliver Wardrop, who informed Ekvtime Taqaishvili of the situation. All 10 miniatures were eventually returned to the manuscript. Currently, the manuscript's artistic decoration is fully preserved.







IOSEB-ZILIKHANIANI

120 ff.; paper; 215x155 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink, red ink (for titles and the beginning of stanza).
S-1283; 17th c.

The Georgian text of *Ioseb-Zilikhaniani* is a translation of the Persian poem *Yusuf o Zuleikha* by Abd al-Rahman Jami. The text, translated by an anonymous translator, dates back to the 17th century. The miniatures in the manuscript were transferred from another, currently unknown, manuscript. The edges of these miniatures were cut off and then inserted into the new text. In the 1960s, texts of the writing were discovered on the backs of miniatures, representing a variant version of the same redaction of *Yusuf o Zuleikha*. This newly discovered text has been dated to the late 16th or early 17th century. Presumably, the miniatures are from the same period.

The manuscript includes 12 miniatures, which sequentially follow the content and depict the key episodes of the poem. The artist, presumably Georgian, was well assimilated with the influence of the predominant Persian artistic traditions. This is already evident in the texture, attire and

treatment of landscapes and interiors. The elongated, refined figures are distinguished by their extraordinary delicacy. The flexible and flowing lines are characterized by exceptional grace. The unique color palette – intense oranges, various shades of violet, blue, and subdued green – somehow differs from the bold color schemes of contemporary Iranian miniatures, giving the Georgian miniatures a unique expressiveness. At first glance, the miniatures of *Ioseb-Zilikhaniani* seem to follow the artistic traditions of the Shirazi school of painting; however, they more prominently reflect the characteristics of the earlier Isfahan school.

It can be confidently stated that, from an artistic perspective, the miniatures in *Ioseb-Zilikhaniani* are among the best Georgian secular miniatures influenced by Iranian art.







ROSTOMIANI

487 ff.; paper; 395x255 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink, red ink (for titles and the beginning of stanza).
S-1580; 17th c.

Georgian poetic version of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, versed by Khosro Turmanidze. It was copied in the 17th century in a calligraphic *mkhedruli*. It features decorative headpieces, with some pages bearing watermark. The manuscript is adorned with miniatures. The book once belonged to King Vakhtang VI. After the exile of Queen Darejan, the wife of King Erekle II, to St. Petersburg, the book was moved to Moscow and was given to Vakhtang Jambakur-Orbeliani, the grandson of the King Erekle II.



THE CHRONICLES OF KARTLI (QUEEN MARIAM'S COPY)

470 ff.; paper with watermarks; 325x230 mm.; calligraphic *mkhedruli*;
black ink, red ink (for titles and initials).
S-30; 1633-1646

This manuscript contains the earliest version of the ancient historical chronicles united under the title *The Chronicles of Kartli*. The collection includes the apocryphal text *The Birth of Heaven and Earth*, attributed to Ephrem the Syrian, as well as historical chronicles from the 8th to 14th centuries. These chronicles were authored by Georgian historians, Leonti Mroveli, Juansheri, Davit the Historian, Sumbat Davitisdze, the Historian of Tamar, anonymous chronicler. The collection was copied on the order of Queen Mariam of Kartli between 1633 and 1646. Among the historical compilations known as *The Chronicles of Kartli* this is the earliest. The manuscript is copied by several scribes. The book was owned by Vakhtang VI (1675-1737) during his princehood years, who became the governor and the king of Kartli.





**SULKHAN-SABA ORBELIANI,
GEORGIAN DICTIONARY**

03+242 ff.; paper; 220x165 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink, red ink (for initials and titles).
S-4748; 1730.

The complete version of Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani's dictionary was copied by the dean of the court Aleksii Meshkshvili, a representative of the Anchiskhati calligraphic school. The manuscript is adorned with decorated initials in red, as well as depictions of Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani and a cross.



**SULKHAN-SABA ORBELIANI,
GEORGIAN DICTIONARY**

305 ff.; paper; 385x300 mm.; mkhedruli; black ink.
H-1658; 1715-1716

The first comprehensive lexicographical work not only provides definitions of Georgian words but also categorizes and explains the differences between various phenomena or objects. It includes translations of foreign words along with their Latin, Greek, and Armenian equivalents. The *Georgian Dictionary* is the autograph of Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani. It was copied in Constantinople in 1715-1716, after the author's diplomatic mission to the royal court of France and the Pope in Rome. The manuscript is acephalous, the explanations of the peculiarity of the

Georgian alphabet, the significance of the dictionary for the youth and the conventional signs attached to the explanatory words are missing. In the end of the manuscript Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani's colophon is presented, where he reflects on the motivations and challenges while creating his Georgian dictionary, as well as the knowledge he gained during his travel across Europe. His dictionary, known as the *Sitkvis Kona* (bunch of words), remains a foundational work in Georgian lexicography, continuing to be relevant today for its contribution to the standardization and preservation of the Georgian language.





VISRAMIANI

274 ff.; paper; 290x200 mm.; mkhedruli; black ink, red ink. S-3702; 1729

Visramiani is a Georgian translation of Fakhr ad-Din-e As'ad Gorgan's (in the Georgian translation, Fakhfur Jorjaneli) work *Vis o Ramin*, a love story of the classical period of Persian poetry, created in the middle of the 11th century. The story is developed within the cultural context of the Parthian era. It is noteworthy that while the Persian original is written in verse, the Georgian translation is prose. The Georgian translator is believed to have elevated the Persian original into a brilliant masterpiece of native literature through an accurate translation. The manuscript is dated to 1729, and the illustrations are from the same period. The text is decorated with 45 miniatures, 20 of which are incomplete.

Significantly, the miniatures in *Visramiani* intensively illustrate life at the royal court: meetings, banquets, hunting and romantic episodes. The artist, using a laconic and rather restrained color palette, occasionally accented with bright

tones, aims to create an artistic effect. Working within a conditional decorative scheme, the artist attempts to lay out simple compositions; the scenes are not overloaded with figures and details; the figures are characterized by uniformity and similar sizes. The drawing is fluid, with bold lines, that add more dynamism and expressiveness to the scenes. It is evident, that the artist, presumably, was familiar with earlier Georgian secular miniature painting influenced by Iranian art, borrowing certain details from it.

It should be noted that the first miniature of *Visramiani*, featuring the commissioner Ibdal Malik Vizier and Fakhfur Jorjaneli, reminds us of a scene from the Tavakalashvili manuscript of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (H-599), with the figures of Levan Dadiani, Mamuka Tavakalashvili and Shota Rustaveli.

In general, the miniatures in *Visramiani* are quite expressive; it is evident that the artist was well-acquainted with the text creating the impression that the scenes were drawn from the live observation. It is believed that the artist retained local artistic characteristics and traditions.



ZIJ OR STAR CATALOGUE

313 ff.; paper; 305x210 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink, red ink.
S-161; 1735-1737

An astronomical manuscript includes the most comprehensive astronomical book of the 15th century, known as *Zij* or *the Star Catalog*, compiled by Mirza Muhammed Taragai bin Shahruk Ulugh Beg (1394-1449), better known as Ulugh Beg, mathematician and astronomer, the grandson of Tamerlane, the head of the Timurid Dynasty. The catalogue is based on observations conducted at the observatory established by Ulugh Beg in Samarkand, as well as the works of the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy and the 12th century Iranian astronomer Abd al-

Rahman al-Sufi. *Zij* contains information on 1018 stars and 38 constellations, including their coordinates and magnitudes. The Persian *Zij* was translated into Georgian by King Vakhtang VI. The Georgian translation consists of Ulugh Beg's preface and five books, accompanied by tables and large and minor lexicons of astronomical terms compiled by King Vakhtang VI, as well as a the translator's colophon. This manuscript is one of the notable examples of the program for acquiring knowledge in natural sciences in the 17th and 18th centuries.



VAKHUSHTI BAGRATIONI, WORLD GEOGRAPHY

175 ff.; paper; 210x165 mm.; mkhedruli;
black ink; maps of different sizes.
A-717; 1735

The manuscript presents concise World Geography accompanied by 27 maps depicting all the known countries of the world at that time. The work was translated from Russian in Moscow during the forced resettlement of the members of the Bagrationi royal family of Kartli in Russia. The translator is Vakhushti Bagrationi (1696-1757), the son of King Vakhtang VI, a prominent geographer and historian of his era. This is an autograph manuscript.

The margins of the translation feature Vakhushti's explanations and notes on foreign terms. The geography is

preceded by an introduction, explaining the purpose of the book and the goals of the translation. The book is divided into chapters and subchapters. Before the geographical descriptions of the countries, there is information about the four continents – Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. The descriptions of the countries are accompanied by maps of hemispheres, as well as the maps of Europe, Spain and Portugal, France, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the Kingdom of Poland, the Kingdom of Denmark and the Duchy of Holstein, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, Hungary and Greece, Asia, the Asian part of Turkey, Persia and Bukhara, India and the Mughal Empire, Greater Mongolia and the Kingdom of China, Africa, North America or the New World, South America, and Russia.

**DAVIT GURAMISHVILI,
DAVITIANI**

155 ff.; paper; 325x195 mm.; mkhedruli; brown ink.
S-1598; 1787

This manuscript is an autograph of the renowned Georgian poet Davit Guramishvili (1705-1792), written in 1787 while he was living in Ukraine, where he spent much of his life. The manuscript, known as *Davitiani*, an autobiographical book of poetry that recounts his years serving abroad, includes a plan of an irrigation system and a mill, accompanied by the author's explanations about the layout of the mill and the specifics of water flow in Malorossia (present-day Ukraine). According to Davit Guramishvili, this mill plan was designed by him. The manuscript also contains a self-portrait of the author. In his note, Guramishvili mentions that he presented this book to Prince Mirian, the son of the King Erekle II, who was in Russia at the time, and who later brought the book to Georgia.



GIORGI AVALISHVILI, THE JOURNEY FROM TBILISI TO JERUSALEM

201 ff.; paper; 300x240 mm.; *mkhedruli*;
black ink.
S-450; 19th c.



The manuscript by the Georgian writer, political figure, and traveler Giorgi Avalishvili (1769-1850) describes his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the ancient sites there. The manuscript dates back to 1820. According to the manuscript, his travel route was as follows: Tbilisi – Western Georgia – Crimea – Constantinople – Alexandria – Cairo – Jerusalem – Cyprus – Tarsus – Kayseri – Erzurum – Kars – Shulaveri – Tbilisi. Alongside its source value, the work by Giorgi Avalishvili is a significant monument of Georgian geographical thought. The manuscript is an autograph and includes not only the text but also a map (30r), illustrations (42r, 44v, 50r, 85r, 93r), and plans (56r, 143r). It discusses the social and political life of Egypt and Turkey, the customs of Arabs and Turks, as well as some aspects of Georgian-Russian political relations. Particularly interesting is the depiction of the situation of Georgians residing in Egypt. The work is preceded by an extensive preface explaining the goals and conditions of the journey. At the end of the manuscript, there is an index of the cities, towns, villages, rivers, seas, and other geographical locations mentioned in the text.

THE AMULET

Paper; 350x230 mm.;
pouch size 60x70 mm.
Q-283; 19th c.



An amulet designed for protection against illness and evil forces, composed of 24 interconnected round pieces of paper. The first two pieces feature images of Jesus Christ. This type of manuscript is referred to as an *Avgaroz* (amulet). The name originates from an early Christian Syriac literature about the history of the King Abgar of Edessa, who was healed of leprosy through his faith and epistles to Jesus Christ. Based on this legend, an apocryphal text known as the *Epistula Abgari* (*Epistula Abgari*) was developed in Byzantine literature in the 11th century. Initially, it became a part of liturgical collections and the Gospels. From the 14th to the 19th centuries, the text was incorporated into prayer books for healing, and later it circulated independently as an amulet. The term *Avgaroz* came to refer generally to protective texts of various contents. This present *Avgaroz* includes the text of the *Epistula Abgari*. The manuscript is kept in a silk-lined embroidered pouch, which is a notable example of Georgian embroidery.

Handwritten text in Georgian script, likely a list or index of documents, with some red initials.



Handwritten text in Georgian script, continuing the list or index.

Background text in Georgian script, partially obscured by the main title.

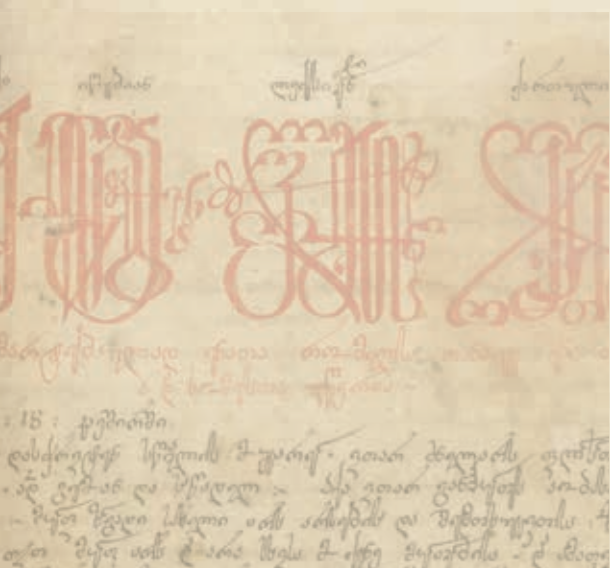
DOCUMENTS

CHAPTER VII

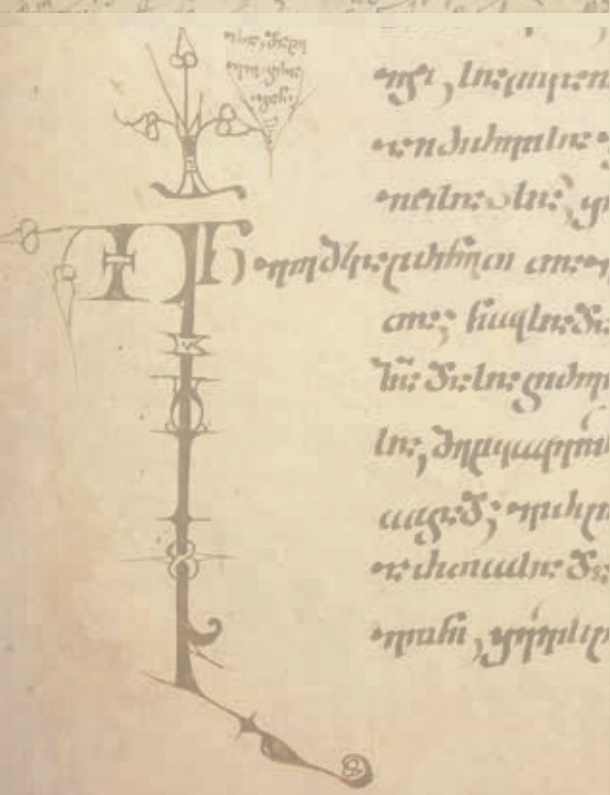
The National Centre of Manuscripts houses a rich collection of historical documents. The earliest examples date back to the 11th century. However, the tradition of employing legal written documents in practice in Georgia can be traced back to at least the 6th century. The reliability of historical documents as sources of historical information is particularly noteworthy, as they reflect contemporary facts and events with documentary precision.

The long experience of state order in Georgia led to the development of the corresponding system of documentation, which is reflected in the variety of historical documents that have survived to this day. The documents were primarily created at the royal court, where a special office of royal scribes operated. Here the royal decrees and orders were formulated along with the documents regulating the rights and responsibilities between the royal authority and the church, as well as between the royal authority and state officials, and cases adjudicated at the king's court. In addition to the royal court, documents were also produced at the patriarchal residences of the Catholicos and in the chanceries of high-ranking officials in administrative regions.

Documents were drafted by individuals with legal expertise, notaries – who were primarily of clerical status. Before the unification of Georgia under a single monarchy, the institution of notaries operated in the Kingdom of Abkhazia, the principalities of Tao-Klarjeti and Kartli. In the 10th century, at the court of Davit Curopalates, the position known as the *Head of the Notaries* existed, which was replaced in the 11th century by the *Mtsignobartukhutsesi* (royal chancellor). This official oversaw the royal chancery, where notaries got a set number of parchment sheets daily to record the king's orders and decrees. The notaries drafted various documents using appropriate formulate and terminology, with one copy kept in the royal archive and the other given to the recipient.

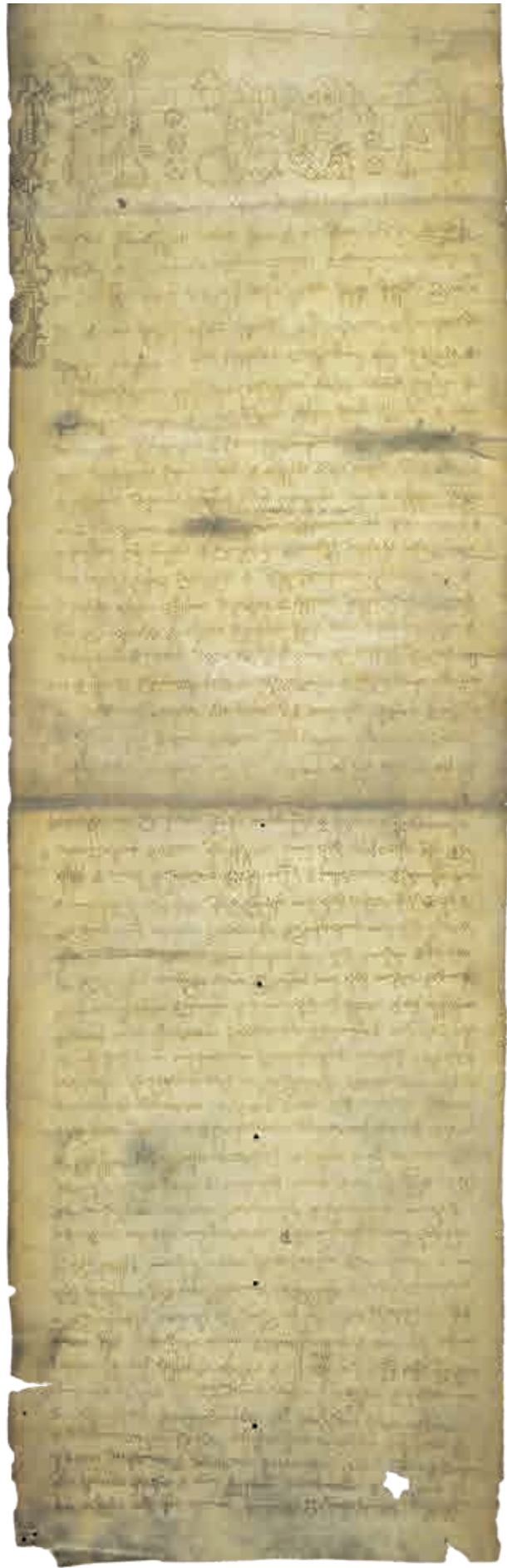


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The notaries' *mkhedruli* handwriting was particularly distinguished. Documents were written on parchment or paper, carefully selected for their width and length, and were authorized by individuals with signatures and seals. Finally, the documents were rolled up into scrolls and kept in special containers.

Among historical documents, there are church donation charters, royal grants given to feudals, statistical registers of the population and those with military obligations, tax lists, private testaments, purchase and sale agreements, loan and mortgage contracts, and many others.

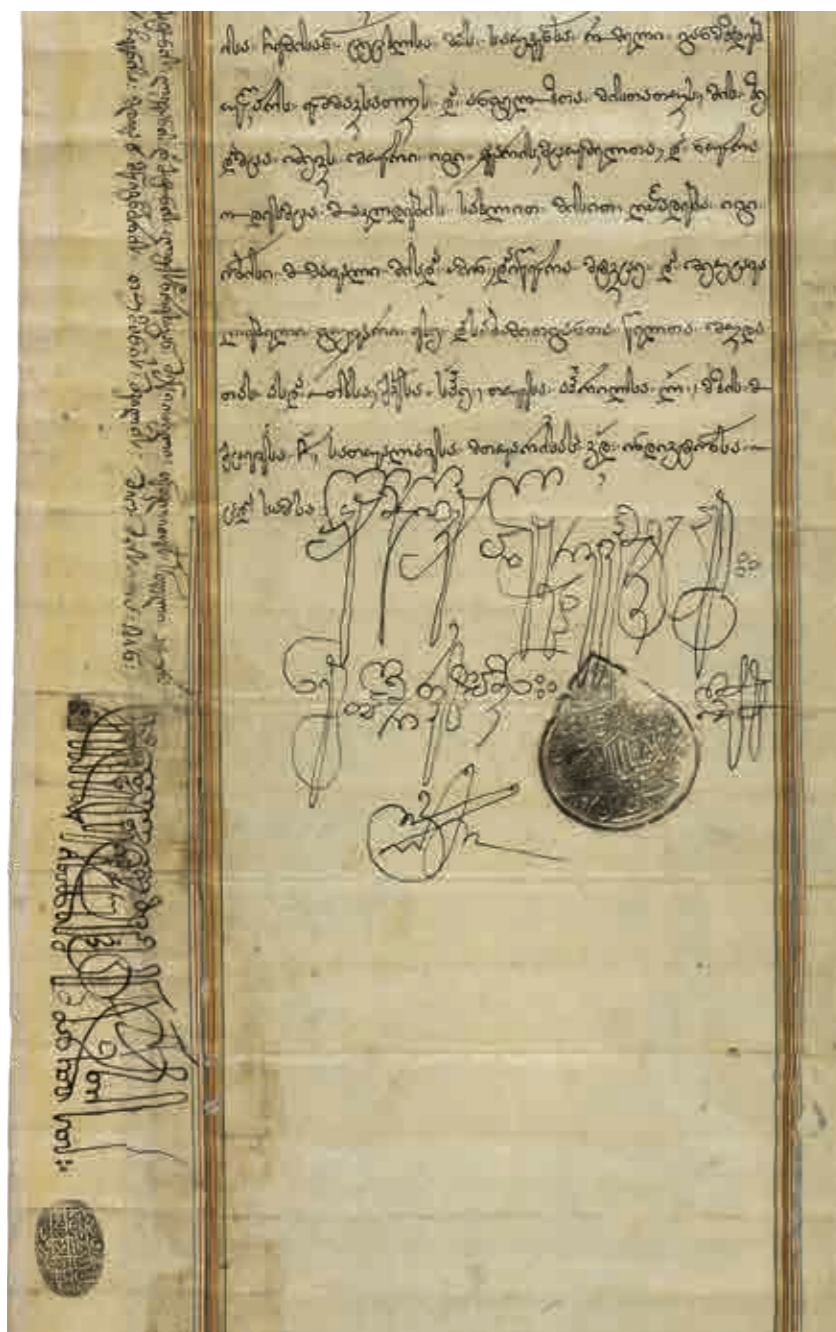
Historical documents serve as primary sources for investigating the legal system of the Georgian state, the nature of royal authority, social hierarchy, military organization, aristocratic family histories, genealogy and chronology. Their significance is immense for studying historical onomastics and the demographic structure of the population.



THE DOCUMENT FROM KING GEORGE VIII OF UNITED GEORGIA

Parchment; 1210x200 mm.; *mkhedruli*; black ink; the notary: the court notary and the cross-bearer Gabriel Jorashvili Qd 7118; 15th c.

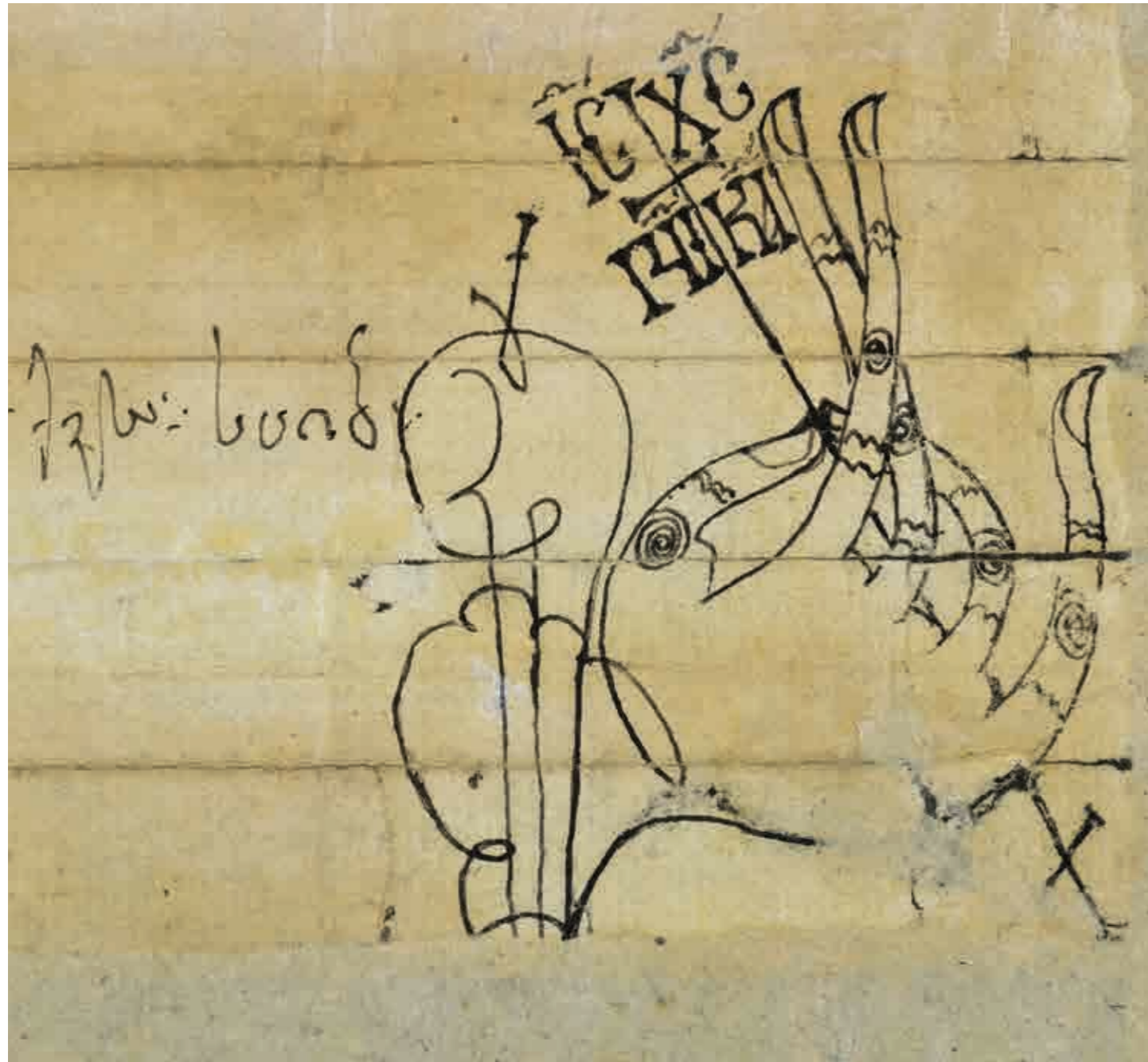
This is Hereditary Charter (a document that confirms hereditary rights, typically involving land or titles passed down through a family lineage), issued by King George VIII of United Georgia (reigned 1446-1466; King of Kakheti 1466-1476) to Priest Giorgi Zhurluli, through the mediation of the Shalva Eristavi of Largvisi. The document is adorned with illustrations. On the first leaf, there is Christ on the throne, blessing with his right hand and the second leaf features an image of King George VIII, the last king of United Georgia.



**THE DOCUMENT FROM
ALEXANDER II (1527-1605),
KING OF KAKHETI**

Paper; 2850x250 mm.; rounded Mkhedruli;
black ink, golden ink.
Hd-1377; 1597

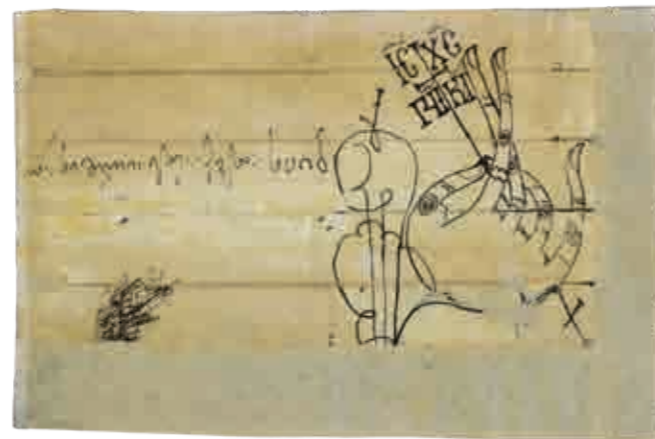
This document, issued in 1587, concerns the appointment of Ketavan, as the Abbess of the Monastery of Akuri, metochion of Davit Gareja. The first leave of the document is adorned with an oriental (*Unvan* type) headpiece.



THE DEED OF GIFT FROM BASIL VI, CATHOLICOS

Paper; 95x165 mm.; *mkhedruli*; black ink.
Qd 1604; 1604

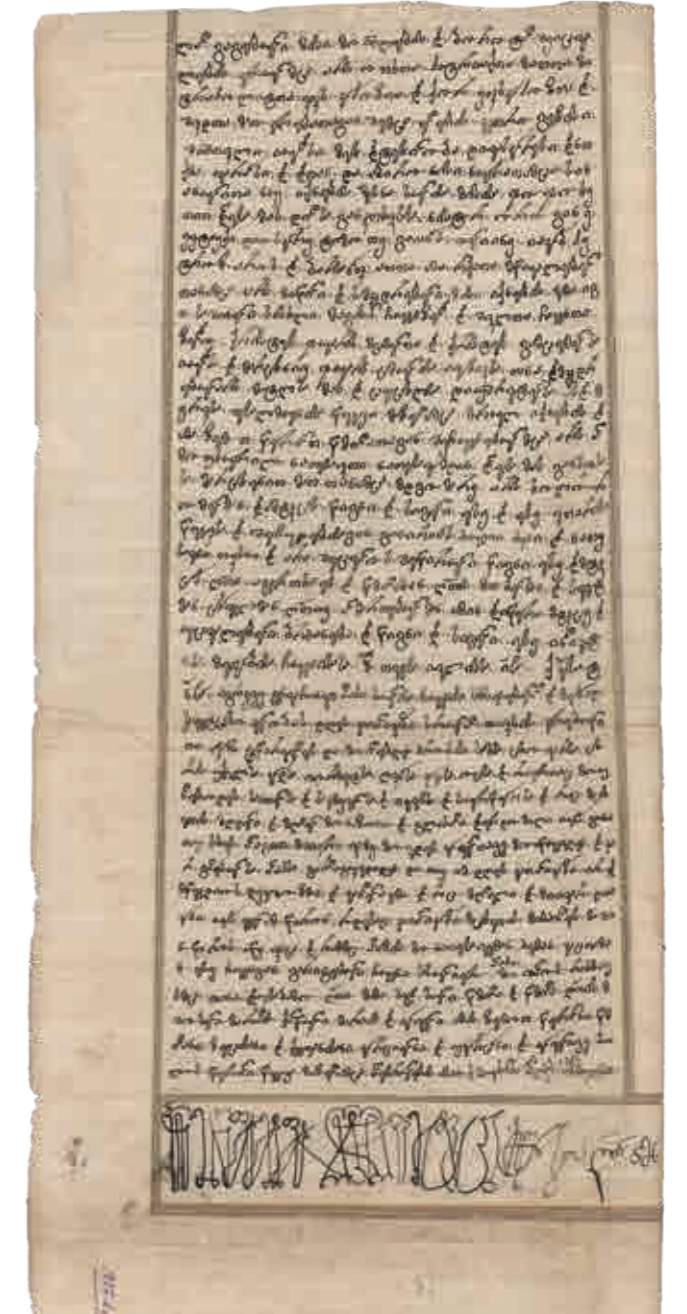
The document of 1604 is a deed of gift of the estate given to the Monastery of the Theotokos in Manglisi. The document is accompanied by the signature of the Catholicos.



THE BOOK OF DONATION FROM KING ARCHIL II (1647-1713)

Paper; 2080x280 mm.; *mkhedruli*; black ink.
Ad-1837; 1670

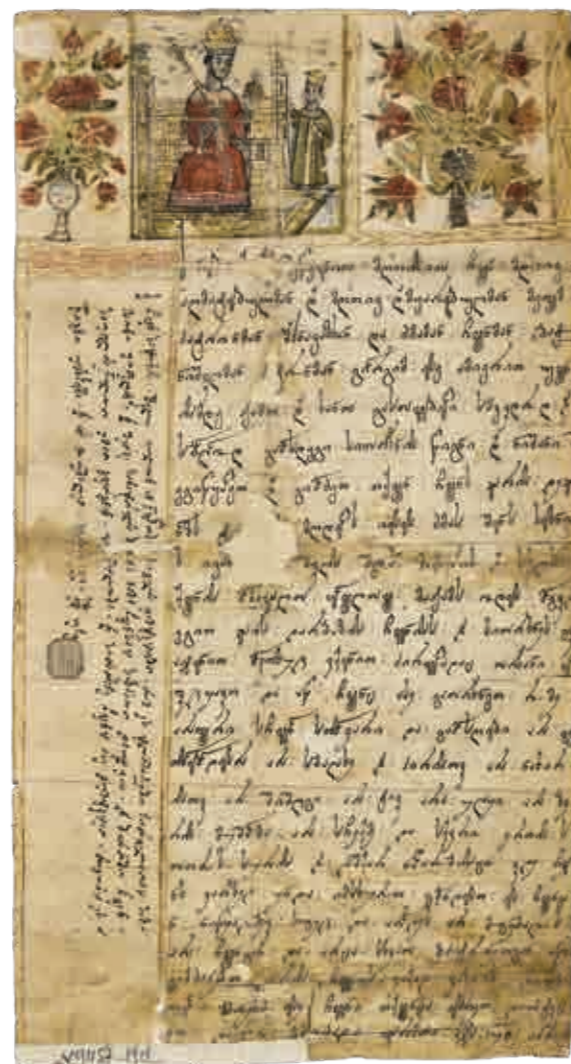
A donation for the land and riverside copse on the banks of the Mtkvari River granted to the Svetitskhoveli Monastery, was issued on July 15, 1670. The painting on the first kefa features floral ornaments. On both sides of the stepped pedestal, there are depictions of Patrons, Catholicos Domenti and King Archil of Kakheti.



THE DOCUMENT FROM SHAHNAVAZ-KHAN (1700-1750)

Paper; 435x235 mm.; *mkhedruli*; black ink; the notary: Davit, the son of the royal court secretary. Hd 9457; 1712

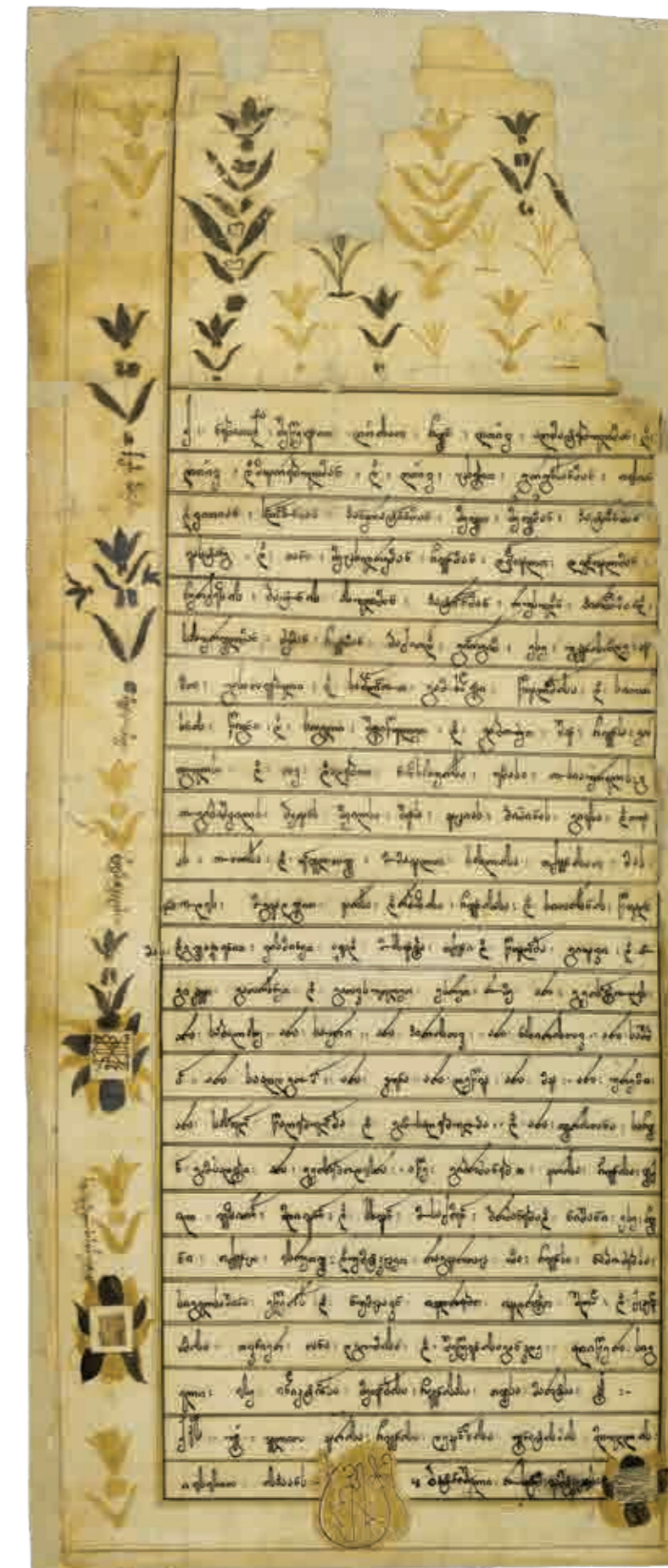
A tax ledger document (it documented tax obligations, land ownership, and related records within a particular region or estate) given by Bakar Batonishvili, known as Shahnavaaz-Khan, and his brother, Giorgi Batonishvili, to the dean of the court, Iese Tlashadzi, during the reign of the son of Vakhtang VI in Kartli. The document is issued on April 6, 1712. The beginning of the document features an image of the young crowned king sitting on the throne, Bakar (1700-1750), the son of Vakhtang VI, a youngster dressed in royal garments beside him is his brother, Prince Giorgi.



THE DOCUMENT FROM THE KING VAKHTANG VI OF KARTLI (1675-1731)

Oriental paper; 780x330; rounded *mkhedruli*; black ink, golden ink; the notary: Priest Iese, the dean of the court, the son of Egnati. Qd 9357; 1715

A charter of tax exemption was granted by King Vakhtang VI of Kartli to Bezhan Gogibashvili from the village Osiauri (Inner Kartli, Georgia) on March 21, 1715. The document is compiled in Ispahan (Iran).

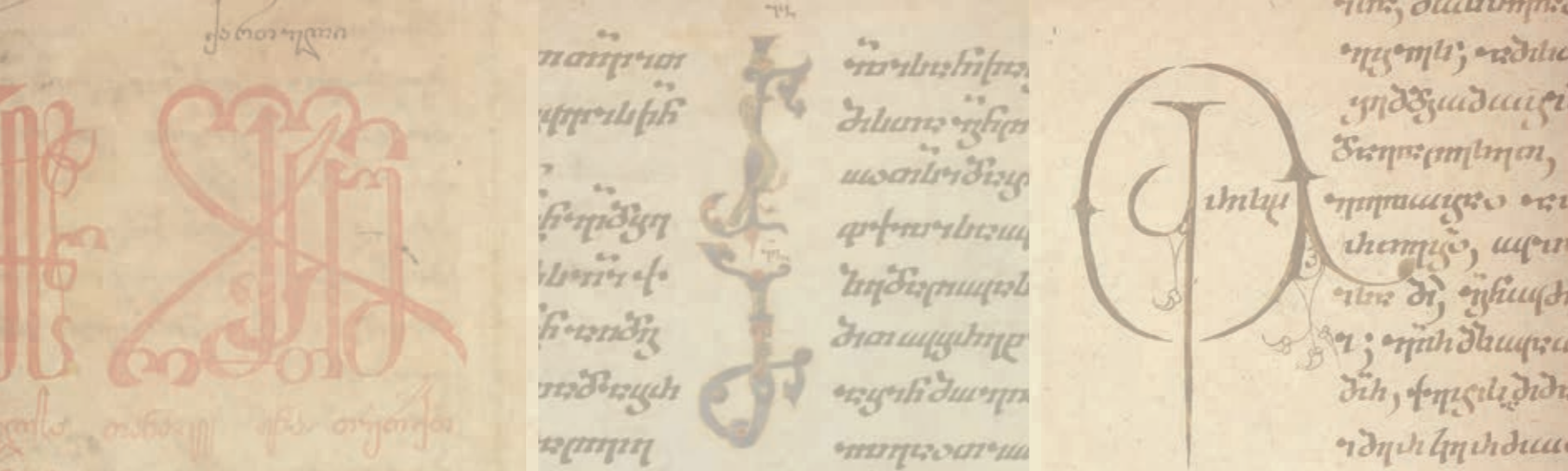




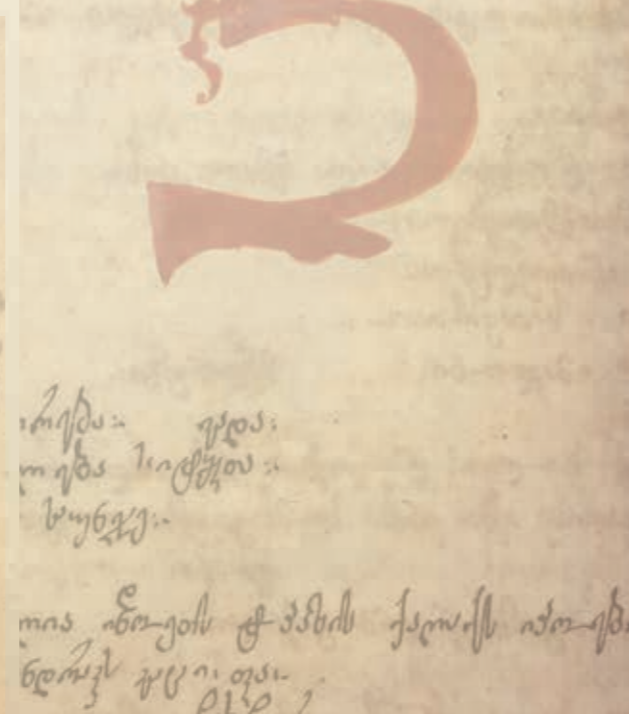
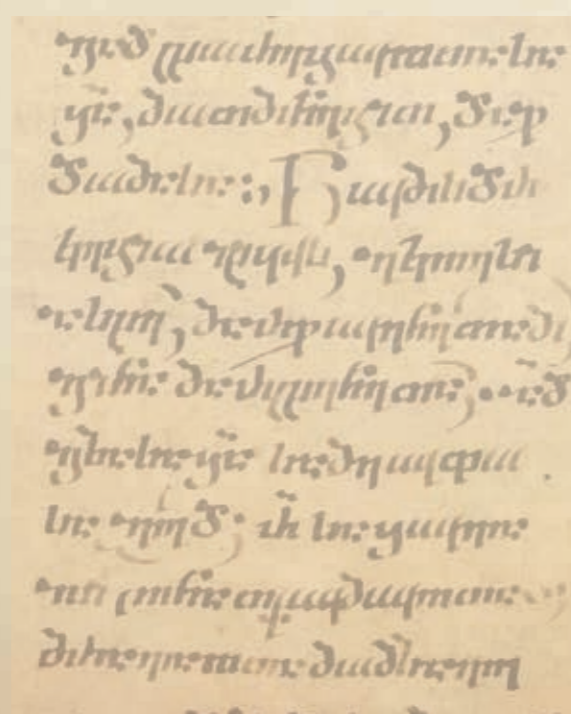
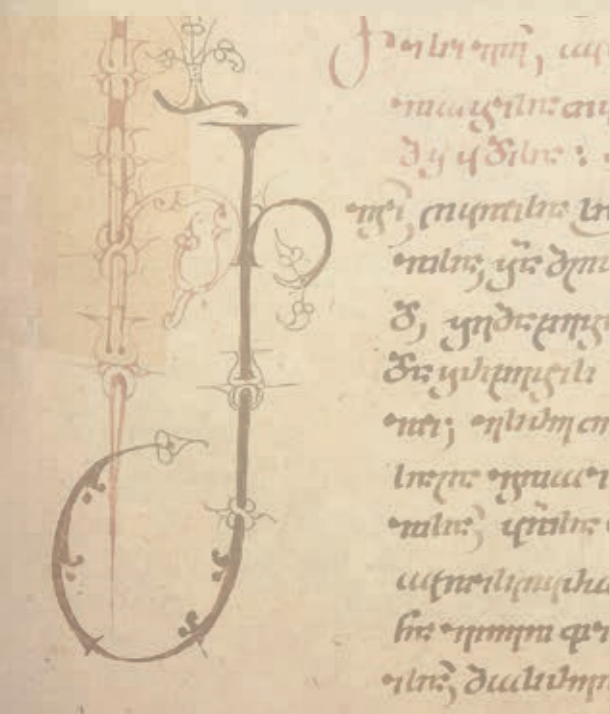
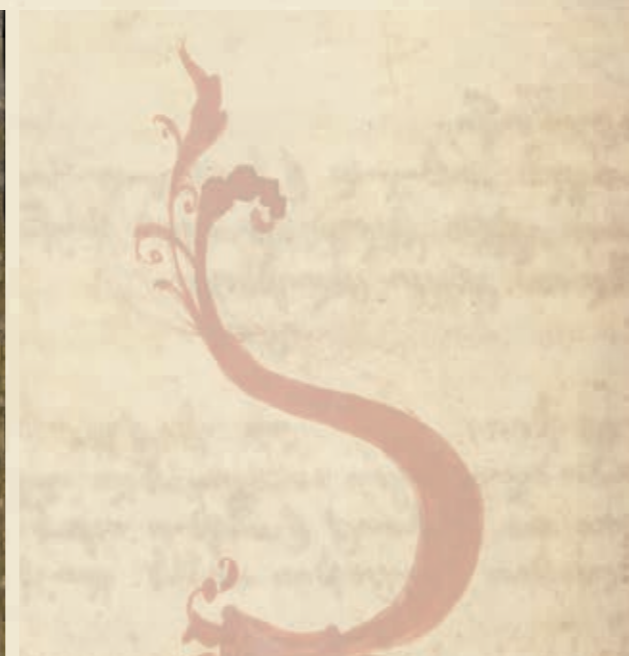
THE DOCUMENT OF KING SOLOMON II OF IMERETI (1772-1815)

Paper; 560x440; mm. stylized *mkhedruli*; black ink;
 the notary: the artist Davit.
 Hd-1529; 1804

A donation deed was granted to the Monastery of Jruchi on May 27, 1804. The beginning of the document features a multi-figure composition, with St. George is depicted on the far left and the figure of King Solomon II in front of the Saint.



COVERS



CHAPTER VIII

While assessing the cultural and historical value of a manuscript, special relevance is given to the book cover. It is the least resistant to time and often needs renewing. Accordingly, the later renovated covers attached to the early manuscripts provide us with interesting information about the change and development of the material and artistic-decorative elements of medieval manuscripts, as well as about their relocation. A handwritten book bound in quires, inserted in a cover, has appeared in Georgia since the 5th century, as evidenced by numerous *khanmeti* palimpsests dating from the 5th-8th centuries. Thus, for example, in manuscript A-89, which contains *khanmeti* Gospels, there are traces of quire numbering in the lower layer of the folios.

Today, it is challenging to discuss techniques of bookbinding and artistic characteristics of ancient covers, as just the few surviving examples date back to the 9th-10th centuries. Two of these are preserved at the Historical and Ethnographic Museum of Svaneti – the covers of the Adishi Gospels and the Adishi Iadgari, – while others are found in the Georgian collection at the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. Due to the frequent use of manuscripts, it is quite natural that the original covers made of leather would wear out and it would be necessary to re-bind them. Depending on how often a particular book was used, the process of renewing the cover was sometimes done twice or even three times. Accordingly, the geometric shapes and compositions used in the decorative system of the cover changed and responded to the demands of the times.

Between the 9th and 17th centuries, alongside the scribes who worked in on copying of manuscripts, there were also “binders,” (შემკვრელები) and enclothers (მომსველები, მკაზველები) of manuscripts. Early signs of reconstructing manuscripts into new covers can be observed during the rebinding of books copied from the 9th to 16th centuries. These traces indicate that, despite the evolution of book covers, the techniques and tools



used in their creation remained unchanged. From the 18th century, part of the bookbinders stayed in churches and monasteries, and some of them established themselves in the atelier of “printing houses” specially built by Vakhtang VI in Tbilisi, close to Sioni Cathedral and Church of Anchiskhati. The covers produced by the first Georgian printing house are similar to those of manuscripts from the same period in both binding techniques and decoration.

Considering every detail or ornamental fragment of each cover, also information preserved in the colophons of manuscripts about covers, it is possible to determine the chronological stages of the history of the cover: the

early stage (9th-16th cc.), transitional (17th c.) and late (18-19th cc.). Each stage has its characteristics.

After the involvement of the secular aristocracy and high-ranking clergy in the creation of the manuscript book, silver repoussé covers are created. Covers of this type have been found since the 11th century. The unique samples of the Georgian repoussé cover were created by the famous goldsmiths Beshken and Beka Opizaris, working in the 12th century, distinguished both by their high-performance technique and their skills in creating artistic compositions. Later, in the 18th-19th century, there are covers characteristic of European and oriental books.



BERTA GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 12th c., contemporary cover; the cover master: Beshken Opizari. Q-906.

Silver gilt repoussé cover, 245x171 mm. The cover is decorated with semi-precious stones. The compositions have explanatory inscriptions made in *asomtavruli* script. At the centre of the front cover is a depiction of the Crucifixion, with the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, and angels in the background. The scene is surrounded with *asomtavruli* inscription, in which Iovane Arkhaidze, Father Giorgi and deacon Mikel Kvirikaidze are mentioned. On the back cover – Deesis, accompanied by the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist are presented. The inscriptions here name commissioners: Okropiri and his son Demetre.



TSQAROSTAVI GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to 1195, contemporary cover;
the cover master: Beka Opizari.
Q-907

Silver gilt repoussé cover, 250x162 mm. At the centre of the front cover is a depiction of the Crucifixion, with the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, and angels in the background. On the back cover – a composition of Deesis, accompanied by the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. Along with the ornamental decoration, one of the artistic elements is *asomtavruli* inscriptions. The cover is decorated with precious stones. The brown leather edges are decorated with small silver decorative plates.



DEMIRBULAKHI GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 12th c.,
contemporary cover, restored twice in 15th-16th cc. and 17th-18th cc.
Q-241

Black leather-bound stamped wooden cover; 215x158 mm. On the front cover there is a single arch consisting of a braided ornament and a leaved cross. The cover is characterized by earlier marks, dated to the 12th century. Master Iason (15th-16th cc.) reconstructed the cover of the manuscript. Metal decorative plates were added to the cover later. On the cover are preserved both early (12th c., 15th-16th cc.) and later layers (17th-18th cc.).



PALESTINE GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 11th c.,
the cover: 13th-14th cc.
H-1741.

Dark brown leather-bound wooden cover; 214x130 mm. Fragments of silver plating are preserved on the back cover, probably depicting the composition of Deesis. The "grequage" technique is used on the manuscript, which traces the secondary binding of the book.





GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 12th-13th cc.,
the cover: 14th-15th cc., restored in the 17th- 18th cc.
A-516

Silver repoussé cover, 238x170 mm. The front cover is broken, the narrative image in the center is almost completely lost, presumably the Easter composition was depicted. On the back cover there is a depiction of the Crucifixion, traditionally with the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist and angels with Georgian and Greek explanatory inscriptions in the background. A later restorer's colophon (9r-v) is attached to the manuscript.

TBETI GOSPELS

The manuscript is dated back to the 12th c.,
contemporary cover; commissioner: loane of Tbeti and Sapara;
cover master: probably Beka Opizari; light brown
leather gilt-stamped cover from the 70s of the 18th c.
Q-929

Fragments of silver gilt repoussé cover is attached on the light brown leather gilt-stamped cover of the late period, 280x200 mm. The front cover presents the scene of the Crucifixion with the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist and the Angels in the background. On the back cover there is an image of Christ inserted in a medallion (with a Greek explanatory inscription), the images of Peter and Paul, beseeching with full torsos. The Savior gives Peter the keys, and Paul the book. The Saints have explanatory inscriptions. loane of Tbeti, mentioned in the inscription, is the commissioner of the repoussé cover, and the master should probably be Beka Opizari. The restoration was carried out at the initiative of Queen Mariam, Otia Dadiani's daughter, and Solomon I's wife (80v).





GOSPELS

The manuscript dates from the 12th-13th cc.,
the cover: 14th-15th cc., restored with metal details in the 17th-18th cc.
A-499

Combined cover of leather and metal, 205x160 mm. On the front and back leather covers the gilded silver casted icons of the Virgin Mary and St. George are attached. Two wrists and a reliquaries hang from the chains. The decorative plates on the back cover form a fairly large cross, which is a detail of the earlier (14th-15th cc.) cover decoration. St. George's icon of the 17-18th cc. is fragmentarily preserved. The free space is filled with decorative plates in the form of embossed nails.



BICHVINTA GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 12th c.,
fragments of a silver-plated cover – 90's of the 15th c.
H-2120

The manuscript is housed in a light-colored calico cardboard box with two gilt silver chased plates affixed to the top and bottom; 320x220 mm. On the silver repoussé cover plates, scenes from the New Testament are depicted, accompanied by explanatory inscriptions in *asomtavruli* and thin, cursive *mkhedruli* script. These inscriptions name historical figures from the 1490s, particularly members of the Dadiani, Gurieli, and Sharvashidze feudal families. Based on the individuals mentioned, fragments of the repoussé cover should be dated to the 1490s.



NOMOCANON

The manuscript belonged to the famous Georgian ecclesiastical figure, writer and diplomat Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani.

The manuscript dates back to 1031, the cover: 16th c. restored in the 18th c. A-96.

Dark brown leather bound stamped wooden cover; 210x165 mm. The surface of the cover is completely infolded with marginal engravings, the front cover is similar to the back cover. Fasteners are missing. There are three places of stitching in relief on the book bone, on which leather of different colors and quality is pasted, decorated with 18th century engravings.



JRUCHI I GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to 936, the cover: 16th c., metal details were attached in the 17th c. H-1660.

Combined cover of leather and metal. Dark brown leather-bound stamped wooden cover; 257x200 mm. The front cover shows a cross raised on a pedestal, the engraving is nearly erased, a marginal braided ornaments and an engraving filling a quadrangular loop can be distinguished. On the back cover, the inner space is filled with several types of marginal engravings. There should have been four medium-sized metal crosses on the front cover. Only the upper two, decorated with gems, are preserved.



GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to 1563, the cover: 16th c., restored with metal details in the 17th-18th cc. A-501

Combined leather and metal cover. The dark brown engraved cover is attached with gilded silver casted details; 215x155 mm. In the center of the front cover there is a composition of the Crucifixion accompanied by the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist. In the corners, the symbolic images of the Evangelists are stylized: an angel, a bull, a lion, and an eagle. The surface of the cover, both on the front and the back, is embellished with decorative plates and nails. On the front cover a handbell, a hand and a transparent stone – rock crystal, inserted in flat silver wires, hangover.





GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to 1504,
contemporary silver case.
Q-920.

The manuscript case is made with silver filigree technique, 155x115 mm. Wooden boards are divided into boxes – reliquaries and are decorated with images of saints (45 boxes in total). The central places of the chest are decorated with a six-pointed star – “Solomon’s Ring”. The silver case, refined and airy, is covered with an ornament composed of complex plants and roses. The case is fastened at the corners with silver hooks, these details are probably made later, 4 undamaged hooks survived. The case has a movable lead consisting of two filigree plates, which are connected by hinges.



NEW TESTAMENT

The manuscript dates back to the 16th c.,
the cover: 16th-17th cc.
A-482

Silver gilt repoussé cover embellished with precious stones; 126x95 mm. On the front cover is presented Christ-Pantokrator, with blessing right hand and with opened book in his left hand, on the back cover – St. George, with a cross and a spear. A continuous row of margins consisting of precious stones and complex floral ornaments line along the edge of the front cover; the nimbus of the Savior is decorated with precious stones. The spine of the book, the right edge and the back cover are decorated with complex leaf-floral ornaments. Underneath the gold plating one can see the brown leather pasted onto the wood. The bookmark is decorated with gems: emerald, ruby, iolite, pearl and turquoise.



GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 16th c.,
the case: 16th-17th cc., restored in the 18th-19th cc.
Q-921

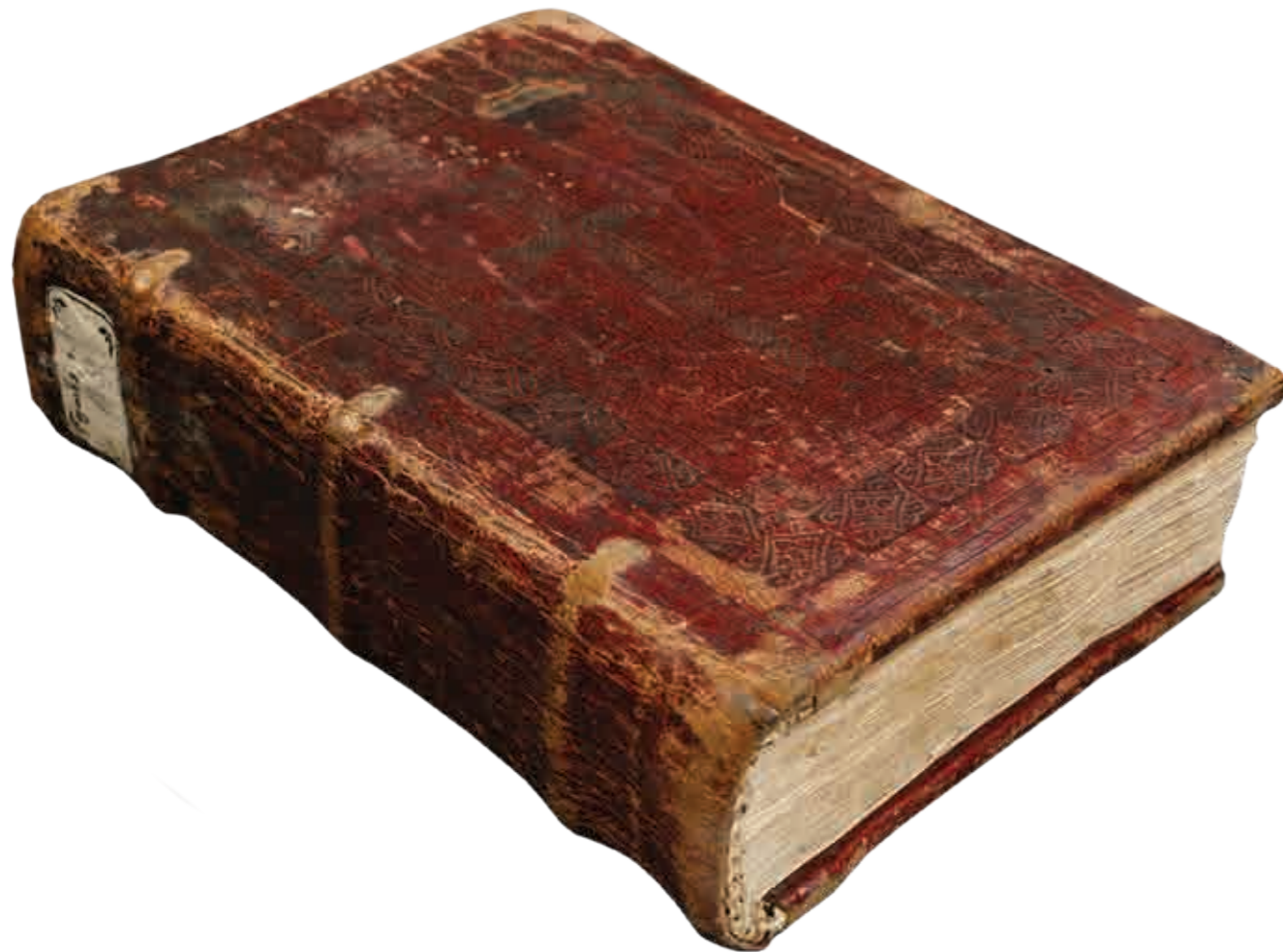
Silver gilt repoussé case; 208x150 mm. On the upper side of the case, the Resurrection is depicted, while the lower side features a Crucifixion scene, accompanied by the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist, with explanatory inscriptions in *asomtavruli*. The images of the Evangelists are enclosed within twisted frames. The plates preserve the inscriptions of the commissioner of the 16th-17th centuries – Evdemon Apakidze and the commissioner of the 18th-19th centuries – the bishop of Chkondidi-Gaenati. The case is accompanied by the inscription of the author of the chasing – Khukhu Ejibia.



COMPENDIUM

The manuscript dates back to 1669, the cover: 17th c. A-179.

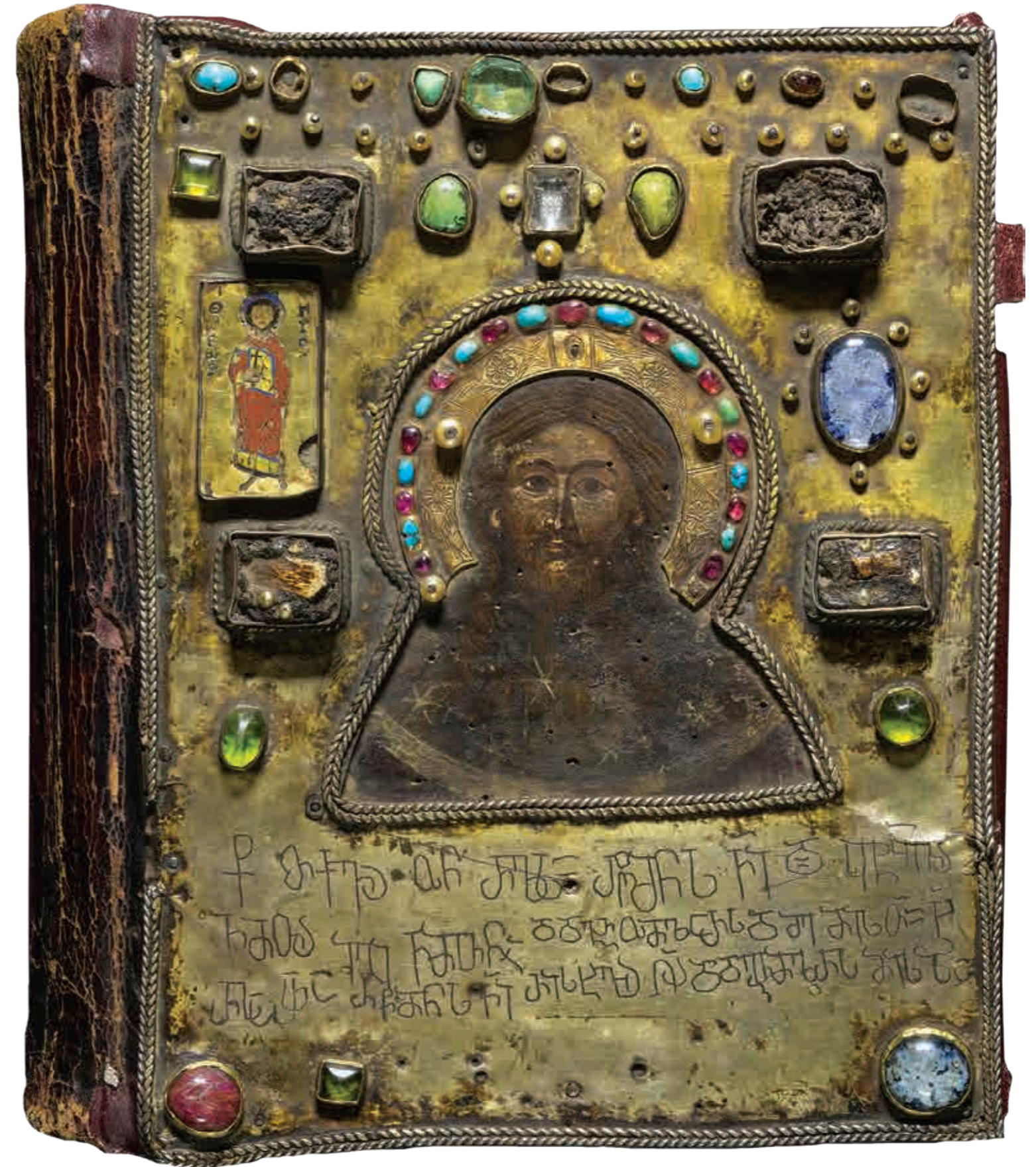
Dark burgundy leather-bound wooden cover; 210x150 mm. On the surface of the cover rectangular ornamented marginal engravings are used as a border. In the center of the cover there is a cross, also consisting of small rectangular border engravings, that is characteristic of earlier covers (9th-16th cc.). Three places of stitching are embossed on the edge. According to all features, the cover should be dated to the 17th century.



ALAVERDI GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to 1054, the cover: 17th c. A-484

Combined leather and metal cover; 240x185 mm. On the front cover, a painted image of Christ on leather is adorned with a gilded and bejeweled silver overlay. The silver features a small golden cloisonné icon of St. George, dating from the 11th-12th centuries with a Greek inscription, and four reliquaries interwoven with small pearl beads. Beneath the image of Christ is a three-line inscription in *asomtavruli*. The back cover holds a faded depiction of the Virgin and Child, with traces of gilding still visible. Based on its characteristics, the combined metal and leather cover is dated to the 17th century and bears resemblance to repoussé icons from Levan Dadiani's atelier.





KALKOS GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to the 13th-14th cc., contemporary cover, restored with metal details in the 17th-18th cc.
Q-1602

Combined leather and metal cover; 323x223 mm. The wooden boards are massive and well-hewn, the surface of the cover features a cross on a pedestal, made of braided ornaments, and a single margin, crafted by pricking the wet leather. The same method is used on the back cover, only the drawing of the center is different. Metal details are affixed to the leather cover for renewal: 4 crosses, socketed gem on only one cross (glass on a colorless rose case, cabochon), 3 wrists, decorative plates and relief nails. In the center of the front cover, it seems that a 95x73 icon should have been inserted. On the back cover, in the center, there is a gilded icon of the same size, with a Greek explanatory inscription, depicting the Mother of God with a child. The icon is surrounded by a floral ornament, relief chased ornaments. On the back cover there are decorative arrow-shaped plates and relief nails.



LITYRGY

The manuscript dates back to the 17th-18th cc., the cover: 18th c.
A-123.

Brown gilt-edged thin wooden cover; 195x145 mm. On the front cover a clover-leaf ornament follows the margins. The inner space is filled with leafy-flowered engravings, in the center, there is an arrow-shaped decorative engraving, surrounded by a double frame with leafy-flowered engravings. The back cover is decorated in the same way, only with a different combination. The edge is gilded and engraved. The inside of the wooden boards is doublured with a thin brown cloth, embroidered with colorful flowers.

MKHITAR OF SEBASTIA, RHETORICS

The manuscript dates back to 1764, the cover: 18th c.
H-1068.

Light brown leather-bound stamped wooden cover; 160x110 mm. The surface of the front cover is decorated with leaves and small decorative balls; on the edge there are three places of engraved stitching; the head-end bands are woven of thin white and red threads.





GOSPELS

The manuscript dates from the 17th-18th cc., the cover: 18th c. H-1192.

Gilded plates are pasted on brown leather cover; 87x60 mm. Relief chased ornaments, both, the front and back covers are decorated with foliate-floral relief ornaments. The front right edge is covered with metal, which is decorated with relief rosette and a lotus-like, oblong-shaped floral ornament, which gives the cover massiveness; the bookbone is made of two plates decorated with leaf-floral accents. According to all features the cover must be dated to the 18th century.



THE AKATHIST HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD

The manuscript dates to 1747, the cover: 19th c. Q-369.

Leather-bound gilt cardboard cover; 50x35 mm. The off-cuts of the folios are painted in different colors. On the front cover a small, oval medallion depicts Crucifixion, on the back cover lower wing in the oval medallion, two human figures are engraved, one of them with a nimbus. Cherubims are depicted in the corners. The book is placed in a brocade case.



GOSPELS

The manuscript dates back to 1714, the cover: 18th c. A-1097

Silver gilt repoussé cover, 67x52 mm. The front cover is decorated with gems, arranged in bouquet, on the back cover there is an image of the Crucifixion, traditionally accompanied by the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist. The spine is decorated with rosettes and leaf accents. The cover from the inside is doublured with blue cloth. The commissioner of the manuscript is Catholicos Domenti (1677-1741).





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