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## 7. Georgian codicology (JG)

### 7.1. Materials and tools

As in other book traditions of the Christian Near East, Georgian manuscript books (usually styled *çigni* ‘book’ in Old Georgian, vs. *nusxa* ‘manuscript, document’; Modern Georgian *xelnaçeri* ‘handwritten’) are written on papyrus, parchment or paper. As a matter of fact, the history of the different writing supports used for Georgian manuscripts is poorly understood until today, for lack of extensive investigations into the matter, but also because of the lack of explicit dates in all too many manuscripts, as well as their dispersion over all too many repositories throughout the world. To overcome this problem, it would be desirable to establish a relative chronology based upon palaeography as well as external features (ink types, layout etc.), with manuscripts that contain explicit indications of their date and provenance representing the core. An important prerequisite for this undertaking would be the availability of digitized images, not only from western collections. Another prerequisite would consist in the application of scientific methods of analysis, which has not yet even begun.

#### 7.1.1. Papyrus

Even though there were outstanding centres of Georgian manuscript production in the eastern Mediterranean (Jerusalem, Palestine and Mount Sinai), papyrus (Georgian *çili*) was always exceptional as a writing support for Georgian codices even of Levantine provenance. The most prominent papyrus codex is MS 98 of the (old) Georgian collection of St Catherine’s Monastery, parts of a psalter written in *nusxuri* minuscules in about the tenth century. Unfortunately, the codex was badly damaged and has remained practically inaccessible for investigation in the monastery library, so that but little information as to its structure can be given.

Another prominent item to be mentioned here is manuscript 2123 of the H collection of Tbilisi, a hymnary codex of about the tenth century comprising about one half each of parchment and papyrus leaves (the so-called *çil-epraṭis iadgari* ‘hymnary of papyrus [and] parchment’; Šaniže – Martirosovi 1977; Karanaze et al. 2010, 25 and 139; cf. the coloured reproductions of one papyrus and one parchment page each in Cagareli 1888a between pp. 157 and 158), put together in quinions with three papyrus bifolia between outer and central bifolia of parchment to support them (Šaniže – Martirosovi 1977, 214–215; Metreveli et al. 1978, 229–239). Why, when and by whom the codex was conceived in the given form has remained unknown.

The papyrus used in these two codices originated presumably from Egypt; however, nothing is known about the exact provenance or the manufacture of the bifolia as no colophons survive. From the only photograph available of Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 98 (fig. 1.7.1 showing Ps. 64.11–65.11, photograph kindly provided by the librarian of St Catherine’s Monastery, Father Justin, in May 2009; the coloured reproduction of a fragment containing Ps. 118.68–75 printed in Cagareli 1888b between pp. 192 and 193 is not a photograph), it seems that the writing is only across the vertical fibres (recto or verso?), while the other side with horizontal fibres is blank. It was stated in 1888 that the papyrus of H-2123 (then still manuscript 29 of the Georgian monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem) was ‘better’, ‘thinner’ and ‘smoother’ than that of the Sinai Psalter but, at the same time, more ‘yellow-brownish’ and ‘dark coloured’ (Cagareli 1888a, 159; my translations); today, the leaves of the Psalter too appear extremely tanned.

#### 7.1.2. Parchment

Parchment was the basic support material of manuscript codices throughout the period of Old Georgian, up to the thirteenth century, and at all the production centres, both in the Caucasus and elsewhere; except for the few papyrus codices from Palestine and Mount Sinai, all manuscript books of that period, including rolls, are made from parchment. The same is true for the small set of noteworthy legal and other documents that have come down to us from that time. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, parchment began gradually to be superseded by paper, and its use seems to have ceased by the end of the fourteenth century (if we ignore the reuse of parchment leaves as flyleaves in bindings).

Although the number of Old Georgian parchment manuscripts is very large, little is known so far about the material used, its provenance and its manufacture (a relevant thesis on writing materials, Gogašvili 2004, has remained unpublished, but see Gogašvili 2003 and 2006). Given that the structure of parchment codices is by and large compliant with Greek usage, we may safely assume that the Georgian practices of

preparing animals' skin for parchment are derived from Greek practices, most probably those prevalent in Palestine. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that the Georgian word for 'parchment', *eṭraṭi*, likely reflects Greek *tetradion*, 'quaternion', thus indicating that quaternions made of parchment were the normal type of codex units Georgians met with when they commenced the production of manuscripts in their own right.

There has been no investigation yet into the different types of parchment used in Georgian codices and their distribution across chronological or geographical extents (but see Nanobašvili 1973 for popular methods of the treatment of animal hides in Georgia). As a matter of fact, Georgian manuscript books are likely to have been an object of transportation between several centres of production throughout the Middle Ages, and as all too many codices lack any information regarding their origin, we cannot even be sure that they originated from the location where they

were first taken notice of. For studying the history of Georgian manuscript production, it would therefore be worthwhile to devise scientific means to distinguish different types of parchment, especially with a view to determining the number of pre-ninth-century manuscripts that were produced in Georgia proper.

Different from other early Christian traditions, Georgians seem not to have used coloured parchment in the production of codices. However, given the quantity of manuscripts that must have been destroyed in the Caucasus during the time of the Mongol invasions and other wars, we cannot be sure that this assumption is not due to a mere gap of preservation.

### 7.1.3. Parchment palimpsests

Nearly all Georgian manuscripts antedating the ninth century survive only in palimpsest form, overwritten in either (later) Georgian or other languages. Palimpsest codices, such as Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2, often contain parts of more than one original manuscript (in the latter case, fourteen hands extending over approximately six centuries have been distinguished, and another part of one of the originals used has been detected in a palimpsest in Tbilisi, see Kažaia 1974, 491; Gippert et al. 2007a, 6-1). On the other hand, Georgian overwriting was also applied to codices of non-Georgian provenance such as, for example, Palestinian Aramaic, Syriac, Armenian, or the only manuscript remnants of the language of the Caucasian Albanians, detected as the first text in two Georgian palimpsests of the 'New Finds' of Mount Sinai (Gippert et al. 2009). Until today, only a few of the relevant palimpsest codices have been studied in much detail (c.4,000 palimpsest pages have been counted among the holdings of the National Centre of Manuscripts, Tbilisi; see <<http://www.manuscript.ge/index.php?m=73&ln=eng>>, last access 29 November 2014); by consequence, questions of (relative) chronology and provenance of the overwritten originals have only partly been investigated.

### 7.1.4. Paper

Leaving aside a few specimens datable to the tenth and eleventh centuries, evidence for the use of paper as the support material for Georgian manuscript codices begins in the twelfth century, one of the most promi-



Fig. 1.7.1 Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 98, page containing Ps. 64.11–65.11, photograph by Father Justin, May 2009.

ment early codices being the ‘Bible with Catenes’ (*kaṭenebiani biblia*) written in the academy of Gelati in West Georgia (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-1108). Another remarkably ancient paper codex is the Tbilisi MS A-65 which contains, among other texts, a Georgian translation of an Arabic astrological treatise (with illustrations) and which is datable to 1188–1210 (Karanaṣe et al. 2010, 39). Secular codices proper, i.e. manuscripts containing epics, romances and the like, are all paper codices; this is hardly surprising, as none of those that have come down to us antedates the sixteenth century, due to the fact that many codices of this type were destroyed, if not during the Mongol invasions, by clerical fanatics in the eighteenth century (Ṭimote 1852, 154; Rayfield 2010, 79; Gippert – Tandaschwili 2014, 6–7).

For the majority of Georgian paper codices we may assume that it was oriental paper that was used; but there has been no detailed investigation into this question. The same is true for questions concerning the provenance, the composition, and the manufacture of the paper, and possible differences between paper used in Georgia proper and elsewhere (but cf. Paṭariṣe 1965a for the treatment of paper, and Paṭariṣe 1968 for the use of Persian paper in Georgia). Western paper is likely to have been introduced only in the eighteenth century, via Russia, where the first Georgian book was printed (the ‘Bakar Bible’ of 1743); however, there are no detailed studies available for this topic either (but see Paṭariṣe 1965b on watermarks in Georgian manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries).

### 7.1.5. Other writing surfaces

There can be no doubt that wooden tablets (Georgian *picari*) were used as writing supports throughout the time of Georgian literacy, even though we do not have any ancient examples at our disposal; however, there is no indication that they ever bore large amounts of text in the sense of ‘books’. The same is true for *ostraca* and other non-flexible writing supports (including stone inscriptions).

### 7.1.6. Inks

The typology and distribution of the inks used in Georgian manuscripts has not been studied in detail. From multispectral analyses undertaken in connexion with the editing of palimpsests, we may safely state that the main ink used in the early centuries, on parchment, was an iron-gall ink with a brownish (Georgian *qavisperi* ‘coffee-coloured’) to blackish (Georgian *ṣavi* ‘black’) colour. The same type of ink was still used in later centuries when the palimpsests were overwritten, and probably also in paper codices as well as the few papyrus manuscripts. Nothing is known so far about the distribution of special types of ink among the different centres of Georgian manuscript production.

There are no original Georgian texts known that describe the production of inks for manuscript use. It is highly probable that ‘black’ ink was introduced to Georgia from the Greek-speaking world, given that the Georgian term for ‘ink’, *melani*, is clearly a borrowing from Greek *melan*, ‘black’. In contrast to this, the word for ‘red ink’, *singuri*, cannot be traced to Greek, but must have a different origin (Syriac *siriqōn?*); it is important in this context that *singuri* seems not to be attested before the eleventh century, the plain adjective for ‘red’, *ṣiteli*, being used earlier (for example, in manuscripts containing the Euthalian apparatus to the Pauline Epistles; Gippert 2010a, I-1–5).

### 7.1.7. Pigments and dyes

Rubrics can be proven to have been common everywhere in religious manuscripts since the very beginning of Georgian literacy, with several clear-cut purposes that range from delimitation (in the form of ornamental headpieces and the like separating parts of larger texts) via decoration (such as in crosses added at the end of Gospels) to highlighting (of titles, initials of paragraphs, proper names and the like, as on the title page of the synaxary MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-2211, c. eleventh century, see fig. 1.7.2, or in the hymnary MS Tbilisi, S-425, written by Mikael Modreḳili in c.978-988, which also exhibits neumes in red, see fig. 1.7.3; cf. Gippert 2010b for a preliminary typology). The use of other colours in the same types of codices is rather rare; for example, we find green ink used for liturgical glosses added to the twelfth-century Gospel manuscript Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 1, or blue colour used (alongside red and gold) to fill in the initial letters in the tenth-century Gospel codex Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-592, or in the twelfth-century Žruči Gospels, MS Tbilisi, H-1667, see fig. 1.7.4. Other types of ornamentation involving extensive use of colours can be found in Gospel (and other) codices which exhibit portal-like frames (headpieces) indicating the beginnings of chapters (Georgian *ḳari* ‘gate’)

as in the Gospel codices from Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-484 (the Alaverdi Gospels, dated 1054), Q-908 (1054, see fig. 1.7.5) or A-1335 (the Vani Gospels, twelfth to thirteenth centuries; see Ch. 2 § 6 fig. 2.6.2), or the codices S-134 (dated 1031) and S-3683 (dated 1708, on paper) containing elements of (ecclesiastical) law.

In the secular codices containing mediaeval epics, romances and the like, rubrics can be found with highlighting functions as in the Tbilisi manuscripts H-84 (dated 1680, containing Shota Rustaveli's *Vepxistqaosani* 'Knight in the Panther's Skin') or S-1594 (dated 1647, containing a Georgian derivate of the Persian *Šāhnāma* epic); however, red is often replaced by gold in the same types of manuscript as in H-2074 (sixteenth/seventeenth century, another manuscript containing Rustaveli's epic).

A wider range of colours was used throughout the time of Georgian manuscript production in miniatures and illuminations.

### 7.1.8. Writing instruments

The main writing instrument used in the production of Georgian manuscripts was the calamus, obviously introduced to Georgia from Greece as its name shows (*kalami* < Greek *kalamos*); the word is still used today for any kind of pen. Nothing is known about the source material used in the production of the calamus in the centres of ancient Georgian manuscript tradition; however, it is likely that either quills or reed pens (or both) were used, as in other traditions of the Christian Near East.

## 7.2. Book forms

The principal form of the Georgian handwritten book was the codex made of quires of parchment (note again the term *etrati* denoting 'parchment', from Greek *tetradion* 'quaternion') or paper, with but little variation concerning the number of bifolia constituting a quire and other aspects of codex and quire structure. As a concurrent form, parchment rolls appeared during the Middle Ages; they always played a minor role, however, their use being restricted to certain specific purposes.

### 7.2.2. The roll and the rotulus

Rolls made from parchment sheets have mostly been found at Mount Sinai. As there have been no special investigations devoted to the manu-

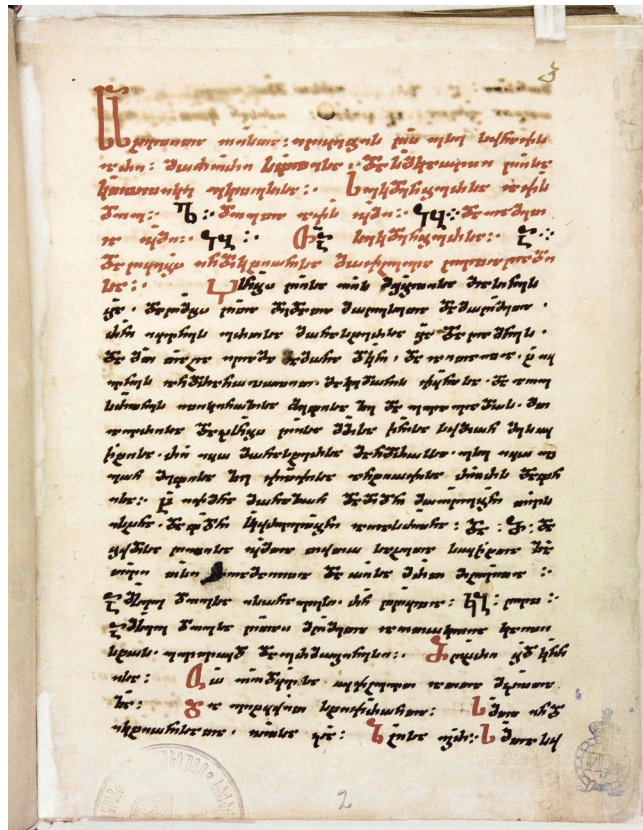


Fig. 1.7.2 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-2211, c. eleventh century, f. 2r; this and the following six photographs courtesy of the National Centre of Manuscripts.



Fig. 1.7.3 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-425, c. 978/988, f. 24v.

facture and structure of Georgian rolls (*gragnili* ‘rolled up’), only a few remarks can be made here. From the specimens mentioned above, it is clear that a roll consists of a series of parchment sheets that were sewn together along the shorter edges and inscribed on both sides parallel to the short edge, which implies that they were unrolled vertically when read and so are to be identified as *rotuli*. The leaves bound together in rolls usually have a smaller ratio of width to height than those used in codices; cf., for example, MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-922 with a ratio of less than 0.3 (Karanaze et al. 2010, 80). Typically the Georgian *rotuli* contain liturgical texts, such as the liturgy of St John Chrysostom, which is contained in MS Graz, UBG, 2058/5 (of Sinaitic provenance; Imnaišvili 2004, 300–313; Gippert – Imnaišvili 2009a). A parchment rotulus containing a king’s decree (written in *mxedruli*) is MS 608 of the Kutaisi Historico-ethnographical Museum, from about the eleventh century.

**7.2.3. The codex**

There is no indication whatsoever that the production of rolls antedated that of codices in the Georgian tradition. As a matter of fact, all manuscripts from the early centuries of Georgian literacy (c. fifth to ninth centuries) that have come down to us are parchment codices (or fragments thereof), and parchment remained the basic material in the production of codices up to the thirteenth century, when it was superseded by paper. Except for the use of papyrus, which was clearly restricted to the eastern Mediterranean coastlands (Sinai and Palestine), there seems to be no geographical preference discernible in the distribution of codex types. Leaving aside the ‘Hymnary of papyrus [and] parchment’ from Jerusalem mentioned above (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-2123), mixed codices of parchment and paper all seem to be the result of a later substitution, in paper form, of lost or missing parts of an older parchment codex, as in the case of the ‘Parxali’ Gospel manuscript (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-1453) of 973, twenty-two leaves of which were rewritten on paper in the eighteenth century (cf. Karanaze et al. 2010, 33).

**7.3. The making of the codex**

There has been no thorough investigation into the manufacture of Georgian codices yet. The following remarks, which are based on the analysis of a small number of parchment manuscripts from Georgia, Jerusalem, and Mount Sinai, are therefore tentative.



Fig. 1.7.4 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-1667 (Żruči Gospels), twelfth century, f. 14v (Mt. 3.9–16).



Fig. 1.7.5 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, Q-908, 1054, f. 88r: the beginning of the Gospel of Mark.

### 7.3.1. The making of the quires

Nothing is known about the making of quires in ancient Georgia as there are no sources describing it. Whether or not the bifolia put together in a quire were derived (by folding and/or cutting) from contiguous pieces of parchment, and whether there was the habit of beginning a quire with the flesh side as in older Greek codices, must still be investigated, as must be possible geographical and chronological divergences in manufacturing practices.

### 7.3.2. The composition of the quires

If the general Georgian term for parchment was indeed borrowed from the Greek word for ‘quaternion’ (as already noted above), this can be taken to indicate that quires consisting of four bifolia were the standard quire structure in Georgia, as in Byzantine parchment books of all epochs. Nevertheless, as in Late Antique Greek codices, quaternions co-occurred with other quire structures (quinions, ternions, rarely others; cf. Gippert 2013, 85–90 concerning the quire structure of the Kurashi Gospel manuscript).

When parchment leaves were re-used as palimpsests, new bifolia were normally derived from single leaves of the original codex, the underwriting being rotated 90°; by consequence, the resulting codices were usually smaller than the underlying source manuscripts. Nevertheless, the new quires were again mostly conceived as quaternions (cf. Gippert et al. 2007a, xviii for the quire structure of the palimpsest Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2).

### 7.3.3. Pricking and ruling

Georgian parchment leaves to be used in codices were prepared for being written upon by applying hints concerning the page layout with both pricking and ruling. Palimpsests preserving the oldest stock of Georgian literacy, such as the *xanmeṭi* Gospel manuscript overwritten in Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2 (c. sixth/seventh century), prove that these techniques were used right from the beginning. On the other hand, new ruling could also be done for the overwriting in a palimpsest, as in the case of the Graz Psalter (MS Graz, UBG, 2058/2), a palimpsest with an Armenian undertext (Gippert – Imnaišvili 2009b; Renhart 2009). For lack of more detailed studies, we cannot tell anything about the geographical and chronological distribution of the methods in question, and not very much about the techniques and characteristics; it may be sufficient here to state that pricking was usually positioned in the outer margin of a given leaf and that ruling was more often applied for layouts with columns (but was not necessarily restricted to this layout).

### 7.3.4. Ordering systems

Leaving aside lection indexes to Gospels and other such textual systems, Georgian codices are rather poor with respect to the reference systems they contain. What we do find generally in parchment codices is numberings placed at the top of the first page of a quire and repeated at the bottom of the last page of the quire (with the first quire sometimes omitted in counting), usually in a centred position (more rarely in the right margin), even when the manuscript is written in columns. The sequence of ‘end number’ and ‘start number’ thus achieved guaranteed the correct arrangement of quires in a codex (cf. Gippert forthcoming, § 2.1.2 for the quire signatures proving that the fragmentary Georgian MS Sinai, St Catherine, New Finds, georg. N89, pertains, as part of its quire 11, to the *mravaltavi* codex 32-57-33 of the ‘Old Collection’). The tradition can be shown to be quite old, as it is even met with in *xanmeṭi* palimpsests (see, for example, Gippert et al. 2007a, 6-1 on quire signatures of the hagiographical manuscript re-used in MS Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2). It is not always certain, however, that the quire signatures are of the same date as the textual contents of a codex; that quire numberings could be added later (for example, when preparing a new binding) is proven by the co-occurrence of Greek and Georgian signatures in the codex Sinai, St. Catherine, georg. 6 (with the numbering starting to diverge by error with quire 12, f. 201r, bearing Georgian  $\overline{\kappa\nu} = 26$  and Greek  $\overline{\kappa\varepsilon} = 25$ ), or by Georgian signatures being applied to Greek codices as in the Sinai manuscripts graec. 215, 230, 231 (evangelaries), 566, 582, 622, 632 (menologia), 795, 829 (*oktōēchoi*), 928 (kondakarion), and 1097 (typicon).

Numberings other than quire signatures (foliation, pagination, or even column numberings) seem not to have been wide-spread within the Georgian tradition proper (leaving paginations applied by ‘modern’ librarians aside). The same is true for catchwords, which seem to occur only late in the Georgian manuscript tradition. They are found, for example, in the Tbilisi paper codex S-3702 from the year 1729 con-

taining the *Visramiani* romance (cf. Karanaze et al. 2010, 107 showing a page of the manuscript with a two-item catchword, *uqmna laškarni*).

### 7.3.5. The codex as a complex object

As in many other manuscript traditions, Georgian codices exhibit a strong interrelationship between their contents and their outer appearance, and by far the majority of the oldest specimens we have show that they were prepared for exactly one purpose and for one purpose only. Among the majority of codices we may count evangeliaries and lectionaries, both characterized by considerably enlarged letters arranged in columns for better readability during divine services, while codices containing historiographical or philosophical texts were conceived much less for being read aloud (being of much smaller size and written in one column and in minuscules). This implies that the Georgian tradition does not abound in codices comprising multiple texts that have no inherent thematic linkage; even the so-called *mravaltavi* (lit. ‘multi-headed’) codices can be proved to be clearly designed according to thematic principles (cf. Gippert forthcoming). Cases of codices that consist of several individual parts without any contentual or productional interrelationship are rare.

## 7.4. The layout of the page

Georgian parchment codices exhibit quite the same range of sizes and proportions as we find in the Greek tradition, which implies, first of all, that the page is oriented vertically, oblong codices being practically unknown. Books measuring less than 100 mm in height are as rare as books whose height extends beyond 500 mm, which seems to speak in favour of the same preference for *sexto* rather than *quarto* skin division as in the Byzantine book manufacture (see Ch. 1 § 8). As to quire structure, Georgian shows a preference for the quaternion type, in agreement with the fact that the Georgian word for parchment very likely reflects the Greek for ‘quaternion’. Similar observations can be made with regard to the ratio of width to height, which proportion usually lies between 0.7 and 0.8; however, little can be said with respect to the early centuries, as nearly all specimens that have come down to us were considerably reshaped when they were prepared for being re-used as palimpsests. A more nearly square proportion (*c.*0.9) is visible in the mixed ‘Hymnary of papyrus and parchment’ (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-2123; cf. the image in Karanaze et al. 2010, 25), possibly also in the papyrus Psalter of Mount Sinai (Sin. georg. 98), which, however, has been damaged too badly for it to be possible to establish the original dimensions. With the introduction of paper codices, especially those containing non-religious texts, the proportion tends to decrease down to 0.6 due to a narrowing of the width, while heights remained within the former range.

## 7.5. Text structure and readability

### 7.5.1. Writing

For lack of detailed investigations, but also due to the fact that most manuscript codices were reduced in size by trimming (in the process of binding, sometimes repeatedly, or, in the case of palimpsests, through re-use), we cannot give a clear picture of the ‘occupancy rate’ of written vs. blank portions on a given page; it seems, however, that a ratio of about 1:1 was usual in parchment codices, while paper codices may show a higher ratio. At all times, the ratio may be different when miniatures and ornamentation are present or, as in the case of non-religious codices such as Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-54 and H-2074 (both containing Shota Rustaveli’s epic), the text is bordered with decoration (see the images in Karanaze et al. 2010, 92–95).

For the most part, writing is arranged in two columns in parchment codices written in majuscules, including most of the palimpsests. However, a one-column layout is found as early as in the seventh/eighth-century ‘Sinai Lectionary’ in Graz (MS Graz, UBG, 2058/1, Gippert et al. 2007b), and it prevails in later times, especially in books of small size, but also in rotuli and in the few extant papyrus codices. In paper manuscripts, a two-column layout remains rather exceptional (an example is the liturgical manuscript Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-30 written in 1681; cf. Karanaze et al. 2010, 90). In the secular paper manuscripts containing epics and the like, we sometimes find a column-like alignment of the rhyming elements of verses, as in the two codices H-54 and H-2074 already mentioned above.

In the Georgian tradition, no layout prescriptions have been preserved. Nevertheless, it is clear that the decision for a one- or two-column layout often depended, if not merely on the size of the support ma-



terial, on considerations concerning readability, especially in the case of religious texts. There can be no doubt that a two-column layout was typical for evangeliaries and lectionaries that were meant to be used in religious services, while theological treatises and the like deserved no special attention as to their utility for being read aloud, and therefore they could be written in rather long and narrow lines.

Special layouts were required, from the oldest times on, for the purpose of integrating additional information as in the case of the Eusebian apparatus, which was usually placed in a peculiar table-like arrangement at the bottom of a given page in both two- and one-column Gospel manuscripts; it was usually arranged columnwise, as in the so-called *Adiši Gospels* of 897 (Taqaishvili 1916; Gippert et al. 2009, I-32). A peculiar layout was also required, for obvious reasons, for the Eusebian Canon Tables that are found at the beginning of many Gospel manuscripts, as in the *Alaverdi* (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-484, of 1054) or the *Çqarostavi Gospels* (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-98, tenth century; Karanaže et al. 2010, 55 and 35), as well as the Ammonian section numbers that were usually arranged, with more or less decoration, together with ekthetic initials to the left of a given column or line, as in the Gospel manuscript Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-962 of 1054 (Karanaže et al. 2010, 42), H-1667 (the *Žruči Gospels*, twelfth century, see fig. 1.7.4), or S-391 (the *Martvili Gospels* of 1050, see fig. 1.7.6). In Gospel codices, the column containing the last verses of a given Gospel is sometimes shaped tapering off towards the bottom, as in the *Parxali Gospels* of 973 (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-1453; Karanaže et al. 2010, 33).

Other special layouts that were required by special contents were, for example, the ‘frame-like’ arrangement of *catenae* around the biblical text they refer to, as in the so-called *Gelati Bible* (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-1108, twelfth century; Karanaže et al. 2010, 36–37); a similar arrangement of commentaries to a philosophical text, with an iconographic shaping of individual passages, as in the manuscripts A-110 and A-24 (both of the twelfth century; Doboržginize 2011, 231–244); or the snake-like shaped ‘column’ that appears in manuscript H-1669 (twelfth or thirteenth century) containing the Georgian translation of John Climacus (Karanaže et al. 2010, 72–73). Tables and other special arrangements are found in scientific codices, for example, the circle-shaped description of the lunar phases in the astrological manuscript A-65 (1188–1210; Karanaže et al. 2010, 128).

### 7.5.2. Decoration

Special layouts are further met with, from relatively early times on, in the case of a mixture of text with ornamentation or miniatures on a given page. Depending on a miniature’s size, it may extend over the width of two columns as in the *Žruči* (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-1667, twelfth century, see fig. 1.7.7), *Vani* (MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-1335, twelfth/thirteenth century), and *Alaverdi Gospels* (MS Tbilisi, A-484, 1054; Karanaže et al. 2010, 43–57), or be inserted into one column as in the *Gelati Gospels* (MS Tbilisi, Q-908, twelfth century; Karanaže et al. 2010, 64–67), or the *synaxary* MS Tbilisi, A-648, 1030 (see fig. 1.7.8); in other cases, the miniature was sized to fit the column layout as in the case of the *Varzia* (MS Tbilisi, Q-899, twelfth/thirteenth century) or *Mokvi Gospels* (MS Tbilisi, Q-902, 1300; Karanaže et al. 2010, 75–79). An insertion of miniatures into the text of a given page is



Fig. 1.7.6 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-391 (the *Martvili Gospels*), 1050, f. 187v, Gospel of John 19.19–24.

also found in non-religious manuscripts, such as the astrological codex Tbilisi, A-65 (cf. Karanaze et al. 2010, 39).

Georgian manuscripts of all times and types exhibit a rich inventory of decorative elements, illuminations and miniatures (examples from religious codices are collected in Burçulaze 2012, 191–231; see also fig. 2.6.2), with the exception only of the palimpsests of the early centuries. It is true that the manuscripts that were written on Mount Sinai are poorer than others with respect to the addition of pictorial content, but even here we find typical means such as red-coloured crosses or braids used to demarcate sections of texts (for example, the individual Gospels in evangeliaries) or to divide colophons and other additional materials from the main text (Gippert 2010b, 2–4). Manuscript Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 30 is the only Georgian Gospel manuscript from Mount Sinai that contains miniatures of the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke; John is missing, as the codex is defective), but they are much less elaborate than is usual in other manuscripts, with no colours applied.

The use of red ink is the basic means of decoration to be met with in Georgian manuscripts from the beginning of literacy onwards; even in *xanmeti* palimpsests, where the pigments of red ink have vanished totally, there are clear indications that rubrics were used for the titles of individual texts (for example, in a hagiographical collection; Gippert et al. 2007a, 6-1 and 6-89, n. 62). Initial letters of texts or major text sections are usually enlarged and project into the left margin, often in combination with the use of red ink or other colours as well; in minuscule manuscripts, the initials are usually majuscules (see figs. 1.7.2, 1.7.4). Titles, whether at the top of a page or within the running text (as in lectionaries, for example), are usually written in majuscules and also in combination with red ink. In some cases, majuscule rubrics seem to have been used in a way similar to the use of capital letters in modern Latin orthographies to denote proper names (Gippert 2010b, 6).

The clear distinction of religious (Christian) and non-religious manuscripts manifests itself in two distinct traditions of decoration and illumination, the one reflecting Greek and the other, Persian models. This is true not only for miniatures such as that of St Matthew in the Alaverdi Gospels (see above), which bears the evangelist's name in Greek (Karanaze et al. 2010, 56), or that of



Fig. 1.7.7 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-1667 (Žruči Gospels), twelfth century, f. 112r (Mk. 13.35).



Fig. 1.7.8 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-648, 1030, f. 2r, with the image of John Nesteutes.

John Nестеutes in MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-648, of 1030 (see fig. 1.7.8) but also for ‘characteristic’ decorations such as the portal-like arrangement of the Eusebian Canon Tables in the Çqarostavi Gospels (MS A-98, tenth century; Қараназе et al. 2012, 35) or the ekthetic arrangement (mostly in rubrics) of Ammonian section numbers in nearly all evangeliaries (Gippert 2010b, 6–8). A peculiar decoration of codices containing epic texts is the gold-coloured frame designed as a jungle with plants and animals which surrounds the written area in manuscript H-54 (of 1680; Қараназе et al. 2010, 92), or the frame with dark green background showing human figures among plants in manuscript H-2074 (sixteenth/seventeenth century; Қараназе et al. 2010, 95). A strange cultural crossover is met with in the Psalter A-38 (c. tenth/eleventh century) to which was added, below a table on f. 246v, a row containing (from right to left) the Arabic digits from 1 to 9 in red ink (Қараназе et al. 2010, 22; the assumption that we might have a ‘stylized’ part of the ‘Albanian alphabet’ here is untenable).

## 7.6. The scribe, the painter and the illuminator at work

### 7.6.1. Persons, places and methods

As far as we can tell from the limited information we gain from colophons and historiographical sources, nearly all manuscript books of the Old Georgian period were written in monasteries and other places devoted to the Christian religion, either in the Caucasus or in centres abroad. There is no indication of any kind of commercial production; however, in some cases we learn that a manuscript was commissioned by a donor for the sake of his own salvation or the like. This is true, for example, for the oldest dated Georgian manuscript, the Sinai *Mravaltavi* (Sin. georg. 32-57-33+N89) of 863/864 (Šaniže 1959), which was, according to its principal colophon, commissioned in the Laura of St Sabas before it was further donated to St Catherine’s Monastery (Gippert forthcoming, § 2.2). Among historiographical sources that are relevant here, we may mention the vitae of the founder of the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, Eptwme, and his son Giorgi (Abulaze 1967, 38–207; Latin translation in Peeters 1917–1919, 5–159), which summarize the production of books (mostly texts translated from Greek) in detail, but with no clear indication of methods and means of producing the manuscripts.

### 7.6.2. Colophons

For lack of a detailed study of Georgian colophons throughout the centuries of manuscript production, only a few characteristics can be outlined here. In general, Georgian codices are much less frequently provided with colophons than are codices of comparable traditions. In many cases, this may be due to damage and loss, especially in codices of the early centuries, most of which have survived only in fragmentary form; as a matter of fact, none of the palimpsest codices that have been analysed so far contains any colophon in its undertext. On the other hand, colophons that have been preserved often indicate that Georgian manuscripts were moved from one place to another, as in the case of the Sinai *Mravaltavi*, which was donated from St Sabas’ Laura to St Catherine’s Monastery, or in the case of the Adiši Gospels (897), which was removed, together with other codices, from the monastery of Šaṭberdi in Tao-Қlarṭeti (eastern Anatolia) to Guria in Georgia, as a secondary note tells us (f. 378r; Gippert forthcoming, § 2.3). As in the latter case, much of the knowledge available for the reconstruction of a manuscript’s provenance and history can be gained only from information recorded by later hands, rather than a scribe’s (or donor’s) colophon. A special case is the binder’s colophons provided in some codices of the Sinai collection by a certain Ioane Zosime, a Georgian who lived in St Catherine’s Monastery in the second half of the tenth century and worked both as a scribe and as a bookbinder (Gippert forthcoming, § 2.2). Another special type of colophon contains the indication of the date of the origin of the individual Gospels appearing in several evangeliaries, with a dating after the Lord’s Ascension (for example, Sinai, St. Catherine, georg. 19 f. 199v, for Luke, and f. 262r, for John); this type of ‘text colophon’ is likely to reflect a tradition going back to Eusebius of Caesarea.

Colophons may be written in the same style as the main text to which they pertain, or differently, for example by employing minuscules instead of majuscules, as in the case of the Gospel manuscripts Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 19 (of 1074) and 30 (of 979), or, rarely, vice versa as in the case of the evangeliary Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 15 (of 978), written by the scribe and bookbinder Ioane Zosime, or the Martvili Gospels, MS Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-391 (see fig. 1.7.6). In the Sinai *Mravaltavi* of 863/864, the layout and script of the donor’s colophon is exactly the same as that of the main text, whereas the scribe’s colophon following it is in minuscules. Colophons typically contain formulae such as *kriste*

*šeiçqale* ‘Christ, have mercy’ uttered in favour of the writer or donor; detailed information on the persons involved remains rare, however.

### 7.6.3. Dating systems

The Old Georgian tradition possessed a time-reckoning system (hereafter: AG) based upon calculation from Creation onwards, which differed from the Greek system (the Byzantine Era, BE) by 96 years, the first year of our era (1 CE) falling together with the year 5604/5605, not 5508/5509 as in the BE. Reference to this system is made by counting the total number of years since Creation, or the year within a given lunisolar cycle (Georgian *kroniḡoni* < Greek *chronikon*) of 532 ( $19 \times 28$ ) years. Whenever Old Georgian codices contain a dating, one or the other of these methods, or both, are applied, as in the colophons of the Sinai *Mravaltavi*, the completion of which is dated to 6468 AG and the year 84 of the (12<sup>th</sup>) lunar cycle, both corresponding to 863/864 CE (because the year began on 1 September, as in the Greek calendar). In the same way, Ioane Zosime dated his (third) binding of the same codex in the year 6585 AG and in the *kroniḡon* 201, which is 980/981 CE (Gippert forthcoming, § 2.2.1).

The Georgian system of time-reckoning was continuously used up to the eighteenth century, when it was finally superseded by the Julian calendar (as prevailing in Russia then). Much earlier than this, the Georgians had given up their inherited month names and replaced them with the Latin ones, but the original system can be restored reliably on the basis of attestations mostly in hagiographical manuscripts (see Gippert 1988 for details). More exact datings (mentioning individual days) are extremely rare.

### 7.6.4. Duration of copying

The time it took a scribe to copy a codex can only rarely be determined on the basis of indications in colophons and secondary notes. The picture we arrive at is similar to that of the Greek tradition. While many scribes have left information about themselves in colophons, practically nothing is known about the artists who added decorations to a codex. The miniature of St Luke in MS Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 30 (f. 122v) is preserved only in the form of a (pencilled?) sketch, which indicates that the illuminator’s work was done after the completion of the written text. The same is true for many cases where large initials were sketched for being coloured, but remained unfinished.

## 7.7. Bookbinding

In the course of an extensive study devoted to the subject, Maia Ḳaranaḡe has drawn up three ‘conjectural stages’ in the history of Georgian bookbinding (Georgian *qda* ‘cover’), namely an ‘early’ stage extending from the tenth to the sixteenth century, a ‘transitional’ stage in the seventeenth century, and a ‘late’ stage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Ḳaranaḡe 2002, 75). This reflects the fact that the oldest bindings of Georgian codices which have come down to us date to the second half of the tenth century, all produced by Ioane Zosime in St Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai (Ḳaranaḡe 2002, 75). However, the art of bookbinding must have been known in the Georgian world before this, given that Ioane Zosime himself tells us (in his colophon) that his binding of the Sinai *Mravaltavi* (undertaken in 980/981) was already the third binding of this codex, which had been written 116 years before (in 863/864; Gippert forthcoming, 2.2.1).

The specimens of early book binding we have at hand at Mount Sinai clearly show that the basic material of the covers was wooden boards which were bound in leather (Ioane Zosime explicitly mentions *tqavi zroxisay* ‘cow’s skin’ in his colophon to the *Mravaltavi*) and which were attached to the text block by a thread that was pulled through a series of holes in the boards. Even at Mount Sinai we can observe several types of sewing used in these cases, with a zigzag-like twining (see images in Ḳaranaḡe 2002, I-1, 4d) as in the Gospel manuscripts Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 15 and 16 (codices of 978 and 992, bindings



Fig. 1.7.9 Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 15, dated 978, back cover of a later binding, photograph by JG.

later; fig. 1.7.9), or with a rectangular twining (see images in *Ḳaranaḷe* 2002, I-4, 15) as in Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 30-38 (of 979) and 29 (c. tenth century, bindings later). Another rectangular type (images in *Ḳaranaḷe* 2002, I-2, 5) is regarded as more typical for the Georgian tradition, which is why it has been styled ‘Georgian sewing’ (see *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 152–154). The grain of the wooden board is usually horizontal, as in Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 29; however, a vertical orientation of the grain does also appear, as in Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 15 (fig. 1.7.9). On their inner sides, the boards are usually covered by flyleaves, sometimes stemming from other (parchment) codices. For example, the flyleaves of the Sinai *Mravaltavi* were taken from a Christian Palestinian Aramaic Gospel manuscript (Lewis 1894, 118–120). In rare cases, the inner side of the board remained uncovered and could therefore be used for colophon-like additions directly written upon it, as in the case of Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 29.

From the earliest times on, leather covers were decorated externally by stamped-in crosses and other ornaments, of either geometrical or other shapes (*Ḳaranaḷe* 2002 lists, besides crosses, ‘rhombic’, flower-shaped and band-shaped stamps:

II-14, II-4, II-6, II-11). In addition, we find (metal) crosses and other ornaments attached to the cover with rivets or nails, as in the case of Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 19 (of 1074, binding later), or consisting of a decoratively arranged series of nails, as in the Gospel manuscript H-1660 (of 936, binding c. sixteenth/seventeenth century; *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 175). In later bindings, we find stylized ornaments stamped into the leather, as in the Gospel manuscript Q-883 (c. twelfth or thirteenth century, binding of c.1760), where the decoration also has a special (golden) colour (*Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 181).

Apart from metal crosses used as decorations, Georgian Gospel codices often bear much more elaborate metal ornamentation, especially in bindings that are later than the fifteenth century. The illustrative material gathered in *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 158–185, shows several specimens of book covers with a total or partial overlay of brasswork illustrating the Crucifixion etc. Additionally, precious stones can be found inlaid into the metalwork, as in the binding of the *Çqarostavi Gospels* (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, Q-907, of 1195, fig. 1.7.10; *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 160–161), or in the *Alaverdi Gospels* (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-484, of 1054, binding c. seventeenth century; *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 177).

In the ‘late’ phase of Georgian manuscript production, ‘European’ types of bookbindings and decoration entered the Georgian tradition, including cardboard-based and coloured covers; see *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010, 182–185 for examples.

### References

Abulaḷe 1967; Burçulaḷe 2012; Cagareli 1886, 1888a, 1888b; Doborḷginize 2011; Gippert 1988, 2010a, 2010b, 2013, forthcoming; Gippert et al. 2007a, 2009; Gippert – Tandaschwili 2014; Gogašvili 2003, 2004, 2006; Imnaišvili 2004; *Ḳaranaḷe* 2002; *Ḳaranaḷe et al.* 2010; Kaḷaia 1974; Metreveli et al. 1978; Lewis 1894; Nanobašvili 1973; Paḷariḷe 1965a, 1965b, 1968; Peeters 1917–1919; Rayfield 2010; Renhart 2009; Šaniḷe 1959; Šaniḷe – Martirosovi 1977; Taḷaišvili 1916; Ṭimote 1852. Web sources: Gippert et al. 2007b; Gippert – Imnaišvili 2009a, 2009b; Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, <<http://www.manuscript.ge/index.php?m=73&ln=eng>>, last access 29 November 2014.



Fig. 1.7.10 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, Q-907 (*Çqarostavi Gospels*), 1195, front cover.