

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО И НАУКАТА НА РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ  
КИРИЛО-МЕТОДИЕВСКИ НАУЧЕН ЦЕНТЪР ПРИ БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ  
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**Писменото наследство  
и информационните технологии**

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## **Digitization and a Database of Original Copies of Historical Documents Preserved in the National Centre of Manuscripts of the Republic of Georgia**

**Tea Kartvelishvili, Nikoloz Zhgenti**

The Republic of Georgia's National Centre of Manuscripts in 2012–2014 implemented the project “Digitalization and Database of Original Copies of Historical Documents Preserved in National Centre of Manuscripts”, funded by the Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation. As a result, over 5,000 original documents, from 40,000 that are preserved in the Centre, were described in the database and digitized. These 5,000 documents are already available for scholars and other interested persons on the Internet.

Historical documents belong to the most numerous type of historic sources available to us. As opposed to other sources, historical documents are marked by high reliability. The National Centre of Manuscripts of Georgia holds approximately 40,000 Georgian historical documents organized in four collections.

Historical documents from the medieval period cover almost all spheres of life. They include kings' orders, private letters and documents concerning economic relations. The documents reflect general trends of political, socio-economic and cultural development of the country.

Surviving historical documents testify to a high level of secretarial performance in Georgia. The documents were drafted according to special rules. Their structure was well defined. Some of the documents, including palimpsests, were executed on parchment, but many of them were written on paper. The documents were written mainly in Mkhedruli script. Nuskha-khutsuri script was used only in a small number of church documents.

To ensure the legal validity of a document, the issuer used to sign and seal it. Signatures of the Bagrations are found on the royal family documents. The autograph of king Giorgi V the Brilliant is of special note. Its complexity was intentional to prevent signature forgery. Apart from the king's name, the royal signature in earlier Georgian historical documents also contained a formal text of approval. This feature is characteristic for the deeds issued by kings of the united Georgian state. Documents of the later period lack this peculiarity: the king used to approve the document by signing it only with his name.

The seal of King Bagrat VI is the most ancient one among those which have come down to us: it dates to 1470. Early period seals have laconic legends. The presence of imprints of several royal seals on the same document enforced its legal validity. Documents intended for foreign countries had seals with text in a foreign language.

Historical documents are considered unique monuments of cultural heritage.

Unfortunately, most of the originals are damaged and frequent use by scholars or other interested persons may be harmful for them.

By that reason, National Centre of Manuscripts implemented the project “Digitalization and Database of Original Copies of Historical Documents Preserved in National Centre of Manuscripts”, funded by the Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation.

The project took 2 years and included the following:

1. Choosing 5,000 originals from 40,000 by some criteria: antiquity, damage, importance, frequently needed to take from funds, etc.
2. Creating a database of the project, describing documents by following fields: 1. Fund and cipher; 2. Sizes; 3. Damage quality; 4. Restoration; 5. Script; 6. Ink color; 7. Material; 8. Type of document; 8. Date; 9. Historical persons mentioned in document; 10. Geographical places mentioned in document; 10. Seals; 11. Signatures; 12. Approvals; 13. Watermarks; 14. Punctuation marks; 15. Calligrapher. 16. Title of document; 17. Notes.
3. Entering metadata and attaching digitized images.
4. Publishing the database on website of the National Centre of Manuscripts.