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**Islamic World and its Christian Neighbours: Georgian-Persian, Persian and Ottoman
Illuminated Historical Documents in Georgian Archives and Museums**

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Because of its geographical location, Georgia has always retained close relations with both West and East. At the boundary of the Hellenic-Byzantine, Eastern and Western worlds, Georgia has synthesized these cultures. Despite the vagaries of history, difficulties and acts of destruction, several tens of thousands of eleventh to nineteenth-century documents in Georgian and other (Persian and Ottoman) languages are preserved in Georgian depositories. These documents reflect political, social, and cultural changes that Georgia, as well as its neighboring countries has undergone over a long period of time: when Byzantium was the primary influence on Georgia, manuscripts and historical documents reflected Byzantine trends in their form, structure and artistic design. In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, when Georgia was divided and different areas controlled by Safavid Iran and Ottoman Turkey, the impact and influence of these preponderantly Muslim cultures was reflected in the illumination of Georgian manuscripts and documents, primarily Georgian-Persian bilingual documents, and also in the drawing up of Persian and Ottoman firmans and deeds.

The Georgian, Persian and Ottoman documents preserved in Georgia are mainly decorated with miniatures, illumination and initials. Various different types of document were illuminated: Georgian blood-money deeds, charters of grant and donation, Persian firmans and documents of ritual content, letters patent of Turkish Sultans, charters granting estates.

Among the major documents of the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries various examples stand out, including documents adorned with portraits of Georgian kings, secular and ecclesiastic representatives, as well as those with miniatures featuring a variety of subjects. There are also highly artistic and unique documents decorated with initials, vegetal and animal ornamentation seen in Georgian, Iranian, Ottoman and European art of illumination.

A study of Georgian, Persian and Ottoman illuminated historical documents created within a Georgian milieu needs to be carried out in the light of both the principles of Christian artistic design as well as those of the Islamic East. The principal aim of this project is to make an

interdisciplinary study of the illuminated Georgian, Persian and Ottoman documents preserved at the National Centre of Manuscripts in Tbilisi and in the libraries and museums elsewhere in Georgia. It will examine them from the codicological, historical and art historical points of view. It will presents its results in electronic format and by preparing a website (in both Georgian and English), thus making the findings available to scholars and the general public.

After the realization of the project it will be possible to create the stages of the development and typology of the illuminated documents, its connections towards the Post Byzantium and Islamic illuminated manuscripts. Data base as well as Web site will carry scientific and educational purpose. This will be interesting exhibition portal which will present detailed information about Georgian, Persian and Ottoman documents.

