

**Image and Community:  
Representations of Military Saints in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean**

by

Heather A. Badamo

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(History of Art)  
in The University of Michigan  
2011

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Elizabeth L. Sears, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor Thelma K. Thomas, Co-Chair, New York University  
Professor Michael D. Bonner  
Associate Professor Megan L. Holmes

© Heather A. Badamo  
2011

*In memorium* AEB

I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race,  
I have kept the faith.  
2 Timothy 4:7

## **Acknowledgments**

This project would not have been completed without the help of many wonderful people, who helped me with tasks of all kinds, contributing their time, energy, and encouragement. I could not have hoped for a more compassionate and enthusiastic dissertation committee; they have gone beyond the call of duty throughout the process. I am particularly grateful to my advisor, Professor Thelma Thomas, who has generously contributed her time, expertise, and energy to this project. She encouraged me to explore angles I never would have considered on my own, and through many conversations, comments, and suggestions helped me to clarify the project and finally to bring it to a close. Professor Elizabeth Sears, who has been an enthusiastic supporter since I arrived at Michigan, consistently gave generously of her time. She has engaged me in countless stimulating conversations, which provided a much-needed forum for trying out and formulating new ideas. Her many insights and suggestions have improved the project in countless immeasurable ways. Professor Megan Holmes provided assistance and valuable criticism throughout the process, and I am particularly grateful for her help in the early years of shaping the project. I am certain that I would not have made it to the field, let alone to the finish line, without her tireless patience and support. Finally, I am grateful to Professor Michael Bonner for introducing me to the Arab geographers whose writings have provided a constant source of delight and proved invaluable to my understanding of the eastern Christian world.

Generous financial support from the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan made much of my work on this project possible. A research fellowship from the Turchihin Foundation, given through the History of Art Department, enabled me to expand my project into Syria and Lebanon, while a Rackham International Dissertation Research Award provided support for early fieldwork. Assistance from the Horace H. Rackham Graduate School also allowed me to participate in an excavation and conservation project in Egypt, both of which provided invaluable professional training and an opportunity to establish contacts abroad.

Numerous institutions outside of Michigan provided support for different parts of this project. I spent fifteen months in Egypt conducting fieldwork through the generous support of a Critical Language Enhancement Award and Fulbright. I was able to continue my fieldwork for another nine months through the support of an ECA fellowship from the American Research Center in Egypt. Many kind people at Fulbright and at ARCE helped me navigate the ins and outs of conducting research in Egypt. Over the course of the two years I spent in Cairo, Dr. Shaza Ismail and Dr. Aly Omar Abdalla served as valued colleagues. Their time and suggestions made the process of conducting fieldwork progress smoothly. After completing my fieldwork, a Chester Dale Fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art allowed me to begin drafting my dissertation. The Department of Medieval Art provided a welcoming place and encouraging environment in which to develop the project, as well as an excellent library. The final year of writing was funded with the generous assistance of a Junior Fellowship in Byzantine Studies from the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, D.C. While

there, I benefited from not only from the library, but also from informal conversations and lectures, both from visiting scholars and those in residence.

Many scholars took the time to discuss with me their research and offered insights on my project. Special thanks is owed to Helen Evans, who introduced me to Byzantine Egypt while I was a college intern in the Department of Medieval Art. I have benefitted from many inspiring conversations with her over the years, particularly during my time as a fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ilene Forsyth provided invaluable assistance at the very beginning of this project and delighted me with her accounts of Egypt and Mount Sinai in the 1960s. Elizabeth S. Bolman has been extraordinarily generous, giving her time and expertise, involving me in excavation and conservation projects, and facilitating much of my work in Egypt, and providing intellectual assistance. I am indebted to her pioneering work at the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea and for a wonderful first trip to the site, which gave me the inspiration for working on warrior saints. During my year as a Fulbright fellow, Darlene Brooks-Hedstrom was a delightful research companion, dedicated mentor, and valued friend, who included me on numerous adventures to the desert, provided advice of all kinds, and gave me constant encouragement. She and her family opened their door in Zamalek to me on a regular basis, even taking me in when I fell ill. In Syria, Mat Immerzeel provided an excellent introduction to the Christian monuments and gave generously of his time and resources. I am particularly grateful to him for sharing visual material and an early version of his book with me while I was working on my dissertation, and for always having the stamina to track down “the man with the key.” In the summer of 2009, Rima Gannage gamely took me through Lebanon, providing a tour of the medieval churches

and many interesting conversations about the state of eastern Christian scholarship. I am certain that I would never have located the churches on my own, or received such a warm welcome from the Lebanese Christian communities without her assistance. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Christine Brennan provided a constant welcoming presence. In Washington D.C., Nancy Patterson Ševčenko offered both encouragement and advice.

My research took me to many museums, monasteries, and institutions where I benefited from the help and interest of librarians, scholars, curators, archaeologists and custodians. In Egypt, I received generous assistance from Nadia Tamoum at the Coptic Museum, Karel Innemmée in the Wādī al-Natrūn, Wladimir Godlewski in the Fayoum, Mohamad Khalifa Mohamad in Coptic Cairo, and Abouna Maximous at the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea. Fr. Justin and Fr. Porphyrios both made my work at the Monastery of St. Sinai possible and were kind enough to include me in the spiritual life of the institution. I must also thank Jere Bacharach, Adam Sabra, Suzanne Stetkevych, and Michael Jones for taking the time to discuss my project while I was a fellow at ARCE. Adam Becker helped me to navigate the complicated world of Syriac scholarship while I was in New York. At Dumbarton Oaks, I benefited from a dedicated library staff and, in particular, from the help of Deb Stewart. Gudrun Buehl took a particular interest in my project and offered valuable suggestions on the material. Finally, I am grateful for the mentorship and examples of Kostas Yiavis, Ellen Bell, and Margaret Mullet.

Michigan provided a stimulating intellectual environment in which to develop my skills as a scholar and a colleague. The faculty in the Department of Art History and other departments often went far beyond the call of duty. In particular, I would like to

thank Ben Acosta Hughes, Raymond van Dam, Elaine Gazda, Sussan Babaie, Terry Wilfong, Stella Nair, and Cecily Hilsdale. I was also fortunate to have the support of a wonderful cohort, which included Heidi Gearhart, Monica Huerta, Katie Hornstein, and Christina Chang. Their accomplishments have been impressive indeed. Kirsten Olds, Kathy Zarur, Rebecca Bieberly, Hima Mallampati, Angela Ho, Olivia Poska Vitale, and Katherine McCurrah have provided support, advice, and many suggestions along the way. Finally, a special thanks must go to Noël Schiller, who took me under her wing five years ago and has provided constant academic and personal support ever since.

Friends and colleagues the world over both contributed thoughtful insights into this project and offered constant support along the way. In Egypt, thanks go to Rebecca Johnson, Nadim Audi, Anne Mariel Peters, Matthew Axelrod, Jason Larkin, and Seth Smith. My time in New York was made immeasurably more pleasant by the company of Amrit Chima and Elizabeth Williams, whose sharp intellect has improved this project in countless ways. Marek Dospel kindly took the time to teach me Coptic and shared his love of classical music. In Washington D.C., Annie Labatt provided not only a sounding board, but also her friendship, encouragement, a positive outlook, and, when needed, an excuse for an outing. Without her, I'm certain the process of finishing would have been far more difficult and far less pleasant. Finally, Margaret Mullet and Hein Bogaard opened their doors to me during the last weeks of dissertation writing, allowing me to extend my stay in Washington, D.C. so that I could complete this manuscript. They provided comfortable havens that any scholar would envy, and, when needed, the perfect cocktail to carry me through.



Susan Niles, Ida Sinkević, and Howard Marblestone set me on the path to an academic life while I was in college. Ida Sinkević provided my first introduction to Byzantium and Howard Marblestone (who is much missed) taught me my first word of classical Greek. Susan Niles could not have known what she signed on for when she agreed to be my advisor – her support, suggestions, and mentorship have been there every step of the way, guiding me through eight years of graduate work, the grueling process of writing a dissertation, and the trials of the job market.

Finally, I cannot thank my family enough for their support. Their love of museums and value of education are ultimately responsible for my decision to pursue a doctorate and my commitment to the project. They have been calm voices of reason throughout an often-trying process, sometime travel companions, and enthusiastic supporters. Indeed, my parents were encouraging even when my work took me very far from home, at times when my presence at their side would surely have been appreciated.

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
List of Figures .....	xii
Chapter 1 Introduction: The Eastern Cult of the Warrior Saints .....	1
Warrior Saints in the eastern Mediterranean .....	3
Modern scholarship on the warrior saints .....	7
Scope of the project: geography and chronology .....	25
Methods and sources .....	30
Chapter 2 Religious Topographies .....	36
The Levant .....	37
Religious communities .....	38
The Syrian Orthodox and Melkites under Muslim Rule .....	43
Egypt .....	47
Religious communities .....	48
Copts and Melkites under Islamic rule .....	50
Chapter 3 Becoming Soldiers of God .....	55
Martyrdoms: creation and remembrance of religious communities .....	56
The Passion of St. Theodore Teron (“the Recruit”) .....	57
The soldier saint: a saintly type? .....	60
Soldier saints and images of community .....	62
The Church of St. George at Zorava .....	63
The Church of St. George at Thessaloniki .....	66
The Monastery of Apollo at Bawit .....	69
Pilgrimage shrines, images, and texts: a case of close convergences .....	74
Military saints and spiritual combat .....	79
From martyr to soldier of God .....	84
Frontier cult .....	86
Chapter 4 Depicting the Military Martyrs: Regional Variations .....	90
The warrior saints in the Byzantine Empire .....	93
Byzantine icons .....	95
The rise of the cult .....	102
Vanguards and champions: the warrior saints and imperial patronage .....	106

Models and protectors: warrior saints and the military aristocracy .....	112
The warrior saints in Egypt.....	116
Egyptian icons.....	116
Monastic patronage.....	124
The warrior saints in the Levant .....	127
Syrian icons.....	127
Spheres of patronage.....	130
Historical communities, visual communities.....	132
Conclusion: the local and the regional.....	136
Chapter 5 Miracles: Military Martyrs and Communal Boundaries .....	139
Warrior saints, miracles, and miracle collections .....	141
The genre .....	142
Miracles of boundary maintenance.....	146
Enemies at the gate, infidels in the sanctuary .....	146
Defending one's own .....	153
Accounts of boundary-crossing: afflicted bodies, beleaguered empires .....	157
The dominance of the warrior saints.....	161
Miracles in icons.....	164
Friends to those in the frontiers: the donor portrait at Beliserama .....	164
Other icons .....	168
Miraculous icons.....	169
The currency of miraculous images.....	176
Chapter 6 Military Saints in the Levant: Religious Practice at the Frontiers of Christianity and Islam.....	179
Military saints in the Levant: the problem of roots .....	183
Patterns and modes of circulation at the frontier .....	187
Religious communities: idolators, heretics, and the orthodox .....	194
Cultural homologies: the Crusader appropriation of the military saints.....	198
Heteropraxy, traveling Iconographies, and visual ambiguities.....	207
Al-Ruṣāfa .....	211
Wall paintings .....	216
Deir Mar Musa and communal differentiation .....	225
Metadoxy and the icons of Sinai.....	231
Coda: visual translations .....	237
Chapter 7 The Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea: Monks, Military Martyrs, and Monastic Genealogies .....	240
Inscribing the monastic past: the genealogy .....	243
Sectarian disputes, reuse, and competing claims of authority .....	251
St. Mercurios: militant piety, asceticism, and the monastic self.....	262
Monks and military martyrs: defenders of the faith .....	282

Conclusion .....	291
Figures .....	294
Bibliography .....	360

## List of Figures

Figure 1. St. Demetrios with donor, mosaic in naos, 7 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki, Greece.....	294
Figure 2. St. Demetrios, ivory plaque, Constantinople, 10 <sup>th</sup> century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. ....	295
Figure 3. St. Bacchos, wall painting in naos, 1208/1209, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria .....	296
Figure 4. St. George with accompanying rider, wall painting in naos, 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon. ....	297
Figure 5. St. George slaying the Jew and St. Phoibammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	297
Figure 6. Church of St. George, 5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> century, Thessaloniki, Greece.....	298
Figure 7. Detail of St. Onesiphoros, dome mosaics of the rotunda, 5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of St. George, Thessaloniki, Greece. ....	298
Figure 8. St. Phoebammon, (now lost) wall painting in Oratory 17, Monastery of Apollo at Bawit, 7 <sup>th</sup> century, Asyut, Egypt.....	299
Figure 9. St. Sissinius slaying the demon Alabastria, (now lost) wall painting in Oratory 17, Monastery of Apollo at Bawit, 7 <sup>th</sup> century, Asyut, Egypt.....	299
Figure 10. St. Menas on ivory pyxis, Alexandria (?), 6 <sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London.....	300
Figure 11. St. Sergios, mosaic in naos, 7 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki, Greece.....	300
Figure 12. St. Sergios as rider saint with cross, pilgrimage flask, lead alloy, Syria, 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> century, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. ....	301
Figure 13. St. Theodore Teron, icon, Egypt, 7 <sup>th</sup> century, Coptic Museum, Cairo, Egypt.....	302
Figure 14. Nielloed figures depicting Christ (top), Virgin orans (center), angels (left and right), and a military saint impaling a serpent (bottom), pectoral cross, gold, 6 <sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London. ....	303

Figure 15. Sts. Eugenios, Eustratios, and Auxentios, wall painting in north-west chapel, early 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece. ....	304
Figure 16. St. Procopios, mosaic in naos, early 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.....	305
Figure 17. St. Theodore Teron, mosaic in naos, early 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.....	306
Figure 18. St. George, mosaic in naos, early 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.....	307
Figure 19. St. Demetrios, mosaic in naos, early 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.....	308
Figure 20. St. Sergios, mosaic in naos, early 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.....	309
Figure 21. St. George, pectoral cross reliquary, bronze, Anatolia (?), 9 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. ....	309
Figure 22. Deesis with Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Baptist (upper center panel); Sts. James, John the Theologian, Peter, Paul and Andrew (lower center panel); Sts. Theodore Teron, Eustathios (?) (upper left wing), Procopios, and Arethas (lower left wing); Sts. Theodore Stratelates, George (upper right wing); Sts. Demetrios, and Eustratios (lower right wing), ivory triptych, Constantinople, likely a commission for Emperor Constantine VII (945-59), Palazzo Venezia, Rome.....	310
Figure 23. Deesis with Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Baptist (center panel, top); Sts. James the Great, John the Theologian, Peter, Paul, and Andrew (center panel, bottom); Sts. Theodore Teron and Theodore Stratelates (left wing, top); Sts. Mercurios, Thomas, Eustratios and Arethas (left wing, bottom); Sts. George and Eustathios (right wing, top); Sts. Philip, Panteleimon, Demetrios, and Procopios (right wing, bottom), ivory triptych, Constantinople, late 10 <sup>th</sup> /11 <sup>th</sup> century (?), Musée du Louvre, Paris.....	311
Figure 24. Basil II triumphs over his enemies, Psalter of Basil II, ca. 1000, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS Gr. 217, fol. 3.....	312
Figure 25. Alexios I with St. George, coin of Alexios I Comnenos, 1067-1068, obverse.....	313
Figure 26. Manuel II with St. Theodore, coin of Manuel II Comnenos, 1083-1084, obverse.....	313
Figure 27. St. Theodore Stratelates, steatite icon, Constantinople (?), 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Museo Sacro, Vatican. ....	314
Figure 28. St. George on enkolpion of St. Demetrios, enamel, Thessaloniki, 12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> centuries, British Museum, London.....	315

Figure 29. St. Theodore Stratelates slaying a dragon, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	316
Figure 30. St. Theodore Stratelates slaying a dragon, wall painting, 10 <sup>th</sup> century, unidentified building, Tebtunis, Egypt. ....	317
Figure 31. St. Theodore the Oriental slaying a dragon, frontispiece of Martyrdom of SS. Theodore the Anatolian (the Oriental), Leontius the Arab, and Panigerus the Persian, 867, Pierpont Morgan, MS Coptic, M.613, fol.1v. ....	318
Figure 32. St. Claudius of Antioch slaying Diocletian, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	319
Figure 33. St. Claudius of Antioch slaying an emperor, wall painting in naos, 1179/1180, Monastery of the Martyrs, Esna, Egypt. ....	320
Figure 34. St. Claudius of Antioch slaying an emperor, wall painting in naos, 11 <sup>th</sup> century, Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel, Fayoum, Egypt. ....	320
Figure 35. St. Victor, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	321
Figure 36. St. Theodore Stratelates slaying a dragon, wall painting in naos, late 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon. ....	322
Figure 37. St. Theodore and St. George, wings of triptych, panel-painting, Sinai, 10 <sup>th</sup> century, Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, Egypt. ....	323
Figure 38. Donor portrait with St. George, Basil Giagoupes and the Lady Tamar, wall painting in naos, 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey. ....	324
Figure 39. St. George slaying the dragon, wall painting in naos, 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey. ....	325
Figure 40. Detail of St. George slaying the dragon, wall painting in naos, 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey. ....	325
Figure 41. St. George with accompanying rider, wall painting in naos, 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey. ....	326
Figure 42. St. Demetrios with accompanying rider, pilgrimage token, lead, Thessaloniki, 12 <sup>th</sup> century, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ. ....	327
Figure 43. St. George with accompanying rider, icon, eastern Mediterranean, 13 <sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London. ....	328
Figure 44. Sergios and Bacchos, double-sided icon with the Virgin, eastern Mediterranean, 1260s-70s, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, Egypt. ....	329

Figure 45. Icon with Saint Sergios with female donor, eastern Mediterranean, 1260s-70s, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai.....	330
Figure 46. Besant with imitation Fatimid legend, gold, 12 <sup>th</sup> century, Jerusalem mint, American Numismatic Society, New York. ....	331
Figure 47. Besant with Christian legend and cross, gold, 12 <sup>th</sup> century, Jerusalem mint. ....	331
Figure 48. St. George slaying a dragon, follis of Roger of Antioch, bronze, 1112-1119, Antioch mint, American Numismatic Society, New York. ....	332
Figure 49. St. George and St. Demetrios (obverse) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (reverse), pilgrimage flask, lead alloy, Jerusalem, 12 <sup>th</sup> or 13 <sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London. ....	332
Figure 50. Ruṣāfa treasure. Censor, Mesopotamia or Iran, 12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> century; Paten, Syria (?), early 13 <sup>th</sup> century; Chalice, Syria, early 13 <sup>th</sup> century; Chalice foot, Syria (?), early 13 <sup>th</sup> century; Cup with heraldic shields, Northern France (?), ca. 1290, National Museum, Damascus. ....	333
Figure 51. Cup with heraldic shields, silver with gilding, Northern France (?), ca. 1290, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus. ....	334
Figure 52. Paten, silver with gilding, Syria (?), early 13 <sup>th</sup> century, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus.....	334
Figure 53. Chalice, silver with gilding, Syria, early 13 <sup>th</sup> century, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus.....	334
Figure 54. Interior detail of chalice showing the Mother of God with angels, silver with gilding, Syria, early 13 <sup>th</sup> century, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus. ....	334
Figure 55. St. Theodore, wall painting in naos, 1260s-1290s, Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos, Qar‘a, Syria.....	335
Figure 56. St. Sergios, wall painting in naos, 1260s-1290s, Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos, Qar‘a, Syria.....	335
Figure 57. Greek inscription (left) and Syriac inscription (right), St. Theodore, wall painting in naos, 1260s-1290s, Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos, Qar‘a, Syria. ....	336
Figure 58. Interior looking towards apse, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon. ....	336
Figure 59. Donor portrait with St. Theodore, wall painting in naos, late 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon. ....	337
Figure 60. Donor portrait with St. George, wall painting in naos, late 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon. ....	337



Figure 61. St. George with accompanying rider, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.....	338
Figure 62. St. Theodore slaying the dragon, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria. ....	338
Figure 63. St. Sergios, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.....	339
Figure 64. St. Demetrios (?), wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.....	339
Figure 65. Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.....	340
Figure 66. Detail of the saved, Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria. ....	341
Figure 67. Detail of the damned, Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.....	341
Figure 68. George and accompanying rider, icon, eastern Mediterranean, late 13 <sup>th</sup> century, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, Egypt. ....	342
Figure 69. View of the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea and Mount Qulzim, Wādī al-'Arbah, Egypt.....	343
Figure 70. Interior view of church from the naos looking into the khurus, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	343
Figure 71. St. Victor, St. Menas, St. Theodore Stratelates, St. Sisinnios, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.....	344
Figure 72. Abba Pishoi, Abba John, and Abba Pisentius. wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	344
Figure 73. Detail of widow's children with Coptic inscription, St. Theodore Stratelates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.....	345
Figure 74. Detail of shield, St. Theodore Stratelates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	346
Figure 75. St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	347
Figure 76. St. George slaying Euchios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.....	348
Figure 77. Detail of angel, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	349

Figure 78. Detail of Julian the Apostate, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	350
Figure 79. St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, illustration in manuscript of homilies and hagiographical texts, 10 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> century, Vatican MS Copto 66, f. 687 v.....	351
Figure 80. St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, icon, Egypt, 10th-13th century, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, Egypt. ....	352
Figure 81. Detail of Sts. Basil and Gregory, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	353
Figure 82. Detail of the <i>cenocephales</i> , St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	354
Figure 83. St. George slaying the Jew, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.....	355
Figure 84. St. Phoebammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	356
Figure 85. Detail of St. Phoebammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	357
Figure 86. Detail of St. Claudius slaying Diocletian, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	358
Figure 87. John of Heraclea (?) slaying Eutychianos, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt. ....	359

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: The Eastern Cult of the Warrior Saints

Sometime during the central middle ages, a group of soldiers entered a church in Syria with prisoners in tow. The soldiers – so says the miracle account – were Saracens and their captives Christians. On entering the church, dedicated to the military martyr St. George, the Saracens proceeded to drink, sleep, and play dice. When a prisoner warned them that the saint knew how to repay such wickedness, the Saracens laughed and asked the Christian to point out the saint’s portrait among the images adorning the church. They beheld St. George “girt about with brightness, wearing a military corselet and bronze leg-coverings, holding a war-spear in his hand, and looking in a terrifying manner upon those who gazed straight at him.” Stirred to contempt by this image, one of the Saracens hurled a missile at the icon of St. George, but the weapon failed to reach its destination. As it approached the image, the soldiers saw the icon of St. George stretch forth its hand, reaching out from the mosaic icon, and turn the missile back to strike his assailant fatally in the heart.

This miracle account, composed in Greek during the eleventh or twelfth century in Palestine, presents an icon of a warrior saint performing as an active defender of the Christian faithful.<sup>1</sup> Set in the war-torn steppes of Syria, it envisions the church of St.

---

<sup>1</sup> BHG 690. Ed. Joannes B. Aufhauser, *Miracula S. Georgii* (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1913), 10-11. French trans. in A. J. Festugière, *Collections grecques de miracles: Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges* (Paris: Picard, 1971). Partial English translation and discussion in Alexander

George as the final front in an ongoing battle, transforming a military skirmish into a contest for religious sovereignty. The chaos of the battlefield finds a parallel in the dissolution of normal boundaries: Muslims occupy a church, desecrate the sacred space by drinking and gambling, and attack the material artifacts of Christianity. Written in an era when military victory was believed to signify divine favor, the actions of the Saracen soldiers conform to their claim for the dominance of Islam over Christianity. The miracle account resolutely defies this claim as the icon of St. George heroically comes to life. Transgressing the material limits of mosaic, the enlivened icon exacts retribution for the mockery of the soldiers, reclaims the church, and, ultimately, demonstrates the continuing vitality of Christianity. Slaying the Saracen becomes an act of resistance not only to the Muslim conquest of a Christian monument, but also to the larger territory of Christianity and the religious absorption that threatened to follow in its wake.

As presented in this miracle account, the icon of a warrior saint becomes an active defender of communal boundaries and vigilant protector of moral order. The story locates the active power of Christian saints in sacred images and invests its audience with the confidence that their religion is greater than all its rivals, even as it sanctifies violence as a means for restoring the status quo – a triumphant and uncontested Christianity. Partaking in a genre intended to serve as an ethical guide, the miracle account becomes a model for understanding the consequences of religious difference, one that configures cultural self-preservation as a militaristic endeavor and raises the maintenance of communal boundaries to the level of a religious duty.

### Warrior Saints in the eastern Mediterranean

From the tenth through the thirteenth century, image-makers and hagiographers reconceived select saints as aggressive warriors, a transformation that launched them to the top of the saintly hierarchy in the eastern Mediterranean. Classed and known as the *stratelatai* (“generals”), these holy warriors were drawn from the ranks of the early Christian martyrs and often, though not in every case, had served as soldiers in the Roman army during their lives. As defenders of the faith, they were called upon to lead soldiers to victory, to mete out punishment to those who had dared to insult Christianity, and to protect their own from the perils of warfare. In the tenth century, their images proliferated, appearing on myriad religious objects and in a great many monumental pictorial cycles: St. Theodore might be seen brandishing his sword on amulets, St. Mercurios standing ready in full armor on portable icons, or St. George slaying heretics on church walls. The saints were particularly venerated at the frontiers of Byzantium and beyond, in regions where Arab-speaking Christians lived under Muslim rule. In these regions, numerous chapels, churches, and liturgical records attest to their cult, while tales of their efficacy abound in histories and hagiographical writings. In one Egyptian miracle account resembling the Palestinian story described above, a painted figure of St. George is reported to have come to life to slay a heretic, while in a Syrian narrative, an icon of St. Theodore is credited with converting a *ghāzī* descended from Muḥammad.<sup>2</sup>

This dissertation focuses on the cult of the military saints in the medieval eastern Mediterranean, seen through the lens of its icons, especially those produced in the twelfth through thirteenth centuries in Egypt and the Levant. It provides the first detailed

---

<sup>2</sup> Dick Ignace, "La passion arabe de S. Antoine Ruwah, néo-martyr de Damas († déc 799)," *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 109-133.

discussion of a little-known group of images and the way they were perceived in the pre-modern Mediterranean. By studying these icons in relation to images produced in Byzantium, it is possible to situate them within the larger context of cult formation and practice in a region that was frequently contested and, by so doing, to gain insights into religious identity and local interfaith relations between Christians and Muslims.

The military saints' rise to prominence coincides with their visual transformation, which came about through the appropriation of older iconographies and the gradual elaboration of saint-specific hagiographical traditions. Though military martyrs were commonly depicted in courtly garb during late antiquity, the image-makers of the tenth century reimagined them in full armor, equipped with weapons. More strikingly, select saints who were not soldiers during their lives began to appear in the same militaristic iconography. Perhaps the most famous example of this phenomenon is St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki. A seventh-century mosaic of him features an image of the saint in the garb of a courtier, signifying his membership in the heavenly court (Fig. 1). In the tenth century, this iconographic type was joined by an alternative one that represents St. Demetrios in full military regalia (Fig. 2). As can be seen in a tenth-century ivory icon of St. Demetrios at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the saint appears in a ready stance – his foot projecting beyond the edge of the icon as if about to leap out. His cuirass is crafted with exactitude and precision, conveying a clear message of the saint's might that is enhanced by the spear grasped in his right hand and the shield held at his side. By the time this icon was made, miracle accounts recording the military interventions of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, where he appeared "in the guise of a soldier," had been in circulation for three centuries. Although St. Demetrios provides the most well-known

example of this visual transformation, similar developments can be seen in Egypt and the Levant, where Arab Christians began to depict select saints as fully armed warriors during the same period.

The visual record offers vivid testimony to the immediate and widespread response that this new iconography generated: by the tenth century, the military martyrs were the most frequently represented group of saints in the east. They are represented in glittering mosaics and vibrantly colored paintings in Byzantine churches, and they turn up as the sole subject on amulets, in manuscript illuminations, and on precious icons, on seals, and even on coins. The cults flourished especially at the frontiers of Byzantium, as witnessed by the concentration of their images in Cappadocia, and beyond, in lands where Christians lived under Muslim rule. Here, eastern Christians of various sects – the Melkites, Syrian Orthodox and Maronites in Syria, and the Copts and Syrian Orthodox in Egypt – represented the martyrs in perhaps their most elaborated and engaging forms. They can be seen as warriors on horseback on the walls of churches and chapels of Lebanon and Syria – as in a wall painting from Deir Mar Musa in Nbek, which shows St. Bacchos riding through the steppes bearing a standard (Fig. 3), or an image of St. George rescuing a captive in the Church of Mar Tadros at Bahdeidat (Fig. 4). In Egypt, they take on at times aggressive stances: in wall paintings at monastic churches, including the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, the saints appear as mounted soldiers violently slaying the historic and legendary adversaries of Christianity (Fig. 5).

As images that were produced and circulated within frontier zones, icons of military saints can provide new insights into the different levels of cultural interaction that took place in such places, where different religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups co-

existed. The military and political instability that created and characterized frontiers provided a fundamental impetus for the production of these apotropaic images and shaped their militarized iconographies. The role of frontiers as conduits for exchange led to the production of images with iconographic and stylistic heterogeneity, for the makers of icons of military saints freely incorporated elements from Byzantine, Islamic, and local Christian visual cultures. Often, the saints are depicted in “cultural cross-dress,” wearing mixes of Arab, Turkish, and Byzantine armor.<sup>3</sup> Such formal and iconographic blendings suggests that warfare, far from being inimical to exchange, could engender new patterns of circulation of images and foster heterodox cult practices. Documentary sources reveal that Christians of all confessions venerated the military martyrs, opening the possibility for sharing across communities. Even Muslims counted St. George among their holy figures, if in highly mediated form, and participated in his festival at Lydda.

At the same time, the ultimate effect of such boundary-crossing was to foster the production of images that seek to consolidate Christian sentiment and exclude Muslims. The image-makers that produced icons of military saints utilized a militarized visual vocabulary to represent the saints in iconographies of Christian triumph, which proclaim the dominance of Christianity over all other faiths – a theme taken up in their miracle accounts. These images thus offer beholders a model of interfaith encounters that is predicated on conflict, confrontation, and polemic. In their formal qualities, icons of military saints reveal a world in which exchange is common and even prosaic, while their subject matter and perceived functions shed light on the anxieties that could arise in the

---

<sup>3</sup> I have borrowed this term from Inge Boer; see Inge Boer, “Just a Fashion?: Cultural Cross-Dressing and the Dynamics of Cross-Cultural Representations,” *Fashion Theory* 6 (2002): 421-440.



face of such cultural fluidity and the resultant erosion of communal boundaries that some members of the community perceived.

Configuring battle and heroic triumph in hybrid visual idioms, these icons do not simply represent military saints. They also register the attempts of embattled religious communities to understand their position, that of Christians in an *oikumēne* occupied by Islam and alternative forms of Christianity, in light of and as a continuation of the warrior saints' struggles. In this dissertation, by studying the strikingly abundant images that survive from the central middle ages, in conjunction with hagiographical works, liturgical texts, and chronicles, I hope to throw light on the role of sacred images in creating and transgressing communal boundaries and shaping perceptions of interfaith encounters in Egypt, the Levant, and Byzantium in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

### **Modern scholarship on the warrior saints**

Despite the wealth of icons of warrior saints produced in Egypt, the Levant, and Byzantium in the central middle ages, and despite the importance attached to the cults of these saints in these regions, there has been to date no sustained cross-regional study of this class of images. While for the Byzantine empire, there have been important studies, as will be described below, the relevant literature in the field of eastern Christian art – Egypt and the Levant – is largely confined to isolated studies of single monuments, specialist studies, or ancillary observations in monographs devoted to other topics.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, icons of military saints have rarely been considered in relation to the written

---

<sup>4</sup> In referring to Egypt, the Levant, and the Byzantine Empire I am drawing upon period conceptualizations of these regions, which regarded them as distinct cultural units, albeit with shifting borders. These designations are considered more closely in chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> The designation eastern Christian is generally used to refer to the Arabic-speaking Christian communities that resided in Muslim countries: Copts, Syrian Orthodox, Melkites, Nestorians, and Maronites. In this study, I will use the term to refer to Christians in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon.

record. There is a quite vast hagiographical corpus to be tapped, much of which remains unexamined even by specialists in hagiography.

More than any other scholar, Christopher Walter has sought to bring attention to the cult of the warrior saints and in so doing has revealed the potential of the topic to provide insights into the role of militarism in Byzantine religious devotion. In 2003, he published the sole monograph on the topic, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*.<sup>6</sup> Drawing upon extant studies primarily in the fields of history and hagiography, Walter seeks to define the cult of the military saints by creating a catalog of all the martyrs in the Byzantine liturgical calendar categorized as warriors. In respect to subject matter and approach, Walter is clearly indebted to the work of the great Bollandist, Hippolyte Delehaye.<sup>7</sup> In 1909, Delehaye published the seminal study on the eastern cult of the military saints, considering the passions of a group of martyrs (St. George, the two St. Theodores, St. Mercurios, St. Procopios, and St. Demetrios). He sought to characterize the cults and, as was common at the time, to try to uncover so far as possible the historic personages behind the narratives of the saints' martyrdoms.

Walter expands upon and refines the work of Delehaye by including some seventy-five saints in his study and greatly broadening the base of primary and secondary sources. From his study, we learn that the cult of military saints emerged in the ninth century, the saints' passions changed little after their initial composition, and that their militarization was carried out primarily through the elaboration of miracle accounts and

---

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (New York: Arno, 1909; reprint, 1975). This approach has been critiqued by Cynthia Hahn, among others; Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

images. Though he focuses on hagiographical texts, Walter signals the important role icons played in defining and characterizing the nature of the saints that comprise the cult; without the images, it would not be possible to identify or speak of an “echelon of warrior saints.”

Walter devotes significant time to the Old Testament precedents for pious warfare, but he leaves open the question of what the military martyrs meant in the context of Byzantium. His approach is indicative of the general situation within Byzantine studies, which is due to the widespread acceptance of two basic assumptions that underlie discourse on the topic.<sup>8</sup> The first is that devotion to the military saints is to be explained primarily in terms of the affinity between contemporary warriors and their saintly predecessors, based on a shared military profession. The second reason is the closely related assumption that the cult of warrior saints became popular because of the rise of a militarized provincial elite, which fostered a culture celebrating the Christian warrior. Devotion to the military martyrs became a mark of that identity. Both assumptions provide an accurate assessment of the cult and its meaning, as far as they go, but they share a few shortcomings. First of all, they regard the cult as a static and stable phenomenon, in which warrior ideals rarely, if ever, changed. Moreover, these

---

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Nicolas Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," in *Peace and War in Byzantium*, ed. T.S. Miller and J. Nesbit (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995); 62-88; George T. Dennis, "Defenders of the Christian People: Holy War in Byzantium," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angelike Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks 2001), 31-9; Jean-Claude Cheynet, "La conception militaire de la frontière orientale (IX<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, ed. Anthony Eastmond (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001), 57-72; idem., *The Byzantine Aristocracy and its Military Function* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). More recently, the military saints elicited interest at the Dumbarton Oaks conference on warfare, held in Washington, D.C., April 2010. Many of the ideas seen in these historical works are echoed in the studies of art historians.

explanations cannot accommodate the significance of military martyrs among other sectors of society, or in Christian communities that had no warrior culture.

The field of eastern Christian art – in Egypt and the Levant – is still at the stage of documenting and conserving art, producing monographic studies, and situating works in their temporal and spatial contexts. Few cross-cutting thematic studies of medieval eastern Christian art have been produced to date. However, articles and books by Lucy-Anne Hunt,<sup>9</sup> Mat Immerzeel,<sup>10</sup> Bas Snelders, Adeline Jeudy,<sup>11</sup> and Betsy Bolman have drawn attention to the particular characteristics of icons of military saints in Egypt and the Levant.<sup>12</sup> Their work, to which I am indebted, provides an intriguing glimpse of the rich potential of this material for cross-cultural study and provides a solid foundation for further research.

Within the field of Byzantine art history, studies on the warrior saints have focused primarily on the so-called *vita* icons and their monumental counterparts, late

---

<sup>9</sup> Lucy-Anne Hunt has produced contextualized studies of select icons in relation to female piety and local artistic practices; see Lucy-Anne Hunt, "A Woman's Prayer to St. Sergios in Latin Syria: Interpreting a Thirteenth-Century Icon at Mount Sinai," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 51 (1991): 96-125; idem., "Christian Art in Greater Syria and Egypt: A Triptych of the Ascension with Military Saints Reattributed," *al-Masaq* 12 (2000): 1-36

<sup>10</sup> Mat Immerzeel has considered the contribution of Syrian icons of equestrian saints to Crusader visual culture; see Mat Immerzeel, "Divine Cavalry: Mounted Saints in Middle Eastern Christian Art," in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations*, ed. Krijnie Ciggaar and Herman Teule (Leuven: Peeters, 2003): 265-286; Mat Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 29-60; Mat Immerzeel, "Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004), 29-60.

<sup>11</sup> Bas Snelders and Adeline Jeudy have drawn attention to their apotropaic functions; Bas Snelders and Adeline Jeudy, "Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia," *Eastern Christian Art* 3 (2006): 103-140.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Bolman has considered the role of images of military saints within the context of Egyptian monasticism; Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002); Idem., "Theodore's Program in Context: Egypt and the Mediterranean Region," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

Byzantine pictorial cycles.<sup>13</sup> The dress of the military martyrs, particularly the armor, has also been the topic of recent focused studies.<sup>14</sup> In comparison to icons of Christ and Mary, perennial topics of interest, studies on icons of the warrior saints are few. In part, the relative scholarly neglect is owed to the fact that the warrior saints are seldom mentioned in medieval icon theory and to the circumstance that their cults had no major shrines in Constantinople, conditions that may have led historians of Byzantine art to overlook their images. Scholars working on Byzantine icons have tended to follow the lead of medieval theologians, who took Christ as their paradigm when discussing the function of the religious image.<sup>15</sup> This stance has engendered numerous studies on Christ and the Mother of God, and important work on the nature of sacred images, to which I am indebted.<sup>16</sup> For art historians working on the Mother of God, the location of her major shrines within Constantinople offers a further advantage: centuries of chroniclers have left a rich record of devotional practices related to her cult and miraculous icons

---

<sup>13</sup> Paroma Chatterjee, "Narrating Sanctity: The Narrative Icon in Byzantium and Italy" (Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007); Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, *The Life of St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1983); Idem., "Vita Icons and 'Decorated' Icons of the Komnenian Period," in *Four Icons in the Menil Collection* (Houston: Menil Foundation, 1992), 56-69; Idem., "The Vita Icon and the Byzantine Painter as Hagiographer," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999); Glenn Peers, "Chapter 4: Saint George and His Iconic Bodies," in *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 77-100; Temily Mark-Weiner, "Narrative Cycles of the Life of St. George in Byzantine Art" (Dissertation, New York University, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Piotr Ł. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, trans. Richard Brzezinski (2010); Maria G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 101-158. On the garb (ceremonial/civilian) of a single saint, see Warren T. Woodfin, "An Officer and a Gentleman: Transformations in the Iconography of a Warrior Saint," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 111-144.

<sup>15</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this approach and its repercussions for the shape of the field, see Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Thoughts on the Economy of the Image of Mary," *Theology Today* 56, no. 3 (1999): 359-378.

<sup>16</sup> The literature is enormous. See, for example, Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks, and Shrouds* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

bearing her image, enabling scholars to craft in-depth and textured accounts of the incorporation of her sacred images into the urban fabric.<sup>17</sup> The warrior saints, in contrast, rarely attracted the attention of theologians, and the cults of these saints did not attain the status within Constantinople that was enjoyed by Christ and his mother. With the notable exception of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, the shrines of the military martyrs developed outside the major urban centers of the empire and, consequently, beyond the scope of imperial chroniclers. In the absence of relevant tracts, documents, or urban archaeological evidence outside the center, it is the abundant icons and related objects of devotion that speak most eloquently of the cult of the military martyrs and provide the most fruitful avenue of inquiry.

Decades ago, recognizing that the faithful commemorated the saints concurrently through images and texts, Henry Maguire and Alexander Kazhdan first explored hagiography as a source for information on icons.<sup>18</sup> More recently, Glenn Peers has demonstrated the profitability of this approach through his study on angels, which demonstrates how the miracle accounts of the Archangel Michael convey paradigms for devotional practice.<sup>19</sup> The hagiographical literature generated in support of the cult of the military saints presents multiple challenges to the scholar: it is a complicated corpus that

---

<sup>17</sup> Most recently, Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Kazhdan and Maguire, "Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art," 1-22. Their article is part of a larger movement to consider hagiography as a source for social history. These articles are all cited in John Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)," *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 383-385. For a recent review of hagiography and an assessment of its utility for scholars working on the cult of the saints, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Au-delà de l'hagiographie: réflexions sur les sources de l'histoire du culte des saints à Byzance," in *Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l'antiquité et le moyen âge: mélanges offerts à Pierre Maraval*, ed. Béatrice Caseau, Jean-Claude Cheynet, and Vincent Déroche (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2006), 329-340.

<sup>19</sup> Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

spans centuries, cuts across several languages, and includes a wide array of overlapping genres: passions, hymns, miracle collections, eulogies, and homilies. Many of these works have been treated in specialist studies,<sup>20</sup> but, despite growing interest in late antique and Middle Byzantine hagiography, they have rarely attracted sustained scholarly attention.<sup>21</sup> A partial explanation for the neglect of this corpus may be found in the development of the cult of military saints and the nature of the hagiographical tradition. Because new developments provide valuable insights into changing ideological stances, scholars working on Middle Byzantine hagiography have engaged primarily with the new saints that appeared during the period.<sup>22</sup> Although the echelon of military saints did not emerge until the ninth century, the saints that comprise the cult are primarily late antique martyrs. The passions of many, including St. George, St. Mercurios, and St. Demetrios, were composed in late antiquity and after that copied and transmitted with relatively little change.<sup>23</sup> The military martyrs are among those saints who represent hagiographical

---

<sup>20</sup> There are numerous studies intended for historians and scholars of hagiographical literature. For examples of the former, see Alexander Kazhdan, "The Noble Origin of Saint Menas," *Byzantina* 13, no. 1 (1985), 667-671; Constantine Zuckerman, "The Reign of Constantine V in the Miracles of St. Theodore the Recruit (BHG 1764)," *Revue des Études byzantines* 46 (1988): 191-210. For examples of the latter, see Nicholas Oikonomides, "Le débâtement de saint Théodore et les villes d'Euchaïta and d'Euchaneia," *Analecta Bollandiana* 104 (1986): 327-335; Paul Devos, "Un récit des miracles de S. Ménas en copte et en éthiopien," *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959): 451-463; Gesa Schenke, "Creating Local History: Coptic Encomia Celebrating Past Events," in *Writing "True Stories": Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 21-30.

<sup>21</sup> For an introduction to late antique hagiography, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Martyr Passions and Hagiography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 603-627. For Middle Byzantine hagiography, see the excellent references compiled in Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century), 383-385."

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Stephanos Efthymiadis, "The Byzantine Hagiographer and his Audience in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," in *Metaphrasis: Redactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography* (Oslo: The Research Council of Norway, 1996), 59-80; Lennart Ryden, "New Forms of Hagiography: Heroes and Saints" (paper presented at the The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers, 1986), 537-554; Ihor Ševčenko, *Observations on the Study of Byzantine Hagiography in the Last Half Century or Two Looks Back and One Look Forward* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> The primary change to late antique hagiography was its standardization and canonization in the tenth century, represented by the Metaphrastic project. These "paraphrases" sought to bring the lives into line

continuity. Then too, the scholarly approach that focuses on the moment of production of passions and lives, tends to overlook the miracle accounts produced in subsequent years, though these provided important venues for reconceptualizing the saints and their functions.

My own examination of the military saints will focus on images and texts that have often been considered outside the scope of scholarly inquiry. Christopher Walter's study, though encyclopedic in scope, focuses on the Greek tradition and halts at the frontiers of the Islamic and Frankish polities. And while this decision can be justified on the grounds of practicality, it in fact had misleading consequences, for it imparts the impression that the cult was a phenomenon that was primarily Byzantine in its conception and orientation. As it will become apparent, major changes in the cults of the military saints often took place outside Byzantium proper; pursuit of the military saints propels one to the frontiers.

As this study demonstrates, both the location of shrines and the many artifacts bearing the images of warrior saints shed light on a network of sanctity that extends to the peripheries of the empire and far beyond. The major late antique shrines of the military martyrs were not located in Constantinople but in fortress cities distributed across the frontiers of the empire: St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki (at the Byzantine-Bulgarian frontier), St. Theodore in the Anatolian for town of Euchaita (at the Byzantine-Arab

---

with hagiographical norms, but rarely changed the texts in a substantial fashion. The passion of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos is a notable exception to this general rule. For an analysis of its transformation at the hands of the metaphrastic hagiographers, see Christian Hogel, "The Redaction of Symeon Metaphrastes: Literary Aspects of the Metaphrastic Martyria," in *Metaphrastes: Redactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography* (Oslo: The Research Council of Norway, 1996), 7-21. And for a study that focuses on rewriting as canonization, see idem., *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Press, 2002). Other changes included the promotion of the soldiers' ranks. See Alexander Kazhdan, "Military Saints," in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1374.



frontier), St. George in Lydda (near Jerusalem), and St. Sergios in Ruṣāfa (at the Byzantine-Persian frontier). Elizabeth Key Fowden's work on St. Sergios, in which she considers the cult as a frontier cult, calls attention to the important link between the status of the region and the shape of religious devotion. She demonstrates how the frontier status of Ruṣāfa promoted a specific form of interaction among the various groups that populated the zone between Rome and the Sasanid empire, notably the Arab populations. As a military saint and miracle worker in the frontier zone, St. Sergios' protection and mediation were sought not only by the local Arabs, but also by the political leaders of Byzantium and Sasanian Persia. Even after the area had ceased to be a frontier zone, cultural integration in the early Islamic period ensured that shared veneration of St. Sergios among Christians and Muslims continued for centuries.<sup>24</sup> This is manifested in the architectural program instituted by the Caliph Hishām at the site, which led to the building of a mosque beside the cathedral of St. Sergios. From the distribution of cult sites along other frontiers, it is evident that the periphery served as the "center" not just for the cult of St. Sergios, but for that of the other warrior saints as well.

While Ruṣāfa provides the most dramatic testimony to the way cults flourished at the frontiers, other forms of evidence demonstrate that Ruṣāfa was not an isolated phenomenon. Numerous studies on late antique inscriptions and amulets suggest the widespread appeal of warrior saints in Syria and Palestine,<sup>25</sup> while work by Brigitte Pitarkais on encolpia and John Cotsonis on seals indicates strong devotion to the military

---

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999). See also, Elizabeth K. Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002): 124-146.

<sup>25</sup> F. Halkin, "Inscriptions grecques relatives à l'hagiographie," *Analecta Bollandina* 67 (1949): 87-108; idem., "Inscriptions grecques relatives à l'hagiographie," *Analecta Bollandina* 69 (1951): 67-76; idem., "Inscriptions grecques relatives à l'hagiographie," *Analecta Bollandina* 70 (1952): 116-137, 306-311; idem., "Inscriptions grecques relatives à l'hagiographie," *Analecta Bollandina* 71 (1953): 74-99, 326-358.

saints in Asia Minor, Greece, and the Balkans.<sup>26</sup> In a thoughtful study of military saints in the medieval Morea, an area in Greece occupied by the Crusaders, Sharon Gerstel has demonstrated how representations of equestrian warrior saints served to consolidate a sense of national identity, affirming political and religious boundaries, even as they paradoxically drew on the artistic traditions of the Crusaders.<sup>27</sup> More recently, Thomas Sizgorich has drawn attention to the ways in which the Islamic concept of *jihād* drew upon a late antique heritage, borrowing and remodeling Christian hagiographical *topoi* such as that of the spiritual warrior, venerated in the form of the military saint.<sup>28</sup>

This mounting evidence of the centrality of military saints in frontier cultures receives significant support from recent studies in the field of eastern Christian art. Images of warrior saints in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon dated to the medieval period have long been known. These representations typically depict the saints on horseback, wearing full armor, riding over a landscape with their capes flying dramatically behind. Because this iconographic form was uncommon in Byzantium until the fourteenth century, and because fewer images survive in Egypt and the Levant, scholars including Christopher Walter have typically treated these icons from Egypt and the Levant as anomalies in their discussions of the cult, giving them short shrift. Over the past decade, numerous discoveries, some enabled by conservation projects, have greatly expanded the corpus of warrior saint imagery in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Monographs and articles

---

<sup>26</sup> The majority of encolpia Pitarakis considers do not depict military saints as warriors, although a few do utilize a militarized iconography; see Brigitte Pitarakis, *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze* (Paris: Picard, 2006), 140-142; Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cut of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)": 437-473; John Cotsonis, "A Geographic and Administrative Perspective in Light of Byzantine Lead Seals," *Studies in Byzantine Sigilography* 8 (2003): 9-26.

<sup>27</sup> Sharon E. J. Gerstel, "Art and Identity in Medieval Morea," in *Crusaders from the Perspective of the Byzantine and Muslim Worlds*, ed. Angeliki Laiou (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 263-285.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

by Erica Cruikshank Dodd, Lucy-Anne Hunt, Matt Immerzeel, Bas Snelders, Nada Helou, Elizabeth Bolman, and Annemarie Weyl Carr have drawn attention to a vibrant tradition of representing the military martyrs in wall paintings in eastern Christian churches.<sup>29</sup> This rapidly expanding body of evidence comes from areas that were separated by porous political boundaries, but closely connected through trade networks and ties among religious communities. Drawing on these scholars' insights, I argue that icons of military saints are best approached as a frontier phenomenon, thereby shifting the geographic focus of study and opening up new avenues of scholarly inquiry.

In this dissertation, I propose to draw connections between eastern Christian and Byzantine images in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by studying them in relation to the dynamics of frontier zones.<sup>30</sup> The frontiers of the Levant and Egypt provide the main focus for this study, with material from the Arab-Byzantine frontier of Anatolia and the Serbian-Bulgarian-Byzantine frontier in northern Greece brought in for comparison. Though similarities can be seen across these geographically distant frontier zones, each had a distinctive character shaped by historical contingencies. During the Middle

---

<sup>29</sup> For Lucy-Anne Hunt and Matt Immerzeel, see above. See also, Elizabeth S. Bolman, ed. *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Mat Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (Leiden: Peeters, 2009); Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2001); Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Perspectives on Visual Culture in Early Lusignan Cyprus: Balancing Art and Archaeology," in *Archaeology and the Crusades*, ed. Peter Edbury and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti (Athens: Pierides Foundation, 2007): 63-82; idem., "Iconography and Identity: Syrian Elements in the Art of Crusader Cyprus," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 127-151.

<sup>30</sup> I am drawing upon recent work on frontiers that emphasizes their porous nature and their role as conduits for exchange. For an art historical study taking this approach, see Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), esp. 1-14. For a historian's perspective, see David Abulafia, "Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity, c. 1100-c. 1500," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. Nora Berend and David Abulafia (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 1-34. The work of Lucy-Anne Hunt, Elizabeth Bolman, Erica Cruikshank Dodds, and Thelma Thomas seeks to place Arab Christian material in its broader Mediterranean context.

<sup>30</sup> For the more detailed analysis, see chapter 6

Byzantine period, the Arab-Byzantine *thughūr* in Anatolia became the frontier *par excellence*, where noble Muslim warriors went to wage *jihād* and fight on behalf of the faith.<sup>31</sup> On the other side of the empire, Thessaloniki often served as a fortress city that marked the frontier between Byzantium and its northern neighbors (Bulgars and Serbs). Though not a Christian-Muslim frontier, similar dynamics can be seen at play between the Greek Orthodox Greeks and their non-Christian rivals.

The two frontiers at the heart of this study – those of the Levant and Egypt – were both real and imaginary. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the boundaries of the Crusader polities formed a military and political frontier that separated (and joined) the short-lived western kingdoms and the neighboring Islamic polities. Establishment of the Crusader kingdoms created a religious frontier that was in some ways analogous to that of the Arab-Byzantine frontier in Anatolia.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, the religious frontier in Egypt was not situated along a military and political boundary; rather, it was an internal and mental frontier. As can be seen in an array of literary genres, Christians and Muslims in Egypt both harnessed motifs and imagery derived from the frontier in service of communal self-fashioning.<sup>33</sup> Each group imagined their community to be surrounded by walls that separated and protected the members of their own religion. There is little

---

<sup>31</sup> John Haldon has noted that the frontier zones around Byzantium shifted. He writes about the following regions as important frontiers in the period covered in this dissertation: Byzantine Italy and the Balkans (ca. 960-1180), the Danube and the Balkans (1050-1350), Serbs, Bulgars and Turks (1350-1453), Seljuks, Türkmens and Mongols (1090s-1420s), Armenia and Georgia (ca. 1000-1460), Russia and the Steppes (ca. 1000-1453), the Islamic Middle East (ca. 1100-1430); see John Haldon, *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 141-157.

<sup>32</sup> The dynamics and understandings of this frontier zone will be considered in greater detail in chapter 6.

<sup>33</sup> For the importance of the Arab-Byzantine frontier in legitimizing the Tulunid dynasty, see Michael Bonner, "Ibn Ṭūlūn's Jihad: The Damascus Assembly of 269/883," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130 (2010): 1-33. Notions of a bounded community, constructed through Pharaonic myths, began to appear in the ninth and tenth centuries; see Petra M. Sijpejtin, "Building and Egyptian Identity," in ed. Asad Q. Ahmad, Behnam Sadeghi, and Michael Bonner, *The Islamic Scholarly Tradition: Studies in History, Law, and Thought in Honor of Professor Michael Allan Cook* (forthcoming). For Christian perceptions, see chapter 7.

evidence for the strict segregation of Christians and Muslims in Egypt, a fact that sheds light on the ideological importance of the mental frontier created by these vivid images of boundaried – and sometimes beleaguered – communities.

By investigating icons of warrior saints as products of exchange at frontier zones, I bring to light commonalities that are suggestive of cultural interaction across several regions and point to the rich potential of the icons to shed light on the complicated networks and relations among religious communities in the regions. Such networks are well known from medieval sources and are vividly portrayed in primary sources, notably the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries*.<sup>34</sup> Written in the thirteenth century by the Arab Christian geographer Abū l-Makārim, the treatise is a compilation of treatments of the churches, monasteries, and holy sites of Christianity arranged by region. Abū l-Makārim's work conveys an image of a Christian Mediterranean that stretches from Cairo to Constantinople – across the *dār al-Islām*, the Byzantine *oikumēne*, and everything in between – and is populated by Armenian, Syrian Orthodox, Melkite, and Coptic churches. His work does not simply map an alternative geography but sheds light on relationships among the various Christian sects. He points to significant movement and sometimes surprising kinds of accommodation. According to Abū al-Makārim, Syrian Orthodox monks traveled back and forth from Cairo to Mosul; Syrian Orthodox and Coptic Christians shared liturgical spaces in the Wādī al-Natrūn in Egypt; and churches changed hands from one confession

---

<sup>34</sup> B. T. A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries by Abu Salih the Armenian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895). On its authorship, see Johannes den Heijer, "The Composition of the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighboring Countries. Some Preliminary Remarks," in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies Washington 12-15 August 1992*, ed. D. Johnson (Rome: CIM, 1993), 209-219.

to another. Though common, encounters were not always congenial; Abū al-Makārim provides testimony to the frictions that could arise from close contact between sects that, though doctrinally similar, held different beliefs and belonged to different religious institutions. The icons of military saints that I study also, in their way, reveal an alternative sacred geography, one that can be reconstructed through the routes of cultural transmission. The cult of military martyrs provided a point of intersection among the rival religious communities that co-existed in the eastern Mediterranean.

Comparative analysis of images of warrior saints reveals striking similarities between icons produced in Egypt, the Levant, and the frontiers of Byzantium – dramatic testimony to the mobility of people, objects, and ideas in the pre-modern era. The veneration of a core group of saints across the three regions – St. George, St. Theodore Stratelates, and St. Demetrios – along with dissemination of the same miracle accounts and iconographic types, all bear witness, in their modest fashion, to exchange across Christian communities. The iconography of St. Theodore slaying the dragon, for instance, can be found from Cappadocia to the Monastery of St. Antony in the Red Sea. Miracle accounts originally composed in Greek, such as that of St. George rescuing a captive boy, can be found in Arabic collections.<sup>35</sup> This study, demonstrating cultural transmission from Byzantine to eastern Christian communities, further opens up the possibility that the artistic production of eastern Christian communities may at times have informed Byzantine visual culture. Strikingly, miracles originating in the Arabic-

---

<sup>35</sup> Such miracles form the subject of chapter 5.

speaking Melkite sphere, did find their way back to Byzantium, if in a significantly reworked versions.<sup>36</sup>

Transmission among Christian sects was facilitated by a shared notion of sacred images, a common use of hagiographical form, and a common late antique history. Overlapping festivals and pilgrimage practices may also have enabled the slow transfer of image types and hagiographical accounts and insured their absorption into the various traditions. Direct appropriation was possible, but similarities in the cult and images were also the product of common traditions, which derived from the same heritage and developed in parallel. For instance, transformations of saints into military martyrs often occurred in similar circumstances; St. Demetrios became a military martyr during the Bulgar sieges, while St. Eugenios, the patron saint of Trebizond, assumed military garb centuries later, when the last remaining outpost of Byzantium came under threat from Turkoman tribes.<sup>37</sup> Often, as this study demonstrates, themes and motifs can be seen to travel across the frontiers of the eastern Mediterranean and Byzantium, making the cult of the military martyrs almost a transperipheral phenomenon.

Regional variations make it possible to address broad issues of communal self-definition, local influence, and visual heterogeneity in the artistic production of multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic societies. Different sects favored different martyrs, often as a way to root the “transregional” cult within local histories. In Byzantium, Sts. George,

---

<sup>36</sup> André Binggeli, "Converting the Caliph: A Legendary Motif in Christian Hagiography and Historiography of the Early Islamic Period," in *Writing "True Stories": Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 77-104.

<sup>37</sup> For St. Demetrios, see Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979). For St. Eugenios, see Anthony Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

Theodore, and Demetrios received the greatest devotion, while the Syrian Orthodox displayed a preference for Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, who were local heroes, and the Coptic Christians in Egypt favored St. Mercurios, perhaps the most aggressive of the warrior saints. Patronage could take significantly different form in Egypt, the Levant, and Byzantium in accordance with local and historic contingencies. In Byzantium the cults were most popular among the military elite, which has led scholars to associate its rise to prominence with that social milieu. In both Egypt and Levant, however, patronage was located primarily in monastic communities, a variation that may call into question current assumptions about the perceived functions of these saints, their resonance, and what situations might constitute spiritual battle.

Direct or straightforward instances of Christian-Muslim exchange in the veneration of military martyrs are often more difficult to detect. Reasons for this are twofold. First of all, any such borrowing from Christianity, since it might constitute heterodoxy, rarely appears in Muslim chronicles. But more crucially, Islam developed distinct traditions for commemorating its saints that involved veneration of relics, sacred sites, and pilgrimage, but not images.<sup>38</sup> Islamic concepts of martyrdom were also historically and culturally contingent, meaning that any attempt to establish a one-to-one relationship between Christian warrior saints and Muslim *mujāhidūn* is likely to produce unsatisfactory results.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Islam did absorb and reformulate aspects of the

---

<sup>38</sup> On the cult of saints in Islam, see Christopher Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> On martyrdom in Islam, see (with bibliography) Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). See also Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1999); Etan Kohlberg, "Shahid," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 203-207; Idem., "Medieval Muslim Views on Martyrdom," in *Afdeeling*



Christian cult. As Thomas Sizgorich has shown, Islamic authors drew upon the rich late antique hagiographical tradition (accounts of pious men, namely ascetics and soldier saints) while crafting accounts of their communal exemplars, the *ghāzī*. Sizgorich demonstrates how early Muslims, responding to the Christian veneration of military martyrs – such as Sts. George and Sergios – in the region in which Islam took shape, refashioned it in their own terms.<sup>40</sup> It is documented that in the tenth century Muslims, who may even have been converts from Christianity, participated in the veneration of saints, including George and Sergios, visiting their shrines and celebrating their feast days. Of course, as Elizabeth Key Fowden has noted, shared veneration need not signify shared beliefs:<sup>41</sup> a notable example is the Muslim identification of St. George as al-Khidr, a Koranic prophet who was also thought to be the Old Testament prophet Elijah.<sup>42</sup> These and other examples suggest that the cult of the military saints often provided a point of departure for later refashioning in both Christian and Islamic traditions. At the same time, as this dissertation will argue, the very success of Islam both sustained veneration to the military martyrs among Christians and, to a certain extent, shaped conceptualizations of the saints, and by extension, of martyrdom itself.

In the early stages of my research for this study, I set out to assemble as many images of Byzantine and eastern Christian warrior saints from late antiquity and the

---

*Letterkunde, Nieuwe reeks* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1997), 279-307. For martyrdom in Byzantium, see Paul Lemerle, "Byzance et la Croisade," in *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Florence 1955), 595-620. For a comparative perspective, see Marius Canard, "La guerre sainte dans le monde islamique et dans le monde chrétien," *Revue africaine* (1936): 605-623; Jean Flori, *Guerre sainte, jihad, croisade: violence et religion dans le christianisme et l'islam* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth K. Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002): 124-146.

<sup>42</sup> On the elusive al-Khidr, see Josef W. Meri, "Re-Appropriating Sacred Space: Medieval Jews and Muslims seeking Elijah and al-Khidr," *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 3 (1999): 237-264.

middle ages as possible. After I viewed numerous works, the images' unusual characteristics began to emerge. Even in late antiquity, the military martyrs were the most frequently represented group of saints, and figures such as Theodore Teron appeared in armor from his earliest conceptualization. In the ninth century, image-makers across the eastern Mediterranean began to represent a larger selection of martyrs as warriors and placed them together to form an echelon and create the category of the military saint. These images visualized late antique metaphors of the martyr as "spiritual warrior," intensifying aspects of militant piety already present in the initial texts and radically reinterpreting the martyr as a figure who simultaneously embodied the ideals of the late antique Christian community and served as its powerful patron. Particularly at the frontier, the warrior saints assumed the role of authoritative figures whose apparitions and icons enforced moral order – often by exacting retribution for insults against the faith. In both texts and sacred images, the warrior saints are, consequently, represented in the act of defining boundaries between religious communities, often by violently defending and protecting their own. Paradoxically, their renowned military prowess regularly attracted patronage from members of rival religious communities.

The images also display a visual heterogeneity that at once reveals processes of exchange and poses specific challenges for visual analysis. For instance, images in Egypt, the Levant, and Cyprus – where the saints frequently appear wearing a heterogeneous mix of Byzantine, Arab, and Turkish armor – demonstrate close iconographic and stylistic connections to one another. The consideration of these images calls into question the utility of traditional art historical categories and methodologies. These works, produced in multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic societies are

not readily localized by style. This also casts doubts on efforts to derive the ethnicity of an artisan from the formal features of a painting. Traditional iconographical procedures such as establishing origins seem inadequate: examining the icons in conjunction with texts reveals the inherent ambiguity and, conversely, the fluidity of iconographic meaning in this region; while images may appear the same, they do not necessarily function identically. Different communities approached icons with a different set of assumptions and pre-existing narratives, meaning that shared veneration did not necessarily signify shared beliefs.

Finally, I am also committed to examining hagiographical literature to recover the philosophies of religious violence they transmit and to try to determine how such philosophies may have shaped viewer response to icons. Especially relevant in this endeavor is the work of Michael Gaddis, whose treatment of violence in the late Roman Empire brings attention to the role of martyrdoms in normalizing violent expressions of piety,<sup>43</sup> and the work of David Nirenberg, who, studying Aragonese Spain, sheds light on the complicated functions of violence in defining religious communities.<sup>44</sup> As I will argue, hagiographical texts and images continued an earlier tradition of portraying violent acts of piety as a religious norm, necessary for defining and enforcing communal boundaries.

### **Scope of the project: geography and chronology**

This study began in Egypt. Recognizing a vital interest in the cult of the military saints, I began this project as an attempt to situate Egyptian iconographic traditions in

---

<sup>43</sup> Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

relation to larger trends within the local cult of the military saints. Soon it emerged that the geographical boundary was confining and would produce misleading results. The project evolved into a comparative study that draws on evidence from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Greece and Asia Minor. I found that the most interesting insights derived from the investigation of exchange and shifting meanings. My discussion will not take the form of a direct region-by-region comparison. Rather, I will adopt a Mediterranean perspective so as to highlight the interlinked diversity of traditions across the eastern Christian world. One byproduct is the complication of our picture of a divide between the region ruled by the Greek Orthodox communities of the Byzantine Empire and the Arabic-speaking eastern Christian communities that formed a constituency within the Islamic polities. Throughout I seek to investigate broad trends while recognizing local particularities and variations. In adopting this approach, I have been inspired by recent historical work that sees the Mediterranean as a larger unit composed of smaller, interrelated regions.<sup>45</sup> I also draw on art historical work to consider exchange in the material and visual culture.

The focus of the project is broad, yet I give prominence to the monuments of Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The especially abundant images of warrior saints produced

---

<sup>45</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). Their work critiques, but is ultimately indebted to Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Vow, 1927-1973). Recent historical work that promotes the Mediterranean worldview include Stephen O'Shea, *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2006); Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Examples of art historical contributions to this approach include Eva R. Hoffman, *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007); Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Matthew P. Canepa, "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among Ancient and Early Medieval Visual Cultures," *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010): 7-30.

in these regions have close connections with one another and present revealing comparison to Byzantine works.<sup>46</sup> Material from Cappadocia, an area with ties both to settlements on the Arab-Byzantine frontier and Constantinople proves to be particularly rich.<sup>47</sup> I make no claims to offering a comprehensive catalog of images related to the warrior saints or a comprehensive account of cult practice – a task in any case precluded by the fragmentary nature of the material evidence.

The distribution of material evidence and the state of secondary scholarship has also been a factor in my decision to focus on certain eastern Christian communities, including the Copts, Melkites, and Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites). Although espousing different doctrines, these communities were closely connected during the middle ages by virtue of a shared language (Arabic) and shared status as *dhimmīs*.<sup>48</sup> Other sects of Christianity were represented in the eastern Mediterranean, but these Christians – in Armenia and Georgia, or Ethiopia and Nubia – had different languages and political and religious traditions.<sup>49</sup> In other cases, like the East Syrian Maronites, few or no remains of visual culture are attested for the medieval period.<sup>50</sup>

Although I have sought to give equal attention to the Egyptian and Levantine material, my project has been shaped by the state of secondary scholarship within these

---

<sup>46</sup> The Arab Christian communities I study occupied a far larger expanse; however, these are the areas that provide the richest distribution of relevant and accessible evidence, permitting an in-depth discussion of regional variations. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

<sup>47</sup> The material from Cappadocia presents numerous problems. Few of the monuments can be firmly dated, and the question of the functions of the buildings has continued to frustrate scholars.

<sup>48</sup> Armenia and Georgia were both under a Christian sovereignty and held different cultural orientations, placing them beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>49</sup> Ethiopian and Nubian Christians, for instance, belonged to the larger cultural orbit of Egypt and the Levant. Moreover, the majority of military saint imagery from Ethiopia dates to the fifteenth century and later, placing it beyond the temporal scope of this study.

<sup>50</sup> I know of no visual remains firmly attributed to the Maronites and Nestorians (East Syrians), although it is possible that some of the monuments in Lebanon accommodated Maronite communities.

fields. Studies on the medieval Coptic communities and their hagiographical corpus have proliferated in recent years, providing a rich basis for consideration of the medieval cult of the warrior saints as an expression of local devotional practices. The investigation of Syrian Christian and Melkite communities, however, lags behind, in part because of scarcer resources, and in part because of academic divisions.<sup>51</sup> Syrian Christians have been of interest primarily to scholars who work on Syriac, who tend to focus on the late antique period, when the language was at its cultural height.<sup>52</sup> Scholars versed in Arabic are typically Islamicists, who rarely turn their eyes to the medieval Levantine Christian communities. Much work remains to be done before a fully founded treatment of art and cult will be possible.

The “medieval” employed in the title of this dissertation is intentionally ambiguous. In part it is meant to call attention to the broad span of time during which the cult of the warrior saints took shape. The earliest attestations to veneration of military martyrs seem to date to the fifth century, although images began to appear in number on icons, seals, and amulets only in the sixth and seventh centuries. It is not until the tenth century that evidence for a broader phenomenon – the emergence of a class of saints – becomes identifiable in textual and visual sources in a variety of Christian communities in the eastern Mediterranean. From the tenth century onwards, representations of the warrior saints appear in increasing numbers and in an ever greater variety of iconographic forms. But the real expansion comes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which becomes the focus of this dissertation. The outer chronological limit is the thirteenth

---

<sup>51</sup> The importance of the Geniza archives in shaping these respective fields and enabling study of minority communities in Egypt cannot be overstated. There is no comparable corpus for the Greater Syria region.

<sup>52</sup> A group of scholars in the Netherlands, working on eastern Christian identity, is attempting to redress the imbalance.

century, when production drops off in the eastern Christian communities and political events usher in significant changes in the region. The use of the term “medieval” is also a response to the problem posed by a project that cuts across a number of geo-political units where different periodizations are routinely employed: Islamic, Crusader, and Byzantine polities, as well as interstitial regions that were contested. Despite certain western connotations, the term “medieval” was chosen to avoid reference to religious affiliations and to accommodate the different chronological schema employed by scholars of late antique, Islamic, and Byzantine art.

A word must also be said about the objects included. Images of military saints appear in a wide variety of genres: panel-paintings, stone icons, monumental wall paintings, mosaics, jewelry, textiles, pilgrims’ ampullae, coins, and seals. In traditional scholarship, the term “icon” is reserved for panel paintings that depict sacred scenes and figures and is often extended to include monumental wall paintings and mosaics. However, the terms employed for sacred images in Greek (*eikon*) and Arabic (*ṣūra*) are less specific, referring to any visual representation. By using the terms “image” and “representation” I hope to preserve something of the ambiguity proper to the works and thus to describe a more inclusive group of objects and images. Likewise, I generally prefer the term “image-maker” over “iconographer,” which is typically employed specifically to denote the production of panel-painted icons.

The material of the study, drawn from a range of geographic areas and chronological periods, presents numerous challenges: different areas yield different types of visual evidence at different times, the vast majority of objects cannot be firmly dated or localized, and many of the images under consideration survive in a fragmentary state.

Because of this, I try to ground my consideration of the portable, always mobile, images through discussions of wall paintings, which by virtue of their stationary positions, allow for more contextualized study. During the course of my fieldwork, I visited some twenty monasteries, churches, and chapels in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The wall paintings at these sites, which survive in varying states of preservation, stand at the heart of my project. The best-preserved wall paintings programs date primarily to the thirteenth century and are located in Egypt, and I give these particularly extended treatment.

Numerous fragmentary programs survive from the Levant, which provide a resource for understanding the movement of images and motifs, but the state of preservation and the state of knowledge, do not allow for extended analysis. Some of these programs have been discovered only within the past decade, and a number still await publication.

### **Methods and sources**

This project seeks to understand icons of military saints within a framework of cultural exchange, considering the special functions attributed to icons of this class and their distinctive visual characteristics as a product of interactions among different constituencies in the eastern Mediterranean: Christians and Muslims, eastern Christians and Greek Orthodox, and image-makers and hagiographers.

Over the past few decades, contact among cultures has emerged as a major topic of interest in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, material culture studies, and post-colonial theory. For art historians working on the middle ages, the creation of visual networks in a pre-modern “global” Mediterranean has emerged as a particular site of interest. Scholars have explored the topic through such categories as gift-exchange, commerce and travel, cultural cross-dress, the re-use of objects, and visual translation.



My general approach to the icons has been enriched and informed by both theoretical works and object-based studies on these topics. However, given the range of material included in this project, I have found it necessary to employ a variety of methodologies, which vary according to the objects and topics at hand. For example, theories of communal memory provided the most appropriate angle from which to approach some material, but in other cases, theories of cultural translation offered greater insights. In some cases, local sectarian politics, Islamic religious and political philosophies, or regional practices provide the most appropriate angles from which to approach the material.

Scholarship has generated a number of paradigms for describing and interpreting contact between cultures, including “syncretism,” “hybridity,” and “transculturation.” For the study of saints and their images, I have generally found the paradigm of translation, a concept that derives ultimately from the Latin *translatio*, to be useful.<sup>53</sup> This model works well for a group of saints whose passions and miracle accounts were translated into numerous languages, and whose images and iconographies circulated among a variety of religious sects. By now the notion that cultures are always in transition has become something of a commonplace, but in using this term, I hope to emphasize continuous movement that occurred both within and across cultural formations. More specifically, my approach is inspired by work on premodern frontier zones (especially in Anatolia, Armenia, Spain, Sicily, and India).

---

<sup>53</sup> For thoughtful arguments in favor of adopting this linguistic model, see Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, “Art, Identity, and Cultural Translation in Renaissance Italy,” in *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City*, ed. Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-13; Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-14. Other terms, such as “hybridity” are occasionally employed, if deemed appropriate to the situation at hand.

Since images never exist as autonomous signs, but always function within a larger cultural system, I incorporate diverse sorts of written documents into my study: hagiographical works, medieval chronicles, geographies, neo-martyrdoms, apocalypses and polemical texts, as well as tracts on devotional practices and icon theory. Homilies, hymns, liturgical poetry, church calendars, and, above all, miracle accounts prove to be invaluable resources for elucidating the changing nature of the military martyrs over time and for establishing their regional variations. My consideration of miracle accounts confirms Christopher Walter's observation that these stories often served as the primary textual site for the militarization of the martyrs.<sup>54</sup> Presenting the saints as fierce, violent defenders, they provide insights into the Christian understanding of icons and the role of saints in maintaining moral order. While some of the miracle accounts provide a textual equivalent for the scenes depicted on eastern Christian icons, the texts seem not to have served as sources for their images. Rather, images and texts seem to have co-existed in the same cultural system, relying on one another to produce and reinforce meaning.

The images at the heart of this project often operated polemically to convey a clear message about the position of Christianity in relation to other religious groups, while the miracle accounts reinforce ethnic stereotypes. The aggressive nature of the saints precludes the possibility of theorizing a *convivencia* along the eastern Mediterranean; yet, studying the images in isolation could create the impression of a "clash of civilizations" between Christianity and Islam that would not capture the complicated, nuanced, and varied nature of interactions between the religions. Only by consulting a wide array of primary sources and embedding the discussion of the icons

---

<sup>54</sup> Walter makes this point in relation to the hagiographical corpus of St. Theodore Teron; see Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), 46-47.

within a larger consideration of the different communities and their relations to one another can one grasp the subtleties and understand the circumstances in which some members of a community might feel it necessary to adopt a rigorist position. Icons emerge as one of many creative responses to conditions at the religious frontiers in which the Christians treated in this study found themselves.

The dissertation begins with an introduction to the regions under consideration, then continues with three chapters that focus on different aspects of the warrior saints. The third chapter examines late antique manifestations of the military saints' cults, paying particular attention to regional variations and differences in devotional contexts. This sets the stage for the following chapter, which provides an account the ways in which late antique conceptions of military saints were elaborated in Byzantium, the Levant, and Egypt during the Middle Byzantine period. Chapter five considers provides an in-depth consideration of the miracle accounts that circulated in conjunction with icons of warrior saints. I explore common themes of the accounts and consider the ways in which these popular texts shaped perceptions of both the warrior saints and of interfaith relations.

I turn then, in the sixth chapter, to the cult of the military saints as a nexus for exchange at the eastern frontier of Latin Christendom. In 1099 Latin Christians took advantage of internal conflicts in the Muslim world to capture Jerusalem and establish four new principalities on the Levantine coast. These coastal states quickly became home to major mercantile centers that served as urban nodes in the maritime and overland trade networks that connected Europe with the Christian and Islamic east. At the same time, the region had a complicated religious topography that accommodated Muslims, Jews,

and eastern Christian communities of various sects. I use surviving material evidence from the Levant – notably a group of icons at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai in a heterogeneous array of styles – to highlight the cult of the military saints as a point of intersection both between and within the monotheistic religions, which often gave rise to heterodox practices. A consideration of related Christian and Islamic iconographies demonstrates the limits of shared visual legibility.

Finally, in the seventh chapter I focus on the most extensive pictorial program incorporating the military saints to survive to the present, the 1231/1233 painted program in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea. The pictorial cycle offered beholders a genealogy of Coptic monasticism that casts monks as the successors to military martyrs. Drawing on metaphors of spiritual warfare to proclaim the uniqueness of the Coptic church, the paintings incorporate iconographies from diverse traditions, thus combining Islamic, Byzantine, and local Christian motifs and even fusing seemingly incommensurate narratives of the Islamic conquest and Coptic identity. Arguing that these images draw upon Islamic models of pious militarism, or *jihād* (itself in dialogue with Christian ideologies), I explore in this chapter the seemingly paradoxical practice of incorporating symbolic motifs from rival religions to project claims of authenticity. This leads to an exploration of the implications of adopting a frontier motif and representing it at a place far from any political or military frontier.

Throughout this study, I attempt to recapture the original importance and authority of the images of military saints produced in Byzantium, Egypt, and the Levant. The sheer number of images that survive and the fantastic tales of miracles associated with them attest to the potency of icons of military saints. As my research reveals, these

icons were particularly abundant in frontier zones, regions where no single cultural, religious, or military force exerted uncontested hegemony, which makes them ripe for study in the context of cross-cultural investigations. The image of St. George transgressing the boundaries of his icon to attack a Saracen may stand as a metonym for the artistic modes and social interactions my project explores. Ultimately, this study argues that icons of military saints not only demonstrate for us, but also produced in their times, through use and circulation, had a role in producing the anxieties and violence that underlie their hybrid visual vocabularies.

## **Chapter 2** **Religious Topographies**

The cult of the warrior saints was a pan-Mediterranean phenomenon, but it was especially popular in Egypt, the Levant, and on the Arab-Byzantine frontier. These regions were separated not simply by geographic distance, but also by different political circumstances, military histories, and cultural practices. They were further distinguished by their religious topographies, which will be the focus of this short chapter. During late antiquity, Egypt and the Levant served as home to an array of vibrant Christian communities, which continued to thrive after they fell to the Islamic armies of conquest in the seventh century. Although the Christian communities became political minorities, they continued to form a significant portion of the population throughout the Middle Ages.

This chapter is meant to provide a brief orientation to the complicated religious topography of eastern Christianity, with an eye to how the different communities defined themselves vis-à-vis one another. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the eastern Mediterranean accommodated an array of competing Christian communities. Some of these, notably the Greek Orthodox church, aligned with polities, while others, including the Christians of Egypt and the Levant, developed as political minorities under Islamic rule. The eastern Christian communities included in this study often stretched across numerous political boundaries, thriving both in the urban centers that housed their patriarchates and in the rural monasteries that became the iconic symbols of their

communities, both among Muslims and Christians. Though less familiar to medievalists than the Greek Orthodox church of Byzantium, members of the eastern Christian churches often played important political roles in the Islamic caliphates in which they lived. At the same time, they maintained ties to the cultural sphere associated with the Greek Orthodox, both through the legacy of a shared past and through constant interchange. This interchange peaked in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, an era in which contact brought about by an unprecedented degree of exchange and mobility.

This discussion will focus on the Levant and Egypt, both of which fell to Islam during the seventh century but continued to serve as the home of Christian communities. Focusing on the Levant and Egypt, this discussion will proceed by region and attempt to outline patterns of interaction among the different sects.

### **The Levant**

Known in Arabic as *Bilad al-Shām*, the Levant extended from the Taurus Mountains to Sinai and from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, occasionally crossing into Mesopotamia and the upper Arabian Peninsula. This region, which was part of the Byzantine Empire in late antiquity, fell to the Muslim armies of conquest during the seventh century (632-641) and became part of the Islamic caliphate. In the eleventh century, the Levant fell again, this time to the armies of the First Crusade (1096-1099), as Frankish forces took advantage of internal divisions within the Islamic world to capture Antioch and Jerusalem, establishing four principalities within the conquered lands. For

the next two centuries, the Franks would form a small governing class that ruled over a remarkably diverse indigenous population.<sup>1</sup>

### *Religious communities*

Diversity in the Middle east is typically discussed in terms of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but this breakdown fails to capture the rich complexity of Levantine religious culture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Each group was comprised of multiple and competing sects, which would realign themselves politically according to shifting allegiances. The indigenous Christians belonged to three main communities, each shaped through their response to the theological disputes that arose during the Council of Chalcedon in 451. By the time the Crusaders arrived, these communities were distinguished not simply by doctrine, but also by ecclesiastical institutions and priestly hierarchies, a host of liturgical differences, and a variety of cultural practices.<sup>2</sup> Each community called itself the “orthodox,” claiming unique access to the “one true faith.”

The Melkite (Greek Orthodox) Christians had communities in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. These Christians accepted the definition of Christ’s nature promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon, that Christ was both fully human and fully divine in one nature. They remained in communion with the church of Constantinople after the cities and lands in which they resided came under Islamic rule. The patriarchs who governed them in Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria were appointed by Constantinople, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> For what follows, I am reliant on the work of Christopher MacEvitt and Joshua Prawer. See Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 29-34; Joshua Prawer, "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The "Minorities"," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 117-192.

<sup>2</sup> These included, for instance, different words used in the liturgy, whether leavened or unleavened bread was used during services, and the number of fingers used when blessing oneself.



appellation given to the community by its rivals, Melkite, derives from the Syriac term “*malka*,” which means king or emperor, in reference to their alignment with the Greek Orthodox church of Byzantium.<sup>3</sup> Although they looked to patriarchs for religious guidance, the intellectual heart of the community was found in the desert monasteries of the Judean Desert, which were vibrant centers of literary and theological activity.<sup>4</sup> Mar Saba, in particular, gained renown as the home of the eighth-century theologian John of Damascus and his pupil, Theodore Abū Qurra, the bishop of Ḥarrān. In the ninth century, Theodore Abū Qurra wrote major theological works in Arabic in defense of icons and of Christianity as the “true religion.” The Melkites retained Greek as their liturgical language, although many members of the community were Arabic-speakers by the time the Crusaders arrived in the east.<sup>5</sup> With the works of Theodore Abū Qurra, they numbered among the first Christians to begin writing theological works in Arabic, perhaps because of their close connections to the court in Baghdad during the first centuries of Islamic rule.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent overview of the history of the Melkite community prior to the Crusades, see Hugh Kennedy, “The Melkite Church from the Islamic Conquest to the Crusades: Continuity and Adaptation in the Byzantine Legacy,” in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986), 325-343. For the Melkites during the Crusades, see Praver, “Social Classes in the Crusader States: The ‘Minorities,’” 65-88. MacEvitt provides the most in-depth analysis of the Melkite community during the early years of the Crusader Principalities. See MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 31-34.

<sup>4</sup> For the monasteries, see Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). For the Melkite communities, see the articles in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> The extent to which the community spoke Greek varied, usually in accordance to how much contact different communities had with the Byzantine Empire.

<sup>6</sup> Melkite scholars played a major role in the Greek-Arabic translation movement. See Sidney H. Griffith, “The ‘Philosophical Life’ in Tenth Century Baghdad: The Contribution of Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī *Kitāb tahdhīb al-akhlāq*,” in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in ‘Abbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 129-150. See also Idem., *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 106-128.

The other main indigenous Christian community in the Levant was that of the Syrian Orthodox, known as the Jacobites during the middle ages, after their founder Jacob Baradeus.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the Melkites, the Syrian Orthodox held to a *miaphysite* doctrine, which maintained that Christ had one nature, fully human and fully divine.<sup>8</sup> Their doctrinal stance placed them in opposition to Constantinople but in alignment with another Christian community in the region, the Copts in Egypt. In terms of their theological heritage, they looked back to the late antique ascetic Ephraim and the poet-theologian Jacob of Sarug. As their name suggests, the sacred language used by this community was Syriac, although it is likely that the majority of the flock had become Arabic speakers by the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Syrian Orthodox church formed a loose network of local communities that stretched from Iraq to Egypt, with concentrations in Takrit and Mosul. Like those of the Melkite Christians, their monasteries served as major centers for scholarship and theological activity during the middle ages, particularly the Monastery of Mar Mattei in Mosul and the Monastery of Bar Sauma.

The Melkites and Syrian Orthodox shared the region with other smaller Christian communities. One of these was a sect, known as the Maronite sect, found almost

---

<sup>7</sup> They are also referred to as the West Syrian Church. For an introduction to the community, see François Micheau, "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century): Copts, Melkites, Nestorians, and Jacobites," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 376-377. For a discussion of the community with a focus on the Crusader period, see Praver, "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The 'Minorities'," 65-88. The Syrian Orthodox are also included in MacEvitt's study. See MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 31-34.

<sup>8</sup> *Miaphysite* has become the preferred term over *monophysite* in recent historical work and among present-day religious communities.

<sup>9</sup> Some scholars argue for a Syriac renaissance in the thirteenth century and cite the production of major works in Syriac as evidence of its continuity. However, it seems that the use of Syriac and Arabic varied according to region. For a recent discussion of the question (along with relevant bibliography) see Herman Teule, "The Syriac Renaissance," in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman Teule, et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 1-30.

exclusively in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains. Little is known about the early Maronites, but they are often closely associated with the Crusades in scholarly works on their history.<sup>10</sup> The Maronites developed an institutional structure separate from the imperial church only after the Muslim conquest of the Levant in the seventh century, at which time their leader claimed the title Patriarch of Antioch, establishing themselves as a rival to the Melkites. Though the Maronites had monasteries in northern Syria during the early centuries of Islam, by the twelfth century their communities were largely concentrated in the mountains of Lebanon and likely came under the rule of the County of Tripoli. In 1182, the Maronites became the first Eastern church to come into communion with Rome, although the sect continued to maintain its own liturgy and ecclesiastical hierarchy, and to preserve canonical traditions.

Like the Syrian Orthodox, the Nestorians were a Syriac-speaking sect that rejected the council of Chalcedon, although for different reasons: they believed the council had not gone far enough in granting Christ human properties.<sup>11</sup> Also known as the East Syrian church, the Assyrian church, the church of the East, and later the Chaldeans, the Nestorians flourished primarily in areas that were under Sasanian rule in late antiquity. They became closely allied with the 'Abbasid caliphate, at times speaking for all the Christians in the caliphate. Though present in the Levant and Egypt, this

---

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the Maronites from late antiquity through the Mamluk era, see Elias el-Hayek, "Struggle for Survival: The Maronites of the Middle Ages," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute Medieval Studies, 1990), 407-419. Prawer provides a brief survey of the Maronites during the Crusader period, including a discussion of the historiographic challenges that face scholars working on the "obscure history" of this community. See also Prawer, "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The 'Minorities'," 89-94; MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> For the most recent work on this community, see Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (New York: I. B. Taurus, 2006).

community maintained its base in Iraq and fostered extensive trade contacts that enabled it to establish communities as far away as China.

Together the Melkites, Syrian Orthodox, Maronites, and East Syrians formed the major Christian communities in the Levant. Greater religious and cultural diversity could be found in the populations that settled in and around Jerusalem. Due to its many holy sites, Jerusalem formed a hub for both indigenous and immigrant Christian communities. The city accommodated a large Armenian population, as well as Georgians and Franks. Eastern Christian communities including the Copts, Ethiopians, and Nubians also had a presence. Sizable Muslim and Jewish communities – each with its own inner sectarian divisions – also lived in Jerusalem and its hinterlands.

Treating the sects individually, as I have done here, may foster the impression that the communities were distinct and boundaried. However, there is little evidence for any strict segregation between the Christian sects, or between Christians and members of the other monotheistic faiths. Some members of the community, referred to scholars as “rigorists,” might insist upon the integrity of communal boundaries and the importance of maintaining distinctive religious practices. Yet, chroniclers offer glimpses of religious practices shared among members of different faiths, suggesting that heterodoxy was not unknown during the period and may even have led some to adopt rigorist positions. It should also be noted that religious affiliation, though important, was just one of the ways in which an individual might choose to situate him- or herself within in society.<sup>12</sup> It is evident from the trade documents preserved in the Geniza archive that the composition of

---

<sup>12</sup> Other possibilities might include class affiliations, regional affiliations, professional affiliations, etc. The importance of each might vary by time period and by individual. Religious affiliation, for instance, came to the fore in times of persecution.

workshops and trade partnerships could, and often did, extend across religious boundaries. Such instances, where economic ties trumped sectarian ones, suggest that the communal boundaries insisted upon by moral rigorists often represented aspirations rather than realities. Indeed, by the twelfth century, there was a long history of interaction and cross-cultural traffic in the region

*The Syrian Orthodox and Melkites under Muslim Rule*

When the Levant fell to Islam in the seventh century, the Christians joined the Jews, Zoroastrians, and Sabians as religious communities that received the legal status of *dhimma*, a term of hospitality that signified a covenant of protection with Muslims.<sup>13</sup> The Muslims extended this status to the so-called *ahl al-kitāb*, “people of the book.” *Dhimma* communities were expected to pay the *jizya*, a tax representing their subordinate status and the superiority of Islamic authority. Outside the poll tax, Christian communities were largely allowed to govern themselves, based on the laws of their own holy books.<sup>14</sup> Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were governed by what came to be called the Pact of ‘Umar, a document that claimed to have been written by the Christian community of Jerusalem and sent to Caliph ‘Umar (634-644), but which probably originated and developed in the ninth and tenth centuries. The pact stipulated that Christians could not build new churches, restore old ones, dress like Muslims, or hold public ceremonies, along with a host of other regulations.<sup>15</sup> These were rarely enforced,

---

<sup>13</sup> On the meaning and evolution of the term, see Mahmoud Ayoub, “Dhimmah in Qur’an and Hadith,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 25-35.

<sup>14</sup> On the legal status of *dhimma*, see Néophyte Edelby, “The Legislative Autonomy of Christians in the Islamic World,” *Ibid.*, 37-82. See also S. D. Goitein, “Minority Selfrule and Government Control in Islam,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 159-174.

<sup>15</sup> The pact was likely developed in response to concerns over the loss of distinctions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. See Albrecht Noth, “Problems of Differentiation between Muslims and Non-

but they could be used against Christian communities whenever Muslim authorities felt it necessary.<sup>16</sup>

Accounts of attacks on monasteries and the production of neo-martyrdoms reflect the uneasy nature of contact between Christians and Muslims during the conquest;<sup>17</sup> nevertheless, the Christian communities of the Levant adapted quickly to the change in the status quo, surviving and at times even thriving under Muslim rule. By the ninth century, the Melkite communities had adopted Syriac and Arabic, enabling theologians and philosophers to participate in the vibrant new Islamic intellectual world.<sup>18</sup> Christians of all sects used the language and literary forms of Arabic to define and maintain their own culture. They composed tracts in defense of their doctrine, using the form and institution of *kalām*, a form of debate and argumentation that derived from late antique Christian practices, and wrote chronicles detailing the histories of their communities.<sup>19</sup>

---

Muslims: Re-Reading the 'Ordinances of 'Umar' (*Al-Shurūṭ al-'umariyya*)," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 103-124.

<sup>16</sup> Mark R. Cohen, "What Was the Pact of 'Umar? A Literary-Historical Study," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100-157.

<sup>17</sup> For a recent discussion of the neo-martyrdoms, see David Vila, "The Struggle Over Arabization in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography," *al-Masaq* 15 (2003): 35-46. See also Sidney H. Griffith, "Christians, Muslims, and Neo-Martyrs: Saints' Lives and Holy Land History," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, ed. A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Ihak Ben Zvi, 1998), 163-207.

<sup>18</sup> This cultural milieu has been most thoroughly explored by Sidney H. Griffith. A synthesis of his prolific publications (mostly articles and book sections) can be found in his recent book. See Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*.

<sup>19</sup> Much of the Arab Christian literary activity was apologetic in nature, including the theological tracts, which circulated alongside more popular genres. See Sidney H. Griffith, "Answering the Call of the Minaret: Christian Apologetics in the World of Islam," in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre - van den Berg, and T. M. Van Lint (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 91-126. Historiography was utilized as a tool for communal definition primarily by the Syrian Orthodox and Nestorian churches. For the Syrian Orthodox chronicles, see Muriel Debié, "Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 93-114; Dorothea Weltecke, "Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 115-125; Michael G. Morony, "History and Identity in the Syrian Churches," in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre - van den Berg, and T. M. Van Lint (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 1-34. For the Nestorian tradition, see Gerrit J. Reinink, "East Syrian Historiography in Response to the Rise of Islam: The Case of John bar Penkaye's *Ktābā d-rēš mellē*," in *Redefining Christian*

Prominent theologians, such as Theodore Abū Qurra, participated in the institution of the court, the *majlis*, a venue for interfaith discussion among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Accounts preserving the memory of such encounters – often in a highly mediated form – demonstrate the remarkable knowledge that Christian communities had of early Islam.<sup>20</sup> Much of the literary activity in this period was apologetic, providing vivid testimony to the need for differentiation prompted by encounters with competing religious groups.<sup>21</sup>

If the challenge posed by Islam shaped the cultural production of the Christian communities in the Levant, the distinctive landscape and visual culture of Christianity also left its mark on the nascent Islamic imagination. A new genre called the *kitāb al-diyārāt* developed, a geographical text that offered descriptions of monasteries in the Middle East, along with anecdotes about members of the court, *‘ajā’ib* (wonders, miracles), and wine poetry. The only *diyārāt* book to survive in its entirety is that of al-Shābushtī (d. ca. 988), the librarian and boon companion to the Fatimid Caliph al-‘Azīz. In his survey describing monasteries in Iraq, Mosul, the Jazira, the Levant, and Egypt, he offers tales of encounters between Christians and Muslims: the latter would visit desert monasteries for extended stays, regarding them as paradisiacal settings for pleasure outings. The monasteries provided venues for viewing paintings (icons),

---

*Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East Since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre - van den Berg, and T. M. Van Lint (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 77-90.

<sup>20</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period," in *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam* (Wiesbaden: 1999), 13-65; Idem., "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 175-200. Christian knowledge of Islam was often more nuanced than Islamic understandings of Christianity, as an example from the Crusader era attests. See, Rifaat Ebied and David Thomas, eds., *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> For an overview of the different genres, their strategies, and aims, see Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, 75-105.

playing music, and reciting wine poetry, itself a genre shared among Muslim and Christian writers.<sup>22</sup>

The practice of recording monasteries, which served to envelope the Christian institution within the history and culture of Islam, might provide the context for depictions of monks and monasteries in non-Christian contexts. A description of a wall painting in an Islamic palace survives in *The Book of Strangers*, a collection of graffiti attributed to Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967), a courtier, secretary, historian and musicologist associated with the court of Sayf al-Dawla in Aleppo. The author records an incident in which a traveler expresses delight at a painting he saw in the ruins of a palace known as al-Mukhtār: “It had some wonderful paintings. One of them was of a church with monks in it, and the best was of the priests who officiate at night.”<sup>23</sup>

According to the author, the traveler was inspired to compose a graffito in verse:

We never saw anything like the splendor of al-Mukhtār,  
nor anything like the painting of the night priest.  
A gathering surrounded by delight, narcissi, myrtle, singing, and sweet  
aroma!  
It is perfect, except that the reverses of fate will destroy what is in it.

For the traveler, the painting of a monastery in the ruins of a Muslim palace provides the point of departure for a reflection on the vicissitudes of time. The account is suggestive of the mutual appreciation Christians and Muslims held for monasteries (and other facets

---

<sup>22</sup> David G. K. Taylor, "'Your Sweet Saliva is the Living Wine': Drink, Desire, and Devotion in the Syriac Wine Songs of Khākmīs Bar Qardāhē," in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman Teule, et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 31-52. Cf. Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 31-52.

<sup>23</sup> *The Book of Strangers*, 3. Translated in Patricia Crone and Shmuel Moreh, *The Book of Strangers: Medieval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Weiner, 2000), 24.



of religious ritual), even if this recognition was accompanied by divergent understandings of their significance.<sup>24</sup>

## **Egypt**

The Christian communities of Egypt experienced many of the same fluctuations in fortune as those in the Levant, but the region followed its own historic trajectory – even when the two territories were joined under the same regime.<sup>25</sup> Like the Levant, Egypt fell within the eastern prefecture of the Byzantine Empire in late antiquity. In 642, not long after the fall of Syria and Palestine, Arab armies under the banner of Islam conquered Egypt on behalf of the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. For the next few centuries, Egypt would form an outlying territory in the Islamic caliphate, ruled by a succession of governors and rulers who belonged to short-lived dynasties. In the tenth century, the Fatimids conquered Egypt and established Cairo as their political seat and palatial center. The city enjoyed enormous prosperity throughout their reign (r. 909-1171), benefiting from its intermediary role in the lucrative trade between the Mediterranean and India. In a short time, the Fatimid court came to rival that of ‘Abbasid Baghdad, making Cairo an important cultural center in addition to a commercial success.

---

<sup>24</sup> As Elizabeth Key Fowden has noted, the monastery books use numerous devices to inscribe the Christian insitution of the monastery within Muslim history and cultural practices (such as anecdotes about Muslim rulers at the monasteries). The only surviving Christian *diyārāt* book seems more intent on the retention of information about Christian monasteries and sites as part of their own heritage. Of course, understandings of the monasteries also depended on class position. Both Christians and Muslims regarded monasteries as places to stop while traveling, to receive medical treatments, and to attend festivals.

<sup>25</sup> Because of this, I have chosen to treat Egypt as a separate region. Such an approach is further recommended by the period view of Egypt, which regarded it as a place with its own distinctive history and character; see Petra M. Sijpejtin, “Building and Egyptian Identity,” in ed. Asad Q. Ahmad, Behnam Sadeghi, and Michael Bonner, *The Islamic Scholarly Tradition: Studies in History, Law, and Thought in Honor of Professor Michael Allan Cook* (forthcoming). For Christian perceptions, see chapter 7.

The city remained a pivotal center for commerce into the thirteenth century, when Egypt came under the rule of the Ayyubid dynasty (r. 1171-1341).

### *Religious communities*

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Cairo was a city characterized by a cultural and religious diversity to rival that of Jerusalem. Like the Holy City, Cairo was home to Muslims from all over the Arab world, a prominent Jewish community, and immigrant and indigenous Christian communities, which included Melkites, Copts, Syrian Orthodox, Armenians, Nestorians, Nubians, Ethiopians, and Europeans. All left their mark on the urban landscape; the churches of Old Cairo (al-Fuṣṭāṭ), mosques, and synagogues jostled for space in a city teeming with palaces, houses, and apartments.<sup>26</sup> Though the *dhimmi*s here were subject to the same stipulations encountered in the Levant, these communities shared in the economic prosperity of the city, benefiting from the permissive atmosphere fostered by the Fatimids and their successors, the Ayyubids.

Of the Christian communities, the Copts were by far the largest and most thoroughly embedded in the ambient culture associated with Egypt.<sup>27</sup> The Coptic church began as an anti-Chalcedonian movement in late antiquity, which promulgated a *miaphysite* doctrine emphasizing the unified nature of Christ. The Copts consolidated

---

<sup>26</sup> For the history of Cairo in the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, see André Raymond, *Cairo*, trans. Willard Wood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 31-108; Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> The essential source is Ed. Aziz S. Atiya, *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991). For overviews of the Coptic church during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, see Terry G. Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, ed. C. F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 175-197; Micheau, "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century): Copts, Melkites, Nestorians, and Jacobites," 373-403; Thelma K. Thomas, "Christians in the Islamic East," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: Abrams, 1997), 364-372; Idem., "The Arts of Christian Communities in the Medieval Middle East," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 414-426. For a history of the Coptic community in the Ayyubid period, see Kurt J. Werthmuller, *Coptic Identity and Ayyubid Politics in Egypt* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

their institutional structure around a patriarchate in Alexandria, which later moved to Cairo, and employed Coptic as their ecclesiastical language. While theologians in the Levant were quick to adopt Arabic, their Coptic counterparts tended to resist its use, viewing Arabization as a dangerous precursor to Islamicization.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, it was in Cairo in the tenth century that the first major theological works in Arabic were written, those by the Coptic bishop Sāwīrus ibn al- Muqqaḥaʿ (d. 987). His work paved the way for later intellectuals, and by the thirteenth century, Cairo had superseded the Levant as the center for Arab Christian literary activity.<sup>29</sup> Though Cairo was an important center for these and other developments, it was by no means the only focal point of Coptic culture. In the post-conquest era, monasteries assumed a key position as the backbone of the church and, as the primary text-producing institutions of the church, became essential to its survival.<sup>30</sup> The Monastery of Abū Macarios in the Wādī al-Natrūn and the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea played particularly active roles in church politics and the production of theological works. The status of the monasteries is captured in a treatise by the thirteenth-century theologian al-Muʿtaman, who wrote: “monasticism is the *shariʿa* of Christianity.”<sup>31</sup> *Shariʿa*, the code of conduct and religious law in Islam, is used here to explain the significance of monasticism for the Coptic community.

---

<sup>28</sup> Arietta Papaconstantinou, "They Shall Speak the Arabic Language and Take Pride in it': Reconsidering the Fate of Coptic after the Arab Conquest," *Le Muséon* 120, no. 3-4 (2007): 273-299; Jason R. Zaborowski, "From Coptic to Arabic in Medieval Egypt," *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008): 15-40.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Rubenson, "Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt," *Medieval Encounters* 2, no. 1 (1996): 4-14. The classic source for Arab Christian literature is Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, 5 vols. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-1953).

<sup>30</sup> Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," 189-190. For a general study of Egypt's monasteries, see Gawdat Gabra, *Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture* (New York: American University at Cairo Press, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> al-Muʿtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl, *Majmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn*, 14.2. al-Muʿtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl, "Summary of the Principles of Religion (*Majmūʿ uṣūl al-dīn*)," ed. A. Wadʿ, *Studia Orientalia Christiana Monographiae* (Cairo and Jerusalem: The Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, 1997-1998).

Though numerically smaller, there were other Christian communities in Egypt. The Melkites were the second largest and most prominent Christian community. The patriarchate in Alexandria served as the ecclesiastical seat for the community in Egypt, although as we have already seen, the intellectual heart of the church lay in the Levant, in the monasteries of the Judean Desert. The relationship between the Melkites and Copts, already fractious in late antiquity, remained contentious during the middle ages, as each community attempted to exploit weaknesses in the other for the own advancement.<sup>32</sup> The Syrian Orthodox, who also had a community in Egypt, maintained close ties with the Coptic church, sharing with them the belief in a *miaphysite* doctrine. Syrian Orthodox ecclesiastics even served as patriarchs of the Coptic church from time to time, and there were so many Syrian monks at one monastery in the Wādī al-Natrūn that it was known as al-dayr al-suryānī – the Syrian monastery.<sup>33</sup> Nubian and Ethiopian Christians, who came under the patriarchal authority of the Coptic church, are also attested in Egypt.

#### *Copts and Melkites under Islamic rule*

The concerns of the Christian communities in Egypt paralleled those of the Levantine Christians, who shared the same status and faced similar challenges. Conversion of its members to Islam, either to evade the poll tax or to seek social advancement, was a perennial concern for Christians regardless of confession, and as in the Levant, the recording of neo-martyrdoms and church destruction at the hands of

---

<sup>32</sup> There is less information available for studying the Egyptian Melkites, but what is known about the community is gathered and analyzed in Stanley H. Skreslet II, "The Greeks in Medieval Islamic Egypt: A Melkite Community under the Patriarch of Alexandria (640-1095)" (Dissertation, Yale University, 1988).

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the monastery and its importance for considering the relationship of the two communities, see Johannes den Heijer, "Relations between Copts and Syrians in the Light of Recent Discoveries at Dayr as-Suryan," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August - 2 September 2000*, ed. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 929-944.

Arabs speaks to a certain degree of resentment following the conquest.<sup>34</sup> The feared persecutions of the *dhimmī* did occur and could be quite brutal, but such misfortunes were more the exception than the rule.<sup>35</sup> For the most part, the Christian communities in Egypt adapted well to life under Islamic rule, with members holding high positions in the government bureaucracy and benefiting from the economic prosperity attained under the Fatimids.<sup>36</sup>

Interactions among members of the three monotheistic faiths were sometimes limited to the circulation of stereotypes, but there is also evidence for deeper engagements. The new rulers of Egypt were as intrigued by monasteries and the wonders they contained as their counterparts in the Levant. According to the *diyārāt* book of al-Shābushtī, Khumārawayh, who ruled Egypt from 884 to 896, built a room above the monastery Dayr al-Quṣayr so that he could visit often and gaze upon a famous icon of Mary with Jesus in her lap.<sup>37</sup> Muslim, Christian, and Jewish sources attest to the holding of interfaith *majālis*, here too providing occasions to discuss the differences and merits of the three monotheistic faiths.<sup>38</sup> In a similar vein, polemical texts circulated and demonstrate an asymmetrical awareness of Egypt's religions, with the minority

---

<sup>34</sup> For the most recent and thorough treatment of Coptic conversion (along with the relevant bibliography), see Tamer el-Leithy, "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293--1524 A.D." (Dissertation, Princeton University, 2005). For an analysis of a neo-martyrdom recorded in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, see Stephen J. Davis, "Variations on an Egyptian Female Martyr Legend: History, Hagiography, and the Gendered Politics of Medieval Arab Religious Identity," in *Writing "True Stories": Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 205-218. See also Jason R. Zaborowski, *The Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijōit: Assimilation and Conversion to Islam in Thirteenth-Century Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> In this respect, the persecutions of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakīm are legendary.

<sup>36</sup> The Fatimid era is often referred to as a golden age in Coptic cultural production.

<sup>37</sup> 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shābushtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, ed. Kūrķīs 'Awwād (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1966), 286.

<sup>38</sup> Mark R. Cohen and Sasson Somekh, "Interreligious Majlis in Early Fatimid Egypt," in *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, et al. (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 128-136.

communities displaying greater knowledge of Islam than Muslims of Christianity or Judaism.<sup>39</sup>

Though divided and in a constant state of transition, the Christian communities often intersected. The thirteenth-century geographical text, *The History of the Monasteries and Churches of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries*, written by the Egyptian intellectual Abū l-Makārim, records the co-habitation of churches and monasteries by different sects in Cairo and its environs, which also sometimes passed from one group to another. At the Melkite Church of St. Nicholas in Cairo, for instance, Franks worshipped at a separate altar,<sup>40</sup> while no fewer than three sects shared the church of Saṭṭ Maydūm:

Here there is a church, common to different sects, containing three altars: one of them, in the middle, belonging to the Copts, and named after the valiant martyr Theodore; the second belonging to the Armenians, and named after the glorious martyr Saint George; the third dedicated to the Lady, the Virgin Mary, and belonging to the Melkites.<sup>41</sup>

Not all instances of sharing were irenic; Abū l-Makārim also records monasteries changing hands from one sect to another.<sup>42</sup> That Christians of different sects also overlapped as pilgrims is evident from the graffiti left by visitors at places such as the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, which attest to the presence of Syrians,

---

<sup>39</sup> On the stereotypical presentation of other religions, see Jacques Waardenburg, "Muslim Studies of Other Religions: The Medieval Period," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 218-219. For the level of knowledge of Islam demonstrated in early Arab Christian polemic, see C. H. Becker, "Christian Polemic and the Formation of Islamic Dogma," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert G. Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 244-247.

<sup>40</sup> Trans. in Bishop Samuel and Abu Al Makarem, *History of the Churches and Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Mina al-Shamaa' and rev. Mrs. Elizabeth (Cairo: Institute of Coptic Studies, Anba Reweis, 1992), 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Fol. 64b. Trans. in B. T. A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abū Ṣâlih the Armenian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 188.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel and Makarem, *History of the Churches and Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the Thirteenth Century*, 26.

Ethiopians, and Armenians in addition to the Copts.<sup>43</sup> Egyptian Christians also maintained communities in Jerusalem, connecting them to the larger Christian world.<sup>44</sup>

As in the Levant, it is important to remember that sectarian affiliation was simply one of the possible ways in which individuals might position themselves in society. In some cases, elite Christians had more in common with other Muslim elites than they did with Christians from lower social classes.<sup>45</sup> In a similar vein, documents from the Geniza Archive demonstrate that the boundaries of mercantile communities rarely conformed to those of religious communities.

\* \* \*

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the eastern Mediterranean was home to a fragmented group of Christians, all of whom looked back to the same past, but had developed along different trajectories and regarded themselves as separate and distinct communities. The advent of Islam as a major political and military power shaped the development of all of these groups, in their separate ways. Despite their differences, the Christian communities overlapped and intersected, belonging to what Oleg Grabar has referred to as “several orders of worlds.”<sup>46</sup> As we have seen, the Christians who lived under Islamic rule had numerous “points of access” to the cultures and thought-worlds of

---

<sup>43</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, "The Handwriting on the Wall: Graffiti in the Church of St. Antony," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 186-192. Cf. Bas ter Haar Romeny et al., "Deir Mar Musa: The Inscriptions," *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 154-182.

<sup>44</sup> For the Coptic community in Jerusalem, see Otto Meinardus, *The Copts in Jerusalem* (Cairo: Commission on Oecumenical Affairs of the See of Alexandria, 1960).

<sup>45</sup> For instance, wealthy Copts began to regard the pleasures enjoyed by their Muslim neighbors, such as concubinage and polygyny, as a class and gender privilege; see el-Leithy, 385.

<sup>46</sup> Oleg Grabar, "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. Vladimir P. Goss and Christine Verzár Hornstein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 441.

their neighbors.<sup>47</sup> Both the common history and the porous nature of the boundaries that separated these communities provide a context for understanding devotion to the warrior saints, which had been a point of commonality among the diverse Christian sects of the eastern Mediterranean since late antiquity.

---

<sup>47</sup> I am borrowing this phrase, so evocative of the porosity of boundaries, from Oleg Grabar. *Ibid.*, 442-444.



### Chapter 3 Becoming Soldiers of God

The seventh-century miracle collection of St. Anastasius the Persian records a debate that purportedly occurred during the campaigns of Heraclius in the Holy Land. While traveling across Samaria, an officer whose face was gruesomely disfigured sat with a group of soldiers and said to them: “In my section, some men told me that I should rub the afflicted area [of my face] with the balm of St. Anastasius, and they assure me that I will recover immediately.”<sup>1</sup> Scoffing, one of the officers responded: “There is no martyr greater than St. Theodore,” while another officer claimed St. George, and a third St. Mercurios, each, as the author says, “according to their faith.”<sup>2</sup> The debate ended decisively when St. Anastasius, and not the other warrior saints, appeared to heal the officer. Since this is the miracle collection of St. Anastasius, no other outcome would have been possible. Yet, in placing the lesser-known saint in competition with the military martyrs, the account reveals just how powerful the military saints were in the eyes of seventh-century Christians, perhaps especially in the case of members of the army.

This miracle account, composed in the seventh century, sheds light on changing perceptions of the soldier-martyrs. In the passions of the soldier saints written in late

---

<sup>1</sup> Miracle 14. French trans. in Bernard Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1992), 142-145.

<sup>2</sup> Miracle 14. Trans. in *Ibid.*, 144.

antiquity, the martyrs are praised for defeating their Roman adversaries by submitting to torture and death. In this respect, they differed little from the bishops, virgins, ascetics, and civilians who shared their fate. Nevertheless, this miracle demonstrates that by the seventh century, Christians had begun to regard the soldier saints in a different light, as particularly efficacious patrons and as members of a distinctive cohort based on their shared membership in the army of God. In a modest fashion, the account participates in the phenomenon that will form the topic of this chapter: the continuous process of redefining the martyrs in late antiquity.

### **Martyrdoms: creation and remembrance of religious communities**

By the time the military saints came to prominence in the tenth century, their cult had already existed in some fashion for over six hundred years. The long span of time that encompasses the cult's development means that the warrior saints and their images assumed a variety of guises, performed an array of functions that range from the commemorative to the apotropaic, and served diverse purposes, some of which were even contradictory. While not all elaborations of the cult enjoyed equal success, the sheer variety of images, themes, and functions associated with the military saints is a testament to the vibrancy of the cult. Moreover, even those aspects that did not survive in later periods provide insight into the concept of community promoted during the formative years of the church and eastern Christian perceptions of their not-so-distant past.

The stories late antique Christians told about the soldier saints – among the foundational members of the Christian church – have come down to us in the form of passions that record their trials and heroic martyrdoms. The church fathers composed homilies, hymns, and liturgical poetry dedicated to the saints, which often reinforced the

themes and spiritual message of the passions by replicating their accounts, deploying the same literary *topoi*, and often using the same language. That the texts for the military saints survive in a multitude of languages (Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopian, Coptic, and Latin), suggests how extensive veneration to the soldier saints was during the formative period of Christianity. These texts are important not simply because they provide testimony to the cult of the soldier saints in its nascent years, but also because they served as the foundational discourse that would shape – and restrict – the ways the faithful constructed the military saints in both images and texts for centuries to come.

*The Passion of St. Theodore Teron (“the Recruit”)*

The passions of the soldier saints are typical examples of the genre, artfully constructed and engaging accounts of the martyrs’ trials that participate fully in the ideological agendas of the nascent church. The passion (*passio*) is a literary account of a martyr’s suffering, which explicitly models events leading up to the martyr’s death after that of Christ. The genre, which developed in late antiquity, played an important role in shaping and preserving the memory of early Christianity as a period of persecution and heroism. The passion of St. Theodore Teron, which displays literary links to both the bible and epic romance, records the trials of a soldier from the east who died in Amasea. Like many of the most popular military martyrs, the figure commemorated in the passion cannot easily be linked to a historical person.

Already in the passion of St. Theodore Teron – which is perhaps the earliest martyrdom of a soldier saint to survive – characteristic narrative elements of the passion

are present.<sup>3</sup> The account opens with the co-emperors Maximianus and Maximian sending an imperial edict throughout the empire, which, the hagiographer declares, was “against all the followers of the true religion of Christ.” The edict compelled all the soldiers in the imperial army to offer sacrifice to the gods of Rome. This posed a problem for Theodore, who was a recent conscript to the legions, stationed in the town of Amasea, and a Christian. When his superior invited him to “obey the victorious emperors” and offer sacrifice, Theodore refused, saying: “I have as my king Christ in Heaven.” When words alone failed to persuade Theodore to sacrifice, the army officers turned to force. The narrative recounts a series of escalating tortures designed to compel obedience from the recalcitrant Christian. These begin with imprisonment, progress swiftly to starvation, and finally end with the use of metal claws to scrape the skin off of the saint. Throughout his ordeal, Theodore endures the trials, chanting psalms and remaining steadfast in the faith. At one point he effects a dramatic escape from prison to commit a countering act of violence and set fire to the temple of “the mother of the gods.” Theodore is himself soon sentenced to death by fire. His burning body miraculously emits a scent like baking bread, which, according to his hagiographer, “filled us with the most pleasant fragrance.” The narrative comes to its conclusion as the Holy Spirit descends and “[returns] his soul to Christ,” but not before the saint inspires others to conversion.

Although St. Theodore is a soldier in the Roman army, his profession does little more than provide a backdrop for the story. The hagiographer’s primary purpose is to

---

<sup>3</sup> For the text, see Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (New York: Arno, 1909; reprint, 1975), 127-135. There is some disagreement over which of the recensions is the earliest version of the passion. For a summary of the arguments, along with bibliography, see Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 45, fn 7.

praise Theodore's act and mark his memory as worthy of preservation. He invests the death of Theodore with greater spiritual meaning by modeling the death on Christ's exemplary sacrifice. Like Christ, Theodore is the unjust victim of persecution at the hands of the Roman state.<sup>4</sup> This basic analogy lies at the heart of all early Christian martyr narratives, but in this particular example, the parallel drawn between the two figures is strengthened by the description of the bread-like scent emitted as St. Theodore's body burns on the pyre. This detail was likely intended to evoke the Eucharistic bread used in commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ. At the center is the same paradox that lies at the heart of the Christian faith: that, by submitting to torture and death, the martyr could attain victory and everlasting life. The passion thus links the individual struggle of Theodore to that of Christ and the early martyrs, investing his death with meaning by presenting it as part of a larger narrative of persecution and eventual Christian triumph.<sup>5</sup>

Writing at least a century after the events it describes, the author of the passion of St. Theodore followed the example of his fellow hagiographers in presenting the martyr as a figure who creates boundaries. Through the act of dying, Theodore articulates divisions between Christianity and the religion of the Romans that may not have been immediately apparent before, drawing a sharp distinction between the two systems of

---

<sup>4</sup> For a recent discussion of martyrdoms as part of a triumphal Christian narrative, see Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> For a thorough discussion of the ways in which the early church fathers used martyrdoms to articulate and delineate the behavioral norms and beliefs of the faithful, see Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), chapter 1.

belief and placing them into an antithetical relationship.<sup>6</sup> Because the martyrs defined Christian values through opposition to the beliefs of non-Christians, they became symbols of Christianity that necessarily bore an awareness of religious difference. The accounts of martyrs would be subject to many elaborations over the centuries, but this basic attribute was to remain a constant and shaped the tone of much subsequent literature on the saints, including their miracles.

According to Christopher Walter, early hagiographical texts like the one examined above provide evidence that the soldier saints were virtually indistinguishable from the other martyrs.<sup>7</sup> Yet, by the seventh century soldiers were calling on the military saints for aid in battle, prompting the question: did late antique Christians regard the soldier saints primarily as martyrs, or were they already becoming a distinct category?

*The soldier saint: a saintly type?*

The stories of the individual soldier saints share many traits, fostering the impression that they did form a distinct saintly type – or that they at least had specific characteristics that laid the foundation for such a type to emerge in later centuries. Hagiographic borrowing was one form of activity that could both link the soldier saints to the larger group of martyrs and work to create a subset. For hagiographers of the fifth and sixth centuries, it was standard practice to borrow motifs and even entire episodes from the works of their predecessors and contemporaries.<sup>8</sup> The author of the passion of St. Theodore, for instance, modeled his work after that of the Roman bishop, St.

---

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that martyrdoms did not simply seek to separate Christianity from the “pagan” religion of the Romans, but also from Jews and heretics.

<sup>7</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 46.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the inter-textual nature of martyrdoms, in relation to the military saints Sergios and Bacchos, see Elizabeth K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 17-26.

Polycarp, and adhered so closely that he replicated entire passages verbatim.<sup>9</sup> This case, which represents an extreme, might suggest that the soldier saints were virtually indistinguishable from their brethren.

Most of the hagiographers of the military saints, however, followed the simpler expedient of drawing forms and motifs from similar works. The passion of St. Victor, an account of an Egyptian soldier that appears in Coptic, Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic recensions, thus features an episode in which St. Victor throws his golden chain in the face of the emperor Diocletian.<sup>10</sup> This powerful image of a soldier exchanging his earthly wealth for a crown of martyrdom appears again in the passion of St. Gordios, a soldier in Antioch under Maximian, and, with a slight variation, in the passion of St. Mercurios, a soldier in the Martenses unit.<sup>11</sup> The scene of St. Theodore the Recruit setting fire to a pagan temple finds a conceptual parallel in the acts of St. George, in which the saint smashes an idol of Apollo.<sup>12</sup> The passion of St. Athanasius the Persian, concerning a soldier in Syria, is explicitly modeled after that of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos and even includes a cameo appearance of the two famous martyrs. The repetition of events and images across the corpus of martyr narratives serves to reinforce their pedagogical message, even as it creates an internal cohesion among subsets such as the soldier saints, albeit inadvertently.

---

<sup>9</sup> Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1914), 263-264.

<sup>11</sup> Mercurios represents a slight variation; the martyr actually throws off his “worldly” armor and stands before the emperor Decius naked, though garbed in “the whole armor of God and the breastplate of faith.” *Ibid.*, 815, 817.

<sup>12</sup> For St. Theodore, see Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, 129. For St. George, see Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts* (London: D. Nutt, 1888), 231.

Patristic writings tend to emphasize the similarities between the different types of saints, favoring an image of corporate membership over hierarchical structuring. For early commentators, the martyrs were all equal in their suffering and therefore equal in their value. This uniformity is captured in a homily of St. Basil of Caesarea. Speaking of the forty martyrs of Sebastia, he said: “They were all similar to each other, equal in conviction, equal in suffering. This is why they were deemed worthy of the crowns of glory of equal value.”<sup>13</sup> His declaration might easily be extended to the larger community of saints. The church fathers used saints’ lives to articulate the behavioral norms and beliefs, to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, and to create a sense of community founded on a common past.<sup>14</sup> Few images of military saints survive from late antiquity, but those that do demonstrate the varied ways in which different communities could also utilize the saints – their images and memory – for purposes of communal fashioning.

### **Soldier saints and images of community**

These narratives of martyrdom provided a common lexicon of symbols, motifs and themes that could be variously adapted to meet the needs of local patrons. Since martyrdoms provided accounts of Christianity’s foundational members, their stories often served as the material for communal self-definition. The church historian Eusebius built his history of the Christian church on the stories of the early martyrs, rooting the genesis

---

<sup>13</sup> *A homily on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste* 1. Trans. in Johan Leemans and Pauline Allen, “*Let Us Die that We May Live*”: *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 68.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Clement of Alexandria: “By their witness and confession all may be benefited—those in the Church being confirmed, and those of the heathen who have devoted themselves to the search after salvation wondering and being led to the faith; and the rest seized with amazement.” *Stromateis* 4.9 (trans. ANF). For examples of the ways the church fathers used martyrdoms to promote communal values, see Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*.



of the church in the common memory of the sufferings of the martyrs. The Donatists, a separatist sect in North Africa, performed much the same gesture, utilizing the genre of historical writing to define the martyrs as their own heroic ancestors and, thereby, to claim unique access to the one true religion.<sup>15</sup> Images of the saints and related inscriptions could perform much the same task, as evidenced by their earliest visual attestations.

Over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, the saints eulogized in martyrdoms began to appear in church spaces, their presence marked by tombs, images, and inscriptions. Much like the martyr narratives discussed above, evocations of the saints in churches could serve to ground collective memory, but they also performed other functions: framing and articulating liturgical space, creating an extended spiritual community, and providing perpetual prayers on behalf of the faithful.<sup>16</sup> The soldier saints number among these early attestations, providing both an indication of their early importance and how the faithful perceived them. In what follows, I will consider how three different sites employed soldier saints to perform these functions, in the process adapting common martyrdom themes to meet distinctly local and site-specific needs.

#### *The Church of St. George at Zorava*

Saints and their martyrdoms could provide a framework through which to interpret quite recent events. A particularly vivid example comes from the city of Zorava in Syria, where a city leader (*prōteuōn*) named John dedicated a church to St. George in

---

<sup>15</sup> On the church of the Donatists, see Maureen A. Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> These developments are thoughtfully explored in Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*.

515. The dedication of the church, which was inscribed on the lintel above the main doorway, declares:

The gathering place of demons has become the house of God. Saving light has illuminated where darkness concealed. Where [there were] sacrifices of idols, now [there are] choirs of angels, where God was outraged, now God is propitiated. A certain Christ-loving man, the first of the city, John, son of Diomedes, from his own funds, as a gift to God, dedicated [this] attractive building, having set up in this place the revered relic of the splendidly victorious holy martyr George, who appeared to him, John, not in a dream, but in open. In indiction 9, year 410 [of the era of Provincia Arabia].<sup>17</sup>

The inscription utilizes the language and *topoi* of martyrdoms to make the church proclaim the victory of Christianity over the earlier, pagan religion. It does so by replicating the sharp oppositions drawn in passions – paganism versus Christianity, pollution versus purification – and alluding to a common episode in the narratives, the destruction of idols and temples. Such militant acts are recorded in the passion of St. Theodore, who set fire to the temple of Artemis, and that of St. George (the figure honored here), who smashed an idol of Apollo that housed an evil spirit. Whether the earlier site denigrated in the inscription was real or imaginary,<sup>18</sup> the church presents its construction as a victory over its rival religion in a way that recalls the martyrdom of the saint whose relics it housed. The inscription ends by placing the church, and by extension the community that worshipped within its space, under the protection of St.

---

<sup>17</sup> Trans. from Jason Moralee, "The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 2 (2006): 194. His translation is based on W. K. Prentice, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions*, The Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900 (New York: Century, 1908), 335–36, no. 437a.

<sup>18</sup> Trombley argues that the church must have rested on the foundations of an earlier temple, but archaeologists noted that no such foundations could be found. Frank Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (1993), 365. This contrasts with the Church of St. Theodore in Gerasa, which incorporated the spolia of earlier temples, using the stones to reinforce the triumphal message of the inscription. See Moralee, "The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa," 197-215.

George. The identity of this community is not in question; it belongs to the god of St. George – the one God – and no other.

There is evidence that the inscription is an expression of a particularly local set of concerns and understandings regarding the relationship of Christianity to its rivals. Christianity came late to the Syrian countryside, not making its mark in the archaeological record until the second half of the sixth century. The memory of religious transition is preserved in epigraphic inscriptions such as the one on the Church of St. George; close parallels for the inscription come from two other churches in the region and a host of funerary monuments that make reference to “the one true God.”<sup>19</sup> As Frank Trombley has noted, this formulation is explicitly constructed vis-à-vis the polytheistic religion that preceded and often co-existed with Christianity,<sup>20</sup> and it might be considered as shorthand for the message conveyed by the longer inscription on the church of St. George. The church inscription utilizes the language of martyrdom, and likely the specific story of St. George – bringing the biography of the church into alignment with that of the martyr – to frame the building of the church as a victory for the faith and to offer a justification for the alleged act of destruction that preceded it. Since the martyrs had acted out against the “idols” of the Romans, martyrdoms, as Francis Drake and

---

<sup>19</sup> Inscriptions on the Church of St. Sergios in Zorava and the Church of St. Theodore provide close parallels. These are both considered in Moralee, “The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa,” 193-195. For the Christianization of Zorava, see Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*, 2:359–65.

<sup>20</sup> The inscriptions are collected into an appendix by Trombley; see Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*, 2: 313-315.

Michael Gaddis have noted, often provided Christians with a model for the moral justification to destroy and efface monuments associated with the pre-Christian faith.<sup>21</sup>

The conceptualization of the martyrs as idol smashers was not particular to the soldier saints, but it is possible that this action was closely associated with them. Another church in Zorava, dedicated to the “rider” St. Sergios, bore a similar inscription.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps more tellingly, the tenth-century Islamic historian al-Ṭabarī would later incorporate St. George into his history of Islam, honoring him for defeating the idols of polytheists.

#### *The Church of St. George at Thessaloniki*

Images of the saints might also convey complex ideas about community and the relationship of the soldier saints to the corporate Christian body. The images of soldier saints in the Rotunda of St. George in Thessaloniki are among the earliest monumental images of soldier saints to survive.<sup>23</sup> Originally part of a late Roman palatial complex, the building was modified to serve as a church in the fourth and fifth centuries, at which time the central dome was decorated with a dazzling mosaic program (Fig. 6). Although much of the program has been lost, the lowest register is still largely intact. The register circles the circumference of the dome, and is divided into eight panels that feature elaborate two-storey architectural structures that are evocative of palaces. Standing in orant pose in front of the structures are groups of two or three saints (a total of fifteen

---

<sup>21</sup> Christians often regarded the continuing existence of earlier religions as an insult to the new faith; since God was the one true God, it was an affront to allow the false polytheistic religion to continue, so the logic went.

<sup>22</sup> Moralee, "The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa," 194.

<sup>23</sup> For a recent discussion of the rotunda mosaics, along with the relevant bibliography, see Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*, 198-202.

preserved figures), some flanking large bejeweled crosses (Fig. 7).<sup>24</sup> Inscriptions name the figures depicted, and provide their profession and the month in which they were commemorated.<sup>25</sup> Both the saints selected for representation and the calendar impart a distinctly local flavor to the program. Many of the martyrs date to the period of persecution under Galerius, who exercised administrative authority in Thessaloniki, and the dates derive from a calendar whose use was limited to the region.<sup>26</sup> Ann Marie Yasin speculates that the saints visualized the roster of names that were read aloud during the celebration of the mass in the church.<sup>27</sup>

The calculated repetition of forms and motifs creates an impression of unity in the iconographical program, with the panels, containing three or four saints, conveying an overall impression of a company enveloping the space of the church.<sup>28</sup> Formal features are deployed to emphasize egalitarianism over the hierarchies favored in later medieval visual culture; the saints are represented in uniform scale and stand in the same register, while their clothing provides no indication of their relative status. Their homogeneity is further suggested by the palette employed in rendering their clothing, which is limited to white and purple, and above all by their identical poses, hands raised in prayer. The orant pose almost seems to echo the form of the jeweled crosses that punctuate the series, the juxtaposition reminding beholders that the martyrs sacrificed their lives in imitation of

---

<sup>24</sup> W. E. Kleinbauer, "The Orants in the Mosaic Decoration of the Rotunda at Thessalonike: Martyr Saints or Donors?," *Cahiers Archaeologiques* 30 (1982): 29-31, and esp. fig. 10.

<sup>25</sup> For the inscriptions, see E. Weigand, "Der Kalenderfries von Hagios Georgios in Thessalonike," *Byzantinisch Zeitschrift* 39 (1939): 116-145.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Nasrallah, "Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki: Interpreting the Early Christian Rotunda," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, no. 4 (2005): 488.

<sup>27</sup> Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*, 259.

<sup>28</sup> For a more extended discussion of the function of the images in framing the ecclesiastical space, see Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*, 198-202.

Christ. There are no further iconographic motifs to indicate the time during which the saints lived or their manner of death. Facial features and age vary to a degree, casting the saints as individuals within a corporate body.

The members of this corporate body are further differentiated by titles and by dress. The inscriptions identify the martyrs variously as soldier, bishop, presbyter, physician, and even flute-player.<sup>29</sup> This gesture towards differentiation might prompt an audience to identify the saints according to types based on profession. Most of the martyrs wear the *paenula*, a garment associated with civic and later ecclesiastical dress, but the soldiers all appear in a *chlamys*, a robe fastened at one shoulder with a clasp and worn over the tunic, which served as the attire of late antique officials, both military and civilian. As Maria Parani has noted, late antique Christians preferred to portray soldier martyrs wearing the *chlamys*, since through their martyrdoms they had won a place in the heavenly court.<sup>30</sup> In keeping with the courtly social milieu implied by the garb, the soldier saints do not carry any arms. The lack of weaponry, in conjunction with the courtly dress, serves to emphasize their membership in the larger company of the saints and focus attention on the prize won through the martyrs' trials.<sup>31</sup>

That this community also includes the living faithful is suggested by the placement of the mosaics around and above the space of worship. Positioned above the viewers below, the register of saints functioned to define and articulate social and sacred

---

<sup>29</sup> Kleinbauer, "The Orants in the Mosaic Decoration of the Rotunda at Thessalonike: Martyr Saints or Donors?," 29-31.

<sup>30</sup> Maria G. Parani, "Defining Personal Space: Dress and Accessories in Late Antiquity," in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift, and Toon Putzeys (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 502-505.

<sup>31</sup> On the dress of soldier martyrs, see Maria G. Parani, "Defining Personal Space: Dress and Accessories in Late Antiquity," in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift, and Toon Putzeys (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 502-505.

hierarchies within the church space.<sup>32</sup> Their lofty and remote position within the church aligns well with contemporary notions of the saints as models for imitation. Writing in the fifth century, Neilos, the abbot of St. Catherine's at Mount Sinai, expressed the hope that ordinary people might "by gazing at pictures, become mindful of the manly deeds of those of us who have genuinely served the true God and...be forced to emulate those glorious feats." In Hosios Loukos, the gulf that separated the faithful from the martyrs, who had performed superhuman feats, is articulated in the space of the church itself.

*The Monastery of Apollo at Bawit*

Representations of military martyrs at the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit in Egypt draw upon a different set of iconographical precedents and themes. The monastery, which housed a prosperous monastic community from the sixth to the ninth century, exists today as an archaeological site in Middle Egypt. The sprawling complex comprises a series of buildings with living quarters, kitchens, and rooms that likely served as oratories.<sup>33</sup> Images and inscriptions in the monastery identify the founders as Apa Apollo and Ama Rachael, raising the possibility that the site accommodated both male and female ascetics at the site. The excavation photographs show that many of the oratories were densely painted with elaborate wall painting programs, which were executed by the monks. The paintings have recently received attention from Elizabeth Bolman, who argues that they served a dual purpose: to frame communal identity and to

---

<sup>32</sup> Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*, 259-260.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1904); Jean Maspéro and Étienne Drioton, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouit*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1932,1943).

serve as tools for spiritual transformation.<sup>34</sup> My own comments about the paintings will focus on the role of the military martyrs within these painted visions of community.

Equestrian soldier saints appear in Oratory 17, where they are incorporated into a larger pictorial program that includes images of monks, apostles, and Christ in Majesty.<sup>35</sup> The oratory is a small freestanding building with a square plan, low dome, and painted interior. On the west wall, there appear two military saints identified as St. Phoebammon and St. Sissinius, both local Egyptian soldier saints (Figs. 8, 9).<sup>36</sup> St. Phoebammon appears in an iconographical form popular for soldier saints in Egypt and Syria, which draws upon images of imperial victory. St. Phoebammon, crowned and clad in a *chlamys* over a long tunic, turns to face the viewer from his position on horseback. The saint holds a long cross over his shoulder that alludes to his death as a martyr and displays a jeweled crown in his right hand, representing the crowns promised to him in his passion. An angel descends from the left to proffer another crown, demonstrating that the martyr's reward comes is divinely bestowed. By modeling the depiction of St. Phoebammon after images of imperial triumph, the iconography presents salvific themes in a visual language that bears clear military associations.

The inclusion of the military saint in a monastic setting suggests an interplay between discourses on martyrdom and asceticism, which intersected in various ways. Early ascetics understood their lifestyle as a continuation of the martyr's struggles, with

---

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Joining the Community of Saints: Monastic Paintings and Ascetic Practice in Early Christian Egypt," in *Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism*, ed. Sheila McNally, *BAR International Series* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001), 41-46.

<sup>35</sup> Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit*, 73-85, pls. LIII-LIV, LV-LVI.

<sup>36</sup> For Phoebammon, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides: L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001), 204-214; de Lacy O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1937; reprint, 1974), 229-231. For Sissinius, see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides: L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, 190-191; O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, 258-259.



the martyr serving as a model for ascetic practice. The image of St. Phoebammon, with its emphasis on crowns of victory, likely relates to a strand of discourse that linked ascetic practice to martyrdom based on the shared experience of suffering. In martyrdoms, the tortures inflicted on the body of the martyr served as a sign of their sanctity, and the greater the suffering the greater the holiness.<sup>37</sup> Looking back to the martyrs, some ascetics practiced an extreme form of asceticism that involved self-mortification as a way to fashion themselves as the successors to the martyrs and share in their glory.<sup>38</sup> The depiction of St. Phoebammon, which emphasizes the place of the martyr in the heavenly court, would have focused the monk's attention not on the redemptive process of suffering, but on the reward to come.

The image of St. Sissinius deploys more militaristic imagery to offer a slightly different interpretation of the metaphorical relationship between monks and martyrs. Though both images depict the soldier saints on horseback, the painting of St. Sissinius presents a vivid representation of spiritual combat. The painting is dominated by the central figure of St. Sissinius, who slays the demon Alabasdria in a field teeming with small animals and half-human creatures that conjure up images of demonic forces and desires.<sup>39</sup> Though both appear in military dress, the attire of St. Phoebammon has been

---

<sup>37</sup> On the purchase of torture in Coptic martyrdoms, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 76-78.

<sup>38</sup> In the *Life of St. Anthony* by Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Anthony expresses regret that he missed his chance to be martyred and, in lieu of martyrdom, pursues an ascetic lifestyle. The biography explicitly presents asceticism as an alternative to the trials of the martyrs. See Robert C. Gregg, *Athanasius, The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

<sup>39</sup> The snakes and centaurs that surround the saint are likely meant to visualize demons as well. In the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Abba Poemen likens a snake and scorpion shut up in a bottle to the evil thoughts that are suggested by demons. In another saying, Abba Poemen refers to the "venom of evil demons" that attack monks in the desert. Poemen 21 and 30. Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984). Elizabeth Bolman

modified to meet the task at hand. In place of the long tunic of the court, St. Sinninius wears the shorter tunic and leggings of the active soldier, while the cross and crown displayed by St. Phoebammon is replaced by the implements of active duty: a shield and spear.

The iconography has often been compared to images of nameless holy riders favored on magical amulets. These typically combine magical words or symbols with depictions of anonymous riders on horseback that spear a serpent or demon beneath. Over time, these anonymous figures increasingly adopted the personae of military saints such as Sissinius, suggesting that the boundary separating magic from official religious practice was porous at best.<sup>40</sup> Though the image may have shared in the talismanic functions ascribed to the smaller images, the size, format, and context of the image suggest the painting served as a symbol of Christian salvation.<sup>41</sup>

In this particular instance, the salvation symbol acquired additional meaning and definition by visualizing a spiritual metaphor that appears in the writings of late antique ascetics. Asceticism, much like the act of martyrdom, was understood as a form of spiritual combat, waged against the forces of Satan. In the *Life of St. Antony* written by the bishop Athanasius, the monk spends years in the desert battling demons through the

---

connects the metaphorical language to pre-Christian trends. See Bolman, "Joining the Community of Saints: Monastic Paintings and Ascetic Practice in Early Christian Egypt," 45.

<sup>40</sup> There is a sizeable literature on the rider saints and their apotropaic functions. See, for instance, Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, vol. 49, University of Michigan Studies Humanistic Series (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950); Jeffrey Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993): 25-62; R. P. H. Greenfield, "Saint Sisinnios, the Archangel Michael and the Femal Demon Gylou. The Typology of the Greek Literary Sources," *Byzantina* 15 (1989): 83-142; Gary Vikan, "Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 65-86. See also Sarah Iles Johnson, "Riders in the Sky: Cavalier Gods and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century A.D.," *Classical Philology* 87, no. 4 (1992): 303-321; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Gods in Uniform," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105 (1961): 368-393.

<sup>41</sup> As Eunice and Henry Maguire have argued; see Eunice Dauterman Maguire and Henry Maguire, *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 66.

power of the cross. The writings of early monastic communities in Egypt drew upon and reinforced the notion of combat seen in St. Antony's *Life*. The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, a collection of pithy statements on the monastic life that served as edifying texts for monks, includes the following exchange between an aspiring ascetic and the monk Agathon:

The brethren also asked him, "Amongst all good works, which is the virtue which requires the greatest effort?" He answered, "Forgive me, but I think there is no labour greater than that of prayer to God. For every time a man wants to pray, his enemies, the demons, want to prevent him, for they know that it is only by turning him from prayer that they can hinder his journey. Whatever good work a man undertakes, if he perseveres in it, he will attain rest. But prayer is warfare to the last breath."<sup>42</sup>

While all martyrs were understood as spiritual soldiers, depicting soldier saints must have provided an expedient way to make the metaphor both clear and vivid.

The members of the monastic community who prayed in Oratory 17 likely understood the images of the soldier saints in much the same way as did the congregation that worshipped in the Church of St. George in Thessaloniki, namely as models for imitation. However, the models for spiritual advancement offered by the martyrs differed. All martyrs, because of their sacrifice, were soldiers of God. That the monks chose to represent martyrs who were members of the Roman army during their lives suggests that the congruence of profession, iconographical, and function was deemed the most effective way to visualize the metaphor.

The three cases considered provide a glimpse of the myriad ways in which early Christians understood the soldier saints to form part of their community and demonstrate the extent to which early interpretations had a strong regional character. In each case, a

---

<sup>42</sup> Agathon 9. Trans. in Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, 21-22.

community evoked the memory of the military martyrs to sanctify their sacred space, though each located the martyrs within different traditions. For the community at Zorava, St. George served as a heroic ancestor – and model – who expressed the victory and superiority of Christianity through the extirpation of idolatry, defining the community of the faithful as the community of the one true God. In Thessaloniki, local martyrs served as the basis of a shared past and conferred legitimacy on the present community. In these instances, the titular saint of the churches were warrior saints, in contrast to the Monastery of Apollo, which was dedicated, appropriately, to a monastic saint. At Bawit, the military martyrs served as models for spiritual combat, understood as a battle to attain greater holiness through a life devoted to prayer, self-renunciation, and self-mortification. The images of saints at Bawit and the rotunda are not hierarchically structured, conveying an egalitarian sense of community; however, the soldier saints were already becoming a site for playing out the different meanings of spiritual combat.

### **Pilgrimage shrines, images, and texts: a case of close convergences**

Of course not all forms of devotion to the same saint were equal; the level and form of homage paid to a saint differed according to whether the saint's relics were on the site, the saint was the titular saint of the foundation, or the saint served as the focus of a major shrine. Pilgrimage sites, preserving the relics of saints, had been established across the empire and were visited in great number.<sup>43</sup> The saints honored were of various classes; some were dedicated to ascetics, such as the enormously popular pilgrimage

---

<sup>43</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Antony Eastmond, "Body vs. Column: The Cult of St. Symeon Stylites," in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Ashgate: Varorium, 1999), 87-100.

center of St. Simeon at Qal‘at Sim‘ān in northern Syria,<sup>44</sup> others to martyrs such as St. Thekla, celebrated as a thaumaturge at her shrine in Iconium,<sup>45</sup> and St. Demetrios, the famous patron of Thessaloniki.<sup>46</sup> A number of important shrines commemorated soldier saints: St. Menas outside of Alexandria,<sup>47</sup> St. Theodore in Amasea,<sup>48</sup> St. Sergios at al-Ruṣāfa,<sup>49</sup> and St. George in Lydda (Ramla in Palestine).<sup>50</sup> Of these, St. Menas gained a particularly strong following. His shrine drew pilgrims from as far away as northern Europe, as attested by the dispersal of his pilgrimage tokens.<sup>51</sup> Such shrines provided a specialized setting in which to learn about and interact with the saints. Homilies describe richly decorated interiors embellished with narrative imagery that focused on the tortures of the saints, where the faithful would hear the passions and miracles of the saint read aloud.<sup>52</sup> The experience of the pilgrim was further shaped by the production of images that were closely connected to the site and to the literary tradition of the saint.

---

<sup>44</sup> For a recent discussion on the cult of St. Simeon, see Eastmond, "Body vs. Column: The Cult of St. Symeon Stylites," 87-100.

<sup>45</sup> For a study of her cult, see Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of St. Thekla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For the hagiographic tradition in Greek, see Gilbert Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle: Texte grec, traduction et commentaire* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1978).

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of St. Demetrios' cult and its architectural setting, see Charalambos Bakirtzis, "Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 175-192.

<sup>47</sup> For St. Menas, see Peter Grossmann, *Abū Mīnā* (Mainz am Rhein: P. on Zabern, 1989). For the Coptic texts, see James Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1946).

<sup>48</sup> The site is currently the focus of an archaeological project led by John Haldon at Princeton, the results of which await publication.

<sup>49</sup> For the outstanding study, see Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*. For the archaeological study of his shrine, see Thilo Ulbert, *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiopolis* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1984).

<sup>50</sup> Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10.

<sup>51</sup> On the pilgrimage tokens, see Janette Witt, *Werke der Alltagskultur Teil 1: Menasampullen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> For a study of their the use of interior elaboration to construct the sanctity of the martyrs, see Cynthia Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines," *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (1997): 1079-1106.

A consideration of the three military saints with major late antique shrines who developed distinctive iconographies can provide insight into contemporary perceptions of soldier saints. A sixth-century ivory pyxis in the British Museum carved with high relief images that feature St. Menas – an Egyptian soldier saint martyred under Diocletian – documents the ever-increasing status of the soldier saints (Fig. 10).<sup>53</sup> The ivory box was found far from home: it came to light during excavations of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome. Archaeologists have speculated that it was brought from the cult site at Alexandria, perhaps carrying relics of St. Menas. Two scenes are represented on the round box, arranged on either side of the hinge and lock of the now-missing lid. The first conflates the trial and execution of St. Menas, while the second shows him standing in his sanctuary, nimbed and wearing military dress consisting of a short, belted tunic with a mantle fastened at the shoulder. Certain aspects of the depiction recall earlier forms, as seen in the mosaics in the Rotunda of St. George, namely the orant pose and architectural setting intended to evoke a sacred space. Identifying characteristics drawn from the legend are included; two camels kneel at the saint's feet, craning their necks to look up at him.

The imagery, which is replicated on stone reliefs and ampullae, is closely linked to the passion of the saint, although whether the text explained a pre-existing image or motivated the creation of new iconography is impossible to say. In either case, the concurrent circulation of texts and images would have reinforced the meaning conveyed by both and prompted recognition of the saint based on his story. The passion circulated in a variety of versions which offered slightly different explanations for the imagery on

---

<sup>53</sup> Antony Eastmond, "Ivory Pyx with Martyrdom of St. Menas," in *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. David Buckton (London: British Museum Press, 1994), 65.

the tokens as Warren Woodfin has recently shown. A typical version of the story goes that, following his death, the saint directed that his decapitated body be placed on a camel and driven away; the animal would stop at the appointed by God for his burial. His followers obeyed his instructions and the camel, led across the desert by the angel of the Lord stopped at the future site of the saint's shrine, which became the great church of St. Menas. The iconography of the pyxis essentially reiterates the message imparted by the mosaics in Thessaloniki; through suffering and death, the martyr has gained victory. On another level, the imagery offered beholders a demonstration of the events that transformed the bones and blood likely contained in the box into sacred, efficacious objects.

A similar interplay of pilgrimage shrine, images, and written life and miracles can be seen in the case of another military saint, St. Sergios. Though fewer late antique images of St. Sergios survive, images in Syria and elsewhere represent the saint in two forms: as a rider on horseback and as a standing figure in courtly attire. Perhaps the most famous version of the latter is a seventh-century mosaic St. Sergios in the basilica of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki (Fig. 11).<sup>54</sup> The mosaic is one of a series of panels located on the piers near the sanctuary in the basilica, which served to mark and differentiate the space of the sanctuary. The mosaic depicting St. Sergios faces the naos, presenting the congregation with an elegant figure in an orant position, framed by an architectural niche evocative of sacred space. The saint wears the courtly attire of a *chlamys* over a tunic with a *tablion*, its richness indicated by the patterning, and a *maniakion*, a torc made of

---

<sup>54</sup> For the most recent discussion of the donor panels and their function within the larger church, see Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*. For this specific image, see also Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 35-36.

precious metal of a kind originally granted to heroic barbarian soldiers. By the sixth century, the *maniakion* had become a standard feature in the dress of the Byzantine emperor and his personal guards. Much like the camels in the St. Menas iconography, the *maniakion* was a point of convergence between iconography and textual accounts. In his passion, the saint is said to have been stripped of his armor before his execution – thus exchanging the earthly torc for the heavenly martyr’s crown. By endowing the mark of soldierly honor, the artist makes reference to the circumstances of his death.

Images of St. Sergios as a standing figure circulated in conjunction with an alternative iconography, one of which depicts the saint on horseback, carrying a martyr’s staff surmounted by a cross. The iconography appears on jewelry and on pilgrims’ flasks, such as this one, which was likely made in al-Ruṣāfa (Fig. 12).<sup>55</sup> The neck of the flask is embellished with a cross, surrounded by a wreath that thematically complements the image of the victorious martyr below. The martyr is framed by an inscription that reads: “Blessings of the God of St. Sergios.” Though St. Sergios is never described as a soldier on horseback in his passion, he appears in this form in the Syriac martyrdom of another saint, Mar Qardagh, a Persian noble who converted to Christianity.<sup>56</sup> It seems that this conceptualization of the martyr was popular and widespread in late antique Syria; an inscription from a church in Zorava refers to St. Sergios as “the good rider.”<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Katherine B. Gerry, "Pilgrim Flask of St. Sergios," in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 44. The transcription of the epigraphy seems to have omitted the word *kurios* (KY).

<sup>56</sup> One night when Qardagh was asleep, according to the author, “...he saw in his dream a certain young knight (*parāšā*), standing over him, clad and girded in armor, and mounted upon a horse...” Trans. in Joel Thomas Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 7. For the significance of this apparition, see *Ibid.*, 221 and 264.

<sup>57</sup> Trans. from Moralee, "The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa," 195. Inscription in C. Mondésert, "Inscriptions et objets chrétiens de Syrie," *Syria* 37 (1960): 116-130, no.



Elizabeth Key Fowden has noted that the iconography of a rider would have had particular power and resonance in the steppes of Syria, where mounted figures signified wealth and power.<sup>58</sup> The appeal of the image may have derived also from its iconographical similarity to figures of holy riders on apotropaic amulets, whose cross-topped spears offer a close visual parallel, as well as the long-standing practice in the region of appealing to divine riders for aid.<sup>59</sup> Such protection would have been welcome to the pilgrims who braved the steppes and traveled to the saint's shrine.

### **Military saints and spiritual combat**

During the same period in which these images of courtly spiritual victors were in circulation, an alternative characterization of the soldier saints was taking hold. As early as the fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa called upon St. Theodore Teron to protect his shrine, located in Amasea, a small town in the Anatolian countryside. Gregory made his appeal for help in a homily he composed to deliver at the shrine on 17 February, the saint's feast day. The homily, which consists of an *ekphrasis* (vivid description) of the shrine followed by a retelling of the martyrdom, is perhaps the earliest text to survive that actively seeks to conceptualize a soldier saint as a saint with a distinctly militarized character and function. It does so by framing the larger narratives with two petitions that

---

22/14/04. For comments on the inscription, see Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 110; A. Sartre-Fauriat, "Georges, Serge, Élie et quelques autres saints connus et inédits de la province d'Arabie," in *Romanité et cité chrétienne: Permanences et mutations, intégration et exclusion du I<sup>er</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Mélanges en l'honneur d'Yvette Duval* (Paris: De Boccard, 2000), 303.

<sup>58</sup> Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. This tradition preceded Christianity; see Johnson, "Riders in the Sky: Cavalier Gods and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century A.D.," 303-321.

describe the character and role of the martyr. Gregory opens by evoking a past miracle of St. Theodore, which is presented as the occasion for the eulogy:<sup>60</sup>

For it was he, as we believe, who last year stilled the barbarian storm and who brought to an end the horrible war with savage Scyths by shaking, against those who were coming nearer in a menacing way while looking terrifying, not a helmet with three crests nor a sharp sword sparkling in the sunlight but the evil-barring and almighty cross of Christ, for whom he suffered and obtained glory.

It is now generally assumed that the “barbarian storm” in Gregory’s homily refer to the bands of Goths that advanced on Anatolia in the fifth century.<sup>61</sup> Regardless of the exact identity of the enemy forces, the miracle provides early testimony to a belief that a soldier saint was a particularly appropriate form of martyr to defend members of community in danger from military conflicts. Here, the power of St. Theodore derives from the “almighty cross of Christ.” Late antique Christians regarded the cross as a powerful weapon against demons in “spiritual combat,” as can be seen, for instance, in St. Athanasius’ popular *Life of St. Antony*.<sup>62</sup> In a liturgical poem on St. George written by the Syrian theologian Jacob of Serug, the martyr is present as a hero who wields the cross in the spiritual battle against demons. Gregory’s appeal draws upon the characterization of the cross as a powerful weapon against evil, but expands the meaning of “spiritual warfare” to encompass all conflicts that endanger Christians and put them in the path of bodily harm.

---

<sup>60</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *A Homily on St. Theodore the Recruit* 61, 4. Trans. in Leemans and Allen, “*Let Us Die that We May Live*”: *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)*, 84.

<sup>61</sup> C. Zuckerman, “Cappadocian Fathers and the Goths, Gregory of Nyssa’s Enkomion for St. Theodore the Recruit and the Gothic Riots in Asia Minor in 379,” *TM* 11 (1991), 479-86.

<sup>62</sup> In chapter 65, for instance, St. Antony engages in combat against demons. Quoting Eph. 6:13 and Tit. 2:8, St. Athanasius explains that such forces are why: “he exhorted us: *Take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day...that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.*” *Life of St. Antony*, chapter 65. Gregg, *Athanasius, The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, 79.

The homily closes with a final plea that directly links the status of saint as a soldier to his role as an extraterrestrial defender:

As a soldier, fight for us; as a martyr, use your freedom of speech on behalf of your fellow-servants. I know, you already left this life; but, on the other hand, you know the sufferings and needs of humankind. Ask God for peace, so that these feasts do not have to stop, so that the furious and lawless barbarian does not attack churches and altars nor that the profane trample upon the holy.<sup>63</sup>

Couched in the language common to passions, the appeal invests Theodore with special powers derived from his status in life as a soldier. Theodore is called upon both to “fight for us” and to “ask God for peace.” His intercession is necessary not only to prevent bodily harm, but also to protect his sanctuary from insult to the religion, which is vividly evoked by Gregory’s claim that the “profane” will “trample upon the holy.” In his passion, St. Theodore does not defend any shrine against desecration, but rather destroys a pagan temple; nevertheless, the two actions belong to, and operate within, the same set of cultural values. The model of spiritual combat seen here differs somewhat from the images at Bawit and Zorava, since the saint is called upon to fight real enemies. The aggression of the saint, however, is tightly circumscribed; he defeats the barbarians with a cross, not a sword.

The aggressive imagery may appear to be at odds with the concept of martyrdom promoted in the late antique martyr narratives and patristic texts, but it is those very documents that laid the groundwork for the militaristic saint described in Gregory’s miracle account. In an insightful study on violence in early Christianity, Michael Gaddis has emphasized that the martyrs of early Christianity were never conceived primarily as passive victims. Instead, the martyrs fight demons, smash idols, assault magistrates, and

---

<sup>63</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *A Homily on St. Theodore the Recruit* 70, 6. Tr. in Leemans and Allen, “*Let Us Die that We May Live*”: *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)*, 90-91.

set fire to temples.<sup>64</sup> His observation is easily extended to the soldier saints. St. George, in his *Acts and Passion*, swears vengeance on his persecutors before his soul is assumed into heaven. In the Syriac recension of his life, he calls out: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of all the ages, send fire which you sent in the days of Elijah the prophet, and it devoured the captain of fifty and the fifty who were with him, and let it devour the kings who believed not in the signs which they saw done through me.”<sup>65</sup>

This militant stance and aggressive characterization draws upon a well-developed tradition of regarding the struggles of the martyrs as a “spiritual combat.” The martyrs, according to their passions, are “soldiers,” their faith their “shield and armor.”

Militarized imagery pervaded Christian devotional language as early as St. Paul:

Put on all the armor which God provides, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil...Take up God’s armor, then you will be able to stand your ground...take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take salvation for helmet; for sword, take that which the Spirit gives you—the words that come from God.<sup>66</sup>

The language of spiritual combat was not exclusive to martyrdoms, but extended throughout Christian discourse, from ascetic practice to baptismal rites and even prayer.<sup>67</sup>

Although most Christians understood the language as a vivid metaphor, there was always the potential for the faithful to go beyond the figurative.

When Gregory of Nyssa called upon St. Theodore the Recruit for protection in the late fourth century, he was thus drawing upon a set of well-established motifs. It is impossible to know what the images of St. Theodore in circulation in the fifth century

---

<sup>64</sup> Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 23.

<sup>65</sup> E. W. Brooks, *Acts of St. George, Syriac and English* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006), 114.

<sup>66</sup> Ephesians 6:10ff (RSV trans.)

<sup>67</sup> Though not without problems, Malone gathers up many patristic texts with references to militarized language; see Edward E. Malone, “The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr” (Catholic University of America, 1950).

might have looked like, but later depictions draw upon the same constellation of ideas. Like St. Sergios and St. Menas, St. Theodore belonged to the small subset of saints with an elaborated iconographic form, but, in striking contrast to the other two saints, he was typically depicted in full armor. An panel painting in the Coptic Museum in Cairo belongs to a small group of late antique icons that represent St. Theodore in this form (Fig. 13). The rectangular panel is a double-sided icon, with a full-length figure of St. Theodore painted in encaustic on one side, and an archangel in bust form on the other. The image of St. Theodore shows him standing, wearing a *chlamys* pulled back to reveal his breastplate and leather skirt. His left hand rests on a jeweled, circular shield, while he holds in his right hand a spear, surmounted by a cross that announce his allegiance to Christ. The imagery aligns closely with a description of his icon in the eighth-century miracle collection, which relates how the martyr appeared to an artist to sit for his portrait, dressed in the full armor of a general. This iconography, which appears on numerous seals, recalls the profession of the martyr and fleshes out the metaphorical language of spiritual combat, giving it a concrete presence that belies the figurative nature of a metaphor.<sup>68</sup>

The reappearance of this iconography on late antique amulets suggests that the faithful, not unlike Gregory, regarded the soldier saints as particularly efficacious.<sup>69</sup> A gold pectoral cross that dates to the sixth or seventh century features an engraved image of a standing warrior piercing a serpent with a cross-topped spear that bears a close

---

<sup>68</sup> For the seals, see John W. Nesbitt, "Apotropaic Devices on Byzantine Lead Seals in the Collections of Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art," in *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton*, ed. Christopher Entwistle (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003), 107-113.

<sup>69</sup> Brigitte Pitarakis, "Objects of Devotion and Protection," in *A People's History of Christianity. Byzantine Christianity*, ed. Derek Krueger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 172-173.

iconographic resemblance to the icons of Theodore Teron (Fig. 14). The saint on the cross is unidentified: it could be St. George or St. Theodore, even possibly changing as the owner changed. It is even possible that the conflation of military martyrs with more overtly magical figures facilitated their perception as efficacious and aggressive patrons.<sup>70</sup> Regardless, the amuletic pendant clearly belongs to the same world as the image of St. Sisinnius seen at the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit.

### **From martyr to soldier of God**

In late antique martyrdoms, the death of the saint dramatically defined the community of the faithful by drawing a line between those who believed and those who did not. It was through this sacrifice that martyrs gained membership in the celestial company, becoming soldiers of God. As we have seen, early Christians vividly portrayed this metaphor by choosing to depict the soldier martyrs in the *chlamys* or in armor. By the sixth century, Christians had begun to image the soldier saints as heroes who drew boundaries around the community in more aggressive ways. In sixth-century accounts of military saints' epiphanies, select martyrs return to earth to defend the faithful, actually committing violent acts against real, historical figures on behalf of Christianity.<sup>71</sup> The most famous is the apparition of St. Mercurios recorded in the sixth-century Chronicle of John Malalas, which is said to have occurred in the fourth century during the reign of Julian the Apostate.<sup>72</sup> Julian, the Byzantine emperor who sought to restore the pre-

---

<sup>70</sup> These amulets depict a riding saint impaling a prostrate figure and are associated with magic practice. Although the rider is often identified as Solomon or simply remains nameless, they increasingly become associated with military martyrs, particularly Sisinnios. See Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," 25-62.

<sup>71</sup> As opposed to demons or the material culture of non-Christian religions, as in their martyrdoms.

<sup>72</sup> The Armenian historian Faustus, for instance, attributed a similar miracle to Sts. Sergios and Theodore. In this account, the warrior saints slay the Emperor Valens. See P. Peeters, "Un miracle de SS. Serge et Théodore dans Faustus de Byzance," *Analecta Bollandiana* 39 (1921): 70-73.

Christian faith, died in 363 under mysterious circumstances during a military campaign, felled by a spear. His unpopularity was such that the event instigated a round of rumors regarding the identity of his attacker – was the spear thrown by an enemy or by one of Julian’s own guard? According to Malalas, the deed was not performed by any human agent, but by the military martyr St. Mercurios. The chronicler records that the miraculous deed was revealed to the monk, St. Basil, in a dream:

That same night Basil, the most holy bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, saw in a dream the heavens opened and the Saviour Christ seated on a throne and saying loudly, "Mercurius, go and kill the emperor Julian, who is against the Christians". St. Mercurius, standing before the Lord, wore a gleaming iron breast-plate. Hearing the command he disappeared, and then he re-appeared, standing before the Lord, and cried out, "The emperor Julian has been fatally wounded and has died, as you commanded, Lord."<sup>73</sup>

As Michael Gaddis has shown, this miracle account was part of a larger discourse that used the concept of the martyr to make acts of violence legible as acts of virtuous resistance. Malalas regarded Julian as a persecutor of the Christian faith in the tradition of Roman emperors such as Diocletian.<sup>74</sup> In this he was drawing on the precedent of his fourth-century precursors: St. Basil had branded Julian a persecutor, a powerful term that placed the Christian community once again into the position of the unjustly persecuted, and called on the faithful to engage in spiritual combat. As Julian discovered, five decades of Christian rule had changed the meaning of “spiritual combat” radically and irrevocably; in the eyes of fourth-century Christians the ultimate victory no longer came through submission but was to be sought in any fight for the protection of the faith. By

---

<sup>73</sup> John Malalas, *Chronicle*, 13.25. Translation in Elizabeth Jeffreys et al., *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 181-182.

<sup>74</sup> Julian actually differed significantly from his Roman predecessors. He did discriminate against his Christian subjects, but he never actually outlawed or even circumscribed the practice of the faith, likely because he did not want to be branded as a persecutor of the Christian faith. See Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 89-90.

branding Julian as a persecutor, St. Basil and his contemporaries placed him into a larger narrative of persecution and triumph, justifying acts of violence.

Redefining the functions and character of the military saints was not the primary purpose of this account; yet the martyr that emerges is radically different from the other iterations discussed in this chapter. Where St. Theodore turned back the forces that threaten his shrine with a cross, Mercurios wielded a weapon to slay the emperor Julian. Though the violence remains tightly circumscribed, committed only to protect the community, we are far from the martyrs who established communal boundaries by dying for their values. This militant saint ensures the continuation of the larger community by lashing out against all those who would dare to threaten its survival. In the process, Mercurios and his brethren became figures who at once embodied the community of the faithful and protected it.

### **Frontier cult**

By the seventh century, understandings of the military saints were shaped by competing discourses a range of iconographies. On one level, the military martyrs remained symbols of victory and emblems of the Christian community that were understood within a salvific framework, emphasizing the role of suffering in attaining spiritual victory. Christians continued to regard the military martyrs as the special defenders of Christianity, engaging in a form of “spiritual combat” that went beyond its metaphorical meanings. By now the cult had expanded – stretching from the banks of Mareotis in Alexandria to the fortress-shrine of St. Sergios in Ruṣāfa – and the roles of the saints had become more complex. Both warfare and the rise of new rival religious communities would sustain – and intensify – the demand for images of the warrior saints,



the protection they conferred, and the models for militarized virtues they offered the faithful. During the second half of the seventh century, the emperor Heraclius found himself defending the empire against the military advances of the Persians and Arabs. As John Haldon has demonstrated, religious motifs (including the military martyrs) came to play an important role in the ideological struggles of the empire during this period, prompting the faithful to regard conflicts as a struggle between good and evil.<sup>75</sup> The tenth-century emperors Nikephoros Phocas and John Tzimiskes, who led campaigns to the east, would both draw upon and elaborate the ideologies pioneered in the reign of Heraclius.

The emergence of a cult of military saints has often been linked to imperial ideologies, and they doubtlessly played a role. Yet, as we have seen, the military martyrs were equally popular on the outskirts of the empire. There are other indications that a centrist model may not fully capture the phenomenon. Though hailed as “the allies” of the emperor “who set enemies to flight,”<sup>76</sup> the military saints did not play a prominent role in either the defense of Constantinople, a task entrusted to icons of the Theotokos,<sup>77</sup> or imperial devotion, which centered on Christ.<sup>78</sup> While the emperors and empresses of Constantinople eagerly collected relics, these were overwhelmingly related to the Holy

---

<sup>75</sup> John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London: UCLA Press, 1999), 17.

<sup>76</sup> Nicolas Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," in *Peace and War in Byzantium*, ed. T. S. Miller and J. Nesbit (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>77</sup> Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 61-108.

<sup>78</sup> Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Court Culture and Cult Icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997), 81-100.

Land and Christ's passion.<sup>79</sup> Detached from their sacred places of origin, they were transported to the capital to create Jerusalem anew and establish Constantinople as the rightful heir to Christendom. Indeed, when Constantine VII urged his troops to victory in 958 over Sayf ad-Dawla, he gave them holy water drawn from the relics of the passion so that they might "garb" themselves "with the divine power from on high."<sup>80</sup> Although Manuel I Comnenos adopted St. George for his imperial imagery, his devotion was more the exception than the rule.<sup>81</sup> As a usurper with neither military connections nor experience of battle, his choice appears as a strategic gesture to the army, an adoption of the popular devotion that extended throughout the ranks of the military.<sup>82</sup> When John Tzimiskes saw St. Theodore miraculously turn back the tides of Russian forces to save Byzantium from destruction, he expressed his gratitude by building a church for the saint not in the capital, but in Euchaïta, the frontier city that was saint's cult center.<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, Constantinople was a distant city on the horizon for the populations living in locales where the military saints' cults were rooted. As we have seen, Demetrios' shrine was located in the city of Thessaloniki, George's cult center grew up in Lydda (Palestine), and Theodore was venerated at a church erected over the cave where he

---

<sup>79</sup> Liz James, "Bearing Gifts from the East: Imperial Relic Hunters Abroad," in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, ed. Anthony Eastmond (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001), 119-132.

<sup>80</sup> Eric McGeer, "Two Military Orations of Constantine VII," in *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations: Texts and Translations Dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides*, ed. John Nesbitt (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 133.

<sup>81</sup> Henry Maguire, "The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 206-207.

<sup>82</sup> For devotion among officers see Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Le culte de Saint Théodore chez les officiers de l'armée d'Orient," in *Byzantium, State and Society in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, ed. Anna Avramea, Angelike Laiou, and E. Chrysos (Athens: Byzantine Institute, 2003), 137-153; Idem., "Par Saint Georges, par Saint Michel," in *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*, ed. Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2002), 115-134. For devotion related to the common ranks see Brigitte Pitarakis, *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze* (Paris: Picard, 2006), 140-141.

<sup>83</sup> John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, 15.19. Trans. in John Wortley, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057: Introduction, Text and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 293.

performed his miraculous feat of dragon slaying, in Amasa (Anatolia). Though these regions were fragmented by warfare throughout late antiquity and in the middle Byzantine period, pilgrims from both near and far continued to visit the saints' shrines, their travels paralleled by the movements of relics and images.<sup>84</sup> In the eleventh century, John Mauropous wrote that the relics of St. Theodore Teron had been dispersed so that "these universal treasures could be widely appreciated,"<sup>85</sup> hinting at the circulation of relics for establishment of the saint's cult in new places, in locales sometimes as far away as Egypt. Commanders such as Nikephoros Ouranos came to the east and took part in the patronage of the local military saint, aligning himself with local networks of piety as well as the heavenly allies.

Operating at the constantly shifting frontiers of the empire, warrior saints routinely saved their supplicants, shrines, cities, and even their own relics from despoilment by an ever-changing array of enemy forces ranging from Persians to Arabs, Slavs to Turks. As we have seen, they were venerated even beyond those military frontiers. In the remainder of this dissertation, it will be argued that the warrior saints – their transformation and veneration – are best understood within the context of the frontier.

---

<sup>84</sup> Pilgrims continued to visit the shrine of St. Theodore after the eighth century, as attested by the life of St. Lazarus the Fool; elsewhere, it is recorded that a miracle-working pillar in a church in Amasea was still attracting visitors in the eleventh century. Clive Foss, "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 130, 134, 139.

<sup>85</sup> Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), 49.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Depicting the Military Martyrs: Regional Variations**

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the military martyrs stood at the apex of the saintly hierarchy across the eastern Mediterranean. Yet their rise to spiritual prominence came only after long centuries of redefinition, during which time image makers and hagiographers drew on the images and discourses developed in late antiquity to intensify the saints' militant character and group them into a distinct class. Both their new visualization as armed warriors and their reputations as defenders facilitated the appropriation of select warrior saints across religious boundaries. This phenomenon can be seen most vividly in the case of St. Demetrios.

In 1185, in northern Bulgaria, two brothers, Peter and Asen, raised a rebellion against Byzantine rule, which ended with Byzantium's losing the Balkan Mountains and the Lower Danube. According to the Greek chronicler Nicetas Choniates the victory of the Bulgarians was owed, in part, to their conviction that the holy warrior St. Demetrios was on their side. In the early stages of the revolt, Peter and Asen built in the future capital of the "Second Bulgarian Empire" a church dedicated to St. Demetrios and announced to the congregation assembled in it that God had decided to restore freedom to the Bulgarians. Choniates reports that they concluded: "for this reason Christ's martyr Demetrios had deserted the metropolis of Thessaloniki and the church there in which he had dwelt among the Byzantines, and had come to them (i.e. to Bulgaria) to help and

support them in their enterprise.”<sup>1</sup> At that time, Thessaloniki was in the hands of the Normans, lending credence to the claim that St. Demetrios had abandoned the Byzantines and the shrine in which he had been venerated since late antiquity.

Although the belief in St. Demetrios’ patronage provided and sustained the morale needed to liberate Bulgarian territories from Byzantium, this version of events would not go uncontested. Just two decades later, in 1207, Bulgarians under the leadership of the king Kalojan advanced on Thessaloniki, recently recaptured by the Byzantine army. Just before the main assault, Kalojan died under mysterious circumstances.<sup>2</sup> John Stauracius, the thirteenth-century Chartophylax of the Metropolis of Thessaloniki, ascribed his death to divine intervention. According to him, it was none other than St. Demetrios who slew the Bulgarian, appearing before him in the guise of a soldier on a white horse.<sup>3</sup> For John Stauracius and his brethren in Thessaloniki, the slaying of Kalojan was just punishment for the Bulgarians’ attempt to appropriate their powerful patron – and proof that St. Demetrios was still the exclusive champion of their city and religious community.

Niketas Choniates and John Stauracius provide an unusually detailed account of a typical occurrence in the middle ages: the appropriation of a saintly patron by a rival community, and his subsequent reclamation. By the time Peter and Asen laid claim to St. Demetrios, Bulgarians had been visiting his shrine in Thessaloniki for centuries, hoping

---

<sup>1</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. I Bekker (Bonn, 1938), p. 485; ed. J. A. van Dieten (Berlin 1975, p. 371. Trans. in Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984). For a discussion of this event in relation to broader Byzantine-Slav relations, see Dimitri Obolenski, "The Cult of St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slav Relations," *Balkan Studies* 15 (1974): 295.

<sup>2</sup> Obolenski, "The Cult of St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slav Relations," 296.

<sup>3</sup> Γεωργίου Σταυρακίου λόγος εἰς τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου, *Μακεδονικά*, I, 1940, 371-372. For a discussion of the miracle, see *Ibid.*

to benefit from his miracle-working relics. For the Byzantines and their northern neighbors – separated by linguistic and ethnic differences – the migration of the cult must have fostered in each case a sense of communal cohesion. It also laid the groundwork for the contested histories produced in the thirteenth century, which sought to harness a saint with regional appeal and a strong local association with Thessaloniki in the service of both local politics and communal self-fashioning in Bulgaria.

The events described by Choniates and Stauracius occurred in a region outside the area that serves as the focus of this study; nevertheless, they provide a fitting point of departure for the topic of this chapter, the place of warrior saints in regional devotion. By the thirteenth century, the cult of the warrior saints had gained popularity across the eastern Mediterranean, developing site-specific features in relation to local and regional traditions wherever it alighted. The documentation of the movement of the cult of Demetrios from Thessaloniki across the northern frontier in the thirteenth century is precious and rare. For the most part, the spread of such cults occurred without comment, leaving us only with the images and texts created in their support to testify to their regional appeal and to show how they were adapted under new circumstances.

The cult of the military saints assumed a prominent position in the visual culture of the Byzantine Empire and its surrounding regions in the early middle ages. The precise members of the cohort of military saints, as we have begun to see, varied in accordance with local devotional practice and locally generated sacred histories. Nonetheless, all Christians in the east – regardless of creed or confession – paid homage to a core group of warrior saints that included Sts. George of Cappadocia, Theodore

Stratelates (the “General”), Theodore Teron (the “Recruit”), Mercurios, and Demetrios.<sup>4</sup> Christians in Syria localized the cult by placing their own ancestral heroes, Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, at the center of the cohort, while Egyptian Christians elevated figures such as St. Menas to prominence.<sup>5</sup> In Cappadocia, image-makers and audiences favored a local martyr, St. Eustatius.<sup>6</sup>

The militarization of the saints was a complex process, ongoing for centuries, characterized by revivals and the reuse of earlier materials. We see it in texts, copied anew, incorporated into the liturgy, and in prayers for soldiers who died in battle. Imagery provides an even more sensitive witness to developments, for it charts an escalation in their militarized personas. This phenomenon has been treated in scholarship, but not across the centuries or across regions. This chapter draws together many strands of research to attempt a synthesis that will provide a context for the images that arose during the Crusader era. As a prelude to a treatment of the situation in Egypt and the Levant, I will briefly sketch the situation in Byzantium proper. The cult and images are better known and better studied and therefore become a necessary point of departure.

### **The warrior saints in the Byzantine Empire**

In the eyes of thirteenth-century Byzantines, the military martyrs were among the most powerful saints in the Orthodox church. In status and efficaciousness, they ranked second only to the Virgin Mary and her all-powerful son, Jesus. Since they were the

---

<sup>4</sup> Hippolyte Delehaye, the first scholar to consider the military martyrs, referred to this corpus group at the *état-major*. Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*.

<sup>5</sup> These saints will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, "Hagiographie cappadocienne: A propos de quelques images nouvelles de Saint Hiéron et de Saint Eustathe," in *Eufósunon: afiéroma ston Manóle Hatzedáke* (Athens: Ekdose tou tameíou arkaialogikon póron kai apallotrioseon, 1991), 205-218.

special generals of the Virgin, their intercession on the battlefield ensured victory while their absence was a portent of defeat.<sup>7</sup> According to the monastic charter of the late Byzantine Emperor, Michael VIII (1259-1282), it was not Christ but the military martyr St. Demetrios who served as his “great defender.”<sup>8</sup> Throughout the early middle ages, homilies and devotional texts lauded the soldier saints as “allies,” “comrades in arms,” and “fervent [guardians] in battle.”<sup>9</sup> The Byzantines routinely attributed their success in battle to divine aid, and sometimes specifically to the intervention of the military martyrs themselves.<sup>10</sup> Because of their reputation as defenders and the models they provided for Christian warriors, these saints become a nearly ubiquitous feature of the visual culture in Byzantium by the tenth century. Their change in status was registered and orchestrated in large part through their visual representations, which increasingly came to depict the soldier saints in armor and in the company of other soldier saints.<sup>11</sup> This discussion is intended to provide a summary of current thinking on the warrior saints in Byzantium and will draw on a plethora of studies by historians, art historians, and liturgists, including the synthetic work of Christopher Walter, discussed above, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (2003). Whereas many of the studies offer focused treatments of

---

<sup>7</sup> An anonymous account of the Battle of Myrokephalon, for example, implicates the absence of the military saints in the Byzantine defeat. Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. I. van Dieten (CFHB, 11) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973), 1, 190; English tran. in H. J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 107-108. For commentary on the text and its relation to the military role of Mary, see Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Trans. in George Dennis, “Kellibara I,” in John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika and Testaments* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 1246.

<sup>9</sup> See below, fn. 57, 36, 69.

<sup>10</sup> As, for example, in the battle led by John I Tzimiskes against the Rus’. See below.

<sup>11</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 274-276.



individual texts and images, I will attempt to weave together an account of the evolving cult and its shifting meaning, especially as registered in iconographical developments.

*Byzantine icons*

In the tenth and eleventh centuries in Byzantium, the cult of the military saints acquired greater significance, as is attested by the proliferation of their images on portable objects, like ivory triptychs, steatite icons, cameos, enamels, seals, and coins, as well as the prominent position assigned to them, in terms of numbers and locations, in the iconographic programs of churches. During the same period, the cult expanded; martyrs such as St. Demetrios and St. Procopios were redefined as soldiers, and the cult of the warrior saint Theodore Stratelates developed in Anatolia as a rival to that of St. Theodore Teron. As we will see, iconographical forms played a key role in redefining the personas of these saints.

The military saints in the echelon belong to a far larger cohort of saints with military associations in the Orthodox calendar, most of whom never inspired their own iconographic tradition. In this respect, their development follows broader trends. Byzantinists have noted that, of the many sacred figures accorded liturgical veneration, only a small percentage ever received pictorial treatment.<sup>12</sup> The historic lives of the core saints (with the exception of Theodore Stratelates) all date to the fourth century, although

---

<sup>12</sup> This point has been made most recently by John Cotsonis, focusing on the saints represented on seals. See John Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)," *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 392. Paul Halsall has made a similar point in regards to the western cult of the saints. See P. Halsall, "Women's Bodies, Men's Souls: Sanctity and Gender in Byzantium" (Dissertation, Fordham University, 1999), 26-27, 32-33, 41, 48, 50, 261. Otto Meinardus found similar trends in relic veneration. See Otto Meinardus, "A Study of the Relics of Saints of the Greek Orthodox Church," *Oriens christianus* 54 (1970): 132.

eneration to some saints cannot be attested until the Middle Byzantine period.<sup>13</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that not all the saints venerated as military martyrs in the Middle Byzantine period were associated with the military during late antiquity. Consequently, both the timing and method of their militarization are strikingly diverse.

Image-makers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries represented saints, including the warrior saints, primarily in the form of portraits. In many respects, these portraits conform to the conventions typical of all sacred images, but image-makers also drew inspiration from other sources, including lived experience (with respect to dress) and, as Walter has shown, the iconographic types proper to late antique depictions of warrior saints and emperors.<sup>14</sup> Two basic iconographic types came to the fore: the standing figure in ceremonial garb and the standing warrior; when space was restricted, the saint could be represented as a half-length figure or a bust.<sup>15</sup> The courtier type appeared first, in the ninth century, and the warrior type appeared soon after, in the tenth century.<sup>16</sup> These provided the template for the majority of images of military saints and also served as the basis for further elaborations, notably as the twelfth-century iconography that

---

<sup>13</sup> The passion for Theodore Stratelates cannot be attested prior to the tenth century. See Oikonomides, "Le déblouement de saint Théodore et les villes d'Euchaïta and d'Euchaneia," 327-335. For an opposing opinion see Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 59-64. For the evidence from seals, which supports Oikonomides' findings, see Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)," 456.

<sup>14</sup> For the possibility that armor was modeled after armor then in use, see Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, 101-142. Piotr Grotowski's book came to my attention as I was finishing my dissertation. Unfortunately, I did not have time to consult it; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*.

<sup>15</sup> For general discussions of the depiction of military figures, see Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, 149-154.

<sup>16</sup> This development can be quite precisely followed through consideration of seals, as Cotsonis has shown. Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)," 469-470.

depicts the warrior saints on horseback.<sup>17</sup> Although the material record indicates a preference for the warrior type among patrons, both were employed throughout the middle ages and across the expanse of the eastern Mediterranean.

Images of Sts. Eugenios, Eustratios, and Auxentios dated to the eleventh century, painted in the north-west chapel of the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas in Phocis, are paradigmatic examples of the courtier type (Fig. 15).<sup>18</sup> In accordance with the conventions of sacred images, the saints stand facing forward with their gazes turned towards the viewer. Each is dressed in ceremonial garb, which includes a *chlamys* and *tablion*, and holds a cross before his chest, signifying his death as a martyr in imitation of Christ. As in late antiquity, the iconography utilizes the contemporary language of dress – with all its ability to construct and mirror identity and status – as a way to signify the rank and position of the soldier saint. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, court ritual, imperial art, and the perception of the empire as the mirror image of the kingdom God gave rise to this iconographical form, which visualized the relationship of the martyr to God in terms of that of Byzantine officials to the emperor. The iconography refashions the soldier saint of late antiquity by drawing upon the system of signs provided by current courtly fashions to express the allegiance of the three military saints to Christ and to articulate their membership in the larger company of martyrs. This iconographical type

---

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Ioli Kalavreou-Maxeiner, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite* (Wien: Verlag, 1985), vol. 2, figs. 124-125.

<sup>18</sup> When represented as courtiers, the military martyrs were indistinguishable from other martyrs, unless holding swords. For a more detailed discussion of the dress employed for martyrs, see Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, 94-99.

places a visual emphasis on the role of the soldier-martyrs as members of the heavenly court and as intercessors.<sup>19</sup>

A tenth-century mosaic representation of St. Procopios in the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas in Phocis (Fig. 16) nicely exemplifies the warrior type. St. Procopios appears in full military regalia, wearing a breastplate, *chlamys*, and arm guards. The iconography leaves the beholder with no doubt that the saint is well-equipped and prepared for action: a sword hangs at his side, his left hand rests on a circular shield, and he grasps a spear with his right hand. As in the case of St. Eustratios, dress plays a key role in establishing the status of the military martyr. The breastplate is likely intended to evoke contemporary ceremonial armor, which was used in triumphal processions and on other ceremonial occasions. This is combined with antique features, such as the officer's sash tied around his chest. The depiction of the armor at once links the warrior saint to contemporary realities in the practice of court dress and sets the saint apart as a figure outside of time.<sup>20</sup> The overall effect of the iconography is to distinguish the soldier saints from the larger company of martyrs and to articulate their place in the heavenly hierarchy as the holy warriors who defend and uphold the realm – or as a tenth-century text puts it, the “allies that set the enemies to flight.”

This militarized iconography, which became a pervasive feature of Byzantine visual culture, is often thought to reflect the profession of the soldier in life. Such a relationship may be proposed for figures such as St. George, who served as a soldier in the Roman army. However, not all the martyrs represented in military garb from the

---

<sup>19</sup> The same idea has been expressed by Ibid., 153; Kalavreou-Maxeiner, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite*, 63-64.

<sup>20</sup> Or, as Maria Parani has said, it creates an image of a “timeless” military dress. See Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, 158.

Middle Byzantine period onwards could claim such a pedigree. St. Procopios, for instance, was identified in his passion as a bishop. In his case, it seems that the military dress was adopted not so much as the costume of the soldier who became the martyr, but of the martyr who, because of his sacrifice, became a soldier for Christ. The productive and transformative nature of the soldier-martyr iconography was not limited to St. Procopios, but also refashioned St. Demetrios, the patron of Thessaloniki, and later St. Eugenios, the patron of Trebizond.<sup>21</sup>

Representations of the soldier-martyrs from the tenth and eleventh century suggest that they were regarded as individuals within a larger class. Various visual devices were used to distinguish the saints from one another. Byzantine image-makers developed individual facial types for a number of the warrior saints.<sup>22</sup> This is well demonstrated by the tenth-century mosaics at Hosios Loukas, where St. Theodore Stratelates was represented with the white hair and flowing beard of venerable old age (Fig. 17), while St. George and St. Demetrios are seen with short curly hair and the clean-shaven faces that signified youth in Byzantine visual culture (Figs. 18, 19).<sup>23</sup> Because St. George and St. Demetrios were depicted with much the same facial type, they are often indistinguishable from one another save for their identifying inscriptions. This is particularly evident in media such as seals and steatite icons, where image-makers

---

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of St. Procopios' hagiographic tradition and his passion, see Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, 77-89; 214-233. For a discussion of the hagiography alone, see Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 94-100.

<sup>22</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of portrait types of the Byzantine military saints, see Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 18-22.

<sup>23</sup> For St. Theodore, see Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 55-56. For St. George, see Idem., *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 123-144. For St. Demetrios, see Idem., *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 76-80.

evidently employed the same model for both saints.<sup>24</sup> In addition to distinctive facial types, an image-maker might also include iconographic attributes specific to a saint, although this was far less common than in the European tradition.<sup>25</sup> Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, for example, typically wear the *maniakion*, an iconographic convention that developed in late antiquity, as we have seen (Fig. 20).<sup>26</sup> Neither portrait types nor iconographic attributes were applied consistently across time and across media, suggesting a certain leeway in the application of iconographic conventions.

By the eleventh century, the warrior type had come to dominate, indicating a growing preference among patrons for the more overtly militarized images. The change is most clearly registered in the monumental pictorial programs seen in Middle Byzantine churches, where military saints are categorized visually as they are represented together in a group. This we saw at Hosios Loukas (Figs. 16-19). It is the practice of visual grouping, which employs dress to suggest a class, that has enabled modern commentators to identify the emergence of a group within the hierarchy of saints. Yet, the Byzantines referred to them only as “the great martyrs” and “the *stratelatai*” (generals). By the end of the tenth century, image-makers and their patrons had settled on a relatively stable cohort of preferred saints that included St. George, St. Theodore Stratelates, St. Theodore

---

<sup>24</sup> Despite their ambiguous features, image-makers did not consistently include identifying inscriptions, particularly on smaller-scale media. For their omission in seals, see Cotsonis, “The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)”: 228. This may be a function of media, or perhaps a continuation or resurgence of late antique trends, when it was common to represent saints without an accompanying inscription. Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> Saints with specific attributes were relatively rare in Byzantium. See Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, 17-18.

<sup>26</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 152-162; Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 29-44. Other military saints who received individual attributes include St. Orestes (who wears a cross pendant) and St. Eustratios (who wears a particular cap). See Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, 150-151.

Teron, St. Demetrios, St. Mercurios, and St. Procopios.<sup>27</sup> Other soldier-martyrs were added according to personal or local preferences. The Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, for instance, were popular in Cappadocia, where they were said to have perished fighting Arab forces.

Icons of warrior saints on portable objects replicate the iconography we have seen in church programs, perhaps deriving their authority in the private context from their appearance in the more official setting. Icons such as a tenth-century ivory in the Metropolitan Museum of Art carved to represent St. Demetrios represent the high end of production (Fig. 2).<sup>28</sup> The ivory shows the saint in armor with a general's sash, as we have seen at Hosios Loukas, but made to be held in the hand by an elite patron. Other objects, such as a bronze pectoral-reliquaries, represent the opposite end of the spectrum and are curiously disconnected from the iconography employed in higher levels of production (Fig. 21).<sup>29</sup> The cross in the Metropolitan Museum of Art belongs to a type typically found in Anatolia, which shows the saint in a robe and orant position that is identical to the iconography employed for other saints on these objects.

The saints also appear in collective portraits, which sometimes reflect local or personal preferences. The three saints most frequently grouped together are George, Theodore, and Demetrios, the three saints most venerated in Byzantium.<sup>30</sup> Often military

---

<sup>27</sup> This grouping does not necessarily reflect the relative popularity of the saints. St. Mercurios and St. Procopios rarely appear in objects of personal devotion.

<sup>28</sup> Ioli Kalavrezou, "The Harbaville Triptych," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: Abrams, 1997), cat. 80.

<sup>29</sup> Pitarakis, *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales Byzantines en bronze*, 149-163.

<sup>30</sup> See for example Yuri Piatnitsky, "Icon with the Military Saints George, Theodore, and Demetrios," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), cat. 69.

saints would appear in pairs, whether George and Theodore,<sup>31</sup> George and Demetrios,<sup>32</sup> or the two Theodores.<sup>33</sup> These had not been companions of life, though others, following hagiographical tradition, had been, namely, Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, and Sts. Demetrios and Nestor.<sup>34</sup> Certain scholars, notably Henry Maguire, have proposed various explanations for the preference of representing military martyrs in groups, including the increased efficaciousness gained through the magic-like repetition of figures.<sup>35</sup> The desire for warriors in number finds a parallel in contemporary liturgical texts, in which the faithful tend to invoke the saints in a litany, perhaps reflecting perceptions of the saints as members of an armed guard. From time to time, the military martyrs were also represented alongside saints of local or personal importance, in which case the better-known saint lent the lesser-known figure greater authority and perhaps potency.<sup>36</sup> The production of reliquaries of military saints, often combined with images, provided multiple ways to access the divine.

### *The rise of the cult*

Several developments in the early Middle Byzantine period were instrumental in paving the way for widespread devotion to the military saints in Byzantium. Christopher Walter has pointed out a connection between religious practice in the army and the

---

<sup>31</sup> See for example William D. Wixom, "Enkolpion," *Ibid.*, cat. 111.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Dimitrios G. Katsarelis, "Enkolpion Reliquary with St. Demetrios," *Ibid.*, cat. 116.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Idem., "Cameo with Saint George and Saint Demetrios Blessed by Christ," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), cat. 132.

<sup>34</sup> See for example William D. Wixom, "Enkolpion with Saint Demetrios and Saint Nestor," *Ibid.*, cat. 108.

<sup>35</sup> Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium*, 124-126.

<sup>36</sup> This happens quite commonly with the pilgrimage flasks of Demetrios from Thessalonike. See Ch. Bakirtzis, "Byzantine Ampullae from Thessaloniki," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 140-149.



veneration of the warrior saints.<sup>37</sup> The ninth and tenth centuries saw significant expansion in the larger cult of the saints, which was closely linked to the triumph of Orthodoxy. During and after the iconoclastic controversies of the eighth century, iconodule theologians placed a new emphasis on the intercessory powers of the Virgin and the saints and, at the same time, redefined the production of sacred images as a Christian imperative.<sup>38</sup> Consequently the following centuries saw a proliferation of sacred images.<sup>39</sup> Interest in the saints only intensified in the tenth century, when the military campaigns of Nikephoros Phocas and John I Tzimiskes in Syria temporarily restored access to the holy lands, stimulating pilgrimage to the east, the trade in relics, and a new demand for saints' lives and sacred images.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, the production of hymnography and hagiography both made new saint's lives available and promoted interest in the older ones, the stories often now cast in the more standardized form developed for the *menologion*.<sup>41</sup> The military martyrs benefited in

---

<sup>37</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 278-281.

<sup>38</sup> The process through which sacred images acquired increasing importance in both the concerns of theologians and devotional practice is charted in Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks, and Shrouds* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997). See also Kenneth Parry, "Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros on Image-Making as a Christian Imperative," *Byzantion* 59 (1989): 164-183.

<sup>39</sup> See L. Mariès, "L'irruption des saints dans l'illustration des psautiers byzantins," *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950): 150. For a critique, see Anthony Cutler, "Liturgical Strata in the Marginal Psalters," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34-35 (1982): 17-30; Jeffrey Anderson, "On the Nature of the Theodore Psalter," *Art Bulletin* 70 4 (1988): 550-556.

<sup>40</sup> For pilgrimage to shrines in Syria, see Foss, "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor," 129-151. For pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see A. Jotischky, "History and Memory as Factors in Greek Orthodox Pilgrimage to the Holy Land Under Crusader Rule," in *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, ed. R. Nbek . Swanson (Suffolk: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2000), 110-112.

<sup>41</sup> On hymnography, see Nancy Ševčenko, "Canon and Calendar: The Role of a Ninth-Century Hymnographer in Shaping the Celebration of the Saints," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Burlington, VT: Aldershot, 1998), 101-114. On the menologion, see Christian Hogel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Press, 2002); Idem., "The Redaction of Symeon Metaphrastes: Literary Aspects of the Metaphrastic Martyria," in *Metaphrastes: Redactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography* (Oslo: The Research Council of Norway, 1996), 7-21. For an excellent analysis of the standardization, through the examination of a military saints' passion, see Lennart Ryden, "New Forms of Hagiography: Heroes and Saints" (paper presented at the The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers, 1986), 537-554.

particular from the new demand for images, appearing as early as the ninth century in manuscripts and on seals, where image-makers represented them primarily as courtiers.<sup>42</sup> The military martyrs became the most frequently depicted class of saints on portable icons from the Middle Byzantine period onwards.

New forms of accessibility led to increases in the production of sacred images, and contemporaneous changes in the liturgy and the articulation of ecclesiastical spaces promoted new understandings of the saints. Middle Byzantine church programs detached figures from liturgical time – their order according to the calendar – and instead grouped them according to their profession: bishops, martyrs, monks, virgins, physicians and warrior saints.<sup>43</sup> Arranged in a group in churches such as Hosios Loukas, their images articulated the category of the warrior saint more clearly than perhaps any other type of medium or text. This was the period that witnessed the erection of ever-more elaborate *iconostases*, which effectively segregated the laity from the sacred rites being performed by the clergy in the sanctuary.<sup>44</sup> As if in denial of this spatial segregation, the images in the church *naos*, by representing each type of saint positioned according to rank, presented an ideological vision of a single, unified community. That the faithful were understood as part of this order is evident from the *Cherubikon*, the hymn sung before the *prothesis*, which begins with a call for the laity to join the saints, absorbing the living into

---

<sup>42</sup> Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)," 450.

<sup>43</sup> For the changes to the Middle Byzantine program, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 173-172. For an excellent overview of the images and liturgy, see Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Art and Liturgy in the Later Byzantine Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 127-153.

<sup>44</sup> Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle: College Art Association and University of Washington Press, 1999), 12.

the larger spiritual company.<sup>45</sup> In Middle Byzantine churches sacred images in the *naos*, including those of the military martyrs, became the primary site giving individuals access to the divine during the liturgy.<sup>46</sup>

If the intensification in veneration of the saints paved the way for the military saints' visual dominance, it was shifts in the composition of the ruling class and its ideologies of empire that provided the context for the intensification of militaristic aspects in the saints. During the ninth and tenth centuries, a distinct military elite of magnate clans, drawn particularly from the provinces and borderlands, came to dominate the government and control the administration of the empire, leading to a militarization of society. A culture developed championing the Christian warrior that involved personal honor, bravery, and skills in fighting.<sup>47</sup> As Christopher Walter has noted, efforts to ennoble the warrior date to this period and can be seen in the military literature of the time. In the *Tactica* of Leo VI, the ninth-century emperor expressed the belief that soldiers who fight on behalf of the faith gain immediate spiritual rewards, while those who die in battle achieve sanctity. He wrote: "The bodies of the soldiers who have been killed in battle are sacred, especially those who have been most valiant in the fight on behalf of the Christians." For this reason, when a soldier fell in battle the commanding general should "pronounce him blessed." As John Haldon has noted, the ideas presented

---

<sup>45</sup> E. F. Brightman, *Liturgies, Eastern and Western* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 377.

<sup>46</sup> Anthony Cutler, "Visual Communities in Byzantium and Medieval Islam," in *Visions of Community in the Pre-Modern World*, ed. Nbek . Honre (Notre Dame, I.Nbek .: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 40.

<sup>47</sup> Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204*, 29.

by Leo drew upon the Islamic notion of *jihād*, but refashion them in relation to Christian notions of warfare and salvation.<sup>48</sup>

The trends outlined above suggest that the warrior saints came to prominence both through changes in the heart of the empire (such as the reconceptualization of the saints as a hierarchy) and through developments that occurred at its shifting boundaries, particularly the rise of a provincial military aristocracy. In writing about this new elite, John Haldon has argued that the emperors of the tenth century tried to subdue and accommodate their distinctive warrior ideology by absorbing it within the framework of Constantinopolitan administrative culture in the capital. I would like to suggest that a military saints and their representations were part of this movement through and across society. The prominence of the warrior saints might be considered less as a result of imperial influence – as has often been assumed – than as a product of negotiation between Constantinople and the populations that defended the constantly fluctuating boundaries of the empire. I will explore this idea through considering two spheres of patronage, imperial circles and the military elite.

*Vanguards and champions: the warrior saints and imperial patronage*

As I noted in the previous chapter, Byzantine Emperors typically aligned themselves with the spiritual patronage of Christ and his mother, the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, select emperors began to favor the warrior saints in the tenth and eleventh centuries, often according them a supporting role in maintaining the boundaries of the empire. During this period, an era wrought with military conflict, emperors and members

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

of the imperial elite employed representations of these popular saints to bolster their claims to authority.

An incident recorded by the tenth-century writer Leo the Deacon provides a case in point. In recording the battle between the Byzantines and the Rus' in 971, he presents the warrior saints as the special allies of the emperor John Tzimiskes:

And it is said that there appeared a man on a white horse, who went ahead of the Romans and encouraged them to advance against the Scythians; and he broke through the enemy regiments in a wondrous fashion, and threw them into disarray...a definite suspicion was aroused that it was the great martyr Theodore, whom the emperor used to beseech for help in battle, and to protect and preserve him together with all the army. And they say that the following occurred on the evening before the battle. In Byzantium a virgin dedicated to God thought that she saw in a dream the Mother of God, escorted by men in the form of flames. And She said to them, "Summon for me the martyr Theodore"; and immediately there appeared a brave young man in armor. And the Mother of God said to him, "Lord Theodore, your John, who is fighting the Scythians at Dorystolon, is now in very difficult straits. Make haste to help him."<sup>49</sup>

The appearance of a military martyr on horseback who performs a miracle of deliverance owes much to the late antique miracle accounts considered in the last chapter. However, the warrior saint no longer acts in response to an individual or a shrine, but rather to the needs and prayers of the army that upholds the Byzantine state. As represented in this passage, St. Theodore is not a local patron but the defender of a beleaguered empire. In presenting the warrior saint as "the vanguards and champions" of the emperor, the account also contributes to an imperial theory of power based on victories in battle, supported by divinities. Aspects of the account call to mind the appropriation of St. Demetrios by Peter and Asen, for the miracle captures a moment in the second half of the tenth century, when the cult of soldier saints such as Theodore Stratelates and Theodore

---

<sup>49</sup> Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, IX.9. Trans. in Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005), 197-198.

Teron intensified in response to the political needs of the emperor-generals who came to power.<sup>50</sup> For John Tzimiskes, an Armenian upstart from Cappadocia who justified his right to the throne with his success as a general, such epiphanies served a need for legitimization by providing signs of divine support and approval.

The memory of this event was preserved in two chronicles, that of Leo the Deacon (as we have seen) and that of John Skylitzes, each of which record an action performed in pious thanksgiving for the aid received. Tzimiskes, according to Leo the Deacon, repaid the favor by changing the name of Dorystolon to Theodoroupolis “in honor of the warrior and martyr Theodore the Stratelates.”<sup>51</sup> John Skylitzes tells the story differently. In the *Synopsis historiarum*, the emperor travels to Euchaina, the city in Anatolia that housed the shrine of St. Theodore, and “to honour the martyr and repay him for his timely aid, the emperor tore down to the ground the church in which his sacred body lies and built a large and most beautiful new one which he endowed with splendid estates. The name [of the place] was changed from Euchaneia to Theodoroupolis.”<sup>52</sup> By being described as a new shrine for St. Theodore, Tzimiskes is presented as a pious ruler; the action is taken for the benefit of the heavenly cohort and also, it seems clear, for the local military elite.

An ivory triptych at Palazzo Venezia provides a visual parallel to the vision recorded by Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes, assigning a similar role to the soldier

---

<sup>50</sup> Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," 62-88. For an analysis of this event in relation to the role of the Virgin in warfare, see Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, 68-69.

<sup>51</sup> Leo the Deacon, *Historia* IX.12. Trans. in Talbot and Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, 200. Oikonomides questions the veracity of the account; see Oikonomides, "Le déblouement de saint Théodore et les villes d'Euchaita and d'Euchaneia," 330 n. 10.

<sup>52</sup> John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, 15.19. Trans. in Wortley, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057: Introduction, Text and Notes*, 293.

saints (Fig. 22).<sup>53</sup> Christ stands in the center and receives the intercession of John the Baptist and the Theotokos, while warrior saints dressed in civilian garb appear in the wings to either side. Although the only overtly military elements are the swords held by Theodore Stratelates and Theodore Teron, the epigram carved beneath the saints explicitly link the saints and the military virtues they embody to the emperor:

Left wing:

An emperor had the four martyrs sculpted.  
With them he puts to flight the enemies by the storm.

Right wing:

Here is the foursome of the martyrs  
who decorate the crown with the four virtues.<sup>54</sup>

A similar notion underlies the iconography of the so-called Harbaville ivory triptych in the Louvre, which replicates the composition of the Palazzo Venezia ivory. As if to compensate for the lack of an inscription, the soldier saints appear fully armed and equipped, with swords and spears in hand (Fig. 23).<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps the most vivid articulation of imperial rule in relation to the military saints can be found in the well-known preface miniature in the Menologion of Basil II in Venice (Fig. 24).<sup>56</sup> It depicts the emperor as a divinely appointed general; he is crowned by Christ, receiving symbols of authority from the angels, and surrounded by images of icons of military martyrs (Theodore, Demetrios, (?) on the left; George, Procopios, Mercurios on the right), while his enemies prostrate themselves at his feet. The miniature

---

<sup>53</sup> A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1934), II, no. 31, p. 33. See also the analyses of this object in Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, 82-85. See also Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," 62-88.

<sup>54</sup> Trans. in Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," 73-75.

<sup>55</sup> Kalavrezou, "The Harbaville Triptych," cat. 80.

<sup>56</sup> Anthony Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium* (Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques, 13) (Paris: Picard, 1984), 115-19, with bibliography.

is accompanied by a poem that offers an interpretation of the unique imagery and ends with the following words: “The martyrs are his allies, for he is their friend. They smite [his enemies] who are lying at his feet.”<sup>57</sup> Although the programs of the ivories focus on elaborating the nature of Christ and the Theotokos, while the miniature seeks to emphasize the divine origins of Basil’s military might, all draw attention to the role of the military saints in supporting the empire. These are the martyrs who became soldiers of Christ through their death and the supporters of his Orthodox church.

Such images, while they capture the conceptualization of military martyrs operative in the elite and imperial spheres, are essentially objects of private devotion. It would not be until the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) that the military saints would be elevated to the level of state symbols. Unlike the military emperors of the tenth century (Nikephoros II Phocas, John I Tzimiskes, and Basil II), Constantine IX came from the civil elite and could claim no great victories on the battlefield to support his claim to the throne. As if to compensate for his lack of military credentials, he adopted a warrior saint, St. George, as his special patron, building a monastery dedicated to the saint in the Mangana, which the imperial court visited the church annually on 23 April, the feast of St. George. Little remains of the church, or the palatial complex to which it belonged, but descriptions from the period suggest that the lavish gold mosaics were its most salient feature.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Trans. in Ihor Ševčenko, “The Illuminators of the Menologium of Basil II,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962): 272.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Psellus, *Chronographia*, 6.185-186, ed. E. Renauld, vol. II (Paris 1928), 62. Trans. in Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 218-219. For a discussion of this church, as well as the Nea Moni, in relation to a new imperial interest in the military saints, see Maguire, “The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading,” 205-214.



It is possible that Constantine's devotion to a military saint paved the way for the more public and explicit veneration of this class of saints in the eleventh century. The Comnenoi were the first emperors to put saints on their coinage and these included military saints. Alexios I minted a coin that depicts the emperor in full military regalia, his hand resting on a cross held by a standing figure of St. George armed with sword (Fig. 25). The identical scale of the two figures and their similar poses emphasize the divine-like nature of Alexios I, while their position, jointly holding the cross, suggests the supportive role played by the holy warrior in maintaining the empire. The coin of Manuel II essentially replicates the iconography and its force by showing him standing side-by-side with St. Theodore, again jointly holding a cross (Fig. 26).<sup>59</sup> These images break precedent with a long-standing tradition of representing Christ, the Virgin, or a cross on the obverse of coins, indicating the popularity of the military martyrs during this period and shifting strategies of constructing imperial authority. The attempt of the Comnenoi to associate themselves with the warrior saints seems to have been successful; a description of a wall painting in the house of Leo Sikountinus at Thessaloniki records a lost painting in which Theodore Stratelates invests Manuel I Comnenos as emperor.<sup>60</sup> That the Comnenoi should select the military martyrs indicates the extent to which the ideologies of the warrior had taken root in varied levels of Byzantine society.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> They also represented the Archangel Michael and Constantine I. Philip Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 220-221.

<sup>60</sup> Apparently, the emperor was represented on the gate of the house, with the Mother of God crowning him, an angel preceding him, and Theodore Teron handing him a sword. An adjacent image depicted St. Theodore on horseback before the emperor, guiding him in battle. The description appears in *Marc. graec.* 524, f. 36; Peter Lambros, "Marcianus Codex 524," *New Hellenica* 8 (1911): 43. For a discussion of the painting, see Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 53.

<sup>61</sup> According to John Haldon, the appearance of military saints on coinage suggests a shift in the stance of the imperial court towards the warrior ideology promoted by the military aristocracy, with the emperors

*Models and protectors: warrior saints and the military aristocracy*

Devotion to the warrior saints proliferated among the military elite and soldiers, who routinely carried sacred images into battle and appealed to the saints for aid in combat. Commanders frequently employed images of warrior saints as their personal devices, placing bust or full-length figure depictions of St. George, St. Theodore, or St. Demetrios on their seals.<sup>62</sup> The adoption of particular saints was a dynamic process, as studies by Jean-Claude Cheynet have demonstrated. His work on seals shows that commanders of the Byzantine army often chose the image of the regional saint when they were re-stationed: Demetrios for commanders established in the west, Theodore for those in the east.<sup>63</sup> In this way, a commander could establish new alliances with the local spiritual patron and refashion his own image after that of his troops' favored heroic saint.

The tenth-century poet and soldier John Geometres took this notion – the warrior saints as guardian and exemplar – as his point of departure for an epigram. Addressing an image of St. Theodore, John wrote in the first person, as if reciting a prayer:

Rhetor, general, martyr, model of bravery  
 Object of delight, a novel mixture of virtues  
 Everything that is mine I offer to you:  
 My breath, speeches, salute, march, and encampment  
 I, John, offer all this to you.  
 All of these are yours: pain, freedom of speech, salutes, resources,  
 and defiance  
 May I, John, receive these virtues.  
 May you become my guard, guide, and ally in battle.<sup>64</sup>

---

now embracing and promoting one of its most prominent symbols; see Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> Cotsonis, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)": 457, 461, 468.

<sup>63</sup> Cheynet, "Par Saint Georges, par Saint Michel," 115-134.

<sup>64</sup> Ed. J. A. Cramer, "Appendix ad excerpta poetica: codex 352 suppl.," in *Anecdota Graeca e Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecae Regiae Parisinae* (Oxford: Academic Typographs, 1841), 292, lines 1-7.

The poet evokes many of the virtues given to the warrior saints in their passions, but then adds some of his own, suggesting that he and the saint mutually define one another. In other words, John posits an affinity between himself, as a contemporary warrior, and his saintly predecessor based on a shared military profession. He then asks St. Theodore for protection, suggesting that the soldier-poet is worthy of the saint's aid because they share the heroic qualities of a holy warrior.

Byzantine icons of warrior saints dating from this period were assigned a powerful intercessory role. Some objects retain traces of the way they were used to promote spiritual transactions. The ivory icon of St. Demetrios in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, has four holes in its corners, which would have been used to affix the panel to a wall, likely as an ex-voto (Fig. 2).<sup>65</sup> This function has been assigned to a similarly pierced metal icon of St. Theodore in the British Museum as well.<sup>66</sup> Such objects were deposited in churches and at shrines for the continuance of a donor's prayers, either in supplication or thanksgiving.<sup>67</sup> Other icons served their owners' devotional practices and their iconography makes explicit their intercessory power. A steatite icon, now in the Vatican, shows St. Theodore in military garb, his hands raised in supplication, receiving a crown from Christ (Fig. 27); the icon is now damaged, but other examples indicate that it would have had a mirror image of another saint, likely St. George or the other St. Theodore. Icons sometimes represented the

---

<sup>65</sup> Charles T. Little, "Icon with Saint Demetrios," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), cat. 82.

<sup>66</sup> Christopher Entwistle, "Gilded Plaque with St Theodore," in *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. David Buckton (London: British Museum Press, 1994), cat. 160.

<sup>67</sup> On ex-voto practices in Constantinople, see Alice-Mary Talbot, "Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges and Its Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 135-165.

patron of the icon, kneeling in supplication, as in an amulet from Constantinople.<sup>68</sup>

Although the images served to offer protection in battle, the military saints were also invoked for protection against illness and disease. Of course, these icons need not have been used by members of the military aristocracy; other members of society also hoped to benefit for the intercessory power of the icons.

An elegant enkolpion reliquary of St. Demetrios in the British Museum locates the power of a warrior saint in both his image and relics (Fig. 28). It featured St. Demetrios on the obverse (now lost) and St. George with raised sword on the reverse. Inside, a small space decorated with a relief image of St. Demetrios in his tomb likely held a cloth soaked with oil from the shrine. The inscription on the exterior is not in Greek, but Serbian, indicating that the donor belonged to the multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic clientele drawn to this shrine. It reads: "Being anointed with your blood and myrrh (on the front side), "he [the donor] prays to have you as a fervent guardian in battles" (on the side of Saint George).<sup>69</sup> Shed for Christ, the blood of the martyrs is powerfully efficacious, a point underscored by the militarized image on the exterior.

Because saints served not just as intercessors, but also as models for behavior, the elevation of the soldier in Byzantine culture went hand in hand with the developing reverence for his spiritual counterpart, the warrior saint. Over the course of the tenth century, Byzantines witnessed the increasing militarization of their society as the provincial aristocracy developed the new culture of the Christian warrior, emphasizing

---

<sup>68</sup> H. Wentzel, "Datierte und datierbare byzantinische Kameen," in *Festschrift für Friedrich Winkler* (1959), 12.

<sup>69</sup> William D. Wixom, "Enkolpion with Saint Demetrios and Saint Nestor," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), cat. 116.

piety and valor in battle. The governing mentality is well seen in a set of prayers from a tenth-century liturgical service for soldiers who were held in captivity or had fallen in battle. The prayers are liberally inflected with the language of martyrdoms, calling the deceased warriors the “soldiers of the Lord” and “mystic sacrifices,” whose souls had been beautified by “wounds and massacres.”<sup>70</sup> The prayers also praise the deceased soldiers as the guardians of the community, since they had defended its borders against the barbarians – the enemies of the faith:

They have shown themselves to be the foundations of the fatherland and of the entire race by disregarding life here below as though [it were] something transitory.

In order that you might save your chosen people from the hands of the barbarians, O Christ, you have given it brave fighters who have died gloriously in battles and in captivity.<sup>71</sup>

During the same period in which this service was composed, the emperor Nikephoros Phocas requested that all soldiers who died while fighting on behalf of the (one true Christian) empire be ranked among the martyrs, a proposal summarily dismissed by the Byzantine patriarch. This attempt to redefine the morality of warfare demonstrates the extent to which the ennobled images of the military martyr developed in places like Anatolia had come to be identified with the Byzantine soldier.

---

<sup>70</sup> Drawing comparisons between soldiers and martyrs was not new; Heraclius made a similar gesture in the seventh century, when he urged his army: “Brothers, do not let the large numbers [of the enemy] disturb you. If God wills it, one man will be able to drive off a thousand. Let us sacrifice ourselves to God for safety of our brothers. Let us accept the crown of martyrs so that the future age will praise us and God will repay [our] wages.” Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 6115. Quoted in Frank R. Trombley, “War, Society, and Popular Religion in Byzantine Anatolia (6th-13th Centuries),” in *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th-12th centuries)* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1998), 111.

<sup>71</sup> *Akolouthia I*, lines 43-36; ed. Th. Détorakis and J. Mossay, “Un office byzantin inédit pour ceux qui sont morts à la guerre, dans le *Cod.Sin.Gr* 734-735,” *Museon* 101 (1998): 183-211.

### **The warrior saints in Egypt**

By the thirteenth century, the cult of the warrior saints had assumed an important place in the devotional life of Coptic Christians. Earlier traditions fed into a now-blossoming veneration of these often aggressive saints. Homilies and hymns in Coptic dating from the ninth century praise the military martyrs as powerful patrons. Numerous churches, chapels, and monasteries were dedicated to the warrior saints, including the church of St. Sergios in Cairo, the sometime seat of the Coptic patriarchate. As in the Byzantine Empire, chronicles and hagiographic texts report miracles worked by the military martyrs on behalf of the Christian community.<sup>72</sup> As will become clear in the following discussion, images, hagiographic accounts, relics, and church dedications all attest to a vibrant cult that followed larger trends, but articulated them within a distinctively local idiom.

#### *Egyptian icons*

Images of military saints were a common sight in Coptic visual culture. They appeared on panel-painted icons, in church programs, in manuscripts, and as talismanic figures on liturgical furnishings. The prevalence of saints' imagery is evident especially in the medium of wall painting; virtually every extant church program features representations of the warrior saints. In these programs, as in Byzantine equivalents, the military martyrs often appear in a group, represented side-by-side in a register. Regardless of context, they are depicted either as warriors in full armor, or as members of the heavenly court. Although representations of standing warrior saints are attested, the

---

<sup>72</sup> The miracles will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5. For an overview of the miracles associated with icons in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, see Johannes den Heijer, "Miraculous Icons and their Historical Background," in *Coptic Art and Culture*, ed. H. Hondelink (Cairo: Shouhdy Publishing House, 1990), 89-100.

majority of icons, in contradistinction to the situation in Byzantium, show the military saints on horseback. The equestrian type includes a number of variants: the mounted saint might slay a dragon or a human adversary, or appear simply as a princely noble. In contrast to the images in Byzantium, the depictions favored in Egypt combine portraiture with narrative, a procedure which serves to refine and diversify the inflected meanings of the saints.

All three of these types can be seen at the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, an extensive program executed in 1232/1233, which will be the subject of the seventh chapter. The representation of Theodore Stratelates provides a typical example of the dragon-slayer type (Fig. 29). The painting depicts St. Theodore on horseback, within a square panel and set against landscape divided in three registers.<sup>73</sup> Much like the images we have seen in Byzantium, the saint is depicted in full armor, astride a horse, with a shield at his shoulder and a flying cape. In his left hand, he loosely grasps a cross-tipped spear with which he impales the head of a serpent crawling on the ground, while a hand descends from the heavens to offer the soldier a crown of martyrdom. The armor, general's sash, and *chlamys* worn by the saint align closely with Byzantine iconography, while his shield bears an Arabic inscription that ornaments the rim and connects the image to the local visual culture. The lowest register of the painting is populated by small figures who tie the image to a specific episode from the passion of the saint. It was said that Theodore had visited Euchaita, where the children of a widow were threatened by a dragon, and so we see the widow standing to the right of the saint pulling her hair in distress, while her children kneel bound and waiting for the serpent: the image thus

---

<sup>73</sup> Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 42-43, figs. 4.8-9

becomes a narrative as well as symbolic image. The crowning and format of the image are typical features of the Coptic iconography for saints venerated as dragon-slayers. They are replicated in the images of St. Sisinnios and St. Theodore the Oriental within the same program.<sup>74</sup>

That the dragon-slayer iconography seen at the Monastery of St. Antony belongs to a larger iconographical tradition and had many precedents is evident from images in other churches. A tenth-century image found in an unidentified building at Tebtunis, in the Fayoum region of Egypt, depicts Theodore slaying a dragon (Fig. 30).<sup>75</sup> Although the painting is fragmentary, enough remains to identify similar features: equestrian saint, cross-tipped spear, panel format, flying cape, and narrative details; two children can be seen behind the serpent, while the widow stands to the left of the saint, pulling her hair with one hand and supplicating the saint with the other. Such imagery was not limited to wall paintings, but also appears in manuscript illuminations, as in an image of St. Theodore the Oriental in a martyrdom of saints in New York, executed in 867 (Fig. 31).<sup>76</sup> The saint is less elaborately depicted than in the paintings at St. Antony's, but the iconographic details are nearly identical. The only departure is the way the serpent is rendered: it bears a human head and is identified in Coptic as a demon.<sup>77</sup> Ultimately, the

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 43-44, figs. 4.8, 4.12-13.

<sup>75</sup> C. C. Walters, "Christian Paintings from Tebtunis," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 75 (1989): 193-196, pl. XVIII. Cf. Walters, "Christian Paintings from Tebtunis," pl. XX. Theodore is shown at Esna, but the lower portion of the painting has been damaged. See Jules Leroy, *Les peintures des couvents du désert d'Esna*, vol. 1, La peinture murale chez les coptes (Cairo: IFAO, 1975), pls. 44-5.

<sup>76</sup> Leo Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Album of Photographic Plates*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), pl. 19; Idem., *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 282-284. An image of Theodore Stratelates from the Vatican Library (MS Copto 66, f. 210 v) also depicts Theodore Stratelates as a dragon-slayer. See Jules Leroy, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1974), 105.

<sup>77</sup> Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, 283. Cf. Walters, "Christian Paintings from Tebtunis," pl. XIX. There is some disagreement over the dating of this manuscript. Leroy suggests that it dates to 783. Elizabeth S. Bolman has proposed a date in the ninth or tenth century. Lucy-



iconography looks back to late antique types, such as the images of St. Sissinius and St. Phoebammon in the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit (Figs. 8-9).

The second iconographical type, the equestrian saint slaying a human adversary, is a variation on the dragon-slayer. It can be seen in the representation of St. Claudius of Antioch at the Monastery of St. Antony (Fig. 32).<sup>78</sup> This image has the features that we have already seen in the depiction of St. Theodore: a square panel is divided into three registers against which an armed saint appears on horseback with flying cape; hands descend to crown the martyr, who holds a spear poised to impale an enemy. In this case, the adversary is not a dragon, but a small figure identified as Diocletian, the emperor responsible for the Great Persecution of the late third century. A building to the right of the horse, identified as the pagan shrine, likely represents shrine in which the saint smashed the idols he was compelled to worship in his passion.<sup>79</sup> The type appears with minor variations in representations of St. George slaying the Jew, St. Phoebammon slaying the centurion, John of Heraclea (?) slaying Eutychianos, St. George slaying Euchios, and St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate – all of them found in St. Antony's.

The iconography is attested in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. A particularly close parallel can be seen in the painting of St. Claudius at the Monastery of the Martyrs

---

Anne Hunt argues (less convincingly) for a thirteenth-century date. See Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 44, fn. 29; Lucy-Anne Hunt, "Christian Art in Greater Syria and Egypt: A Triptych of the Ascension with Military Saints Reattributed," *al-Masaq* 12 (2000): 21-22.

<sup>78</sup> Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 44, figs. 4.12-13.

<sup>79</sup> For the identification of the building, see Birger A. Pearson, "The Coptic Inscriptions in the Church of St. Antony," *Ibid.*, 224. The small buildings in these images may also represent the shrine erected in memory of the military martyr. In the image of St. George slaying Euchios, the building is identified as his martyrium. Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 61.

in Esna (Fig. 33).<sup>80</sup> Executed in 1179/1180, the painting shows the warrior saint on horseback, with two hands descending to offer crowns, while the saint impales a small figure. Closer still is the early eleventh century image from the Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel in the Naqlun, again in the Fayyūm region (Fig. 34). There, St. Claudius appears spearing a figure, with a small shrine represented to the side.<sup>81</sup> The iconography – if not St. Claudius himself – appears in other wall painting programs, manuscripts, and church furnishings.

Finally, the third principal type, the courtly type, can be seen in the representation of St. Victor in the program at the Monastery of St. Antony (Fig. 35).<sup>82</sup> The image employs the same general format and iconographic elements we have seen – saint on horseback, with flying cape, receiving crowns – but unlike the images discussed so far, St. Victor is depicted in the garb of an Arab prince and, in place of weapons, holds the cross of martyrdom before his chest. This iconography is less common than the previous two, but it appears again in the representation of St. Menas at St. Antony's,<sup>83</sup> as well as in a twelfth-century representation of St. Menas at the Monastery of St. Macarios in the Wādī al-Natrūn.<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Bolman has suggested that the visual distinction, separating Victor and Menas from others of the cohort, derives from their hagiographic tradition.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Leroy, *Les peintures des couvents du désert d'Esna*, 58-59, figs. 40-1. An image of Claudius also appears at the Monastery of St. Macarios in the Wādī al-Natrūn. Though badly damaged, a good reproduction can be seen in Mahmoud Zibawi, *Images de l'Égypte chrétienne. Iconologie copte* (Paris: Picard, 2003), fig. 187.

<sup>81</sup> Włodimierz Godlewski, "Les peintures de l'église de l'Archange Gabriel à Naqlun," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 39 (2000): 89-101.

<sup>82</sup> Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 47, fig. 4.14.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42, figs. 4.6-7. St. Menas appears at the Monastery of St. Macarios without the narrative elements. Instead of holding a cross, he raises his hands in an orant position.

<sup>84</sup> At the Monastery of St. Macarios, St. Menas appears without the narrative elements. Instead of holding a cross, he raises his hands in an orant position. The image is badly damaged, but a good reproduction can be found in Zibawi, *Images de l'Égypte chrétienne. Iconologie copte*, fig. 188.

<sup>85</sup> Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 47.

In their passions, both saints are said to have abandoned the army before they ever fought a battle, perhaps explaining why they are depicted in elegant contemporary attire.

Certainly, in miracle accounts, St. Menas is portrayed more as a healer than a militant, although he frequently appears in the guise of a soldier.

The different iconographies all evoke themes of spiritual warfare and salvation. Like the Byzantines, Coptic Christians regarded the military martyrs as the special soldiers of Christ. This notion is conveyed through the depiction of saints with armor, weapons, and crosses. In images of St. Theodore, for instance, the saint typically holds a cross-topped spear, while his horses' reins are ornamented with cross-shaped pendants. The spiritual nature of the saints' armor was articulated most clearly in the Coptic martyrdom of St. Mercurios, where he declares: "For I have on the whole armor of God and the breastplate of faith, by means of which I will overcome all your designs and crafty arts..."<sup>86</sup> This visual inflection finds a counterpart in the devotional language of Coptic hymns, which juxtaposes descriptions of events from the saints' passions with biblical passages that allude to spiritual warfare. In a ninth-century hymn on St. Mercurios, the verses move from a précis of the saint's feats to a quotation from Psalm 126.4: "You have girded me with strength in the war."<sup>87</sup> If weapons and crosses allude to

---

<sup>86</sup> Trans. in Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: British Museum, 1915), 2: 817.

<sup>87</sup> *The Alphabetic Acrostic on St. Mercurios*, 11. The entire stanza is: "Then that which is written was fulfilled in you:/You have girded me with strength in the war./You have set me upon my high places./You have instructed my hands for war." For the Coptic text and English translation, see K. H. Kuhn and W. J. Tait, *Thirteen Coptic Acrostic Hymns from Manuscript M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Oxford: The Griffith Institute, 1996), 30-31. In a hymn on St. Claudius from the same manuscript, the hymnographer incorporates passages from St. Paul. Cf. *The Alphabetic Acrostic on Apa Claudius, the General*, 4. Kuhn and Tait, *Thirteen Coptic Acrostic Hymns from Manuscript M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, 46-47.

spiritual warfare, the crowns convey themes of spiritual victory.<sup>88</sup> Crowns permeate both the visual and verbal imagery of Egyptian martyrdoms, which (like their Greek counterparts) often substitute the phrase “received the crown” for the term “martyred.”

The three iconographies refer to different moments in the saints’ careers and serve to emphasize different aspects of their sanctity. The dragon-slaying episodes come from the passions of the saints. In late antique passions the dragon is slain to defend Christians, but in later reworkings the beast is often reinterpreted as a demon.<sup>89</sup> But the episode is always part of the saint’s earthly life, and usually occurs early in his pious career, marking him as favored by God and worthy of martyrdom. The image of the saint slaying an adversary, in contrast, typically draws upon posthumous miracles. In these, the saint exacts retribution from a renowned persecutor of Christians, proving the continuing efficacy of the saint on earth even after his death. Finally, the iconography of the courtly prince presents the saint after his struggle, showing his reward in the heavenly court. It is tempting to regard the martyr depicted with so calm a demeanor as a model of passive endurance leading to spiritual victory.<sup>90</sup> But, as we have seen, early Christians understood martyrdom rather as an active spiritual combat against the demons thought to

---

<sup>88</sup> Crowns are typically promised to the saints to fortify their strength while undergoing their trials. In the *Encomium of Archbishop Theodore on Theodore the General*, the event is described thus: “And the grace of Jesus was with him, and he received the crown of life in the heavens.” Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, 625.

<sup>89</sup> As in the image of Theodore the Anatolian, discussed above. A Coptic hymn on St. Theodore Stratelates, composed in the ninth century, offers the same interpretation: “For he gave you authority,/O St. Theodore,/over the demons/and you cast them out.” *The Alphabetic Acrostic on St. Theodore, the General*, 3. Kuhn and Tait, *Thirteen Coptic Acrostic Hymns from Manuscript M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, 56-57.

<sup>90</sup> Such an interpretation would be in line with the one put forth by the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. However, this understanding of martyrdom had fallen off the radar by the fifth century. See H. A. Drake, “Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance,” *Past and Present* 153 (1996): 20-22.

drive their persecutors.<sup>91</sup> That this belief continued into the Islamic period in Coptic Egypt is demonstrated by the aggressive images of saints slaying their persecutors and the choice to represent features such as the temple where St. Claudius smashed the idols of the pre-Christian religion.

By the tenth century, the Coptic cult of the military saints had assumed the profile it would maintain for the next few centuries. No less absorptive than Byzantium, the Coptic church worshipped not only figures particular to Egypt but also others accorded devotion in Syria and the Byzantine Empire. Local figures included St. Menas, whose devotion continued even as the importance of his pilgrimage shrine waned, as well as John of Heraclea, St. Claudius, St. Phoebammon, St. Sissinios, and St. Theodore the Oriental. Figures such as Sts. Sergios and Bacchos were venerated in Egypt as well as in the Syrian sphere, suggesting overlapping devotional practices, while the warrior saints George, Theodore Stratelates, and Mercurios were worshipped throughout the Mediterranean basin. St. Mercurios certainly found his greatest following in Egypt, as attested by an elaborated iconography and extensive hagiographic dossier.

The local character of the figures selected for depiction was enhanced by the iconographic forms that image makers adopted; by depicting the military martyrs as equestrians receiving crowns of victory or slaying their foes, the images recall – without precisely duplicating – the visual culture of late antique Egypt (Figs. 8-9). Perhaps the most striking way in which the images depart from earlier prototypes is in their dress. The warrior saints appear either in Byzantine or Ayyubid armor, thus refashioned the saints in the image of contemporary warrior culture. A similar reshaping occurred in

---

<sup>91</sup> Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 160.

Byzantium, but in the case of Egypt, the Christians paradoxically re-envisioned their heroic ancestors vis-à-vis those of rival religious communities.

*Monastic patronage*

In Byzantium, as we have seen, the rise of the warrior saints was concentrated in imperial circles and among the provincial military elite. For this sector of society, veneration of the military martyrs elevated the status of the soldier and reinforced the notion that warfare in Byzantium was a spiritual endeavor. A different situation obtained in Egypt, where the Christian community did not maintain its own army or wage war on behalf of the faith.<sup>92</sup> In Egypt, where warfare was associated with *jihād* and the expansion of Islam, the monastic world, removed from physical combat, provided the center for efforts to promote the cult of the military martyrs, vital in the realm of spiritual combat.

Monastic patronage of the military martyrs developed as part of a broader phenomenon. In late antiquity, saint's cults were located primarily within cities, with the saints serving as civic patrons. As Arietta Papaconstantinou has shown, monasteries began to absorb these civic cults in the sixth and seventh centuries, a process that intensified with the advent of Islam.<sup>93</sup> In the post-conquest era, monasteries continued to house the relics of the saints and became the primary centers for the production of

---

<sup>92</sup> Atiya qualifies this fact, noting that the Copts were still part of the infrastructure that supported the army, which sometimes brought down other Christian forces, such as the Franks. See Aziz S. Atiya, "Crusades, Copts and the," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 665.

<sup>93</sup> Arietta Papaconstantinou, "The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World?," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: University of Harvard, 2007), 364-365.

hagiographic texts and their distribution to the faithful. Monasteries also became venues for celebrating saints' festivals, a function they shared with town churches.<sup>94</sup>

Military martyrs held a special place within both the Coptic tradition and the monastic milieu. As will be clear by now, military martyrs were frequently the subjects of monastic painted programs, an honor they shared with monastic saints, church fathers, and apostles. Collections of hagiographic texts often provide a remarkably close parallel in the repertoire of figures; manuscripts are sometimes evenly divided between passions of warrior saints and the lives of monastic figures. The importance of military martyrs is further attested by the proliferation of holy days dedicated to them in the monastic context, which came to include celebrations of the enactment of particular miracles and of the erection of their shrines. Passions produced within the monastic context sometimes adapted the text to their audience, as in the passion of St. Menas, which includes an episode in which monks appear to fortify the belief of the soon-to-be martyr.

Late antique ascetics, as we have seen, venerated the military martyrs because they were regarded as their spiritual predecessors and they served as models of spiritual combat. The continuation – and even intensification – of their popularity within the monastic context suggests that the military martyrs retained this imaginative function. The metaphor of spiritual combat continued to be evoked in relation to monasticism, as in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, where the tenth-century continuator

---

<sup>94</sup> Hilary Kilpatrick, "Monasteries through Muslim Eyes: The *Diyārāt* Books," in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule*, ed. David Thomas (Boston: Brill, 2003), 24-25; Gérard Troupeau, "Les couvents chrétiens dans la littérature arabe," in *Etudes sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Age* (Aldershot: Varorium, 1975), 275-276. The festival of St. George, celebrated at a town church, provides the setting for a key event in the *Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijōit*. Zaborowski, *The Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijōit: Assimilation and Conversion to Islam in Thirteenth-Century Egypt*, 73-79.

describes the monks' hood as the "helmet of salvation."<sup>95</sup> The task of the monk to engage in combat against demons, pioneered in the *Life of St. Antony*, also retained its relevance. In the thirteenth-century *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Upper Egypt*, Abū l-Makārim records that a monk named Muhnā lived in a cell near the Monastery of the Qalamūn in Upper Egypt, where "the devils appeared to him, and stood opposite him, face to face, but could not reach him."<sup>96</sup>

As in late antiquity, militarized devotional language extended outside the monastic sphere. The bishop Apa Psote, according to his life, urged his congregation to "fight the good fight, for the contest in this world is of various kinds."<sup>97</sup> It was even employed in the *History of the Patriarchs* to describe the Orthodox community. In introducing the chapter on the Patriarch Khael II, the tenth-century continuator defined the Coptic community as a collective based on the common experience of suffering and purpose of spiritual combat:

They are the patriarchs of the Copts in the land of Egypt, the Orthodox Faithful, who strove and patiently endured every suffering and toil and hardship and pain on the part of those who waged open warfare and of heretics and of the enemies of the church.<sup>98</sup>

The language and imagery of spiritual warfare seen in the medieval period differs from late antique precedents, adapted to the historic contingencies of the later period.

However, the role of the military martyrs in defining and defending the community continued.

---

<sup>95</sup> Yassa Abd al-Masih and O. H. E. Burmester, "History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church," in *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya and Antoine Khater O.H.E. Burmester (Cairo: Publications de la Société d'archéologie copte, 1943-1970), 2.2: 161.

<sup>96</sup> Abū l-Makārim, *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, fol. 72a. Trans. in Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abū Ṣālih the Armenian*, 207.

<sup>97</sup> Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, 2: 726.

<sup>98</sup> Abd al-Masih and Burmester, "History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church," 2.2: 101.



### **The warrior saints in the Levant**

Warrior saints received active veneration in the Levant. As we have seen, the region boasted the late antique shrines of St. George in Lydda and St. Sergios in Ruṣāfa, which remained important sites for Christian communities after the advent of Islamic rule. Survival rates of Syrian images and texts are not as great as in Egypt, but there is evidence of continuing devotion, extending into the Crusader era, in extant liturgical calendars, hagiographic writings, and above all, in wall paintings, which regularly incorporate representations of the military saints.

#### *Syrian icons*

Unlike the situation that obtained in Egypt, the saints selected for representation comprise a limited and stable group: St. George, St. Theodore, St. Sergios, St. Bacchos, and St. Demetrios. The selection reflects the loose ties the region retained with Byzantium and a preference for devotion to local martyrs.

The iconographic types found in the Levant relate to trends we have already seen in Byzantium and Egypt, though again with their distinctive variations. Much like their counterparts in Egypt, painters and patrons in the Levant represented the military saints as warriors in armor, either as standing figures or as equestrians. As in Egypt, the equestrian warrior was the most popular type and appears in several variants: slaying a dragon, rescuing a captive, holding a standard, or (rarely) slaying a human adversary. These different types are typically employed for specific saints and, as in Egypt, incorporate narrative elements drawn from their passions or miracle collections. An iconography that represents military saints as standing courtiers is also attested on icons from the region, although these are typically attributed to painters from the Crusader polities.

In the known corpus of painting from the Levant, the dragon-slayer iconography is employed solely for St. Theodore.<sup>99</sup> The most complete example of this type appears in Lebanon, in the church of Mar Tadros at Bahdeidat (Fig. 36). The painting is badly damaged along the left side, where a window was added to the structure, but the general iconography is still recoverable. The saint appears within a painted red frame, on horseback, riding through a landscape, impaling a serpent with a spear. He wears a narrow jeweled crown and is garbed in full armor, with a shield at his shoulder and a *chlamys* ornamented with pearls flying behind. In the upper right corner of the painting, a hand extends from a semi-circle to bless the saint. The image evokes the episode in the passion of St. Theodore when the saint slays a dragon to rescue the endangered children of the widow in Euchaita.

The type of the warrior saint rescuing a captive can be seen in the same church, in the representation of St. George rescuing a boy (Fig. 4).<sup>100</sup> The general format and features of the image are the same, but the saint rides over a body of water teeming with fish and holds a small figure behind his back, a child who holds a glass in his right hand and a jug in his left. The iconographic details refer to a miracle account in which the saint rescued a boy who had been captured by Arabs and made to serve as a cup-bearer. The popular miracle had multiple iterations in which the identity of the boy changed. In

---

<sup>99</sup> This general iconography appears in both Syrian and Lebanese churches. For a list of these images, along with relevant bibliography, see Matt Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 53-58. Of particular interest is an image of St. Theodore with a woman to the right of his horse, which may provide a parallel for the iconography employed in Coptic visual culture. See Matt Immerzeel, "Medieval Wall Paintings in Lebanon: Donors and Artists," *Chronos* 10 (2004): no. 16.

<sup>100</sup> This iconography was widespread in both Syria and Lebanon. See the catalog in Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 53-58. See also Robin Cormack and Stavros Mihalarias, "A Crusader Painting of St. George: *"maniera greca"* or *"lingua franca"*," *Burlington Magazine* 126 (1984): 132-139.

one account, he is identified as a native of Mytilene, in another as the son of a Byzantine emperor, and in a third version, as a boy from Palestine. In all version, the narrative culminates with George rescuing the boy just as he is about to pour wine for his captors and carries him home across the sea.

Another common type, the equestrian saint bearing a standard, is typically employed for representations of St. Sergios and St. Bacchos.<sup>101</sup> The best-preserved example is the wall painting of St. Bacchos at the Monastery of Deir Mar Musa in Nbek, executed in 1192/1193 (Fig. 3). The image has familiar features – armor, crown, fluttering cloak – but here the saint holds a standard with a cross. For many scholars, the flag has evoked Crusader banners, an idea that is particularly attractive since historians of the Crusaders described the military martyrs as the “standard bearers” of the Crusader army. However, it is equally probable that the iconography relates to late antique representations of St. Sergios who typically carried a cross when depicted as an equestrian, as we have seen (Fig. 12). Finally, the chapel of Deir Saydet Hammatur in Qusba, Lebanon preserves a fragmentary image of an equestrian saint killing a soldier,<sup>102</sup> with a small building represented to the right of the horse, and standing warrior saints appear in the Church of the Virgin at Kaftoun.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> These appear in wall paintings in Syria and Lebanon, as well as icons at Mt. Sinai. For the wall paintings (along with the relevant bibliography), see the catalog entries in Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 53-58. For the icons, see Jaroslav Folda, "Icon with Saint Sergios on Horseback, with Kneeling Female Donor," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Yale University Press, 2004), cat. 229; Idem., "Two-Sided Icon with the Virgin Hodegetria and Saints Sergios and Bakchos," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Yale University Press, 2004), cat. 230.

<sup>102</sup> This is the only attested example of this iconography in the Levant. For a description of the image, along with relevant bibliography, see Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 54.

<sup>103</sup> There are fewer representations of standing warrior saints than equestrians. For an example in wall painting, see Mat Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (Leiden: Peeters, 2009), pl. 61. For an example in manuscript illumination, see Jules

As in Egypt, the Syrian depictions of military saints draw upon local saints and traditional iconographic forms. While they engage with local history, they also represent the saints in contemporary armor and employ a distinct pictorial vocabulary that departs from early images by including details such as the jeweled crowns and the hand of God. Like the Egyptian icons, the themes conveyed by the images include spiritual warfare, salvation, and protection.

### *Spheres of patronage*

The question of patronage is less straightforward in the Levant than in Egypt or Byzantium. The extreme mobility of populations in the region and the rapid political change experienced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with the coming of the Crusaders, present significant challenges for scholars. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of surviving documentation and the fragmentary nature of the visual record. What can be said is that representations of the warrior saints appear in a variety of contexts: monasteries, parish churches, and chapels in Crusader castles. Sometimes, the images include donor portraits, which have been interpreted as evidence for both European and local eastern Christian patronage. Less visual evidence survives for the period of Arab rule, but it is likely that monastic patronage played a role similar to the one we have seen in Egypt.

In the post-conquest era monasteries became the backbone of the eastern Christian church of the Levant, assuming responsibility for the preservation and promotion of their respective sects and the worship of saints. The evidence of these efforts can be found in hagiographical manuscripts from monastic libraries that copy the

---

Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient: album* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1964), pl. 53.1.

passions of the martyrs and lives of the saints, as well as in documentary sources that record the presence of monasteries at the major shrines of the military saints George and Sergios. Devotion continued at both sites, and in contrast to the situation that obtained in Egypt, Muslims often participated in some fashion. The caliph Maḥdī's (r. 775-785) poet-singer al-Mu'allā b. Ṭarīf writes about attending the feast of *mārī sirjis* in Lydda, where he saw "ladies like gazelles in their covert,"<sup>104</sup> while the tenth-century Arab geographer al-Muqqadasī mentions a mosque built close to the church, suggesting continued Muslim presence at the site, at least until the Crusades.<sup>105</sup> Numerous sources attest that the Umayyad caliph Hisham built his summer residence at Ruṣāfa and erected a mosque that adjoined the cathedral housing St. Sergios' remains.

The resonance of military martyrs in the monastic context would be much the same for Syrian Christians as it was for their Coptic neighbors. Local Levantine Christians had regarded asceticism as a form of spiritual combat since late antiquity. In the fifth century, for instance, Isaac of Antioch described monks vividly as spiritual warriors:

Their prayers are arrows, which they aim at the target of mercy;  
 their lips are bows, with which they fire to astounding heights.  
 The words of the Holy Spirit are their armaments, since their struggle is  
 directed against a spiritual fortress.<sup>106</sup>

However, political circumstances in Syria may have created a climate in which devotion to the soldier saints related more to their perception as efficacious defenders. In the

---

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in M. Sharon, "Ludd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 800.

<sup>105</sup> Guy LeStrange, *Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land* (Beirut: Khayats Oriental Reprints, 1965), 493.

<sup>106</sup> Isaac of Antioch, "On the Perfection of Monks" (stanza 320). Quoted in Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 116.

century leading up to the Crusades, Greater Syria was a contested region that experienced near-constant warfare. Local Christian communities were not spared. The Syrian Orthodox chronicler Bar Hebraeus records numerous incidents of church and monastery attacks, with monks sometimes forced to rely on themselves to defend their community.<sup>107</sup> In a particularly vivid passage, Bar Hebraeus describes a visit to a monastery in 1265:

In those days we made ready to go up to the Monastery of Mar Barsauma, because we did not understand the calamity which had taken place until we arrived in the neighborhood of the district, which we discovered to be like unto a vineyard which had been beaten flat by the hail. And as we were sitting in the Monastery of Sergios, there came from the monastery about fifty armed monks, and they took us and we went up to the monastery.<sup>108</sup>

These possibilities are not mutually exclusive, but the political circumstances might explain the frequency of rescue imagery. Military martyrs such as St. Sergios had been regarded as efficacious intercessors who protected their own since late antiquity.

### **Historical communities, visual communities**

The different confessions of Christianity, though linked through a common past, developed into their own distinctive visual communities. Scholars have often emphasized the Byzantine Empire as a community defined by its commitment to the sacred image, both in its own understanding and especially in the eyes of its Muslim neighbors.<sup>109</sup> The same may be said for the Christian communities that lived within the Islamicate caliphate, where retention of image veneration became vital to communal cohesion. It is evident from Muslim texts, and even travelers' descriptions, that images

---

<sup>107</sup> For monastery attacks, see Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l Faraj the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 132, 217, 223, 235, 321, 358, 406, 426.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>109</sup> Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks, and Shrouds*, 92.

and the sacred spaces of Christianity were intimately intertwined in the eyes of Muslims. In the *Book of Strangers*, for instance, travelers who stop in monasteries regularly comment upon the images.<sup>110</sup> One Arabic poem even compares the pose and dress of monks to the icons they venerate: “In their black burnouses, moons in the middle of darkness, faces like images praying before images...”<sup>111</sup>

Egyptian and Levantine Christians encountered, and learned about, the military saints in monastic and parish churches, where they appeared primarily in the *naos*. Following broader Mediterranean developments, churches in Egypt and the Levant used icon screens (called the *hijāb*) to separate the *naos* from the sanctuary.<sup>112</sup> In Egypt, a further barrier was created in the form of the *khurus*, a space between the *naos* and sanctuary reserved for members of the monastic community and clergy.<sup>113</sup> Images, including those of the military saints, became an integral part of the liturgy. In the seventh chapter of the Arabic theological tract *Order of the Priesthood* attributed to Sāwīrus ibn al- Muqqaffa‘ (d. 987), the Coptic theologian states: “the icon is painted on the wall of the church, and on the feast day of the martyr or of the saint, the recitation of passion or the life is read before that icon, because the Christians listening profit, by their intercession, obtaining pardon for their sins.” He goes on to explain: “the patriarchs

---

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Crone and Moreh, *The Book of Strangers: Medieval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia*, 24.

<sup>111</sup> This mid-thirteenth century poem by Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr (quoting the Persian poet Nizāmī’s Nizāmī’s *Iskandar Nāma*) is cited in Rane A. Katzenstein and Glenn D. Lowry, “Christian Themes in Thirteenth-Century Islamic Metalwork,” *Muqarnas* 1 (1983), 65-66. See also Thomas, “The Arts of Christian Communities in the Medieval Middle East,” 424.

<sup>112</sup> On the development of the icon screen in Egypt, see Elizabeth S. Bolman, “Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions,” in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006), 73-106.

<sup>113</sup> Coptic theologians invested this space with rich symbolic references, likening it to the ark of the covenant. See Gertrud J. M. Van Loon, *The Gate of Heaven: Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Khurus of Coptic Churches* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1999), 110-111.

introduced the custom of consecrating the icons with holy chrism (*myron*), and prostrating oneself before them, but it must be understood that this involves only a mark of veneration...”<sup>114</sup> As we have seen, hymns composed in honor of the saints, dating to the ninth century and later, praised their sacrifice and sometimes even recounted the details of their lives. It is possible that the form of the hymn was thought to incite faith; the Coptic theologian Abū l-Barakāt ibn Kabar (d. 1324) wrote that “melodious hymns, divine hymns, and liturgical music” encouraged faith in the martyrs and the saints.<sup>115</sup> Less is known about the use of sacred images in the Syrian context, although the survival of manuscripts with compilations of saints’ lives and hymns suggests that they incorporated images into liturgical practices in a similar fashion.<sup>116</sup> In both communities, it is likely that their primary source of knowledge on the saints came from their respective *synaxaria*, brief notices on the lives of the saints.

In their reliance on holy images that maintained the presence of saints on earth and in the corpus of literature that narrated their lives, the eastern Christian communities were no different than their Byzantine neighbors. The textual corpus comprised several closely related genres, connected through similar content and *topoi*, as well as the employment of consistent narrative strategies.<sup>117</sup> These manuscripts were not simply

---

<sup>114</sup> Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa’, *Kitāb tartīb al-kahānūt*, chapter 7. Julius Assfalg, *Die Ordnung des Priestertums: Ein altes liturgisches Handbuch der koptischen Kirche* (Le Caire: Centre d’Etudes Orientales de la Custodie Franciscaine de Terre-Sainte, 1955), 21-23 (Arabic text), 92-55 (German translation). French trans. in Ugo Zanetti, “Les icônes chez les théologiens de l’église copte,” *Le Monde Copte* 19 (1991): 78.

<sup>115</sup> Abū l-Barakāt ibn Kabar, *Miṣbāḥ az-zulma fī ṭdāḥ al-khidma*, chapter 24. This chapter is still unpublished. French trans. in Zanetti, “Les icônes chez les théologiens de l’église copte,” 85.

<sup>116</sup> For examples of such manuscripts, see William Wright, *A Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Library* (London: British Library, 1890-1892).

<sup>117</sup> Such manuscripts are well documented, and a number are included in the catalog of Coptic manuscripts at the Pierpont Morgan library. See, for example, Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, cat. 121, 125, 126, 127, 136



repositories of the church's sacred narratives, but part of the living traditions that bound the community together. In each region, a saint's day was celebrated by a priest who read for the congregation the laudatory encomia, homilies, miracle accounts, and passions associated with the saints.<sup>118</sup> The hagiographical narratives were embedded within a larger textual program, set among the complementary readings assigned in the lectionary and read through the day's services. While biographies emphasized saintly acts, the lectionary readings tied the individual narratives of the heroic figures to overarching biblical themes.<sup>119</sup> In the Coptic commemorative services for St. Mercurios, for instance, the readings were unified by their message of Christian suffering, witness, and triumph, constituting a celebration of martyrdom in its biblical and post-biblical manifestations.<sup>120</sup> Selected from the Book of Psalms, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and Epistles, the thematic textual program sought to shape the reception of St. Mercurios, prompting the audience to regard the post-Biblical saint as a living exemplar of biblical precepts, patterned after the persecution and suffering of Christ himself.

At the same time, these common saints were incorporated into different histories and calendars, so that even the most universal saints could be employed to reinforce a particular view of history and to confer local identity. As M. G. Morony has shown, the annual commemorations of saints, martyrs, and other church leaders promoted a particular communal identification with the past, popularizing an historical outlook that

---

<sup>118</sup> The ceremony is described in the *Order of the Priesthood*, attributed to Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqqaffa'. Unfortunately, there is no edition of the text, although its contents are summarized by Zanetti. See Zanetti, "Les icônes chez les théologiens de l'église copte," 78.

<sup>119</sup> During the Middle Ages, they were several versions of the lectionary in use, reflecting regional variations in religious practice. For an in-depth and comprehensive study of these important works, see Ugo Zanetti, *Les lectionnaires coptes annulés: Basse-Égypte*, vol. 35 (Louvain: Publications of the Orientalist Institute, 1985).

<sup>120</sup> The set texts, according to the calendar in the ecclesiastical dictionary of the thirteenth-century Coptic theologian Abū l-Barakāt, are included in Zanetti's study. *Ibid.*, 47.

can also be found in chronicles.<sup>121</sup> The use of liturgical calendars and chronicles to emphasize sectarian boundaries gathered force after the Muslim conquest. As contact among communities continued – even intensifying in the thirteenth century – the historical outlook became ever more inward-looking, as if in response to the transference of ideas and objects that threatened communal specificity.

### **Conclusion: the local and the regional**

The local and regional dynamic of the cult of military saints is well illustrated by a triptych preserved at the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai. Dated to the ninth century on the basis of style, the triptych features a central panel with a representation of the Ascension, framed by two wings (now detached) that depict St. George and St. Theodore (Fig. 37).<sup>122</sup> All three panels incorporate local iconographic forms and religious subjects. The representation of the Ascension, for instance, includes an image of the Virgin set against the Burning Bush: because the site where Moses encountered the Lord was located nearby, this was an iconographic form associated with Sinai – a motif that conveys the special purity of the Virgin. The depiction of St. George shows the martyr on horseback, slaying a figure in the lowest register of the panel (likely the emperor Diocletian), while St. Theodore assumes a symmetrical pose as he impales a dragon twisted into a knot. The represented miracles both derive from the hagiographic dossiers of the saints depicted, while the form of a rider saint itself relates to a great many images

---

<sup>121</sup> Morony, "History and Identity in the Syrian Churches," 29.

<sup>122</sup> See Kristen M. Collins, "Ascension of Christ," in *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins (Los Angeles: The Paul J. Getty Museum, 2006), cat. 5, fig. 102. See also Hunt, "Christian Art in Greater Syria and Egypt: A Triptych of the Ascension with Military Saints Reattributed," 1-36. Her reattribution to Egypt or the Levant is sound, although her redating remains to be confirmed.

that circulated in the region.<sup>123</sup> The triptych exemplifies a number of trends discussed in this chapter. With its ninth-century date, it captures a moment of transition within the cult of the warrior saints – their burgeoning militarization. The subject matter of the warrior saints would be at home anywhere in the region, although the narrative details suggest Egypt or the Levant. More than anything it is the image of the burning bush that situates the icon within a firmly local context. The icon is very much a product of the exchanges that occurred between religious communities, many doubtlessly occurring at the Monastery of St. Catherine itself.

Through such interactions, the Christians of the eastern Mediterranean came to venerate their saints in much the same way, produced their sacred images in relation to a similar set of texts, and came to regard the warrior saints as models worthy of both imitation and honor in analogous settings. Aspects of the cult that appear the same are both the result of parallel developments, resting on a shared heritage, and continuing contact between religious communities. It is striking, for instance, that St. Theodore Stratelates became a venerated figure among all three communities here discussed at roughly the same time. It should be emphasized that his cult and associated hagiographical writings did not exist prior to the eleventh century, meaning that the communities remained in contact, exchanging texts centuries after the eastern regions had fallen to Islam. Images too traveled; St. Theodore is represented as a bearded elderly man, while George remained clean-shaven in all three regions.<sup>124</sup> St. Sergios, likewise,

---

<sup>123</sup> The regional character of this particular iconographic form has been emphasized by Matt Immerzeel. See in particular Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 36-39.

<sup>124</sup> In fact, the similarities in iconography and hagiographic tradition for figures such as George is often so similar to the Byzantine tradition that they are omitted from studies of the Syrian cult of the saints. See, for example, Jean Maurice Fiey, *Saints syriaques*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad, *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early*

was nearly always represented wearing a *maniakion*. Such transference was not always the case, of course. Later representations of St. Menas in Byzantium are radically different than their counterparts in Egypt, as Warren Woodfin has shown.<sup>125</sup> This might suggest that saints and images generally moved west to east, which would correspond to trends that have been identified in the transmission of texts.<sup>126</sup>

In the following chapter, I will focus on miracle accounts, which shaped perceptions of the military saints and guided the ways in which the faithful viewed icons of the holy warriors. As we will see, the miracle accounts form a complicated corpus of material that presents different and, at times, contradictory characterizations of the military saints.

---

Islam (Princeton: Darwin Press, Inc., 2004). Delehayé omitted St. George from his study of the cult of saints in Egypt for the same reason. See Hippolyte Delehayé, "Martyrs of Egypt," *Analecta Bollandina* 40 (1922): 5-154, 299-364.

<sup>125</sup> Woodfin, "An Officer and a Gentleman: Transformations in the Iconography of a Warrior Saint," 111-144.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Hoyland, "Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography in the First Abbasid Century: An Inquiry into Inter-Cultural Traffic," *Aram* 3 (1991): 211-233.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Miracles: Military Martyrs and Communal Boundaries**

Images of warrior saints, as attested by miracle accounts, were thought to have powers beyond the communicative functions explored in the previous chapter. The most vivid example may be found in the miracle account with which I began this dissertation. Written in Greek in the eleventh-century in Palestine, the miracle describes how a group of Saracens, with Christian prisoners in tow, set up their camp in the Church of St. George in Syria. One of the Saracens, it may be recalled, attacked a mosaic image the warrior saint that was represented in the church. The Saracen witnessed the icon, described as “fierce-looking,” stretch forth his hand to turn the missile back on its owner and strike him fatally in the heart. Perhaps more clearly than any other example, this miracle offers a vivid description of the warrior saint as a figure who actively defends his religious community and its boundaries, condoning the use of violence for the preservation of both.

The miracle is the product of a milieu in which eastern Christians constantly came into contact with members of rival religions. Many of the recorded encounters relate to military campaigns, which produced scenarios that presented problems for Christian self-perception. In an era when victory on the battlefield was understood as a sign of divine favor, any military defeat was cause for communal self-reproach and questioning. The dilemma was particularly acute for eastern Christians living in Islamic territories, since they had to explain to themselves why God would allow them to live in what they

regarded as a state of perpetual exile, their minority status reinforcing the triumphal claims of their Islamic rulers.

Interfaith encounters could cause further discomfort because they forced Christians to confront the porosity of the boundaries that separated religious communities. Peaceful exchange between Christians and non-Christians must have been common, though specific instances are rarely recorded in written texts. A partial explanation for the textual silence may be the frequency with which peaceful exchanges occurred, which rendered them banal. Another possibility lies in the social standing and rhetorical aims of medieval authors from this milieu, who were often members of monastic communities and the ecclesiastical hierarchy intent on maintaining a rigorist position. Incidents that threw the fluid nature of communal boundaries into sharp relief could be uncomfortable for both rigorist Christians and their Muslim counterparts. As polemical texts, chronicles, and theological tracts attest, eastern Christian church leaders and theologians often grappled with the problem of how to understand the differences between Christians and non-Christians, their incommensurability and simultaneity. Miracle accounts, as I will seek to show, provided another vehicle for addressing these concerns.

In miracle accounts, warrior saints frequently figure in narratives of interfaith encounters, where they appear as communal defenders who define, enforce, and sometimes transgress the porous boundaries that separated communities. In the middle ages, as I will seek to show, miracle accounts became a primary site for defining the functions of the warrior saint in relation to the distinctive social milieu that obtained at frontier zones. Many of the miracle narratives, like that of St. George, present icons as

the site of power, suggesting that these widely disseminated stories provided Christians with models for understanding how sacred images could work on behalf of the faithful. The argument is that the composition of miracle accounts, like the one discussed above, provided a format in which Christians could struggle to make sense of the world around them, by expressing and assuaging the particular anxieties that arose in the fluid social context of the frontier. In the process, the miracle accounts generated an official rhetoric that sought to consolidate Christian sentiment against the many religious others that populated frontier societies.

### **Warrior saints, miracles, and miracle collections**

Although the primary purpose of miracle accounts was to promote the cult of individual saints, they also served as a particularly active site for the elaboration of the functions of the military saints as a class. As early as the sixth century, miracle narratives credit St. Mercurios with the death of Emperor Julian, the act providing a demonstration of divine retribution for spiritual transgressions. In the miracles of St. Theodore Teron, the saint appears on numerous occasions to protect his relics (and his shrine) from the onslaught of Persian (and later Arab) forces. St. Sergios, likewise, provides aid to temporal rulers under siege.<sup>1</sup> As Christopher Walter has noted, it was primarily in miracle collections that the warrior aspects of the soldier saints first and most lastingly found expression.<sup>2</sup> Accounts such as the narrative of St. Mercurios slaying Julian, he suggests, assigned to military martyrs what would become their primary function: to defend and rescue the faithful. Other scholars have confined their use of miracle

---

<sup>1</sup> These miracles will all be discussed in greater detail below.

<sup>2</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*.

accounts as a source of narrative details in select iconographies, such as St. George rescuing the boy.

My approach will be, like Walter, to consider the themes operative in the larger corpus of miracle stories about military saints. Walter is surely right in regarding miracle accounts as a vital site for the development of the cult of the military saints, though much work remains to be done regarding the rhetorical structure and aims in these tales. In this chapter, I will look at the miracle accounts, considering the ways in which they built up a specific set of functions for the warrior saints that related to broader Christian ideologies and triumphal narratives. Ultimately, I argue that the miracle accounts provide a framework for interpreting images of warrior saints, ubiquitous in the eastern Mediterranean.

### *The genre*

Miracle accounts were a fundamental component of the earliest saints' lives, finding their antecedents in the stories of Christ's miracles as related in the gospels. In the fifth century, miracle accounts achieved an autonomous literary status in conjunction with the growing importance of saints' shrines and relics.<sup>3</sup> The accounts, which tend to be brief narratives, were designed to demonstrate the continuing presence and power of the dead saint, and thus miracle collections are typically a compilation of reports of posthumous miracles. In Byzantium and eastern Christianity, miracle accounts circulated in a variety of formats, ranging from historical chronicles to the more standard hagiographic collections. Miracles might take the form of assembled or independent

---

<sup>3</sup> For a consideration of the difference between the miracle *in vita* and the miracle *post mortem*, see Pierre-André Sigal, "Histoire et hagiographie: Les Miracula aux XI<sup>e</sup> et au XII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest* 87 (1980): 41-49; Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1984).



tales, interspersed digressions in a saint's passion, or compact series appended to the passion proper.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the warrior saints, the major figures all inspired miracle collections that circulated as part of the saint's larger hagiographic corpus. Composed in different places and periods, the major Greek collections include: St. Menas (composed in Alexandria in the sixth century), St. Demetrios (composed in Thessaloniki in the seventh and thirteenth centuries), Theodore Teron (composed in Euchaita in the fifth and seventh centuries), St. George (composed in Palestine in the eleventh-twelfth centuries), and St. Eugenios (composed in Trebizond in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries).<sup>5</sup> Versions also circulated in Coptic and Arabic. Of this vast and still little-studied corpus, I consulted the following eastern Christian versions: St. George (composed in Coptic prior to the eighth century; translated from Arabic to Ethiopic),<sup>6</sup> St. Sergios (composed in Arabic before the fourteenth century),<sup>7</sup> St. Menas (composed in Coptic prior to the ninth

---

<sup>4</sup> For the miracle account as a genre, see Hippolyte Delehay, "Les recueils antiques de miracles des saints," *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925): 1-85. For a discussion of the Byzantine perception of miracle accounts, see Marie-France Auzépy, "L'évolution de l'attitude face au miracle à Byzance (VII<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècle)" (paper presented at the Miracles, Prodiges et Merveilles au Moyen Age. XXV<sup>e</sup> Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S., Orléans, juin 1994 1995), 31-46. See also Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Michael E. Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); John C. Cavadini, ed. *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> For a list of these and the other major Greek collections, along with the relevant bibliography, see Efthymiadis, "Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles: A Chronological and Bibliographic Survey," 195-211. Collections in other languages will be addressed later in the chapter.

<sup>6</sup> These are preserved in a tenth-century manuscript. The majority of the miracle accounts utilize late antique themes. Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts*, xiv. The Ethiopic version contains miracles that are not present in the earlier Coptic manuscripts, one of which clearly originated in the post-conquest era. Budge speculates that the Ethiopic version was translated from the Arabic in the twelfth century. Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *George of Lydda: The Patron Saint of England* (London: Luzac & Co., 1930), 65.

<sup>7</sup> The collection is part of a fourteenth-century manuscript (Coptic Museum Ms. Hist. 470, fols. 95v-10r) and clearly selects accounts from an earlier work. Khater, who edited and published the text, notes that two miracles in the collection (9 and 11) date to late antiquity while others (3, 4, 5, and 10) clearly belong to the post-conquest era. Antoine Khater, "Les Miracles des Saints Serge et Bacchus," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 15 (1958-60): 101-102.

century; composed in Arabic prior to the fourteenth century),<sup>8</sup> and St. Mercurios (composed in Coptic prior to the eleventh century; Arabic translation with additions in the thirteenth century).<sup>9</sup>

These collections were typically composed or assembled at the shrine of the saints and intended for recitation to pilgrims. The miracles served to demonstrate the efficacy of prayer, the kinds of crises and situations to which the saint had responded, and thereby to suggest future scenarios for intercessions and miracles. The accounts often provide paradigms both for saintly behavior and for orthodox veneration.<sup>10</sup> Because of their close connection to a given the saint's sanctuary, miracle narratives characteristically include mention of local objects – be they relics or sacred images kept in sanctuaries – and events. Nonetheless, the tales were translated into multiple languages to encourage veneration of the saints wherever Orthodox communities thrived. The translations indicate that miracle collections, even those firmly connected to a specific site, could be found relevant outside the immediate domain of the primary shrine, extending through cultic networks to be reinforced through the patronage of satellite sites.

---

<sup>8</sup> The Coptic miracle accounts in the ninth-century manuscripts employ themes and *topoi* typical to other late antique collections. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary*, xxxiii-xxxvi.

<sup>9</sup> These survive in an eleventh-century manuscript (British Museum MS. Oriental Hist. No. 6802), but the content aligns well with the characteristics that Arietta Papaconstantinou outlines for hagiographic production in the ninth-tenth centuries. On the manuscript, see Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, xlvii-xlix. On the characteristics of post-conquest hagiographic production, see Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 65-86. The Arabic miracles can mostly be found in either the Greek or Coptic collections, although an eleventh-century miracle from the *HPEC* is also included. Felicitas Jaritz, *Die Arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo. Islamische Reihe (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 1993), 49-62.

<sup>10</sup> Peers provides an in-depth discussion of the way miracle accounts for St. Michael were used to encourage orthodox devotional practices in the post-iconoclastic era. See Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 126-158.

Miracle accounts could be taken up into other genres, notably historical and theological works, and be rendered different by their transposition from one genre to another. This is particularly true in the case of historical works and collections, since they pursue divergent ends. The history is a chronologically ordered work that seeks to reveal divine design and presents events according to specific theories of causation, while the miracle collection assembles stories to create an image of a saintly exemplar.<sup>11</sup> In the latter, accounts from different times and places are juxtaposed, essentially replacing chronology and design with atemporality and synchronicity. The purpose is not so much to record particular historical events as to demonstrate how the actions of the saint participate in a universal paradigm of sainthood. For this reason, certain types of miracles – freeing of captives, healings, expulsion of demons, punishment of heretics – occur over and over in accounts concerning different saints. Like all collections, miracle collections had an open-ended quality that invited the addition of further miracles that demonstrated the saint's continued efficacy. This resulted in heterogeneous works, comprised of discrete narrative units that were composed by authors laboring in different places and periods. The resultant collections often bear residual traces of the ideological struggles that marked the periods in which the miracles were composed, although these were ultimately subsumed into the microcosm created by the miracle collection.

A notable feature of the miracle accounts associated with the warrior saints is their intertextuality. Even a brief survey of the accounts reveals that hagiographers in Egypt, the Levant, and Anatolia found their primary inspiration in each others' works and that constant copying and cross-pollenization led to the texts enjoying a transperipheral

---

<sup>11</sup> My discussion of histories and collections is informed and inspired by Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, esp. 132-170.

life. Stories were passed from language to language. The Christian Arabic tale of a Muslim noble who attacks an icon in a church and is punished was translated into Greek, while the famous account of St. George rescuing a captive boy was translated from Greek into Coptic and Arabic. Occasionally, elements were modeled after the Islamic tradition; a recurring episode in Egyptian accounts describes warrior saints descending from the sky to rescue pilgrims lost on the *hajj*, echoing accounts of Muḥammad's night flight to Jerusalem. In terms of their formal features and method of composition, the miracle accounts provide a textual parallel to the heterogeneous visual culture discussed in the previous chapter.

The motifs selected for copying and transposition appealed to frontier communities because they evoked events that were informed by common experience. The narratives repeatedly describe the warrior saints performing acts of rescue, city-defense, and church protection, a set of saintly deeds that address the potential threats of military defeat, capture in battle, and church desecration. Because these episodes occur with such frequency, the miracle tales can be considered as narratives of cross-cultural exchange. One of their primary concerns is that of representing interactions between Christians and non-Christians.

### **Miracles of boundary maintenance**

#### *Enemies at the gate, infidels in the sanctuary*

Concerns over the integrity of communal boundaries are particularly evident in miracle accounts that portray the warrior saints defending their cities and shrines. An early example comes from the seventh-century Greek collection of St. Demetrios. In *Mir. 13*, the saint in military dress appears at the walls of Thessaloniki to protect his city from the advancing Slavs. The narrative describes the enemy forces moving in and

soldiers raising ladders to breach its defenses. St. Demetrios protects the city by striking the first Slavic marauder to scale the fortifications with a lance, sending him falling to his death and turning the tide against the invaders. The brief narrative reflects an understanding of spatial divisions that we have seen already in the Crusader polities, in which the boundaries of political bodies and religious communities are regarded as co-terminus. The city is presented as a stronghold of Christianity, while the Slavs are described as “barbarians” and “savages” – “others” separated by the distance of culture and religion. By keeping the barbarians at bay, St. Demetrios enforces the boundaries around the community of the faithful, ensuring that the cultural differences perceived between Slavs and Christians are articulated by geographical distance.

The productive nature of miracle accounts, as well as the transperipheral relevance of select motifs, can be seen in the case of St. Eugenios, who defended Trebizond against the attack of the Turkish Sultan Melik in 1222-1223.<sup>12</sup> The lengthy account is included in the fourteenth-century Greek synopsis written by John Lazaropoulos, later the Metropolitan of Trebizond. The narrative builds up with the successful advance of Sultan Melik’s brutal forces, until the Sultan stands at the citadel and addresses the people: “Trapezuntines, do not be deceived by your god, nor by that of Eugenios, as he is called. Tomorrow I will burn down his house, which you venerate, and destroy you.”<sup>13</sup> Eugenios intervenes, appearing to the Sultan and identifying himself as “the lord of this city” who keeps “the keys of her gates.”<sup>14</sup> The saint invites them to

---

<sup>12</sup> In terms of its theme, at least, this account draws upon the earlier miracles of St. Demetrios.

<sup>13</sup> *Lazaropoulos’ Synopsis, Mir. 23*. Trans. in Jan Olof Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154*, *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1996), 323.

<sup>14</sup> *Lazaropoulos’ Synopsis, Mir. 23*. Trans. in *Ibid.*, 325.

capture the city, but when they arrive within its walls, he sends a blinding light that scatters the “barbarians.” By drawing on earlier miracles, such as that performed by St. Demetrios, and adapting them to the historical contingencies of Trebizond in the 1220s, the miracle demonstrates the place of Eugenios within a larger paradigm of sanctity.

Although the miracle accounts come from different time periods and places, both represent the military martyr as a primary power in similarly contested and unstable regions. In each, the saints battle for their own, protecting the Christian faithful against barbarian forces allied with other religions. The miracles reflect a common fact of warfare in the pre-modern era, the reality that Christian armies commonly fought against members of other faiths. Political victory was presented as concomitant with religious victory and typically regarded as a sign of divine favor.<sup>15</sup> In the Greek Orthodox world, these ideas supported an ideology of empire in which the struggle against adversaries was also a struggle against the forces of evil. In the city-defense accounts, the emphasis placed on St. Demetrios’ and St. Eugenios’ function as powerful civic patrons is striking. Given their rhetoric and underlying ideologies, it is not surprising that city-defense miracles are uncommon in the eastern Christian tradition, where *dhimma* status precluded the same sense of a civic identity founded on common religion. This type of story, however, does appear in the east, in instances where it is the defense of a shrine or church, rather than a city, at stake.

Miracle accounts in which the warrior saints defend their churches present the space of the sanctuary as a microcosm of the larger battles waged for cities and

---

<sup>15</sup> The seventh-century miracle collection of Theodore Teron, in which seasonal raids led to the plundering of Euchaïta and the saint’s shrine, offer a fascinating look at how Christians accommodated defeat within their religious ideologies. See Zuckerman, “The Reign of Constantine V in the Miracles of St. Theodore the Recruit (*BHG* 1764),” 191-210.

territories. One instance comes from the Coptic St. George collection, likely composed in late antiquity. In *Mir. 3*, a Jewish sorcerer steals from the shrine of St. George in Lydda. Because he does not believe in the power of St. George, he bets a Christian that he can steal from the saint without suffering any consequences. After he “plunders” the shrine, the Jew rejoices and plans to make the Christian “forsake his faith and deny his baptism.”<sup>16</sup> St. George appears “in the guise of a soldier,” ties the stolen goods to the Jew, suspends him from a beam in the church, and whips him with an ox-hide.<sup>17</sup> Once released, the Jew converts to Christianity, providing an example of the ultimate victory for the faith.<sup>18</sup> This narrative occurs time and again in Greek Orthodox and eastern Christian miracles, which present an ever-changing array of others: Jews, Persians, and Muslims.

Miracles composed in eastern Christian lands after the advent of Islam adapt the narrative pattern seen in the miracle of St. George just recounted to the context of Muslim rule. These accounts typically involve Muslims whose hubris and hatred of Christianity leads them to act out against the saint. For instance, a miracle account from the medieval Arabic collection of St. Sergios begins with a Muslim who “hated the Christian community greatly” and would sit near the church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos,

---

<sup>16</sup> *Mir. 3*. Trans. in Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts*, 249.

<sup>17</sup> *Mir. 3*. Trans in *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>18</sup> Accounts of hubris and just punishment are common to miracle collections for all types of saints, and *Mir. 3* follows well-established narrative patterns. The hagiographer sets the scene with an unbeliever who increases his fortune at the expense of the saint. The narrative climax comes when the saint effects a reversal of fortune, in which the hubristic figure is weakened and brought low. In the conclusion, either the offender or another bystander testifies to the awesome power of the saint. In *Mir. 3*, testimony comes through conversion, the ultimate sign of Christian victory. An excellent literary analysis of such narratives can be found in Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 130-140.

“blaspheme against them,” and take ex-votos from their shrine.<sup>19</sup> The centerpiece of the narrative is the appearance of St. Sergios, who reprimands the Muslim:

Oh you, miserable man, evil and without good, for how long have you allowed yourself to take gold from the church, and blaspheme against us and against the faith of the lord, Christ? And we, we have given you a grace period to repent your sins; but you worsened, in denial. And now see me, I take vengeance against you.

Greatly fearing the saint, the Muslim promises to repent and leave the church. According to the hagiographer, he had “respect for the church and the faithful” from that day forward.<sup>20</sup> Later on in the collection, St. Sergios strikes a Muslim with a fatal disease after he attempts to have the church of the saint demolished and replaced with a mosque. The message of these narratives echoes that of the St. George account: the saint protects his own. Like the Jew, the Muslims bear witness to the identity and supernatural powers of the saint performing the miracle.

The church-defense miracles utilize the same rhetoric and employ similar tropes, but the meanings of the accounts change with the work they were asked to do. While placing Muslims in the role of adversary may seem like a simple substitution for figures such as the Jew, the force of the account is radically different. Christians regarded both Jews and Muslims as heretics, since they failed to recognize Christ, but the political standing of the two religions in relation to Christianity was another story. The Muslims in these sanctuaries were part of the ruling class, whose supremacy had been assured by

---

<sup>19</sup> The Muslim who hangs out at churches creating a ruckus becomes something of a *topos* in miracle accounts and hagiographical texts. In more extended accounts, they eat the host and attack icons as well. Cf. Daniel J. Sahas, "What an Infidel Saw that a Faithful Did Not: Gregory Dekapolites (d. 842) and Islam," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31 (1986): 47-67; Dick Ignace, "La passion arabe de S. Antoine Ruwah, néo-martyr de Damas († déc 799)," *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 109-133.

<sup>20</sup> In *Mir.* 3 of the same collection, the entire shrine comes under threat. An Arab man enters the sanctuary “without respect or faith of God” and then leaves to petition the emir: “permit me to demolish this place and construct a mosque there.” Eventually, St. Sergios strikes the Muslim with a fatal disease.



definitive military victories. Both the insults and the defense were heightened by the political context. Perhaps it is only logical that the form the defense took should escalate; miracle accounts written in Egypt often end with the warrior saint slaying the hubristic Muslim who attacks or insults his sanctuary. The miracles that end with the adversary's death do not simply militarize the saints and the form of punishment; rather, they provide a framework through which to apprehend violent acts as pious works, by presenting the defense of communal integrity and boundaries as a religious duty.

The two types of miracles discussed above belong to a larger category of miracles that involve defense and justice, but as I have suggested, they might also be thought of as performing boundary maintenance. When St. Demetrios appears on the walls of Thessaloniki, he is not only preserving his city from military defeat; he is also ensuring that his shrine remains in the hands of Christians. In the case of Sts. Demetrios and Eugenios, their role as civic patrons and their status is manifestly linked to the location of their shrines, within frontiers where borders shifted in accordance with military fortunes. The scale of events in the city-defense and church-defense miracles is very different – one deals with corporate bodies, the other with individuals, one delimits Christianity as a territory, the other as the space within a single building. Yet, the function of the military martyrs is much the same. In the St. Sergios accounts, the Muslims cross boundaries by entering a sacred space reserved for the community of the faithful. Through his punitive acts, the saint expels the infidels from his sanctuary much as St. Eugenios turned back the Turks at the gate.

Though fantastic and formulaic, the miracle accounts respond to real concerns. Thessaloniki and Trebizond both weathered numerous attacks, captures, and recaptures

before their final fall to Islam in the fourteenth century. The churches of the eastern Christians were theoretically protected under the Pact of ‘Umar, but both Muslim and Christian chroniclers document episodes of attack and destruction. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim destroyed numerous churches in 1009, including the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the shrine of St. George in Lydda. Because of its later political significance this episode is well known, but other attacks on churches –often from unofficial quarters – can be found in chronicles. The Christian Arab geographer, Abū l-Makarim records one such incident. There was a church in Nami in Egypt dedicated to St. George that had recently been renovated, “but a body of the fanatic Muslims of that village...attacked the church and destroyed the altar and wrote upon its walls whatever they desired and built three mihrabs...”<sup>21</sup> In the *Futūḥ al-Shām* (a text championing reconquest), the Muslim writer Pseudo-Wāqidī records a Muslim attack on Dayr Abī al-Qadas that occurred at the Easter Festival during the reconquest of the Levant, in which soldiers both attacked Christians and plundered the riches at the monastery.<sup>22</sup> Church destruction was often interpreted like defeat in battle, as a sign that Christians had lost divine favor. The miracles described above address the anxieties of Christians over this common and constant threat even while instilling the hope that the saints will come to the aid of their own.

The same concerns that hagiographers expressed shaped visual culture. Icons of military saints, where they appear in full armor, were often incorporated into sanctuary screens. Three equestrian warrior saints were incorporated into a screen at Abū Sarga in

---

21

<sup>22</sup> Campbell, "The Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East", 224.

Cairo. The saints are unidentified but relate to common types: two slay human adversaries, while another simply holds a cross-surmounted staff. In one, the martyr slays a small figure beneath his horse who holds out a staff to as if to attack a small shrine, tying the small image to the monumental representations at places like the Monastery of St. Antony. The function of the warrior saint, to protect the sanctuary, is enhanced by the scene depicted, which shows him in the act of protecting a sacred space. Coptic theologians wrote of the sanctuary screen (called the *hijāb*) as a protective barrier, which would suggest a thematic connection between iconography and function.<sup>23</sup> Military martyrs were not the only saints who appear as defenders of their shrines in miracle accounts, but they had the advantage of a functional and thematic congruence that was absent in other categories of saints. The success of that combination is evident in churches across the Christian east.

#### *Defending one's own*

Miracle accounts that portray the warrior saints defending individuals demonstrate the role of the martyrs in maintaining the cohesion and integrity of the community. By presenting the saints who defend cities as protectors of individuals, these accounts gave hope to the Christian faithful and identified them as members of the elect. Such accounts include St. George aiding travelers besieged by brigands on the road,<sup>24</sup> St. Menas rescuing a pilgrim from the jaws of a crocodile,<sup>25</sup> and St. Demetrios leading a

---

<sup>23</sup> Bolman, "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions," 93-95.

<sup>24</sup> *Mir. 5*. Trans. in Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts*, 253-255.

<sup>25</sup> *Mir. 17*. Trans. in Devos, "Un récit des miracles de S. Ménas en Copte et en Éthiopien," 451-463.

captured bishop out of an enemy camp.<sup>26</sup> Some involve the dispensation of justice, as in *Mir. 4* of the Coptic St. Menas collection, in which the saint rescues a female pilgrim molested by a soldier and then metes out punishment on her attacker.<sup>27</sup> The moral of these stories is that those who honor the saints, tend their shrines, and maintain a close relationship with them will enjoy the benefits of their protection.

A particularly prevalent theme from the tenth century onwards is the deliverance of captured individuals. The by-now familiar image of St. George rescuing the boy draws upon a closely connected series of accounts. In one, the author sets the scene of action in Paphlagonia and establishes the relationship of the protagonist to the saint: “During their invasion of Paphlagonia the Agarenes took many people in captivity, among them a young boy who was a servant in the church of St. George in Phatris.”<sup>28</sup> This boy refused to convert to Islam and was sent to work in the kitchens. He prayed to St. George, who appeared in due course and transported him on horseback back to the church. This version of the story suggests that swift aid comes to those who call on the saints, but other versions focus on the need to remain steadfast in faith. In another, Arab pirates from Crete attack the Church of St. George on the island of Lesbos. The emir takes a “handsome boy,” the son of a widow, and makes him his personal cupbearer. According to the hagiographer:

---

<sup>26</sup> *Mir. 6*. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, 234-236.

<sup>27</sup> Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary*, 116-118.

<sup>28</sup> In other versions of the miracle account, the boy is named George, reinforcing his relationship with the eponymous martyr. See Grotowski, “The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art,” 30.

For a whole year the despairing mother prayed to St. George hoping to get her son back. With particular fervour she asked the saint on his feast-day, in other words on the anniversary of her son's kidnapping by the Saracens. At such a moment the boy was giving a glass of wine to the emir. Unexpectedly St. George appeared on a white steed, caught the boy and brought him to his mother's house.<sup>29</sup>

As in the first account, the links between venerating St. George and the saint giving his aid are explicit. Both versions show the reward of steadfast faith, though the first locates this with the boy who remains Christian rather than converting, the second with the mother who prays to St. George for an entire year. None of the versions end with the saint exacting retribution at the enemy camp. Rather, the narratives focus in on the power of St. George to extend his reach far beyond his shrines and to bring his own back home, underscoring the point that the saints, and not soldiers, hold the real power.

Though composed in different places and with the intention of honoring different saints, the rescue accounts share a number of features that derive from their setting. The scene is typically the frontier, where armies of different confessional affiliations vie for control of contested areas.<sup>30</sup> Much like the city-defense miracles, the rescue accounts underscore the dominance of the warrior saints within territories that are, by definition, without a single military or hegemonic power. The accounts draw upon and reinforce the image of the military martyr as a figure who creates and enforces boundaries; the rescued are the chosen who belong to the community of the faithful. Finally, because the actors involved are members of different faiths, the triumph of the saint signifies the triumph of Christianity over its adversaries.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.: 32. See also Aufhauser, *Miracula S. Georgii*, 101-103.

<sup>30</sup> The miracles are set within frontier cities and regions, though that did not limit their circulation to regions that had the status of a frontier. So, the account of George and boy can be found in Arabic manuscripts from Egypt, where concerns of capture were not especially prevalent.

Features of the rescue accounts offer a response to typical occurrences at the frontier. Captivity was a common outcome of warfare in the pre-modern era and could lead to exchanges, executions, or conversions for Christians and Muslims alike.<sup>31</sup> A particularly striking testimony comes from Michael Choniates, who wrote a letter in the beginning of the thirteenth century to his nephew George the *sebastos* to console him after the murder of his first-born son, Michael, by the tyrant Leo Sgouros. Sgouros had taken Michael captive and made him his cupbearer. When the child accidentally broke a wineglass, the infuriated tyrant hit the boy with an iron club and killed him. According to Choniates, Sgouros had declared that the boy should share the fate of his wineglass. Choniates describes the glass as “cheap and easily broken” and laments, “Oh, what a valuable thing has perished for the sake of a paltry vessel, not gold for bronze...but a creation of the hand of God for the sake of a cup poorly made of glass and worth three obols.”<sup>32</sup> The close parallels between the letter of Michael Choniates and the miracle account of St. George rescuing the boy are suggestive of the ways in which historical events and hagiographical tropes could mutually inspire and reinforce one another. In doing so, miracle accounts might also give expression to the particular concerns engendered by life on the frontier. The St. George miracle, by supplying the desired outcome, could provide hope to the bereft over the fate of those captured in battle.

The desire to establish close relationships with the warrior saints in order to garner their protection is documented in the material record. Objects of personal

---

<sup>31</sup> M. Campagnolo-Pothitou, "Les échanges de prisonniers entre Byzance et l'Islam aux IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 7 (1995): 1-55. On the monetary value of prisoners, see Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies," 245-276. For Arab prisoners in Constantinople, see Stephen W. Reinert, "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th-15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. Angelike Laiou (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), 126-130.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Talbot, 2005, 243.

devotion, such as bronze pendants and cameos bearing images of the warrior saints, were produced in large numbers, for these served to establish intimacy through their size and contact with the body of the wearer. Seals depicting the military martyrs, common among the military aristocracy, suggest strong devotion to these highly efficacious saints. Even bearing their names might place an individual under their protection, as Theodoret noted: “and to their children they take care to give the names of these [martyrs], engineering for them in this way security and protection.”<sup>33</sup> Some individuals owned portable icons, panels that show the saints rescuing captives, as discussed in the previous chapter. Closer correspondence might come by carrying or owning panels of the saints rescuing captives, such as those discussed in the previous chapter. Through such icons, referring to miracles achieved, a person might make him- or herself the saint’s own and, in times of warfare, ensure salvation in this life.

### **Accounts of boundary-crossing: afflicted bodies, beleaguered empires**

The warrior saints were perceived as powerful figures not only because they had the ability to maintain communal boundaries, but also because they received homage from non-Christians. These boundary-crossings often occur within healing accounts.<sup>34</sup> In *Mir. 4* of the Coptic collection of St. George, a Persian ruler by the name of Nicanor has sought help for his son who has leprosy, but no doctor has been able to heal him. The Persian ruler goes to St. George, who cures his son, inspiring the ruler and his retinue to convert to Christianity. In this narrative, the Persian seeks out St. George because he has

---

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, 101.

<sup>34</sup> For an overview of healing miracles in the Byzantine tradition, see Stavroula Constantinou, “The Morphology of Healing Dreams: Dream and Therapy in Byzantine Collections of Miracle Stories,” in *Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. C. Angelidi (Aldershot: Ashgate, in press). I thank Professor Constantinou for sharing her unpublished work with me.

heard of his miraculous powers. The status of the Persian, as a non-Christian, serves to heighten the prestige of the saint and provides an opportunity to stage a still greater feat – the conversion of a ruler and his people. Unlike the miracles discussed above, the boundary-crossing in this account serves as a prelude to conversion, which resolves the problem posed by religious difference and simultaneity through absorption of the other.

Healing miracles further served to emphasize the power of the saints to watch over and take care of their own, often above and beyond the means available to medical doctors and healers. Though these accounts were not necessarily set at the frontier, the ones that involve conversion tend to hail from the outskirts of Christian territories and to share an underlying logic with stories of rescue and defense. Not unlike the church-defense accounts, these narratives involve a boundary crossing and a state in which things are outside the normal order. In the case of Nicanor's son, this "out of place" status comes both from his diseased body and his presence, as a Persian, at the shrine in a Christian territory. All is set right with the healing and conversion; just as the diseased and "grotesque" body is restored to wholeness, so the soul is claimed for Christianity. John Haldon, in relation to a different collection of healing miracles, has argued that healing accounts and the image of the diseased body related to concern over the presence of heresies within the boundaries of the Orthodox empire.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, the miracles in which healing leads to conversion provide another – less violent – variation on the question of boundary maintenance at the hands of the military martyrs.

---

<sup>35</sup> John Haldon, "The Miracles of Aretmios and Contemporary Attitudes: Context and Significance," in *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories*, ed. Virgil S. Cristafulli and John W. Nesbitt. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 40-41.



Numerous chronicles, geographical texts, and the *diyārāt* books provide some evidence that these accounts were more than wishful thinking. As a number of accounts attest, so powerful was the miracle-working reputation of the military martyrs that it drew supplicants from other religions. The best-studied cases are St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki and St. Sergios in Ruṣāfa, whose shrines beckoned to the distressed regardless of their confessional affiliation.<sup>36</sup> Even if evidence of cross-cultural traffic is lacking for the shrines of warrior saints in Egypt and the Levant, the example of Ṣaydnāyā suggests that Muslims were willing to ignore sectarian boundaries in order to obtain blessings. Whether or not Muslims regarded their actions as veneration is difficult to determine since, as noted in the previous chapter, chroniclers rarely acknowledged instances of metadoxy. The Muslim writer Shābushtī records numerous healing springs at monasteries that were frequented by Muslims, although he takes care to disassociate his co-religionists from the Christian veneration of relics and icons, which often feature in Christian healing narratives.<sup>37</sup> Writing about Crusader miracle accounts in which Muslims pay homage to the Virgin, Alexandra Cuffel has argued that such narratives provided a means to incorporate non-Christian veneration into the framework of Christian salvation history and understandings of the world.<sup>38</sup> In western European thought, non-Christian veneration was a necessary facet of God's divine plan, since these

---

<sup>36</sup> Bakirtzis, "Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios," 175-192; Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*.

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, "The Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East," 214-215.

<sup>38</sup> Alexandra Cuffel, "Henceforward all Generations will call me Blessed': Medieval Christian Tales of Non-Christian Marian Veneration," *Mediterranean Studies* 12 (2003): 37-60.

outsiders provided testimony to the unique truths of Christianity.<sup>39</sup> It is likely that eastern Christians interpreted non-Christian veneration in a similar fashion. Miracle stories such as that of St. George healing Nicanor's son would certainly have provided the ready framework of the Christian triumphalist narrative.

Deference from members of other religions was a powerful rhetorical device for enhancing the warrior saints' prestige and played a vital role in Christian perceptions of their patrons. At the end of the Coptic passion of St. George, the angel of God fortified the soldier for the tortures ahead by promising him that after his death "all the nations of the earth [will] come to your shrine and bring you gifts."<sup>40</sup> An account from the Arabic Sergios collection demonstrates that this theme was not limited to St. George. A single line sets the scene: "It happened one year that a rebel among the Berbers revolted against the king of the east and took the greater part of his country."<sup>41</sup> Having heard of the miracles performed by Sergios and Bacchos, the king goes to their shrine to solicit their aid: "Oh you, the pure companions, aid me and liberate me from my enemies." The king rides off to battle, defeats his enemies, and reclaims his realm. In thanksgiving and "remembrance of the miracle," the king sends a cross, fashioned of gold and jewels, to the shrine of the warrior saints. The miracle concludes with a line that brings the miraculous aid of the saints into the present: "Their intercession is with us." This particular account derives from documented historic events and provides an example of

---

<sup>39</sup> In early Islamic history, the Bahira tradition provides a loose parallel. See Sidney H. Griffith, "Muhammad and the Monk Bahīrā: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times," *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 146-174.

<sup>40</sup> Trans. Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts*, 240.

<sup>41</sup> *Mir. 9*. Trans. in Khater, "Les Miracles des Saints Serge et Bacchus," 119-120.

the ways in which triumphalist narratives could be applied to historic episodes in teleological narratives.<sup>42</sup>

Not unlike the account of the Persian ruler Nicanor, the St. Sergios account utilizes the non-Christian status of the king to heighten the glory and power of the warrior saints. The image of the hapless king, who has lost his vast territory, speaks volumes for the status of the warrior saints within the frontier and demonstrates the ways in which an account of boundary crossing might serve to increase the prestige of Christianity. However, the author is alert to contemporary realities, for the miracle does not end in conversion to Christianity – an act punishable by death in Islamic polities. It should be noted that all of these accounts come from collections that circulated in Egypt, where saints' shrines were in decline. The images of strong saints and thriving shrines created in the cosmos of the miracle collections suggests that Coptic devotion to the military martyrs was inflected with a sense of nostalgia and the desire to keep alive the memory of former glories.

*The dominance of the warrior saints*

Regardless of outcome or narrative prompt, the principal focus of the miracles discussed above is on the ability of warrior saints to defend and protect those who are associated with them in some way. That bond might be created through coming to his sanctuary to request aid, living within cities under her protection, serving at a warrior

---

<sup>42</sup> Khusrau II famously prayed to Sergios when he lost his throne to Bahram II in 590. When he regained his sovereignty, he sent rich ex-votos to the shrine, including a gem-studded cross. Later, when Khusrau II married Shirin, an Armenian Christian, he prayed to Sergios that his wife conceive, and the saint visited him in a dream. In thanksgiving for Sergios' intervention, Khusrau II sent a golden paten and chalice to Rusafa, along with a gold cross and silk curtains embroidered in gold. Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, 136-138.

saint's shrine, or bearing the saint's name.<sup>43</sup> The miracles relate to different saints, come from different times and places, and are written in different languages. Nevertheless, they all emphasize this one-to-one correspondence between those who venerate the martyrs and those who receive their aid. In this respect, the military martyrs do not differ significantly from their brethren. In miracle collections centered on the church doctors Cosmas and Damien, Artemios the thaumaturge, and the female martyr Thekla, the saints all establish relationships to those who need them.<sup>44</sup> Nor are the types of miracles unique; Thekla, for instance, defends her city from brigands, battles pagan gods for the faith of Seleukeia's citizens, and inflicts punishments on those whose hubris leads them to attack her shrine. Her miracles also occur against the backdrop of a beleaguered city on the fringes of the empire and orthodox world.

So, what then, is distinctive about the warrior saints as portrayed in their miracles? The answer may lie in motifs and tenor. When the military saints mete out punishment, they tend to do so with swords and spears, while saints such as Thekla are more likely to inflict the offending party with a disease. And since the spear is their favored weapon, their miracles tend to be swift and violent. A greater proportion of their miracles occur in embattled areas, whether these are city- or church-defense miracles, rescues, or healings. This situation follows naturally from the location of their shrines, within military frontier zones. Of course, the most obvious way in which they differ is the persona of the saint. When the military martyrs make their appearance, they come

---

<sup>43</sup> In one variation of the account in which St. George rescues a soldier in captivity, the boy's name is George.

<sup>44</sup> Festugière, *Collections grecques de miracles: Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges*; Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

“in the guise of a soldier” – in armor, on horseback, and typically carrying a spear. Their militarized personas combine with the common saintly functions they perform to make them frontier figures par excellence.

But there is another way in which the warrior saints can be distinguished from the larger company of saints. Over time, the military martyrs came to be regarded not simply as defenders of a city or shrine defenders of the entire community of the faithful. As mentioned in chapter three, sixth- and seventh-century historians and hagiographers began to assign to the military martyrs the ability to vanquish Christianity’s greatest foes. These were the Roman emperors who made persecution of the faith an institutional practice when they legally banned the religion. St. Mercurios was credited with slaying the Apostate Emperor Julian, St. George with killing Diocletian, and St. Sergios with bringing on the death of Valens.<sup>45</sup> The deaths of these historic figures at the hands of the military saints were miracles related to simple punishment miracles – they assert the superior power of Christianity as they describe the protection of the faithful – but they also ensured the continuation of the larger community. This is boundary affirmation and communal patronage writ large, and it extends the sphere of the warrior saints to the entire community of the orthodox, or those who “believe rightly.” These miracles give the military martyrs substantial heroic roles in the larger narrative that is Christian salvation history.

Reciting the miraculous feats of the martyrs provided eastern Christians with a way to block the triumphalist narratives of their Muslim rulers; however, when necessary, defeats could also be accommodated within Christian theories of causation. A chronicler

---

<sup>45</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 105.

in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* explained a period of hardship by the absence of the community's saintly patrons:

[St. Mercurios]...appeared to him on that night, and he brought him out to a vast place, and made him stand over a pit in which (there were) horses and arms, and he said to him: Do you know me? I am Abba Mercurios...Do not be doubtful concerning me, and know that I and my brethren, the martyrs, and others besides us, have been ordered not to make intercession for anyone at this time, because it is a time of chastisement. There (are) our horses and our arms (which) we have left here.<sup>46</sup>

The image of the pit with discarded horses and weapons vividly conveys the notion of a community without its spiritual protectors. The chronicler makes it clear that this is an unusual occurrence, and that the saints are typically there to defend and protect. This is born out in other instances he recorded in the chronicle, when the warrior saints came to the aid of the Christians, often against their Muslim overlords. The situation in Coptic communities was such that the warrior saints were called in to support acts of resistance.

### **Miracles in icons**

#### *Friends to those in the frontiers: the donor portrait at Beliserama*

The perception that the military saints were especially fitting patrons for those who lived at the frontier extends to visual culture. Images of these saints are noticeably prevalent in church programs in places where Christianity came face-to-face with other military and religious powers, in Egypt and the Levant, and also in Georgia and Cappadocia. A particularly striking example of frontier devotion to the military saints is found in a church in Cappadocia, Kırk Dam Altı kilise in Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı.<sup>47</sup> The church, which was constructed to serve as a funerary chapel, is one of

---

<sup>46</sup> *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, Vol. II Part III, 303.

<sup>47</sup> Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce: Mémoire de Byzance* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1997), 104-115; Nicole Thierry and Michel Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce région du Hasan Dağı* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1963), 201-213.

the rock-cut structures for which Cappadocia is famous. It has an irregular plan with a roughly triangular nave, a semi-circular apse, and chambers for sarcophagi. The walls are embellished with a painted program that includes the standard repertoire of subjects, along with an unusual donor portrait that features St. George (Fig. 38). The program dates to the thirteenth century, placing the monument firmly within the period of Seljuk Turkish rule in the region.<sup>48</sup> At that time, the region was loosely ruled by a Turkish-Byzantine military elite, noted for its permissive attitude towards cultural, political, and religious affiliations.

In terms of its dedication and decoration, the tiny church is an expression of local cultural and religious trends. Scholars have identified the paintings as the product of a local workshop while the dedication to St. George is fitting in the region identified in the saint's passion as his birthplace. The approach to representing him is unusual, since he appears no fewer than three times in different places, once on horseback slaying a dragon (Figs. 39-40), once on horseback with an accompanying rider (Fig. 41), and once as a full-length standing figure within the donor portrait.<sup>49</sup>

The donor portrait, located on the west wall of the church, is dominated by the towering image of St. George, who wears the contemporary garb of a Byzantine soldier and carries weapons associated with the Arab sphere.<sup>50</sup> The patron of the program, Basil Giagoupes, stands to the right of saint George, garbed in a robe and turban after contemporary Seljuk fashion. The figure to the left of the saint, the Lady Thamar, is also

---

<sup>48</sup> For Cappadocia during this period, see Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce: Mémoire de Byzance*, 104-115.

<sup>49</sup> L. Bernardini, "Les donateurs des églises de Cappadoce," *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 127-129.

<sup>50</sup> David C. Nicolle, *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050-1350*, vol. 1 (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1988), 192; Idem., *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050-1350*, vol. 2 (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1988), fig. 505A.

dressed in the rich, courtly garb of the Seljuk court and offers a model of the church to the saint. Above her is the fragmentary donor inscription, which reads:

This most honored church of the great and illustrious martyr St. George was magnificently decorated together, by the great desire and pain of the Lady Thamar pictured opposite and the *amir arzi* Basil Giagoupes. In the reign of the great and noble Sultan Masud during the reign of Andronicus king of the Romans...O crown-bearing martyr George of Cappadocia...<sup>51</sup>

The inscription identifies Basil Giagoupes as the *amīr arđī*, a bureaucrat position identified in the chronicle of Ibn Bībī as an official whose job was to oversee the needs of the Seljuk army, salaries, and military catalogues. The Lady Thamar may be identified as one of the Georgian princesses who married into the Anatolian branch of Seljuk rulers.<sup>52</sup> Both the titles and attire associate the figures with the Seljuks, but their names – and the patronage of the church – situate them firmly within the Greek Orthodox sphere and associate them with the longtime practice of dedicating churches in exchange for divine protection. The image expresses the relationships of the figures through pictorial conventions: Basil and Thamar stand beneath the fully armed saint, holding out their hands in supplication and proffer the church, visually placing themselves under the patronage of St. George. While Basil and Thamar may have owed their political

---

<sup>51</sup> The inscription, which survives in a damaged state, was first recorded, deciphered, and translated by Father Laurent. It was later reconsidered by Speros Vryonis, who broached the possibility that Basil Giagoupes held the rank of the *amir aziz*. See Speros Vryonis, "The Inscription of the Church of St. George of Beliserama," *Byzantina* 9 (1977): 9-22; Vitalien Laurent, "Note additionelle: l'inscription de l'église Saint-Georges de Bélisérama," *Revue des Études byzantines* 26 (1968): 367-371.

<sup>52</sup> In his work on the inscription, Speros Vryonis suggested that the Tamar represented here may have been a figure known from two chronicles. He identified the figure represented in the church as the Tamar who married the Sultan Giyath al-Din in 1237 and, shortly thereafter, converted to Islam. Speros further proposed that the Tamar of Bar Hebraeus' chronicle could be identified with the Georgian Lady who figures in the chronicle of the dervish Eflaki, where she participated extensively in the mawali circles of the mystic Rumi. It is possible that the Tamar represented in Belisırma is the same as the Tamar of one (or both chronicles), although intermarriage of Turks with Georgian women was a frequent phenomenon as early as the eleventh through twelfth centuries. See Antony Eastmond, "Art and Frontiers Between Byzantium and the Caucasus," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 154-159. *Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 154-169.



allegiance to the Court of Rūm, in this space and in the realm of their devotions, St. George reigned supreme.

The powerful nature of St. George, suggested by his military gear, is emphasized by the unusual replication of his portrait. In an image located on the north-western wall, the saint appears on horseback, his head and torso inclined forward as he slays a knotted dragon (Figs. 39-40). He wears standard chain mail armor and a tiara and carries a shield with a chevron pattern reminiscent of the patterned shields seen in Levantine images. On the south wall, St. George rides a horse with an accompanying rider who holds a glass, likely referring to some version of the legend of St. George saving the boy (Fig. 40). The saint appears in garb appropriate to his aristocratic beholders, holding a shield embellished with rows of rosettes and pseudo-kufic. A further image, badly damaged and much restored, appears in a niche at the entrance and shows the saint slaying a double-headed dragon, again on horseback. The images, which are suggestive to connections with the Levant as well as local pictorial practices, gloss the central portrait of St. George to define him as a miracle-worker who protects and saves his own.<sup>53</sup>

The donor image is suggestive of the ways in which the warrior saints could stand above and between the complicated cultural, political, and religious affiliations of the frontier. It is also a vivid testimony to the stature of St. George in the eyes of the Cappadocian faithful, who sought to harness his miraculous powers for the personal protection – both in this life and the next. In this sense, the image provides a visual counterpart to the themes promoted in miracle accounts and demonstrates how images furthered, and likely at times inspired, the rhetoric of the narratives.

---

<sup>53</sup> Images of dragon-slaying saints are common in Cappadocia from the tenth century onwards.

*Other icons*

Like the many images of St. George in Kirk Dam Altı kilise, the majority of the icons produced in the Levant and Egypt depict the warrior saints performing miracles. The saints, as we have seen, slay dragons, rescue captives, and slay enemies of the faith. Even when they are depicted on horseback simply holding a spear or cross, as St. Sergios often is (Figs. 12, 56, 63), they are still in the form in which they typically appear in miracle accounts. As will be evident by now, miracles and icons sometimes told the same narrative, with text and image mutually inspiring and reinforcing one another. This we have seen with the account of St. George and the boy, and in a more pervasive way, the many representations (visual and literary) of saints in armor on horseback. Images, moreover, often utilized common narratives and iconographic forms to extend the powers of the saints, providing them with miracles for which there is no apparent textual basis. At the Monastery of St. Antony, for instance, St. Claudius slays the emperor Diocletian – a feat typically attributed to St. George and, for Claudius, otherwise unattested (Fig. 32).

I would like to suggest that the miracle narratives and images work together in more subtle ways as well. The miracle accounts built up personas for the warrior saints as miracle workers, which must have shaped the ways in which the faithful perceived the images. More importantly, perhaps, both images and texts presented Christian triumph in a militarized language and sought to define interfaith relationships in hierarchical terms. Both images and texts suggest that the act of framing and defining communities were often regarded as violent and hierarchizing processes. The emphasis on miracles in the icons suggests that they, too, played a role in characterizing the community and its position in the world – a point to which I will now turn.

### Miraculous icons

The nature and functions ascribed to the military saints, as seen in the miracle accounts discussed above, were also ascribed to sacred images, which might depict warrior saints on church walls, on amulets, or on portable icons. These might represent the saints performing miracles, as we have seen, but they were also believed to be capable of producing miracles themselves. Thus accounts of miraculous icons appear in a range of sources: miracle collections, hagiographical texts, and historical narratives. Sometimes these involve hierophanies (an epiphany of the saint acting in the vicinity of the icon), like the miracle of St. George at Mu‘allaqa, in which the saint appears to attack a Muslim who spit on his sacred image.<sup>54</sup> In others, the icon acts directly. For the warrior saints, such narratives appear most frequently in the miracle accounts composed in Egypt and the Levant, where efficaciousness of these icons is second only to icons of Christ and the Virgin. Consequently, this discussion will focus on the narratives from these regions.

Two miracles from the Greek St. George collection portray his icon performing a miracle of defense. In *Mir. 2*, with which I began, a Saracen soldier attacked an icon of St. George and died when the icon turned his weapon back on him.<sup>55</sup> Another miracle in the collection (*Mir. 7*) includes an account in which a group of Saracens entered a church while on a hunting expedition and shot an arrow at an icon of St. George during the

---

<sup>54</sup> “Hierophany” is a term coined by the comparative religion scholar, Mircea Eliade that signifies the manifestation of sacred immanence in, or in the vicinity of, the image, an apparition of the saint in proximity to the image, or the material evidence of a healing, exorcism, or some other response to prayer.

<sup>55</sup> *Mir. 2*. Trans. in Festugière, *Collections grecques de miracles: Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges*, 275-276.

liturgy. The icon turned the arrow back on the attacker, which struck the hand of the Saracen and inspired him to convert to Christianity.<sup>56</sup>

Both miracles conform to a widely diffused type which first appeared in the *Life of St. Antony Ruwah*, a neo-martyrdom composed in Arabic in the eighth century. It records the conversion and martyrdom of a young Muslim *ghāzī* descended from Muḥammad. In the neo-martyrdom, the icon that performs the miracle belongs to St. Theodore and represents him on horseback slaying a dragon “like one sees in the churches.” In that account, St. Theodore actually appears to the wounded Muslim as an epiphany, to enumerate and berate him for his offenses:

You have outraged me with your conduct, by lacking respect for my sanctuary, attacking my icon, eating the body of my master and lord, destroying the ornaments of my altar and mocking the ministers of my church. Return to your thoughts and believe in Christ, abandon your error and come to the life, the victory, and the proof.<sup>57</sup>

The central motif of the account in the *Life of St. Anthony Ruwah* – the icon and irate saint – was apparently successful, since this element appears in reworked forms and even in other languages, as in the version described above. In both, the hagiographic tropes are modified to fit the circumstances of the post-conquest era, where conversion could only mean execution. Though this may seem like a less than desirable outcome to a modern reader, it should be remembered that thirteenth-century Christians regarded it differently. In the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egyptian*, Abū l-Makārim refers to the period of persecution under the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim as a sort of golden age, “when Christianity was authentic, and their chief men...honourable.”<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> *Mir.* 7. Trans. in *Ibid.*, 308-310.

<sup>57</sup> Ignace, "La passion arabe de S. Antoine Ruwah, néo-martyr de Damas († déc 799)," 122, 129.

<sup>58</sup> *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, 159.

An account of a miraculous icon incorporated into the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* follows much the same pattern. The episode follows a catalogue of some of St. George's other miracles:

And God manifested in it many miracles through His martyr, my lord George (Mari Girgis), and in other churches besides it which (are dedicated) to his (St. George's) name. Among them (the miracles), it is said concerning a Bedouin (Badawai) man of the Children of Ghalaf (Bani Ghalaf), that he entered his (St. George's) Church at Damallus, and that he stood fighting against his (St. George's) picture, and he (St. George) slew him immediately, and he died.<sup>59</sup>

The compact nature of the account serves to focus the audience on the rhetorical point: the martyr protects his own, and his justice is swift and lethal. Even without the larger framing devices of fully-developed miracle narratives, the brief notice serves to reinforce the theme of victory conspicuous in the other accounts.

The miracles around icons discussed above are all closely patterned after one another and share the same features with other sorts of miracles attached to the warrior saints. But because they occur within church spaces and habitually involve members of other faiths, they often narrate the contests between religions. In these accounts, Christianity always comes out victorious. The Greek accounts relating to St. George – involving Saracens, soldiers, and prisoners – clearly took shape at the frontier and used the sacred image as the focal point to voice concerns about the transgression of communal boundaries. From the accounts in *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, it is evident that these miracles were also popular beyond the political and military frontier. Of course the icon miracles from Egypt and the Levant are not solely

---

<sup>59</sup> *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, Vol. II Part III, 357.

defense miracles – icons weep, ooze healing oil, etc. – but it is striking how often the warrior saints’ icons are portrayed in the act of meting out justice.<sup>60</sup>

I would argue that the accounts address anxieties over the treatment of sacred images in lands where Christians lived under Muslim rule – a problem that did not concern the Byzantines to the same extent. Particularly in the eighth century, the possibility of desecration was a real concern for Christians of all confessional stripes. In 721 the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (720-724) issued an edict stipulating that Christian icons were to be removed from public display, even in churches, and destroyed.<sup>61</sup> Recent work by historians, which seeks to place the edict of Yazīd II into its broader context, has shown that the law stemmed from earlier developments. In the preceding century, the Umayyad caliphs ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705) and his son al-Walīd (705-715) had carried out public mosque building programs, accompanied by measures to dismantle and prohibit the openly exhibited symbols of Christianity. In their chronicles, eastern Christians remembered the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik as the beginning of the church’s problems, although earlier accounts suggest that his policies were a continuation, and perhaps formalization, of earlier instances. In the first half of the seventh century, a monastic writer named Anastasius noted the newly arrived Muslims’ antipathy to the cross, while a Syrian chronicler preserved the memory of an order of Uthmān (644-656) to the effect “that the crosses were to be pulled down and effaced from walls, streets, and conspicuous places, and that the emblem of the cross was not to be displayed on

---

<sup>60</sup> For a survey of miraculous icons mentioned in the *HPEC*, which give a good range of the possibilities, see den Heijer, "Miraculous Icons and their Historical Background," 89-100. For the Levant, we have the icon of the Virgin at Saydnaya, which reportedly exuded oil.

<sup>61</sup> For the following, I am drawing on the analysis in Sidney H. Griffith, "Images, Islam, and Christian Icons: A Moment in the Christian/Muslim Encounter in Early Islamic Times," in *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1992), 121-138.

feastdays or rogation days.” In Egypt, the governor carried out his own campaign.

According to the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*:

Then he commanded to destroy all the crosses which were in the land of Egypt, even the crosses of gold and silver...Moreover he wrote certain inscriptions and placed them on the doors of the churches at Miṣr and in the Delta, saying in them: “Muḥammad is the great Apostle of God, and Jesus also is the Apostle of God. But verily God is not begotten and does not beget.”<sup>62</sup>

Such occurrences date to the very earliest centuries of Islam, and evidently made an impression on Christians. Early accounts regarding miraculous icons, which anticipate those discussed above, date to the same period. At the Second Council of Nicea in 787 a report was read that related an episode in which some Cypriots came to Syria by ship, went into one of the city’s churches with some Muslim military men, and:

One of the Muslims, seeing a mosaic icon in the wall, asked one of the Christians present, “What benefit is this icon?” The Christian answered him, “It benefits those who pay it honor; it harms those who dishonor.” The Muslim said, “I am going to dig out its eye, and I will see what harm it does me.” Having said this, he extended his pike and dug out the icon’s right eye. Straightaway, his own eye leaped out onto the ground and he was consumed with a fever.<sup>63</sup>

The miracle has all the hallmarks of the later accounts: the hubris of the Muslims, contest of the religions, and victory of Christianity through an affliction. The later narratives differ only in utilizing icons of the warrior saints to visualize the metaphorical battle in a more militarized form.

Although the transportation of this trope into Christian Egyptian chronicles may seem like a simple matter of absorption, the meaning is radically altered by the context. At the Syrian frontier, where Muslim and Christians soldiers faced one another in military conflicts, the battling icon appears as an extension of the warfare raging outside. But in Egypt, religious violence across communal boundaries was prohibited and highly

---

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 130.

unusual – which may explain why Muslims sometimes attacked the material artifacts of Christianity rather than Christians themselves. It should be noted that the violence committed by the warrior saints and icons of them is always tightly circumscribed. In every instance cited, the saint acts in defense, after the icon has already been attacked or threatened. While this is equally true for the Greek Orthodox miracle accounts, the resonance of the eastern Christian ones may have been different. When eastern Christian theologians and polemicists wrote tracts proving that Christianity was the one true faith, they frequently pointed to the ways in which Islam gained its converts. In *The Recognition of the True Religion*, the ninth-century Nestorian theologian ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī wrote:

The whole word that is opposed to the Christian religion, the Jews, the Maḡūs, the Muslims and others, agree that Christ’s disciples did not conquer people by the sword, nor did they use it. Rather, the most that the Jews can ascribe to them is sorcery and trickery, rather than the sword. While the Maḡūs and Muslims think of them in regard to signs.<sup>64</sup>

That is, Islam converts by the sword, using coercion to gain its converts, while Christianity converts by miracles, which demonstrate the authenticity of the religion. This critique circulated in the more popular forms of polemic, such as the dialogue between an emir and the monk, Abraham of Tiberias, which supposedly took place in the ninth century.<sup>65</sup> The text, which likely dates to roughly the same period, places Abraham in the court at Jerusalem, demonstrating that Christianity is the one true religion:

His prophets announced [the religion], his messengers put the seal on it; and his choice friends have preserved it in his pure treasuries. He has led peoples and

---

<sup>64</sup> Trans. in Griffith, "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians," 77. Thomas Sizgorich, "'Do Prophets Come with a Sword?' Conquest, Empire, and Historical Narrative in the Early Islamic World," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 993-1015.

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the dating and scenario, see Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period," 26-27.



nations into it without sword, or constraint, or deceitful dissimulation...I mean the religion of Christ and the community (*umma*) of the Nazarenes.<sup>66</sup>

Strikingly, the miracle accounts often preserve the distinction between violence and miracles in inspiring conversions; it is always the miraculous nature of the aggressive act performed by the saint that prompts the Muslims in these narratives to convert. The appeal of aggressive miracles might relate to another part of this debate; Arab Christian theologians express concerns that Christians would stop venerating icons that represent Christ crucified, since it was not an image that clearly conveyed strength and victory.<sup>67</sup> The image had initially gained its power as a reversal of Roman cultural values, but Islamic polemicists often challenged Christians for venerating a God who had submitted to torture and death rather than fighting. I do not wish to posit any one-to-one relationship between these early texts and the miracle accounts discussed above, but rather that the miracle accounts might have fit well within this cultural system.

Taken together, the theological texts and the miracle accounts might suggest a variety of attitudes towards militant piety, with the miracles championing its use. In relation to another frontier – Aragonese Spain – David Nirenberg has argued that violence was a systematic feature of the coexistence of majority and minorities in medieval Spain, and that “coexistence was in part predicated on such violence.”<sup>68</sup> It is possible that imagined violence played a similar role for the Arab Christians who

---

<sup>66</sup> Giacinto Būlus Marcuzzo, *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade Tibériade avec 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Hāšimī à Jérusalem vers 820*, Textes et Études sur l'Orient Chrétien (Rome 1986), lines 33-38, 42. Trans. in Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period," 30-31.

<sup>67</sup> For Theodore Abū Qurra, these icons of the crucified Christ are what provoked “outsiders” to say: “Woe to you! Are you not ashamed to have that one as your God?” Theodore Abū Qurra, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons*, Ch. 24, lines 18-23. Trans. in Sidney H. Griffith, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons Written in Arabic by Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harrān (C.755-C. 830 A.D.)*, Eastern Christian Texts in Translation (Louvain: Peeters, 1997).

<sup>68</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 9.

composed and preserved these narratives, which insisted in equal measure upon the violent and miraculous nature of the warrior saints' images. If the Christians could not respond to violence with violence, the icons could.

*The currency of miraculous images*

Both Byzantines and eastern Christians boasted the existence of icons that formed the focus of their own cult and were known to perform miracles. In the Holy Land, the most famous of these was the Ṣaydnāyā icon in Syria, which drew Muslim, Jewish, and Christian pilgrims, including Latin Christians on Crusade. In Constantinople, the major cult icon was the Hodegetria, which performed miracles on a regular basis and even had a confraternity to care for the image and its processions. In the case of these miraculous images, the specific icon as a physical object was essential to their efficacy. To my knowledge, no comparable tradition grew up around an icon of the military saints during the middle ages. Rather, the miracles associated with their sacred images are non-specific and intended to convey the notion that all icons were potential sites for miraculous manifestation and potent sacred intercession.

Possessed of a burning interest in the relationship between image and prototype established by sacred images, the great theologians of the Byzantium and eastern Christianity made little effort to either classify or define the different types of miraculous images that were an integral facet of their literary and material culture. For them, it was less important to understand how different icons might have acquired their miraculous capacities than to prove that all icons could serve as a conduit for divine intervention. For Theodore Abū Qurra, the bishop of Ḥarrān (ca. 755-803), the miraculous function of icons related to the purpose of miracles more generally, to provide witnesses of

Christianity's power to those who did not believe. In Chapter 16 of his treatise *On the Veneration of the Holy Icons*, he wrote:

Because of the dullness of the ancients, God used to discharge his mysteries among them only by means of such miracles as their eyes could see in connection with them. Christians do not need anything like this. Nevertheless, for the sake of the outsiders, and the lowest rank of the Christians, God continues to manifest miracles in behalf of the mysteries of Christianity, and in behalf of the strong relationship of the icons with those of whom they are the icons.<sup>69</sup>

In the rest of his chapter he offers evidence in support of his claims by citing two cases in which an icon performed a miracle that led to the conversion of a Muslim and Jew, respectively. Theodore Abū Qurra concludes by asserting that any Christian who does not believe in sacred images should “become a Jew.”<sup>70</sup> The tract is preserved only in a few manuscripts, suggesting that it had limited circulation during its day. Nevertheless, his writings capture a concern that the Islamic attitudes towards images would discourage Christians from venerating icons, leading to the loss of a vital aspect of Christian devotion.

Whether performed by an icon of the Virgin, Christ, or military martyrs, miracles were believed to fortify the faith of a beleaguered Christian community. Following an account of al-Ghayr ‘Abd al- Masīh destroying all the crosses in the churches of Egypt, the chronicler reports that the icon of Christ in the monastery of Abū Macarius began to bleed. “The Lord desired to manifest a sign for the faithful, so that they might abound in hope in Him and in His pure Cross...They knew that this was on account of what the evil and unjust walis did in hiding away the Cross. These miracles caused them to be patient

---

<sup>69</sup> Chapter XVI. Griffith, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons Written in Arabic by Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harrān (C.755-C. 830 A.D.)*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> Chapter XVI. *Ibid.*, 75.

and strengthened them in all that befell them through the walis and kadis.”<sup>71</sup> For those living at the frontiers of faith, these accounts of miraculous icons served to maintain communal boundaries ultimately by proving the continuing efficacy, authenticity, and dominance of Christianity – even in times when all evidence seemed to point to the contrary.

In the next two chapters, I will focus on images of warrior saints from Egypt and the Levant. Through close consideration of monuments in these different but interrelated regions, I hope to show how the dynamics of the frontier shaped devotion to the warrior saints and the production of their images.

---

<sup>71</sup> *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, Vol. II Part II., 12-13.

**Chapter 6**  
**Military Saints in the Levant:**  
**Religious Practice at the Frontiers of Christianity and Islam**

A twelfth-century pilgrimage token in lead, acquired not long ago by the Princeton University Art Museum, represents on one side a cross on a dais with foliate and scroll motifs and on the other a military saint on horseback accompanied by a small figure of ambiguous identity (Fig. 42).<sup>1</sup> Despite the size of the token – 2.5 cm. in diameter – the imagery is remarkably detailed and the iconography can readily be grasped by the viewer, the more so because of its spare linear execution: a saint garbed in chain mail and *chlamys* carries an ornamented shield at his shoulder and holds a spear aloft, while riding a galloping horse with cloak fluttering behind. The complex imagery is cleverly adapted to fit the circular pictorial plane, with the legs of the horse raised as if in mid-leap, and the cloak of the saint extending in an arc to the edge of the token. The disc is dominated by the disproportionately large figure of the saint, who is represented at nearly twice the size of his steed. Further emphasis is placed on him by his position in the vertical center of the disc and by his pose. While the horse appears in profile, the torso of the saint is turned towards the viewer. His role as protector is clearly indicated by the spear, and by his armor, which is depicted through fine cross-hatched lines that are repeated on the rim of his shield, lending the image a pleasing visual coherence. A small

---

<sup>1</sup> Princeton University Art Museum. Museum purchase, gift of the Judy and Michael Steinhardt Foundation 1997-34. See the acquisition notice in *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 57 (1998, published 1999), 169. The maximum diameter of the token is 2.5 cm.

foliage motif to the right of the horse is suggestive of landscape and indicates that the saint moves through the earthly realm. A small figure, a boy without attributes, sits below and to the side, raising his finger to draw attention to the sacred equestrian. The iconography of the rider saint was so widespread in the twelfth century that the image could refer to any number of figures, but a Greek inscription identifies him as St. Demetrios, suggesting production in Thessaloniki. As Anthony Cutler has persuasively argued, the token was likely manufactured in Thessalonike and intended for sale to pilgrims at the shrine of St. Demetrios.<sup>2</sup> The connection is strengthened by the iconography of the cross on the reverse, which appears on coinage minted in the city during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

But if the token can be said to originate physically and culturally in Thessaloniki, the imagery on it points to connections far beyond the city and its hinterlands. The motif of the stepped cross can ultimately be traced to the mints of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, while several elements in the image of the equestrian saint invite comparison with panel and wall paintings from the Levant. Well known to scholars of the Crusades, these Levantine images represent St. George rather than St. Demetrios in the role of rescuing saint. Perhaps the most famous example of this type is the twelfth-century panel at the British Museum, described above, that depicts St. George on horseback with a boy riding at his side grasping a jug and wine glass that connects the image to a popular

---

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Cutler, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Invisible Muslim and Christian Self-Fashioning in the Culture of Outremer," in *France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades*, ed. Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 269-270. The same attribution was made independently by Zaleskaya after the discovery of a similar pilgrimage badge at Corinth. See V. Zaleskaya, "Thessaloniskie ikon'i-eulogii i obraski epokhi latinsko imperii," in *The Pilgrims: Historical and Cultural Phenomenon of Pilgrimage* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2001), 80-81. My thanks to Natalia Teteriatnikov for her assistance with the Russian.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

miracle account (Fig. 43).<sup>4</sup> The painting and token are closely related: in both, the equestrians sport a fluttering cape, a shield, and an upright spear, and both include a small boy, who makes narrative sense of the St. George icon,<sup>5</sup> but relates to no known narrative concerning St. Demetrios.<sup>6</sup>

The iconographic parallels mark the token as an example of exchange between the interconnected regions. At the same time, discrepancies between them highlight the complicated mechanisms of cultural transmission. The token made in Thessaloniki adopts forms widely distributed in the Holy Land and appropriates a celebrated aspect of the St. George legend, reformulating it in relation to local histories and heroes. In replacing St. George with St. Demetrios, the iconography presents a translation, a substitution predicated on the status of the saints in their respective spheres. The transmission of the subject itself – a saintly rescue – was likely facilitated by similar historic conditions; during the period in which the token was produced, Thessaloniki fell to Latin conquest and suffered repeated attacks from the Slavs. Like the Christians in the Levant, the pilgrims who visited Thessalonike had need for divine protection.

The circulation of objects across ethnic and religious boundaries created conditions ripe for complex visual transactions. Extensive trade networks linked the

---

<sup>4</sup> Cormack and Mihalarias, "A Crusader Painting of St. George: *"maniera greca"* or *"lingua franca"*," 132-139. For a more recent discussion and color image, see Jaroslav Folda, "Icon with Saint George and the Young Boy of Mytilene," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 395.

<sup>5</sup> The famous miracle account exists in several versions. These have been gathered and analyzed in Piotr Grotowski, "The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art," *Series Byzantina* 1 (2003): 27-77.

<sup>6</sup> The closest narrative parallel for St. Demetrios is Miracle 16. In it, the saint appears dressed in armor to an African bishop and rescues him from the Slavs. However, the saint does not appear on horseback or whisk the supplicant away in the manner of St. George. Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979), vol 1, 234-241.

wider Mediterranean to the coastal states of the Levant, where the establishment of the Crusader principalities both stimulated trade and generated new patterns of circulation. By facilitating the movement of people and objects, these networks facilitated the transfer of images, artistic forms and motifs, and sometimes, beliefs and ideas. Certainly they played a crucial role in shaping the cult of the warrior saints in the Levant. Objects like the pilgrimage token from Thessalonike, fusing local subjects and concerns with regional iconographies, require us to nuance the notion of iconographic and artistic origins.

As a way of gaining access to these cultural dynamics, this chapter focuses on icons of military saints produced in the Levant during the period of Crusader rule, from the twelfth through the thirteenth century. The establishment of western European communities in the eastern Mediterranean created new centers for trade with ties to both the Islamic world and Europe. Consequently, much of the surviving material evidence from the Levant highlights the region's growing role as an entrepôt serving various ethnic and religious groups. The Levant's rise to commercial prominence corresponds with a surge in devotion to the military saints, as witnessed by the proliferation of their images on portable icons and in monumental pictorial programs on the walls of churches. Crusader-era images are best known through the large a corpus of panel-painted icons preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. These have attracted scholarly attention because of the way perplexingly diverse stylistic and iconographic elements are amalgamated. Scholars have localized the icons variously, calling them everything from Cypriot or Frankish to Syrian or Italian.

This chapter asks what can be gained from considering the icons at Sinai as productions of frontier societies. The icons of military saints produced in the Levant in



the twelfth and thirteenth centuries constitute a corpus of imagery well suited to the investigation of processes of circulation and reception; their study throws light on the complexities of cultural and religious identity on the Christian-Muslim frontier.

### **Military saints in the Levant: the problem of roots**

Since the publication of the icons at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai by Kurt Weitzmann in the 1960s, scholars have been particularly intrigued by a group representing the military saints in iconographic forms and styles that combine aspects of Byzantine, eastern Christian, and European artistic traditions.<sup>7</sup> The Sinai icons lack both documentation and internal evidence for their provenance; nevertheless, the group has played a crucial role in the establishment of the field of Crusader art, a category devised to accommodate objects associated with the European expansion into the eastern Mediterranean in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have focused almost exclusively on locating the icons within historical cultural geographies, employing stylistic analysis to assign their production to specific ethnic groups.

Weitzmann set the tone and agenda for subsequent scholarship in his seminal publications. In a series of articles on the icons at Sinai, he described the late thirteenth century as a period of flourishing artistic activity on Cyprus and the mainland with its

---

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Weitzmann, "Icons on Mount Sinai," *Art Bulletin* 45 (1963): 179-203; Idem., "Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (1963): 179-205; Idem., "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 50-83; Idem., "The Icons of the Period of the Crusades," in *The Icon*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (New York: Knopf, 1982), 201-235.

<sup>8</sup> Jaroslav Folda brings an enormous array of material together under the rubric "Crusader Art." See Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For an analysis of some of the significance of this material, see David Jacoby, "Before Louis IX: Aspects of Crusader Art at St. Jean d'Acre, 1191-1244," in *France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades*, ed. Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 138-160.

center in Acre, known as a hub of manuscript production.<sup>9</sup> For Weitzmann, attribution was an either/or question that revolved around Byzantine and Crusader (French or Italian) artists and styles. As he explained: “Either the artist creates a work in the style of his homeland and completely ignores his new surroundings, or he tries to absorb so thoroughly the indigenous style – in this case, the Byzantine – that he all but loses his identity.”<sup>10</sup> This approach can be seen in his treatment of a double-sided icon representing SS. Sergios and Bacchos on one side and the Hodegetria on the other, (Fig. 44) and another icon representing St. Sergios with a donor woman (Fig. 45). He attributed both to an Italian artist, citing the hard linear style and the stiff posture of the saint, and thereby posited a direct correlation between style and ethnicity. Based on their artistic quality, he located the production of the two icons in Acre, a known center of luxury manuscript production.<sup>11</sup>

Since the 1960s, the discovery of wall paintings in Cyprus, Syria, and Lebanon has prompted scholars, notably Jaroslav Folda and Mat Immerzeel, to complicate Weitzmann’s picture. Recent efforts to refine his work are owed to Jaroslav Folda and Mat Immerzeel. Folda approaches the corpus through the lens of Crusader art, and like Weitzmann, focuses primarily on dating and identifying centers of production. In his monumental volume on the art of the thirteenth-century crusaders, he relies on panels with equestrian saints to propose a new chronology for the entire corpus. His sequence

---

<sup>9</sup> Weitzmann, "Icons on Mount Sinai," 179-203; Idem., "Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai," 179-205; Idem., "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," 50-83; Idem., "The Icons of the Period of the Crusades," 201-235.

<sup>10</sup> Weitzmann, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," 52. The icon was later attributed to a Cypriot painter by Doula Mouriki. Doula Mouriki, "Thirteenth-Century Icon Painting in Cyprus," *The Griffon*, no. 1-2 (1985-86): 67-77.

<sup>11</sup> In Weitzmann’s scheme, the icon belongs to a group painted by the so-called “knight templar.” See Weitzmann, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," 72-73.

begins with the drawing by a German artist bound into a manuscript now in Freiburg im Breisgau, a leaf which bears a representation of two equestrian saints that relates closely to icons such as the Sergios panels.<sup>12</sup> Since the manuscript leaf dates to ca. 1200, Folda can then assign other surviving icons of equestrians to 1250, the period of great early manuscripts in Acre.<sup>13</sup> He attributes the Sergios panels, of higher quality and more-confident execution, are now attributed to Latin artists working in a “Veneto-Byzantine Crusader style” and places them in Acre, at the height of the city’s productivity in the 1260s, that is slightly earlier than Weitzmann’s date.<sup>14</sup> Folda revises Weitzmann’s chronology and allows for a more flexible model of artistic identity, if he still believes the industries of art were firmly in Byzantine and European hands.

Immerzeel strongly endorses the earlier dating scheme proposed by Folda but goes a step further by relocating the icons geographically. Underscoring the seminal work of Lucy-Anne Hunt and Erika Cruikshank Dodd, Immerzeel draws upon the numerous wall paintings that survive in the medieval churches of the Levant to argue that the type of the equestrian warrior saint did not come from Byzantium or the West, but was a product of Syrian Christian image makers.<sup>15</sup> He assigns the double icon of Sergios

---

<sup>12</sup> Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, 100, fig. 58. Cf. Weitzmann, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," 81.

<sup>13</sup> Folda dates an icon of St. Theodore and St. George Diasorites (of Lydda) to the early thirteenth century. Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, 139. He then attributes the remainder of the equestrian panels to ca. 1250, the period of great early manuscripts in Acre. *Idem.*, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, 139, 330, 339. For a more in-depth discussion of his chronological scheme, see Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Perspectives on Visual Culture in Early Lusignan Cyprus: Balancing Art and Archaeology," in *Archaeology and the Crusades*, ed. Peter Edbury and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti (Athens: Pierides Foundation, 2007), 93-95.

<sup>14</sup> Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, 341-342, fig. 199.

<sup>15</sup> Mat Immerzeel, "Divine Cavalry: Mounted Saints in Middle Eastern Christian Art," in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations*, ed. Krijnie Ciggaar and Herman Teule (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 265-286; Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 29-60.

and Bacchos and the icon of St. Sergios and a donor to Acre (Figs. 44-45), to the County of Tripoli, where, he suggests, local artists were active. As he argues, the most salient features of the Sts. Sergios and Bacchos icons – the saints’ jeweled diadems, stiff-legged pose, Turkish weaponry, and cross-bearing flags – all appear around 1200 in the paintings of Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi in Nbek , located well within Muslim territory.<sup>16</sup> Tracing a centuries-long line of equestrian saints through the churches of Egypt, ending with the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Immerzeel credits local eastern Christians with the iconographical innovation.<sup>17</sup> Pointing to stylistic similarities between the double icon of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos at Sinai and a panel of the Hodegetria preserved at Kaftoun, Immerzeel argues that the style, which gives the figures much of their flair and rhetorical force, was indigenous.<sup>18</sup> The general line of his argument, that the icons could have been made by local artists in northern Syria, receives support from the earlier work of Lucy-Anne Hunt, who attributed the Sinai equestrians to Melkite artists either in or from pre-Mamluk Syria.<sup>19</sup>

The chronological scheme proposed by Folda, and subsequently reinforced by Immerzeel, aligns well with visual evidence from the region, but the issue of localization remains fraught with unexamined assumptions.<sup>20</sup> Annemarie Weyl Carr has spoken out against value-driven attribution according to which the most skillfully executed icons are

---

<sup>16</sup> Mat Immerzeel, "Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): pls. 11, 12, 19, 20; Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2001), 50-56, 109-117, pl. 27-33.

<sup>17</sup> Immerzeel, "Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 36-39.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*: 49-53.

<sup>19</sup> Lucy-Anne Hunt, "A Woman's Prayer to St. Sergios in Latin Syria: Interpreting a Thirteenth-Century Icon at Mount Sinai," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 51 (1991): 96-145.

<sup>20</sup> Working on the churches in Cyprus, Annemarie Weyl Carr has reached similar conclusions regarding chronology. Carr, "Perspectives on Visual Culture in Early Lusignan Cyprus: Balancing Art and Archaeology," 110.

assigned to Latin artists, thereby downplaying the possible contribution of local visual culture and painters. If Immerzeel, like Hunt and Dodd before him, has insisted on the role of local visual culture, the argument for a Tripolitanian school that created works of the highest quality – as Carr has noted – essentially repeats the centrist claims of Folda and replicates the problem.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps the problem can be rephrased? Scholarship on the equestrian icons from Sinai has tended to rely on an understanding of “Syrian art,” “Latin art,” and “Byzantine art” as categories of visual production with specific and discrete audiences and constituencies of patrons and producers. I would like to question the methodological basis for the creation of these categories, by asking what the history of these icons would look like if we aligned their study with recent approaches to ethnicities and religions in the Mediterranean during the middle ages. Historians of the Crusader era have begun to approach the region as a frontier society that engendered a fluid set of relationships among local Christians, the “immigrant” Crusaders, and Muslims, none of whom formed exclusive or monolithic groups. My intention is to approach the icons obliquely, by placing them within a larger discussion of how the frontier created by Latin expansion provided a setting for the migration of images, objects, and even the cult of the warrior saints.

### **Patterns and modes of circulation at the frontier**

The Crusader victory at Jerusalem in 1099, followed by the emergence of the Crusader states, capitalized on and exacerbated the fragmentation of Islamic authority in the east. For the next two centuries, the region would be ruled from new political centers,

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

some under European authority, others under rival Islamic dynasties. The Crusader states, governed by a foreign military and political elite, included the county of Edessa, the principality of Antioch, the county of Tripoli, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. At their greatest extent, the lands of the Franks contained the region now occupied by Israel, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the western border area of Jordan, Lebanon, the seacoast of Syria, and the southeastern coast of Turkey, as well as the Turkish-Syria borderlands stretching halfway to Iraq.

The newly conquered territory was anything but a cultural monolith. The Europeans who had come on the Crusades were not themselves a homogeneous group, but represented a mix of European cultures. Moreover, the region the Crusaders conquered was not *tabula rasa* but home to a diverse community of Christian, Muslims, and Jews – all with their own inner sectarian divisions.<sup>22</sup> Neither Latin nor eastern Christian chronicles do much to clarify the geographic or social position of these communities in relation to the more powerful Frankish elite, either within cities or in the countryside.<sup>23</sup> Yet, strict segregation seems unlikely, since boundaries of all kinds were more ambiguous and less distinct in premodern societies.

Aspects of the Crusader states have elicited comparisons with modern nation-states, with some scholars even regarding them as forerunners to western frontier societies in the New World.<sup>24</sup> Yet, research by Ronnie Ellenblum suggests a rather different understanding of polities and their boundaries, one that corresponds more

---

<sup>22</sup> MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 27-45.

<sup>23</sup> For a more spatial approach to the communities, see Praver, "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The 'Minorities'," 117-192.

<sup>24</sup> For a recent discussion of the relevant historiography on the approach to interfaith relations in the Crusader polities, see MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 13-20.

closely to that of medieval Arab and Persian geographers and historians.<sup>25</sup> Texts they wrote, providing material on the conceptualizations of boundaries, help us capture period notions of the frontier. The authors of Latin chronicles were more concerned with internal than external boundaries, although they do mention the existence of a frontier facing Damascus.<sup>26</sup> Arab geographers, in contrast, had access to a more developed vocabulary. In their treatises, the two terms used most frequently to designate political boundaries are *ḥadd* (pl. *ḥudūd*) and *thaghr* (pl. *thughūr*). Both may denote the place where the realm of Islam ended, but *ḥadd* was employed primarily to designate the confines of specific regions within the Islamic Empire. *Thughūr* was a term geographers employed exclusively for frontier zones, and only those frontiers in which non-Islamized people dominated the adjoining territory.<sup>27</sup> It follows logically that Arab geographers and historians should use this term to refer to the boundaries between the Crusader states and the *dār al-Islām*,<sup>28</sup> and it is precisely this designation that appears in the sources. Yet, the term has more utility in defining the place of the Crusader polities in the Islamic thought-world than in establishing the location of the frontier zone with any real precision.

Ambiguities in both Frankish and Arab sources likely resulted from the fluid and mobile nature of the boundaries themselves. The zone separating the Crusader polities from the neighboring Muslim powers were not solid defensive lines of castles and fortifications; rather they consisted of a series of urbanized places with their associated

---

<sup>25</sup> Ronnie Ellenblum, "Were There Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages?," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 105-119.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ralph W. Brauer, "Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 85, no. 6 (1995): 12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Jubayr, for example, employs the terms *thaghr* and *ʿawāṣim* in his *Riḥla*.

hinterlands, each exercising their authority with varying degrees of effectiveness, diminishing with distance from the center.<sup>29</sup> Although the territory on either side was considered a distinctive state, the frontier itself was not; military conquest or even the construction of a new fortress could (and did) result in a repositioning of the boundary.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the picture of polities that emerges from the sources does not suggest states with borders in the modern sense, but centers with political and cultural spheres of influence, which intersected at their peripheries to form a frontier zone, where the limits of authority were subject to constant negotiation.<sup>31</sup>

Boundaries were neither linear nor stable, as we have seen, and they also were not reducible to political authority alone. In the region of Greater Syria, as elsewhere in the pre-modern world, domains of sovereignty did not necessarily coincide with linguistic and ethnic communities, or legal, monetary, and ecclesiastical spheres.<sup>32</sup> This point is underscored by the existence of self-governing communities within the Crusader polities, such as the Venetian trading enclaves, which remained subject to the legal codes of their own empire, as well as Latin Christian enclaves within Muslim territory.<sup>33</sup> During the Crusader era, eastern Christian communities stretched across Greater Syria, subject to the ecclesiastical authority of their monastic hierarchy before either Muslim or Frankish

---

<sup>29</sup> Ellenblum, "Were There Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages?," 111-112.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-114.

<sup>31</sup> This aligns with what Brauer has called a "linear geography," in which space is imagined as networks linking towns and cities. See Ralph W. Brauer, "Geography in the Medieval Muslim World: Seeking a Basis for Comparison of the Development of the Natural Sciences in Different Cultures," *Comparative Civilizations Review* 26 (1992): 78.

<sup>32</sup> This point has been made in relation to the Roman frontier. See Richard Rothaus, "Christianization and De-Paganization: The Late Antique Creation of a Conceptual Frontier," in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (Aldershot: Varorium, 1996), 127.

<sup>33</sup> On trading enclaves, see Angeliki E. Laiou, "Byzantine Trade with Christians and Muslims During the Crusades," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 158-197.



courts, while the region between Christian Acre and Muslim Damascus has been described as a patchwork of Christian and Muslim lands, with Christians and Muslims holding joint ownership over the same fields in some cases.<sup>34</sup> Acre itself developed into a major trading entrepôt that linked Frankish settlements in Syria to Egypt and a whole network of overland trade routes that extended into Muslim Syria and Turkey.<sup>35</sup> Unlike the ethnic homogeneity on which the modern nation state is predicated, these linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous communities worked like a network that stretched along the Mediterranean coast to create the easternmost frontier of Latin Christendom.<sup>36</sup>

These linguistically, ethnically, and religiously heterogeneous communities formed “spatial elements in a cultural geography” characterized by intersections and movement across boundaries.<sup>37</sup> Because of this, the frontier was as much a conduit for exchange as a defensive region. This double function was captured succinctly in the terms contemporaries used to refer to Banyas, a Muslim town between Damascus and Acre: this was both a *thagr* (defensive urban area) and a “gate,” a term that implies permeability.<sup>38</sup> In her work on the visual culture of the medieval Mediterranean, Eva

---

<sup>34</sup> David Abulafia, "Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity, c. 1100-c. 1500," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. Nora Berend and David Abulafia (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Idem., "Trade and Crusade, 1050-1250," in *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period*, ed. M. Goodich, S. Menache, and S. Schein (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 19.

<sup>36</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 1-8.

<sup>37</sup> Flood writes about heterogeneous communities “that comprised the urban nodes of South Asian trade networks” constituting “functional regions, spatial elements of a cultural geography marked by circulations and flows that cut across political boundaries.” See Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval Hindu-Muslim Encounter*, 25. Prawer’s discussion of the “minority” communities in the Crusader polities conveys the extent to which different communities overlapped. See Prawer, "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The "Minorities",," 117-192.

<sup>38</sup> In a Frankish letter, the frontier city is referred to as “the key and entrance and refuge for the whole country.” See Ellenblum, "Were There Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages?," 116. On the notion of mobility and gates in the frontier, see Amy Turner Bushnell, "Gates, Patterns, and Peripheries: The Field

Hoffman has drawn attention to the way the circulation of luxury objects along “pathways of portability” “remapped geographical and cultural boundaries, opening up vistas of intra- and cross-cultural encounters and interactions.”<sup>39</sup> The Demetrios pilgrimage token with which I began provides one example of this phenomenon, allowing an element of Levantine culture to be imported into Byzantine territory. Building on Hoffman’s model, Finbarr Barry Flood has pointed out that monetary tokens provide another example of this phenomenon, one that combines visual and commercial exchange in a literal fashion.<sup>40</sup>

A case in point: in the twelfth century, the Latin kings of Jerusalem began to strike gold besants that replicated Fatimid coinage, even to the extent of including Arabic inscriptions with Muslim content (Fig. 46).<sup>41</sup> Both sides of the coin, like the Fatimid counterparts, are decorated with three concentric circles and feature an inscription in the center and another one at the outer rim. The central legend, which records the *shahāda* (the Islamic profession of faith), reads: “There is no god but God, Muḥammad is his prophet and ‘Alī his defender. It is he who sent his messenger with the right direction

---

of Frontier Latin America,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 15-28.

<sup>39</sup> Eva R. Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth through the Twelfth Century,” *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 17.

<sup>40</sup> Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter*, 25. Coins, as he points out, were the objects that facilitated the circulation of commodities across the Mediterranean, and into the Middle East, via an overland network of trade routes that extended across Syria and therefore presented a prime vehicle for the transmission of imagery and cultural symbols.

<sup>41</sup> Mentioned by Halperin as an example of Frankish adaptation to the land and the status quo. See Charles J. Halperin, “The Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984): 456. For a parallel example of contradictory coinage, see Anthony Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 274, fn 151. For basic information on the coins, see David M. Metcalf, “Islamic, Byzantine, and Latin Influences in the Iconography of Crusader Coins and Seals,” in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations II. Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle in May 1997* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 167-168; Idem., *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, 2nd ed. (London: University of Oxford Ashmolean Museum, 1995), 9-14, pl. 5.

and the religion of truth, so that it might triumph over every other religion...” On the reverse, the central inscription records the title of the Fatimid caliph al-Āmir (AD 1103-1130). There is no concession to the changed political circumstances, and we only know that the coin is a product of the Latin Kingdom because of its faulty epigraphy, lower weight, and lower fineness.<sup>42</sup> As in the coinage it copies, the inscriptions on the coin locate the reign of al-Āmir within the traditional symbols and titles of authority employed by rulers in the Fatimid dynasty. In terms of design and epigraphy, the coins represent a direct appropriation that taps into their well-established power in the monetary sphere.<sup>43</sup> The decision to reissue an earlier coin design was surely chosen to express continuity and thereby minimize disruptions to commerce – prioritizing economic concerns over religious or political ones.

Frankish appropriation of Muslim symbols of authority might appear odd to a modern audience, but the practice went largely without comment in the Crusader polities. Commercial documents from 1161 onwards casually refer to the coins as *bisancios saracenatos de moneta Regis Hierusalem* or *bizancios saracenatos...de rege illius terrae* (Saracen besants of the king of Jerusalem...of the king of this land).<sup>44</sup> The coins continued to be struck until 1258, when Eudes de Châteroux, a papal legate from Rome, visited Acre with Louis IX and raised objections. According to the chronicles, he was scandalized to find Christians striking coins bearing “the name of Mohomet and the

---

<sup>42</sup> Metcalf, *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Finds from as far north as Aleppo and Maras suggest that, despite the poorly executed epigraphy, the similitude was great enough that merchants and consumers extended the monetary sphere in which they could be used. Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> The latter terminology makes it clear that striking gold was regarded as a prerogative of the ruler, as opposed to a matter of private commercial initiative. Ibid.

number of years from his nativity.”<sup>45</sup> In response, the inscriptions on the coins were Christianized and a new series of coins struck in Acre (Fig. 47). In place of the *shahāda*, an Arabic inscription reads: “Struck in Acre in the year...of the Incarnation of our Lord the Messiah. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one godhead. We are glorified by the Cross of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, in whom is our salvation and our life and our resurrection, and in whom is our deliverance and pardon.”<sup>46</sup> The Christian message was emphasized pictorially, by incorporating a Latin cross on the center of the reverse. The coin preserves the basic design and the language of the earlier Fatimid coin, but translates the content into Christian terms.<sup>47</sup>

Ultimately, the Christianized coins were not successful; they were soon replaced by another series of coins that more closely imitated Islamic coinage.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the episode shows the porosity of cultural boundaries, and how monetary and religious spheres could overlap in surprising ways. Ultimately, the coins demonstrate the way in which economic necessity could trump religious symbolism in frontier societies.

### **Religious communities: idolators, heretics, and the orthodox**

The circulations and intersections attested to in the numismatic record make us alert to other sorts of interchange in this contested region. Different communities of faith were inhabiting the same cities and towns. The construction of spaces for minority

---

<sup>45</sup> Idem., "Islamic, Byzantine, and Latin Influences in the Iconography of Crusader Coins and Seals," 169. It is interesting to note that Eudes did not have a problem with the language of Arabic itself. His lack of concern may reflect a prevalent view in the west, that Arabic was a sign of antiquity (and the time of Jesus) rather than a signifier of Islam. See Rosamund E. Mack, "Oriental Script in Italian Paintings," in *Bazaar to Piazza* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 51-79.

<sup>46</sup> Metcalf, "Islamic, Byzantine, and Latin Influences in the Iconography of Crusader Coins and Seals," 10.

<sup>47</sup> In other words, these features make the later coin both an appropriation of earlier types (the design and language of the Fatimid coinage) and a translation (rendering the *shuhada* as a Christian profession of faith in the Trinity).

<sup>48</sup> Metcalf, "Islamic, Byzantine, and Latin Influences in the Iconography of Crusader Coins and Seals," 169-170.

religious communities within the Crusader polities is revealing. In Acre, for instance, the Crusaders built their main church on the former site of a mosque, but the builders incorporated a *mihrāb* into its construction to provide Muslims with a space for prayer.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, in Cairo and, to a lesser extent, in Damascus, the mercantile communities of Europe stayed in *fundachio*, hostels built by Muslims that combined facilities for residential living and Christian worship.<sup>50</sup>

Despite such accommodation to religious difference, distinctions between different communities of faith were well-guarded; they formed a cognitive frontier that was often conceived in spatial terms.<sup>51</sup> In European chronicles of the Crusades, territorial expansion is typically regarded as an act concomitant with Christianization and the eradication of idolatry.<sup>52</sup> By the eleventh century, the association between Islam and idolatry was firmly established in western European thought, with polemicists adapting older visual and textual invective against ancient Roman idolatry to the Saracen case. Eastern Christian authors who knew more about Islam attacked the cult of the Ka'ba for its supposed continuation of pre-Islamic pagan rites in honor of Venus.<sup>53</sup> Anna

---

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Government and the Indigenous in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. Nora Berend and David Abulafia (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 123. The Spanish Muslim traveler Ibn Jubayr noted that after the Franks took the city: "Mosques became churches and minarets bell-towers, but God kept undefiled one part of the principal mosque, which remained in the hands of the Muslims as a small mosque where strangers could congregate to offer the obligatory prayers." Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: The Camelot Press, Ltd., 1952), 318.

<sup>50</sup> Olivia Remi Constable, "Funduq, Fondaco, and the Khan in the Wake of Christian Commerce and Crusade," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 148-150.

<sup>51</sup> For a late antique example of this phenomenon, see Rothaus, "Christianization and De-Paganization: The Late Antique Creation of a Conceptual Frontier," 299-305.

<sup>52</sup> John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 105-135.

<sup>53</sup> Barbara Roggema, "Muslims as Crypto-Idolaters - A Theme in the Christian Portrayal of Islam in the Near East," in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule*, ed. David Thomas (Boston: Brill, 2003), 1-18; Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, 106.

Comnene, the Byzantine Princess who wrote the *Alexiad*, claimed that the barbarians of Egypt and Libya “worship Mahumet with mystic rites.”<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Muslim jurists also leveled the charge of idolatry against Christians, casting the doctrine of the Trinity in the mold of *shirk*, the association of other gods with God, or a mistaken investment in material objects. Even polemical tropes, it seems, were like a currency that could circulate among religious communities.<sup>55</sup>

Possibilities for gaining precise knowledge of Islam in Europe were limited, despite occasional efforts on the part of Latin theologians to learn more, so most Christians had the view of Muslims found in romances and polemical literature.<sup>56</sup> The *topos* that Muḥammad was as an idolator, and, by extension, all Muslims were idolators permeated vernacular literature from the *Chanson de Roland* forward. Yet, the literature in which this attitude was most consistently and widely promoted were the homilies intended to incite Christian men to participate in the Crusades. Sacred spaces, so said the polemicists, had been polluted by the abominable idol worshippers.

European chroniclers employed the idolatry trope to cast the Crusades as an endeavor to free Jerusalem from its “pagan” Muslim overlords, configuring Islam as a latter-day Rome. The *Gesta Tancredi* records an episode in which the Crusaders restored purity to a defiled site – one of the monuments in the Ḥaram (Temple Mount) – where soldiers found a silver gilt statue adorned with jewels and a purple cloth. The statue,

---

<sup>54</sup> Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, trans. E. Sewter (London: Penguin, 1969), 309-310.

<sup>55</sup> As argued in Sarah Stroumsa, “Jewish Polemics against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 201-210.

<sup>56</sup> The classic work on the topic is Richard W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). For a discussion of the information on Islam in the West, see Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 35.

which represented “the pristine Antichrist, depraved Muḥammad, pernicious Muḥammad” was “snatched, dragged, torn to pieces, beheaded” by the soldiers.<sup>57</sup> Thus the physical presence of the statue, discovered during the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, enabled the Crusaders to translate their intangible desire to rid Jerusalem of idolatry into concrete actions. Not content with this iconoclastic act alone, the Crusaders erected a cross on the building to signify the triumph of Christianity. Precisely the same tactics and the same rhetoric were used by Muslims during the reconquest of the Holy Land. After Sultan Baybars captured the citadel of Şafad in 1266, he found a representation of St. George that the Franks claimed protected the citadel. According to the chronicler Ibn al-Furāt: “He ordered that it should be torn out and smashed and the place was purified of it, its site being turning into a *miḥrāb*.”<sup>58</sup>

While Europeans were prepared for their encounter with Muslims, they were less informed about the eastern Christian communities they were to encounter: these fell outside the boundaries of European knowledge and the expectations fostered by Crusading rhetoric. A letter written to Pope Urban after the capture of Antioch provides insight into Frankish reactions to the complicated religious topography of the region. “We have subdued the Turks and the pagans,” they wrote, “but the heretics, Greeks and Armenians, Syrians and Jacobites, we have not been able to overcome.”<sup>59</sup> The letter is

---

<sup>57</sup> Raoul de Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, chap. 129. Trans. in Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, *The Gesta Tancredi of Ralph of Caen: A History of the Normans on the First Crusade* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 144. For analyses of this episode, see Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, 119-120; Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 142-145; Eva R. Hoffman, “Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory,” *Gesta* XLIII, no. 2 (2004): 134-135.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Routledge: New York, 1999, 2000), 308.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 1.

inadvertently revelatory, for it suggests the anxiety that arose from encountering communities that claimed membership within the corporate body of Christianity but had developed different sets of devotional practices and religious hierarchies. Identification of eastern Christians as heretics suggests that shared religion prevented the Franks from subsuming these groups into the same framework of idolatry and paganism through which they regarded Muslims.<sup>60</sup> Instead, they fell into the grey area just outside of orthodoxy – an imperfect expression of the “true” religion, which rendered them even more problematic and unsettling than Muslims or Jews.<sup>61</sup>

### **Cultural homologies: the Crusader appropriation of the military saints**

The cognitive frontiers described above resulted in a pattern of interaction in which religious communities occupied the same territory and often shared sacred spaces, but typically maintained separate ceremonies and beliefs.<sup>62</sup> Ibn Jubayr offers a glimpse of the way this worked in his description of a site in Acre, the Spring of the Ox: “To the east of it the Franks have constructed an oratory; thus Muslims and infidels meet there – although it belongs to the Christians – and each one says his prayers, facing in the

---

<sup>60</sup> Jan Assmann, "Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 25-36.

<sup>61</sup> As Jonathan K. Smith declared in relation to other religious groups, “the radically other is merely other; the proximate other is problematic, and hence of supreme interest.” Jonathan K. Smith, "What a Difference a Difference Makes," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 5.

<sup>62</sup> The example of Saydnaya, cited above, is the exception. For this and other instances of shared practice, see Benjamin Z. Kedar, "Convergences of Oriental Christian, Muslim and Frankish Worshippers: The Case of Saydnaya," in *De Sion Exibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. Yitzak Hen (Brepols: Turnhout, 2001), 208-222. By the eleventh century, the region already had a long history of shared religious spaces in which members of different sects maintained their separate practices. See the excellent analysis in Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," 124-146.



direction that his faith prescribes.”<sup>63</sup> A similar dynamic can be seen in the eastern cult of the military saints during the Crusader era. The veneration of these saints can be considered something like a mental site for shared devotion, apart from the physical sites at which this devotion occurs.

Travel to the east brought the Crusaders into a new landscape that was populated by an unfamiliar array of Christian sects and richly associated with holy sites and saints, some of which were the common heritage of Christianity, and others that were particular to eastern devotion.<sup>64</sup> The cult of the warrior saints fell between these poles. Many of the individual saints (such as Mercurios and Theodore Stratelates) were unknown in Europe, but the category of the warrior saint was familiar. The notion of a cult based on saints with a military association had recently emerged in the rhetoric of clerics who sought to incite crusading fervor in their audiences.<sup>65</sup> They did so by invoking great warriors of the Christian past, including saints such as George, as pious exemplars for Western warriors, saints who could also act as efficacious intercessors by defending knights as they fulfilled their martial duties.<sup>66</sup> These nascent ideas, which intersected with crusading and knightly rhetoric in various ways, would develop and coalesce over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as the early crusaders encountered and interacted with the military saints of the east.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 318-319. Elizabeth Key Fowden has written about a similar dynamic at Mamre during the late antique period. See Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," 124-129.

<sup>64</sup> For Crusader devotion see, Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 105.

<sup>65</sup> According to James B. MacGregor, the cult cannot be identified before the eve of the First Crusade. See James B. MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200," *Church History* 73, no. 2 (2004): 320.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*: 322.

<sup>67</sup> Understandings of the warrior saints were particularly fluid in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. They were invoked as models of patience and endurance for monks, models of martyrdom for knights that fell in

Chronicles that record the theft and looting of military saints' relics offer an early sign of European interest in local spiritual patrons and foreground the role of circulation of objects and ideas in creating and enhancing their value. The crusaders began to collect relics as soon as they moved outside of Latin territory, including those of military saints.<sup>68</sup> In one instance, a priest in the service of Robert of Flanders stole an arm of St. George from a Greek monastery, which passed to another man after his death, Gerard of Buc.<sup>69</sup> Gerard of Buc died soon thereafter, prompting speculation that both men met their death because they were not fitting custodians for the precious object. Robert of Flanders then assumed possession of the relic, which he kept in his tent during campaigns.<sup>70</sup> The very fact that these events were recorded suggests that the value and prestige of the relic was sustained as it passed from one owner to the next. These accounts also point to the role of historical writing in absorbing the cult into the specifically Crusader world.

Assimilation through the appropriation of relics is recorded again in the *Historia Francorum* composed by the cleric Raymond d'Aguilers. Following the successful defense of Antioch in 1098, Raymond reports that a fellow priest, Peter Desiderius, received instructions to go to the church of Saint Leontios, where he was to collect the relics of four saints and carry them to Jerusalem. At the church, he and his companions

---

the Crusades, and exemplars of knightly piety. For the full range and their development, see Ibid.: 317-345.

<sup>68</sup> Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 93-94. Merchants also plundered relics during the early day of the Crusades, most famously the bones of St. Nicholas from Greek Orthodox Christians and St. Mark from the Coptic community in Alexandria. For a discussion of their overlapping economic and religious motives, see Abulafia, "Trade and Crusade, 1050-1250," 5, 10-11.

<sup>69</sup> *Narratio quomodo reliquae martyris Georgii ad nos Aquicinenses pervenerunt*, in *RHC Hist. Occ.*, 5:xliv-xlv, 248-252. For a more in-depth discussion of the relic and its appropriation, see MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200," 335-336.

<sup>70</sup> Such relics could travel quite far from their place of origin; after the crusades, Robert of Flanders gifted the relic to a church in Anchin dedicated to the saint. See Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 94.

found relics of a fifth saint, whom the locals tentatively identified as St. Mercurios. Peter left these relics behind because the identity of the saint was uncertain. That evening, he had a vision of a young man who asked:

“Why didn’t you carry my relics today with the others?”

The priest then inquired, “Who are you?”

The young man continued his questioning, “Don’t you know the name of the standard bearer of this army?”

Peter admitted, “No sir.”

Upon the priests’ same answer a second time, the young man stormed, “You tell me the truth.”

Then Peter replied, “Lord, it is said that Saint George is the standard bearer of this army.”

The youth then said, “Correct you are. I am Saint George, and I command you to pick up my relics and place them with the other.”<sup>71</sup>

Several days later, after another visitation from St. George, Peter returned to the church and collected the relics. Although the account appears in a chronicle, the narrative bears the hallmarks of a *translatio*, a document that records the discovery and transfer of a relic. Like a *translatio*, the account foregrounds the role of miracles in authenticating the efficacy of the relic and provides evidence that the transfer was divinely sanctioned. In this instance, the miracle also serves to re-identify the relic as a fragment of St. George, bringing the object into alignment with Crusader expectations; St. George was already a famous soldier saint among Latin Christians, while St. Mercurios was virtually unknown. The substitution of saintly patron resembles that seen in the case of the St. Demetrios pilgrimage token with which the chapter began.

Though the relics were eastern in origin, the incidents cited above suggest that they were absorbed in a fashion that was thoroughly in accord with practices back home.

---

<sup>71</sup> Raymond d’Agiulers, 131-134. Trans in Raymond d’Agiulers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, trans. John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968), 131-134. For a discussion of this event, see MacGregor, “Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200,” 335.

As Patrick Geary has shown, the movement of sacred items such as the relics discussed above, occurred primarily through gift, theft, and commerce. Theft was the preferred mode, since, when successful, it revealed the value and efficacy of the object.<sup>72</sup> Life histories of relics, which often included authenticating miracles, reinforced their power. In the case of the St. George relics, the act of appropriation and the recording of their history reenact a familiar ritual that allowed the crusaders to subsume the relics into their own system. Once “discovered” and removed from their original context, the relics became important to a Crusader rhetoric that linked miracles, divine approval, and victory. This rhetoric around the relics intersected with, and was bolstered by, accounts of the military martyrs’ miraculous appearances. Shortly after the incident described above, in 1098, a host of warrior saints descended to fight at the Battle of Antioch, and St. George intervened at the Battle for Ramla shortly thereafter, resulting in the creation of an Episcopal see at Ramla placed under the protection of the efficacious saint.<sup>73</sup>

The chronicles show that the assimilation of the cult of the military saints was accomplished, in part, through the transference of relics and the creation of histories. The episode from Antioch, in particular, suggests that the appropriations were predicated on a series of cultural homologies. It is telling that the clerics would reject the relics of St. Mercurios – an exclusively eastern saint – and display only interest in St. George, a figure known from western devotions. The tangibility, materiality, and mobility of the

---

<sup>72</sup> Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 169-194.

<sup>73</sup> MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200," 332-342; Hans Eberhard Mayer, "The Origins of the Lordships of Ramla and Lydda in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *Speculum* 60, no. 3 (1985): 537-552.

relics provided a means for the newly arrived soldiers to reduce the cognitive gap between their armies and the local Christian communities.<sup>74</sup>

The eastern warrior saints seem to have fulfilled crusader expectations in other ways. The acquisition of relics provided a means to harness their power and assume the protective attributes of the saint through possession.<sup>75</sup> Their ability to shape the identity of their owners is apparent in the case of Roger of Antioch, who became known as the “son of George” for carrying the saint to battle, which was tended by a specially appointed cleric.<sup>76</sup> The warrior saints served soldiers as models for emulation. This notion was not founded solely on their overlapping professions, but also on actions, for these saints had achieved martyrdom in their fight against idolatrous pagans.

Adoption of the cult provided a point of departure for further refashioning the saints. The miracles and victories associated with the military martyrs, for instance, sometimes resulted in the production of commemorative imagery in forms intended for wide dissemination. One of these is a coin issued by Roger of Antioch, which shows an image of St. George slaying the dragon accompanied by the legend Ο ΓΕΩΡΓ (Fig. 48).<sup>77</sup> The representation of the saint dominates the pictorial field provided by the coin, with the horse rearing up as St. George spears a sinuous form below. In using a Greek

---

<sup>74</sup> Mary Helms, "Essay on Objects: Interpretations of Distance Made Tangible," in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 361-365.

<sup>75</sup> Annette B. Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist* 12, no. 2 (1985): 224; Helms, "Essay on Objects: Interpretations of Distance Made Tangible," 361-365.

<sup>76</sup> Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 94.

<sup>77</sup> These coins date to the first three decades of the twelfth century, when Antioch was active in striking their own copper coins and issued a succession of types. Each of these imitated the fabric and style of current Byzantine *folles* and was current for only three or four years. Metcalf, "Islamic, Byzantine, and Latin Influences in the Iconography of Crusader Coins and Seals," 170; Idem., *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, 8, figs. 55-57.

inscription, the coin adopts the language of the Greek Orthodox population within the conquered city, while the form in which St. George is represented draws upon local iconography – though not necessarily associated with St. George. The saint is shown as a dragon-slayer, although in the east, the more famous dragon-slaying saint was St. Theodore (Figs. 29-30, 36).<sup>78</sup> It is a case of substitution of George for Theodore, not unlike the case of the pilgrimage token described at the beginning of the chapter, or the re-identification of the St. Mercurios relic. The substitution likely relates to the saint's intervention at the Battle of Antioch in 1098.<sup>79</sup> The coin would then reformulate local iconographies to associate Roger of Antioch with the divine patronage of a saint who was increasingly revered by both Latin and eastern Christians.

The military saints did not attain the status of state symbols in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, but a pilgrimage ampulla in the British Museum suggests that the military saints were firmly associated with the Holy Land in the eyes of the faithful (Fig. 49).<sup>80</sup> Dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, the small lead-alloy flask is embellished with relief decoration, depicting two full-length military saints one side and an architectural composition on the other.<sup>81</sup> The armored saints dominate the belly of the flask, where they stand side-by side as companions, in identical poses, holding a spear in the left hand

---

<sup>78</sup> Immerzeel, "Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 38-39. According to Anthony Cutler, it was standard Frankish practice to transfer the name of one saint to a type typically associated with another. Cutler, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Invisible Muslim and Christian Self-Fashioning in the Culture of Outremer," 271.

<sup>79</sup> The earliest report of saintly intervention at Antioch did not mention St. Theodore, although he appears in later accounts. Regardless, St. George quickly became the favored saint among Crusaders, likely based on the close proximity of his shrine at Lydda. MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200," 324-332.

<sup>80</sup> Christopher Entwistle and David Buckton, "Pilgrim-Flask with Soldier-Saints and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre," in *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. David Buckton (London: British Museum Press, 1994), 187, fig. 202.

<sup>81</sup> The flask measures 57 mm by 38 mm and has been dated based on iconographic elements. *Ibid.*, 187.

and in the right gripping a kite-shaped shield resting on the ground. Greek inscriptions identify the figures as St. George and his companion St. Demetrios.<sup>82</sup> The other side of the flask features a building shown in composite view, which likely represents the Holy Sepulchre as rebuilt by Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-55).<sup>83</sup> In typical fashion, the depiction conflates the interior and exterior of the building to show its most iconic and recognizable architectural features. A central open-domed section is flanked by a dome surmounted by a cross, and a tower in two stages with a conical or pyramidal roof surmounted by what appears to be a crescent on the left. In the interior section, a lamp is suspended over an altar with an shroud below, evoking the shroud of Christ displayed at the Holy Sepulchre.

The flask is a complicated object that forms a composite in terms of material, imagery, and religious connotations. Based on its iconography and form, the flask is a site relic, an object from a locality associated with a sacred person rather than the person him or herself. Given its iconography, the ampulla probably held oil from a lamp at the Holy Sepulchre. If so, the flask body would visually refer to its contents through the image of the Holy Sepulchre, and by metonymic extension, to the entire city of Jerusalem, continuing what Oleg Grabar has referred to as “a tradition of seeing and representing a city through its major buildings.”<sup>84</sup> In this respect, the ampulla operates within a tradition seen in objects such as the Monza and Bobbio ampullae, late antique flasks that represent scenes associated with the life of Christ. More innovative is the

---

<sup>82</sup> The inscription is badly preserved and has caused some confusion. The companion of George is sometimes identified as “Aetius,” but Entwistle and Buckton argue convincingly for “Demetrios.” Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> In this case, the object represented within the Holy Sepulchre would be the shroud left behind at the Resurrection. Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Oleg Grabar, “Jerusalem Elsewhere,” in *Jerusalem* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2005; reprint, 2005), 182.

association of Sts. George and Demetrios with the Holy Sepulchre. The doubling of the armored saints might suggest an apotropaic function, but the appearance of George may also derive from Crusader experience. In *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, Bohemond of Taranto is said to have invoked the names of the Holy Sepulchre and Saint George during a pitched battle against the Muslims for Ramla, which poised the Crusaders to take Jerusalem.<sup>85</sup> The episode in the *chanson* and the imagery of the flask may both derive from a shared set of associations, with the representation of St. George intended to commemorate the divine means through which the Holy Sepulchre, and by extension Jerusalem itself, was won.

The warrior saints would continue to evolve in the western imagination. Eventually, the faithful would attribute the very fall of Jerusalem to St. George, and he would assume a place in chivalric literature as the exemplar of knightly virtue par excellence.<sup>86</sup> Both legends and images, such as those represented on the pilgrimage flask, must have aided in this elevation. Through these channels, a saint who had played a very minor role in western Christian devotions became one of the most popular saints in Europe. This demonstrates the subtle ways in which events overseas could shape practices at home. But how did these developments relate to the changing shape of the cult among local Christian communities in the Levant?

---

<sup>85</sup> *La Chanson de Jérusalem*. Nigel Thorpe, ed. *The Old French Crusade Cycle* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 50-53, lines 690-854. For an analysis of the episode in relation to military saint devotion, see MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200," 339.

<sup>86</sup> These events would find a place in the pictorial repertoire of western manuscript illumination. See Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 40, pl. 10.



### **Heteropraxy, traveling Iconographies, and visual ambiguities**

The stated mission of the Crusaders was to restore the Holy Land to Christian custodianship, an intention graphically enacted in the massacre of Muslims during the conquest of Jerusalem. Despite the segregationist tenor of this foundational moment, the polities established by the Crusaders would remain remarkably diverse - ethnically, religiously, and linguistically – throughout the two centuries of their existence. The Europeans who became the new nobility, though united by common purpose and religion (Latin Christianity), were themselves a heterogeneous mix of ethnic and political affiliations, ranging from French kingdoms to Italian city-states. Local Christian populations included the Melkites, an Arabic-speaking sect affiliated with the Byzantine patriarch, as well as the Maronites and Syrian Orthodox.<sup>87</sup> Like the Melkites, these sects were comprised of Arabic-speakers, though they maintained separate institutional structures and traced their ancestry back to Syrian, rather than Greek-Byzantine, roots.<sup>88</sup> Muslims and Jews, each with their own inner sectarian divisions, continued to live and worship in the territories claimed by the Christian west.

Just outside the boundaries of the Crusader polities, the pilgrimage site at Şaydnāyā offers a glimpse of the cosmopolitanism attainable in the frontier during the pre-modern era. Located north of Damascus the site, which fell within Ayyubid territory during the middle ages, had attained a transregional reputation by the eleventh century.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> For a discussion of the communities that were present on the eve of the Crusades, see chapter 2.

<sup>88</sup> It should be noted that Nestorians and Armenians were also a presence in Jerusalem. For the different sects and their histories, see MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 29-34. For a discussion of the Syrian Orthodox construction of history, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches," *Byzantion* 58 (1988): 295-308.

<sup>89</sup> Şaydnāyā has recently become a topic of interest, and its bibliography is growing accordingly. Benjamin Z. Kedar, "Latins and Oriental Christians in the Frankish Levant," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious*

The primary attraction for pilgrims was a miracle-working icon, a depiction of Mary and Jesus reputedly painted by St. Luke himself, which exuded fragrant oil from the Virgin's breast, a substance which became renowned for its healing properties. European visitors to the site expressed wonder at the miraculous icon and the remarkably diverse clientele at Şaydnāyā, which ranged from Europeans to local Muslims, eastern Christians, and Jews. According to Gerard of Strasbourg, Frederick Barbarossa's envoy to Saladin in 1175, "on the Feast of the Assumption and at Christmas all the Saracens of that province [Damascus] gather as one with the Christians to pray and the Saracens perform ceremonies with the highest devotion" to the image; "from it there exudes an incessant flow of oil that heals the ailments of many Christians, Saracens and Jews."<sup>90</sup> In *Masālik al-Abşār*, the Mamluk administrator al-'Umarī called the monastery Dayr Sayyida, after the Virgin, but did not mention the icon. Instead, he wrote that Christians and Muslims took water from "a fissure in a rock...for blessings and put it in elegant vessels of glass

---

*Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land First-Fifteenth Centuries CE*, ed. A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998), 208-222; Bernard Hamilton, "Our Lady of Saidnaiya: An Orthodox Shrine Revered by Muslims and Knights Templar at the Time of the Crusades," in *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History: Papers Read at the 1998 Summer Meeting and the 1999 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Robert Nbek . Swanson (Woodbridge, UK: 2000), 207-215; Mat Immerzeel, "The Monastery of Saydnaya and its Icon," *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 13-26; Elizabeth Campbell, "The Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East" (Dissertation, University of Washington, 2009), 218-220. Cf. Elizabeth S. Bolman, "The Enigmatic Coptic Galaktotrophousa and the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Egypt," in *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (London: Ashgate, 2005), 13-22; Idem., "The Coptic Galaktotrophousa Reconsidered," in *Coptic Studies on the Treshold of a New Millennium*, ed. M. Immerzeel and J. Van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 1173-1184; Idem., *The Milk of Salvation? Gender, Audience and the Nursing Virgin Mary in the Eastern Mediterranean* (In progress); Idem., "The Coptic Galaktotrophousa as the Medicine of Immortality" (Dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1997).

<sup>90</sup> *Chronica slavorum*, bk. VII, ch. 8, ed. J. M. Lappenberg in *MGH Scriptores* 21 (Hanover, 1869), 239 line 36-240 line 12. Repeated almost verbatim by William of Tyre; *Itinéraires à Jérusalem et descriptions de la Terre Sainte*, ed. Henri Michelant and Gaston Raynaud (Geneva, 1882), 173-4. The Arab geographer Abu l-Makārim confirms the picture of religious diversity described by Gerbault. See Daniel Baraz, "The Incarnated Icon of Saidnaya Goes West," *Le Muséon* 108 (1995): 189.

over which they drape fine cloths.”<sup>91</sup> Al-‘Umarī does not mention Muslim participation, but Gerard of Strasburg testifies that at Ṣaydnāyā Muslims made supplications and gave votive offerings “like the Christians.”<sup>92</sup> Ṣaydnāyā is only the most famous example of shared sites; the overlapping sacred histories of Jerusalem meant that many sites drew devotion from members of the three Abrahamic faiths.<sup>93</sup>

In a way less centered on a specific site, the cult of St. George also formed a point of intersection among Muslims and Christians of all confessions. The life of the saint and accounts of his miracles traveled from one Christian sect to the next, translated from Greek to Syriac and Arabic, from varied linguistic sources to Latin.<sup>94</sup> Long before the Crusaders arrived, Arabs had absorbed St. George into Islam as al-Khiḍr, an enigmatic figure identified as a Quranic prophet, but associated with St. George and the Jewish prophet Elijah. Muslims revered al-Khiḍr for his healing powers and venerated him at shrines throughout the Islamic east, sometimes alongside Christians or Jews.<sup>95</sup> It is possible that cult practice, on occasion, aligned more closely. The tenth-century Arab geographer al-Muqaddasī records a *ḥadīth* in which it is related that, at the gate of “that wonderful church” in Lydda, Christ would appear and slay the *dajjāl*, or forerunner of the

---

<sup>91</sup> al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al- Aḥsār* 1.356-7. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*, 210. Trans. in Campbell, “The Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East”, 218-219.

<sup>92</sup> Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*, 211.

<sup>93</sup> The sort of overlaps that occurred can be seen in al-Harawī’s chapter on Jerusalem and its environs. Josef W. Meri, *A Lonely Wayfarer’s Guide to Pilgrimage: ‘Alī Bakr al-Harawī’s Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Ma’rifat al-Ziyārāt* (Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, Inc., 2004), 70-86.

<sup>94</sup> For the Greek miracles, see Joannes B. Aufhauser, *Miracula S. Georgii* (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1913). For a discussion of the transmission of one particular miracle, see Grotowski, “The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art,” 27-77.

<sup>95</sup> Josef W. Meri, “Re-Appropriating Sacred Space: Medieval Jews and Muslims Seeking Elijah and al-Khiḍr,” *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 3 (1999): 237-264; F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 31-32, 319-36. Al-Khiḍr was sometimes associated with St. Sergios, who was also confused with St. George. See Elizabeth Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 179, 190.

End of Days.<sup>96</sup> Al-Muqaddasī also listed the feast of St. George at Lydda (Ramla) among “the Christian feasts that are observed also by the Muslims of Syria.”<sup>97</sup> Like the Syrian Orthodox and Melkite calendars, al-Muqaddasī marks the date for the celebration as April 23,<sup>98</sup> raising the possibility that the site fostered a permissive atmosphere similar to that at Ṣaydnāyā.<sup>99</sup>

In contrast to the impression of religious pluralism imparted by actions at Ṣaydnāyā and Lydda, the basilica that housed the relics of St. George was subject to both iconoclastic destruction and restrictive custodianship. In a public display against Christianity, the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākīm destroyed the shrine along with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other pilgrimage destinations in 1009.<sup>100</sup> When the Crusaders arrived in 1099, they found the Melkite community of Lydda holding services in a secondary basilica while caring for the tomb of St. George in the ruins of the old church. The Crusaders adopted the site, rebuilt the basilica, and installed a bishop, thereby transferring the tomb of St. George from the control of the local clergy to that of the Latin

---

<sup>96</sup> The church is generally understood to refer to the basilica of St. George. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> LeStrange, *Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> There is some variation in the surviving Syrian Orthodox calendars, but those from the Palestinian region tend to list April 23<sup>rd</sup> as the feast day for St. George. For the calendars, see François Nau, “Un martyrologe et douze ménologes syriaques,” *Patrologia Orientalis* 10 (1915): 3-166. For a Melkite calendar, see Robert Griveau, “Les Fêtes des Melchites, par Abou Rîhan al-Birouni,” *Patrologia Orientalis* 10 (1915): 291-314.

<sup>99</sup> It is not always clear what Muslim authors mean when they describe Muslim participation in Christian festivals. Gérard Troupeau assumed that their participation was religious in nature. Troupeau, “Les couvents chrétiens dans la littérature arabe,” 275-276. For an opposing view, see Kilpatrick, “Monasteries through Muslim Eyes: The *Diyārāt* Books,” 24-25. The festivals of St. Demetrios in Thessalonike, St. Eugenios in Trebizond, and the Archangel Michael at Chonai also drew their Muslim neighbors. See Speros Jr. Vyronis, “The Panēgyris of the Byzantine Saint: A Study in the Nature of a Medieval Institution, its Origins and Fate,” in *The Byzantine Saint: Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Sergei Hackel (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1981), 214-216.

<sup>100</sup> This was part of a larger policy intended to place pressure on the Christian community, which also involved increased taxation and the enforcement of dhimma dress codes.

clergy.<sup>101</sup> European chronicles do not record the Melkite response to the change in status quo, but an incident recorded by the Byzantine pilgrim John Phocas suggests it was met with resentment. According to Phocas, a priest at Lydda related that a member of the Latin clergy had attempted to open the tomb of St. George, and “when he endeavored to open this...fire was seen to flash forth from the sepulcher, and left one of the men half burned and another burned to death.”<sup>102</sup> Shared veneration and displays of contempt, both between sects and religions, could occur in proximate spaces.

### **Al-Ruṣāfa**

The complexities of religious practice and sectarian identity seen already within the cult of the military saints can also be observed in the material and visual culture that served the cult. Little remains from Lydda and Ṣaydnāyā, but another site in Syria provides a glimpse of the intersecting visual cultures that might arise in places with frontier connections. The archaeological site al-Ruṣāfa is located in northern Syria, near the modern-day city al-Raqqa. In late antiquity, there was a shrine that preserved the relics of the great military martyr Sergios, an officer in the Roman imperial horse guard who had died at the fort of Ruṣāfa in the fourth century and became the spiritual patron of the frontier city that grew up around his shrine. It became a major destination for Arab Christian pilgrimage. The site boasted a three-aisled basilica constructed under the

---

<sup>101</sup> Since Saladin demolished this church in 1191, its exact configuration and use by the different communities is open to conjecture. Denys Pringle has suggested that the Crusaders allowed the Melkites to continue holding services in the secondary basilica, while Christopher MacEvitt speculates that the new basilica accommodated joint services. See Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 9-27; MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, 131. The chronicle covering the events around the shrine is that of Raymond of Aguilers.

<sup>102</sup> John Phocas, 29. John Phocas, *The Pilgrimage of Joannes Phocas in the Holy Land (in the Year 1185 A.D.)*; trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1889), 34.

Byzantine emperor Justinian, which housed the martyrrium of the saint.<sup>103</sup> Within the church, the shrine of St. Sergios served as a focal point, drawing Christians to its side for baptisms and healings, likely until the Mongols invaded al-Ruṣāfa in 1259. In its heyday, the site – and its miracle-working saint – attracted the patronage not only of local Arab Christians, but also of political leaders in Byzantium and Sassanian Iran.<sup>104</sup> In the early centuries of Islam, it became a site of shared Christian-Muslim devotion.<sup>105</sup>

The status attained by the shrine in late antiquity derived from its position within the frontier zone that separated Byzantium from Sassanian Iran, but even when the shrine became part of the Syrian countryside and lost its frontier status, the saint continued to draw devotion from eastern Christians, as archaeological artifacts attest. In 1982, a team of German archaeologists uncovered a hoard of silver in the north courtyard of the basilica.<sup>106</sup> Likely buried at the advent of the Mongol conquest, the hoard gives a hint of

---

<sup>103</sup> For the most comprehensive discussion of the archaeological evidence, see Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 77-92. For a more concise discussion of the site and its history, see Idem., "Sharing Holy Places," 134-139. For a fuller view of the Late Antique phenomenon of saints' shrines, see Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Culture, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>104</sup> Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, 130-172. For other studies of this cultural milieu, see Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*; Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*.

<sup>105</sup> The Umayyad caliph Hishām, who ruled from 724 to 732, built a country palace outside the walls of the city and erected a three-aisle mosque in al-Ruṣāfa, which encompassed over one-third of the church's monumental courtyard. As Fowden has demonstrated, the building tapped into the power of the saint without attempting to surpass the basilica. According to Fowden, the symbiotic mode of veneration established at al-Ruṣāfa was paradigmatic of the Umayyad's approach to earlier cultural formations in the region they conquered, which favored a synthesis of old and new traditions. See Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 174-191.

<sup>106</sup> Rainer Degen, "Die Inscripten," in *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiopolis*, ed. Thilo Ulbert (Mainz: Verlag, 1990), 65-76; Thilo Ulbert, *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiopolis* (Mainz: Verlag, 1990), 1-64. Archaeological report (Ulbert, Ruṣāfa, 3, p. 1-64 and Degen 65-76 on inscriptions). See also Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, 185-187; Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, 88-91; Sophie Makariou, "La trouvaille de Ruṣāfa," in *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001), 106-109.

the riches that adorned the church, which Muslims writers described as a marvel, during the same period in which Ṣaydnāyā rose to prominence.<sup>107</sup>

The treasure dates to the thirteenth century and comprises a range of objects associated with liturgical and votive functions: a paten, a lamp, a cup, a chalice, and a chalice base (Fig. 50). Apart from the quality of their execution, the most remarkable feature of the objects is the diverse artistic sources that informed their production; the lamp, for example, is embellished with decorative motifs derived from the standard visual vocabulary of “Islamic” courtly art, with confronted griffons set into an arabesque. The cup, paten, and chalice in contrast, meld western and local east Christian artistic traditions.<sup>108</sup> In their layers of use and influence, the cup and chalice are especially revealing of the heterogeneous cultural milieu in thirteenth-century Syria and bear further scrutiny.

Clearly the silver-gilt cup and paten were imported from the west (Fig. 51). The cup, with its broad shallow bowl mounted on a low foot, is characteristic of non-liturgical drinking cups from northern France.<sup>109</sup> But the decisive evidence comes from its interior, which is worked in repoussé to show eleven heraldic shields. The central heraldic figure can be linked to the noble Coucy family of Picardy in northern France, and it has been suggested that the cup came to Syria with Raoul I, sire de Coucy (d. 1191), who fought in

---

<sup>107</sup> In his thirteenth-century dictionary, *Mu'jam al-Bulda*, Yāqūt judged the site “one of the most amazing things in the world in its beauty of buildings.” Yāqūt 2.660-661. Trans. in Campbell, “The Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East”, 49.

<sup>108</sup> For the lamp see, Ulbert, *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, 7-20, pls. 1-2; ; Sophie Makariou, “Encensoir,” in *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001), 109.

<sup>109</sup> Ulbert, *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, 50-60, pls. 3-2; Sophie Makariou, “Coupe ou gémélion,” in *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001), 107.

the Third Crusade.<sup>110</sup> Later on, one Zayn al-Dār, daughter of Abū Durra, came into possession of the cup and added a commemorative inscription in Arabic: “This was given by Zayn al-Dār, daughter of (*maître*) Abū Durra, to the blessed church of Qal‘at Ja‘bar.”<sup>111</sup> Although Zayn probably belonged to a Christian community, it is impossible to assign to her a specific religious affiliation since, as we have seen, saints’ tombs and monasteries drew both Muslim and Christian patrons. In any case, the object came to al-Ruṣāfa not long after its dedication, suggesting a re-gifting.

The paten displays evidence of a similarly layered history (Fig. 52).<sup>112</sup> The elegant work is in the form of a shallow dish with engraved decorations. The outer rim is articulated by a scallop pattern that draws attention to the center of the dish, which features a medallion with the hand of God raised in a gesture of blessing set against a Latin cross that finds close parallels in the metalwork of thirteenth-century France. At some point, a patron engraved a secondary inscription in Syriac, which reads: “Hanson, the son of the deceased Hubal from Edessa, has bequeathed this paten to the church of Mar Sergios in Ruṣāfa.”<sup>113</sup> The use of Syriac suggests that the patron claimed affiliation with the Syrian Orthodox church.

While the cup and paten represent the recontextualization of western objects, the chalice instead is a local product (Fig. 53). It is an intriguingly eclectic work that combines aspects of European, local Christian, and Byzantine visual culture and includes

---

<sup>110</sup> Hervé de Pinoteau, "Heraldische Untersuchungen zum Wappenkupal," in *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, ed. Thilo Ulbert (Mainz: Verlag, 1990), 77-86.

<sup>111</sup> Rainer Degen, "Die Inscriften," *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>112</sup> Ulbert, *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, 42-49, pl. 6; Sophie Makariou, "Patène," in *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001), 109.

<sup>113</sup> Degen, "Die Inscriften," 68-74.



inscriptions in both Syriac and Greek.<sup>114</sup> Its form, with a ribbed node connecting base and cup, imitates that of Romanesque chalices, while the delicate niello motifs and figural representations are clearly indebted to the visual culture of northern Syria. The iconographies belong to the common visual vocabulary of eastern Christians and Byzantines: a medallion with Christ Pantokrator on the exterior, and an interior image of the Virgin and Child enthroned between the archangels Gabriel and Michael (Fig. 54). The Christ Pantokrator is surrounded by the Greek inscription, “IC XC,” the *nomina sacra* for Christ.<sup>115</sup> In contrast, the rim of the chalice is inscribed with Syriac that reads: “To the honor of the chalice, which to your disciple as a pledge has been given, Iwannis has donated this, that your blood is reserved, oh bringer of mercy. And see: he bears you a bequest. Received and rewarded appropriate to your promise and the offering of the priest.”<sup>116</sup> The chalice thus seems to have been made in Syria, based on western models, for a local patron.

The objects in the treasure hoard represent a variety of cultural transactions that suggests a remarkable degree of fluidity in cultural and functional associations. In the Coucy cup, a European object was transformed in its very function and meaning: originating as courtly tableware bearing symbols of an inalienable heritage (the noble line of Coucy), it became a votive offering to a Syrian church, and eventually a church fitting

---

<sup>114</sup> Ulbert, *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, 21-36, pls. 3-4; Sophie Makariou, "Calice," in *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001), 108.

<sup>115</sup> The use of Greek *nomina sacra* need not signify a Melkite or even Greek-speaking Christian; it was widely employed in eastern Christian painting regardless of sect.

<sup>116</sup> Degen, "Die Inscriften," 67-68.

(perhaps even with a liturgical function) in the shrine of a military saint.<sup>117</sup> Fluidity of function is accompanied by ambiguities in sectarian affiliation, since the Melkite, Syrian Orthodox and Muslim faithful all spoke Arabic. The assemblage of objects speaks to an appreciation for eclectic styles and motifs, not unlike the culture of shared objects described by Oleg Grabar over a decade ago.<sup>118</sup> This is not to say that there was no process of selection at work in the appropriation of objects; regardless of their origin, the objects are all silver-gilt, fostering a sense of visual homogeneity and connecting the group to a long tradition of ecclesiastic silver plate in the region.<sup>119</sup> When considered as a whole, the treasure provides vivid testimony to the existence of a Crusader sphere of influence that extended far beyond the territory any westerner could travel.

### **Wall paintings**

Similar complexities can be observed in the remains of churches in present-day Syria and Lebanon, which bear programs of wall painting in varying states of preservation. The wall paintings are characterized by great stylistic diversity and display a need to make visual gestures towards communal self-definition.<sup>120</sup> This is accomplished, in part, through the use of iconographies that could convey very specific

---

<sup>117</sup> The lamp, entirely free of liturgical and religious associations, might also be a repurposed object. For a parallel reuse in liturgical furnishings in Egypt, see Bolman, "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions," 93.

<sup>118</sup> Oleg Grabar focuses on courtly objects with non-religious connotations, but it is evident from the hoard at al-Ruṣāfa that his observations can be extended to liturgical wares. Oleg Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," in *Byzantine Court Culture, 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 115-129.

<sup>119</sup> See the papers in Susan A. Boyd and Marlia Mundell Mango, eds., *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium: Papers of the Symposium held May 16-18, 1986, at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1992).

<sup>120</sup> Styles range from "Byzantine" to a variety of more local styles that scholars have described as "Crusader," "Syrian," and "Cypriot." For a discussion of the great stylistic diversity and its implications for understanding communal identity, see Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, esp. chapter 5.

statements regarding religious doctrine or sectarian histories. One of the more common iconographies is that of the equestrian warrior saint, which, as we have seen, was widespread in the Levant by the thirteenth century.<sup>121</sup> It can be found in contexts that range from Crusader chapels to monastic and parish churches,<sup>122</sup> and as Mat Immerzeel has noted, many of the images bear close iconographic and stylistic resemblance to the equestrian panels at Sinai. Considering a selection of these images *in situ*, within larger painted programs, may offer insight into the place of the warrior saints within the complicated sectarian milieu of the Levant.

Situated near the Christian-Muslim frontier, the Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchus at Qar‘a, provides a fitting place to begin this inquiry. Located 97 km north of Damascus, the village of Qar‘a lies in the craggy mountains of the Qalamoun, a region known as a stronghold of Melkite Christianity. During the thirteenth century, the village fell within the political boundaries of the Ayyubid Empire, not far from the County of Tripoli.<sup>123</sup> Still in use today, the small triple-aisle basilica likely served as a parish church during the middle ages. Renovations, a campaign of whitewashing, and the

---

<sup>121</sup> For standing military saints, see Nada Hérou and Mat Immerzeel, "Kaftoun 2004: The Wall Paintings," *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 16 (2005): 453-458. For the equestrian saints, see Immerzeel, "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria," 29-60. For Muslim parallels to the dragon-slaying saint, see Oya Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia," *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 151-164. They also appeared on non-religious objects, such as an Anatolia dagger with an equestrian military saint on its scabbard. See Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, "Dagger," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Yale University Press, 2004), 430.

<sup>122</sup> For programs in the chapels at the Crac des Chevaliers and Qaşr Marqab, see Jaroslav Folda, "Crusader Frescoes at Crac des Chevaliers and Marqab Castle," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36 (1982): 177-210. For the monastic church program, see Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*; Romeny et al., "Deir Mar Musa: The Inscriptions," 133-187; Stephan Westphalen, "Deir Mar Musa: Die Malschichten 1-3," *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 99-127. Parish churches are included in Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004); Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*; Stephan Westphalen, *Christliche Wandmalereien in Syrien: Qara and das Kloster Mar Yakub* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005).

<sup>123</sup> Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 67-69.

passage of time have resulted in major paint loss, so that only five images remain from what was surely a more extensive cycle. The extant images, which are represented on a single register in the *naos*, include the *Galaktotrophousa* (“nursing virgin”), St. John the Baptist, SS. Theodore and Sergios on horseback, and an unidentified female saint standing in *orant* position.<sup>124</sup> The fragmentary nature of the cycle precludes the possibility of comprehensive analysis of the program; nevertheless, the remnants can throw light on the nature of visual culture and religious practice in the village of Qar’a.

In a position that emphasizes their role as holy defenders, the military saints appear on either side of the Virgin and John the Baptist (Figs. 55-56). Their images impress not so much by material richness but by the elegant forms and visual opulence conveyed through a style that emphasizes patterned garments, ornament, and jewel-like motifs. The form of the figures, elegant and linear, recall the panels of St. Sergios at Mt. Sinai (Figs. 44-45). The repetition of patterns and jewels creates the impression that Theodore and Sergios were companions, as does the employment of the same composition: each appears as a soldier on horseback, wearing a jewel-encrusted tiara, and receiving a blessing from the hand of God, which extends towards the saint from the upper right-hand corner of the painting. From there, the saints are distinguished by their attributes; St. Sergios holds a flag that depicts a red cross on a white field, while St. Theodore raises his right hand in a position familiar from other images, in which the saint impales a dragon with his spear.

The paintings of St. Theodore and St. Sergios form part of a larger program that can be situated within a range of local and regional trends relating to style, iconography,

---

<sup>124</sup> For the wall paintings, see Jules Leroy, "Découvertes de peintures chrétiennes en Syrie," *Les annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* 25, no. 1-2 (1975): 95-112.

and subject matter. St. John, for instance, belongs to the common heritage of Christian visual culture, while the Virgin *galaktotrophousa* likely evokes an image at .<sup>125</sup> The images also draw upon a traditional repertoire of pictorial elements and composition devices. Depictions of sacred figures within arches can be seen in Syriac manuscripts, as well as Lebanese and Cypriot churches, where they are similarly decorated with interlace and scrollwork.<sup>126</sup> These ornamental devices (and their use on architecture) were not limited to Christian visual culture, but can be found on a range of Islamic monuments within Syria. Even the palette, with its emphasis on blues and reds, finds parallels in the churches of Syria and Lebanon, though the practice of representing saints against a blue field is also a hallmark of Byzantine wall painting.<sup>127</sup>

The images of the equestrian saints display a similar array of cultural affiliations. Details of dress, such as the jeweled crowns and the red textile with three white dots (seen on the sleeves of St. Theodore and the hand of God), were widely employed in representations of saints in the Levant.<sup>128</sup> In relation to a different image, Scott Redford has argued that such cloth was meant to evoke contemporary Ayyubid textiles.<sup>129</sup> It is

---

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 113, pl. 96; Gustav Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 22-26, pls. 10-12; Karel Innemée, "Recent Discoveries of Wall-paintings in Deir Al-Surian," *Hugoye* 1, no. 2 (1998). It is also thought that the icon at Şaydnāyā was a *galaktotrophousa* as well. See Immerzeel, "The Monastery of Saydnaya and its Icon," 13-26.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. The Church of St. Phocas at Amium Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, pl. 52.; Church of Moutoullas in Cyprus Idem., *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, pl. 123.; Kafr Qabel, Mar Elias Dodd, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, pls. XI-XIV.; Bahdeidat Idem., *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, pls. LXXVIII-LXXXIII.; Beirut, Mar Barbara Idem., *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, pls. 21.1-21.2.

<sup>127</sup> Particularly close parallels can be seen at Bahdeidat in Lebanon, the Church of the Virgin in Moutoullas, and Deir Mar Musa in Nbek.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Saints at Deir Mar Musa in Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, figs. 33-35.; saints in Sinai icons in Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, figs. 195, 196, 199, 313, 371.

<sup>129</sup> Scott Redford, "Byzantium and the Islamic World, 1261-1557," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 394-395.

possible that the checkerboard patterns on the shields and cloaks derive from the same cultural milieu, since they were frequently employed (if in simpler form) as heraldic devices, both by Ayyubids and Crusaders.<sup>130</sup> With its delicate foliate scrolls, the halo of St. Sergios suggests a different visual orientation, towards Cyprus, where painters sought to render the appearance of metalwork halos in paint.<sup>131</sup> Of course the most distinctive features of the images are the iconographic attributes, the (now-lost) impaled dragon and the standard. Images of St. Theodore slaying the dragon can be found, with variations, throughout the Levant, Egypt, and Cappadocia. The standard, however, is more localized, appearing in Lebanese and Syrian churches. The flag, a standard attribute of Sergios and Bacchos in the region, has often been interpreted as a Crusader banner,<sup>132</sup> although indigenous sources are equally plausible since cross-topped staff was a typical attribute of St. Sergios from late antiquity on. If so, the image might represent a traditional motif articulated in the visual parlance of the day.

In regards to sectarian (rather than cultural) affinities, the inscriptions are the most salient feature. Two inscriptions accompany each figure depicted, one in Greek and the other in Syriac. In the icon of St. Theodore these appear as two vertical inscriptions in white paint on either wide of the saint (Fig. 57). Bilingual – and even trilingual – inscription find parallels in Levantine visual culture. They are not common but they do appear on wall paintings and icons, and in manuscript illuminations.<sup>133</sup> By the time these

---

<sup>130</sup> Idem., "Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 227, fn. 35.

<sup>131</sup> Nancy Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and 'Decorated' Icons of the Komnenian Period," in *Four Icons in the Menil Collection*, ed. Bertrand Davezac (1992), 67.

<sup>132</sup> Immerzeel has made this argument most recently, pointing to the decent of the warrior saints at Antioch.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, an icon at Kaftoun in Lebanon, which combines Greek, Syriac, and Arabic on one panel. Nada Hélou, "L'icône bilatérale de la Vierge de Kaftoun au Liban: Une oeuvre d'art syro-byzantin à l'époque des croisés," *Chronos* 7 (2003): 101-131. A Syriac bible from 1054 deploys both Greek and

paintings were commissioned, Arabic was the primary language of the eastern Christian communities, so the inscriptions seem to identify the space with the liturgical and symbolic languages of Melkite and Syrian Orthodox Christians. Writing about the painted program at Deir Mar Musa in Nbek, Erika Cruikshank Dodd has observed that the preference for Syriac inscriptions was “an expression of the renewed power and independence of the [Syrian Orthodox] church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.”<sup>134</sup> The significance of deploying both Greek and Syriac in this space is somewhat ambiguous. It is possible that their use was meant to claim the space as one of shared devotion among members of both sects. The military saints would then appear as common heroic ancestors and defenders of both Orthodox communities.

Mar Tadros, a church located within Crusader territory, belongs to much the same milieu but displays a slightly different set of cultural and sectarian affinities. The church is located in the village of Bahdeiat in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, and during the middle ages it fell within the Country of Tripoli, home to Latin Christians, Syrian Orthodox and the local Maronite sect.<sup>135</sup> It is thought that the church had a Syrian Orthodox affiliation since a manuscript preserved in the near-by Deir al-Shife records that a Syrian Orthodox priest received ordination at Bahdeiat in 1256.<sup>136</sup> In terms of its architecture, the tiny church is an expression of local building forms and techniques. Built on the remains of a classical temple foundation, the church is a simple, single-aisle

---

Syriac inscriptions to identify the saints depicted in individual illuminations. See Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient: album*, pls. 49-53. Closer to home, they are employed for identification of sacred figures at Dayr Mar Yakub in Qara. Westphalen, *Christliche Wandmalereien in Syrien: Qara and das Kloster Mar Yakub*, pls. 2b, 9a, 5b, 10b, 11a-f.

<sup>134</sup> Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, 17.

<sup>135</sup> Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 101.

<sup>136</sup> Erika Cruikshank Dodd suggests that the ordination served as an impetus for the wall painting program, although I am inclined to regard the program as part of a more general surge in artistic productivity during the thirteenth century. See Dodd, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, 343.

*naos* with a protruding apse.<sup>137</sup> The interior is characterized by exposed masonry, which gives way to a plastered area around the apse that served as the foundation for a painted program concentrated in the apse (Fig. 58). It consists of a *deisis*, imagery associated with the Annunciation, and a cycle of apostles framed on either side by two monumental images in the *naos*, an icon of St. George facing one of St. Theodore (Figs. 4, 36).<sup>138</sup>

The architecture of the monument imparts a distinctly local character through its use of pre-existing forms, but the wall paintings readily invite comparison to the more fragmentary examples at SS. Sergios and Bacchus. The program at Bahdeidat employs the common subjects of the equestrian saints (seen already at Qar‘a), apostles, and *deisis*. Here the Virgin appears in a scene of the Annunciation that is thought to make specifically Syrian Orthodox statements about the nature of the incarnation.<sup>139</sup> The arches with interlace patterns, which lend structural organization to the apsidal composition, recall those seen at Qar‘a, as does the free deployment of jewel motifs and richly patterned garments. However, the identifying inscriptions are entirely in Syriac, reinforcing Erika Cruikshank Dodd’s sectarian reading of the program.

Though St. George is represented rather than St. Sergios, it is evident that he and Theodore belong to the same iconographic tradition seen at Qar‘a; each appears in full armor on horseback, wearing jeweled crowns and shields, blessed by the hand of God. The figures adopt a stiff-legged pose, with one foot thrust forward as they turn in their saddles to face the viewer from horseback. With their identical poses, the saints would

---

<sup>137</sup> The foundation still retains the Greek inscription ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΗΛΙΟΔΡΟΥ Ibid., 339.

<sup>138</sup> For the paintings, along with bibliography, see Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 101-105.

<sup>139</sup> Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Iconography and Identity: Syrian Elements in the Art of Crusader Cyprus," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 149-150. The *deisis* combines a theophany with the typical *deisis* and is favored in the Levantine milieu. See Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 66-67, 102.



have mirrored each other across the naos, suggesting their parallel status and enhancing their protective function. At the same time, care was taken to individualize the saints through the use of facial types and patterns on the shields: the scroll motifs and gems of St. Theodore's shield are answered by the checkerboard pattern of St. George's. The flat, linear style of the figures, in addition to the elegantly arched necks of the horses, immediately call to mind the images at Qar'a. Subject matter, iconography, and style all point to the artificiality and permeability of political boundaries.

Aspects of the military saints' icons at Bahdeidat allude to engagements with other religious sects, in ways that are both divergent from and familiar to those that informed production at Qar'a. The image of St. Theodore represents the saint slaying a dragon, while that of St. George, which depicts the saint with an accompanying rider, clearly represents the famous miracle in which he rescues a boy from Arab captivity.<sup>140</sup> St. George holds the small boy securely at his side as his horse flies over a body of water filled with fish. The boy holds a cup and jug of wine, showing that George has appeared to rescue the captive just as he was about to serve the emir. As we have seen, the miracle was likely composed at a Greek-speaking monastery in Palestine in the eleventh or twelfth century. Images such as this demonstrate that the legend circulated across confessions and, in the thirteenth century, was deemed relevant to the circumstances at hand.<sup>141</sup> Unlike the images of St. Sergios and St. Theodore, which present a generalized image of Christian victory, this iconography alludes to a miracle that conveys a

---

<sup>140</sup> For the Greek versions, see Aufhauser, *Miracula S. Georgii*. For a discussion of the miracles and iconography, see Grotowski, "The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art," 27-77.

<sup>141</sup> For information on the Greek miracle accounts, see Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles: A Chronological and Bibliographic Survey," *Symbolae Osbenses* 74 (1999): 206-207. Its currency in non-Greek speaking communities is evident from its depiction at the Syrian Orthodox monastery Deir Mar Musa. See Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, pl. 27.

specifically anti-Muslim sentiment. In this case, the notion of an encounter with Muslims prompted the creation of an image meant to assert the dominance and efficacy of Christianity.

If the subject matter of the St. George icon suggests the effects of conflictual encounters in shaping the visual culture of another religious community, another aspect of the painting points to more positive processes: the inclusion of donor portraits. Each donor appears as a small figure in the lower portion of the panels, garbed in western clothing. Matt Immerzeel has identified the figure supplicating St. Theodore as a knight in Frankish armor (Fig. 59), while the one below St. George wears a *mi-parti* tunic, the typical garment of servants and artists, among others (Fig. 60).<sup>142</sup> No inscriptions identify the donors, leaving both their religious and ethnic affiliations an open question. One possibility, generally favored, is that the portraits are signs of Crusader patronage in a Syrian church, perhaps even suggesting joint worship in the space.<sup>143</sup> The appeal of this explanation lies in its acknowledgment of European devotion to the local cult, although secure parallels for European worship in Syrian churches remain elusive. It is also possible that the patrons belonged to indigenous religious communities and chose to pattern their garb and devotional practices after those of their overlords, emulating the European practice of including donor portraits in works that received their patronage.<sup>144</sup>

The churches at Bahdeidat and Qar‘a offer intriguing insights into the cultural milieu in which devotion to the military saints flourished. The bilingual inscriptions at

---

<sup>142</sup> Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 102-105.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>144</sup> Such donor portraits can be seen, for instance, in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, pls. VI 8-9, XIII 21. For a contemporary example of patterning practices of dress after those of the regional powers in Armenia, see Helen C. Evans, "Imperial Aspirations: Armenian Cilicia and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century," in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, ed. Anthony Eastmond (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001), 243-258.

Qar'a and the donor portraits at Bahdeidat raise the tantalizing possibility that the spaces might have accommodated members of multiple sects, while the transmission of iconography is suggestive of the way the migration of images might create a culturally contiguous visual culture across different territories. While it is difficult to attribute the sectarian affiliations of the churches with any certainty, the images seem to contribute to the creation of sacred spaces that favored inter-sectarian referentiality in a manner that was largely non-polemical in tone. Yet, not all churches in the region display the same tone; the church at Deir Mar Musa, for example, provides a glimpse of the ways in which the same motifs could be turned towards a far more restrictive vision of community.

#### **Deir Mar Musa and communal differentiation**

Deir Mar Musa, near Nbek in Syria, takes us back into Islamic territory. Located some 80 km north of Damascus, the monastery lies in the craggy cliffs of the Qalamoun hills. Though little remains of its medieval structures, the main church, a three-aisled basilica, is still largely intact. The church stands out among the Christian monuments of Syria, for it preserves the most extensive and complete program of wall paintings from the middle ages, one completed by a named artist, Sarkis, in 1208/1209.<sup>145</sup> The program includes a Last Judgment, martyrs, apostles, monks, and church fathers, as well as the most complete cycle of military martyrs to survive from the region of Greater Syria. Based on manuscript evidence, Erica Cruikshank Dodds has persuasively argued that the monastery was in the hands of the Syrian Orthodox Church at the time of the execution of the paintings; this idea is strengthened by the use of Syriac inscriptions throughout the

---

<sup>145</sup> Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, 170.

program.<sup>146</sup> The ideological function of the inscriptions is underscored by the extensive graffiti preserved in the church – all in Arabic and much of it dating to the middle ages – which throws the symbolic purchase of the use of Syriac into sharp relief. It is important to remember that by the thirteenth century, most members of the Syriac Orthodox church spoke and read only Arabic. The content of the inscriptions would have been accessible to many, although an audience comprised of learned monks and ecclesiastics would have included members familiar with the language. Nevertheless, the letters would have been identifiable to all as the sacred language of the Syrian Orthodox community.

The cycle of military martyrs forms part of a program that is larger and more complex than those seen at Qar‘a and Bahdeidat, and one that held greater potential for communal self-fashioning. The program incorporates local iconographies such as the equestrian military martyrs and selects saints favored in Syrian devotion, among them Sts. Sergios and Bacchos.<sup>147</sup> Monastic saints, who surely held a special place in the heart of this community, are also represented in the figures of St. Antony and St. Euthymios, who appear in the standard garb of their contemporaries. These sect-specific figures appear among a larger group of saints common to Christians across the east, as well as iconographic compositions that may have been less familiar to a Syrian Orthodox audience and suggest wider affinities. A *hetoimasia*, for instance, can be seen on the western wall of the church and a large image depicting the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia is in the apse. Both are atypical in the Syrian Orthodox milieu, but part of the standard

---

<sup>146</sup> For the (scant) historical material that relates to the monastery, see *Ibid.*, 9-25.

<sup>147</sup> For St. Barbara and St. Julia in the Syriac tradition, see Fiey, *Saints syriaques*, 45-46, 125.

repertoire of Byzantine/Greek Orthodox visual culture.<sup>148</sup> Their appearance in this remote monastery underscores the point that remoteness need not signify isolation.

The impression that the monastery even served as a hub in an ecclesiastic network is conveyed by the supplicatory and commemorative Arabic graffiti that visitors inscribed on the church walls. In addition to numerous lay visitors, graffiti record the visits of “Marcos, Bishop of Jerusalem and Homs and Damascus-the-Protected,”<sup>149</sup> a deacon from another, unspecified church,<sup>150</sup> and the Rabban from the monastery of Mar Elian in Homs.<sup>151</sup> Likewise, the dedicatory inscriptions in Syriac record the patronage of notables such as “Bishop Elias the Syrian from Mosul.”<sup>152</sup> The names, in addition to the desire to record their presence in the institution, suggest the prestige of the monastery during the twelfth century and indicates that the images were viewed by an audience that extended beyond the physical walls and monastic community of Deir Mar Musa.

The icons in the cycle of military martyrs provide a close parallel to images seen elsewhere, though they are rendered in a different style. Despite the fragmentary nature of the paintings, the saints depicted can be identified as St. George rescuing the boy (Fig. 61), St. Theodore slaying the dragon (Fig. 62), St. Sergios carrying a standard (Fig. 63), St. Bacchos carrying a standard (Fig. 3), and an unidentified figure that may be St. Demetrios (Fig. 64). Both the iconographic attributes (standards, dragons, etc.) and general format (fully armed equestrian warrior, riding through a landscape) will be

---

<sup>148</sup> For a discussion of the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia and its relation to Byzantine models, see Mat Immerzeel, "Some Remarks about the Name of the Monastery and an Enigmatic Scene," *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 127-133. On the *hetoimasia*, see Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*, 38-39.

<sup>149</sup> Inscription 17 in Kassim Toueir, "Appendix II. The Arabic Inscriptions," in *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, ed. Erica Cruikshank Dodd (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2001), 172-173.

<sup>150</sup> Inscription 20 in *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>151</sup> Inscription 21 in *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>152</sup> Inscription 3 in John C. McCullough, "Appendix I. The Syriac Inscriptions," *Ibid.*, 147.

familiar by now, although the blessing hand of God seen at Qar‘a and Bahdeidat has been omitted. The images also employ familiar details of dress and gear, the dotted red textiles associated with Islamic textiles, the jeweled crowns and shields, and the checkerboard patterns that, perhaps, allude to the heraldry of the Ayyubid and Crusader spheres. The most striking difference is their style, which features bold black outlines, simplified forms, minimal shading, and figures with stocky proportions. St. Bacchos and his horse, for instance, are rendered with minimal shading, the painter using black lines rather than gradations of color to indicate garment folds and limbs. Typically small features – such as the crown, torque, and pearls – are rendered in a larger scale, ensuring their legibility from the ground. Although these features might appear anomalous with respect to the paintings at Qar‘a and Bahdeidat, similar expressions of style can also be observed in the nearby cloister of Deir Mar Yakoub,<sup>153</sup> as well as the Crusader chapels of the Crac des Chevaliers and Qaşr Marqab.<sup>154</sup> Above all, the style suggests affinities with the visual culture of Ayyubid Syria and Egypt, in which Christians clearly participated.<sup>155</sup> The paintings thus suggest a slightly different set of orientations, located somewhere between the Ayyubid visual culture of the interior and that of the coastal states. At the same time, the selection of miracles suggests an adversarial stance to Islam, through

---

<sup>153</sup> Westphalen, *Christliche Wandmalereien in Syrien: Qara and das Kloster Mar Yakub*, 91-95; Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, 110-112.

<sup>154</sup> Folda, "Crusader Frescoes at Crac des Chevaliers and Marqab Castle," 177-210.

<sup>155</sup> Maria Georgopoulou, "Orientalism and Crusader Art: Constructing a New Canon," *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 3 (1991): 289-321; Hoffman, "Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory," 129-142. Oleg Grabar, "The Crusades and the Development of Islamic Art," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 235-246. Much the same point has been made in relation to Coptic art. See Bolman, "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions," 73-106.

thematic content, even though the images share in the visual culture of the Muslim majority.

The reference to Islam so subtly projected through the military saints finds more vivid expression in the scene of the Last Judgment that covers the expanse of the eastern wall (Fig. 65). The image is an adaptation of conventional Last Judgment compositions executed in Italy, Cyprus, Byzantium, and elsewhere.<sup>156</sup> The use of Syriac inscriptions (as elsewhere in the church) and, more pointedly, the inclusion of scenes particular to the Syriac exegetical tradition serve to inscribe the end of the world within the vision of a single community. The point is carried through to the lower registers, which feature a unique representation of the saved and the damned. Depicted in contemporary garb, the saved are faithful members of the Syrian Orthodox ecclesiastical and monastic hierarchies (Fig. 66). Their place among the saved is clearly conveyed both by their position – on the right side of Christ – and the crosses they hold before them. They stand calmly against a deep blue background, waiting for an angel to weigh their souls and admit them to the ranks of the elect, represented in the register above. Opposite, the damned appear as half-length figures against fields of red that alternate with panels of blue punctuated by white squiggles.

The damned are not envisioned as an undifferentiated generic mob; rather, they are orderly arranged into groups based on garments and headdress, suggestive of ethnic or class specificity (Fig. 67). The two lowest registers show robed figures in pointed caps and men in turbans. Based on their attire, Erica Cruickshank Dodd has identified them as

---

<sup>156</sup> Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, 77-97.

Jews and Muslims respectively.<sup>157</sup> Perhaps nowhere else in Syrian visual culture is inter-religious referentiality so clearly expressed, or with such polemical force – which may account for the lack of identifying inscriptions in these panels. More striking, perhaps, is register located in the center of the left side, which depicts figures dressed as members of the Syrian Orthodox church; their placement among the damned suggests that these Christians, too, were heretics and apostates – the enemy within.<sup>158</sup> This image of the Last Judgment, so prominently placed on the eastern wall of the church, inflects the meaning of the larger program. In this restrictive vision of community, the warrior saints are the defenders of the true community of the faithful, defined as the Syrian Orthodox alone.

The polemical images of Deir Mar Musa, with their restrictive vision of community, likely owe their tenor to the status of the institution itself; in the centuries that followed the Arab conquest, monasteries became the primary center of the religion, responsible both for the preservation of the faith and the enforcement of its behavioral norms. Though far from isolated, monasteries could foster an environment that allowed moral rigorists to flourish.<sup>159</sup> The communities that governed parish churches such as those at Qar‘a and Bahdeidat, perhaps, saw less need to draw clear lines between the different sects and religions. Yet, it would be a mistake to suppose that even at Deir Mar Musa the congregation was composed entirely of Syrian Orthodox. Monasteries, as indicated above, were popular places for Muslims to stop during their travels, and

---

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 94-95.

<sup>158</sup> Notably, this vision of religious difference does not acknowledge the existence of other Christian sects – despite a clear dependence on other sects for the very iconography that served as the template for the image.

<sup>159</sup> Monasteries, for instance, are often implicated in the waves of Christian martyrdom that occurred under Islamic rule. See Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); el-Leithy, "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293--1524 A.D.".



sometimes even served as destinations in themselves.<sup>160</sup> It seems likely that permissiveness was more the norm than the exception, perhaps creating the need for displays of visual rhetoric in more official spaces. Regardless, what emerges from the consideration of the three different churches is the extent to which expressions of visual culture, religious devotion, and community were site-specific.

### **Metadoxy and the icons of Sinai**

The form of pietism seen at the churches discussed above is a frontier phenomenon, finding parallels in other Christian and Muslim frontiers of the pre-modern era. It can be seen, for example, in the melding of western and Byzantine iconography in the churches of the Morea and Cyprus, and it finds broad parallels in the Sufi Lodges of Anatolia, which shared spaces with the earlier cult of St. Theodore before absorbing it into the new religion entirely.<sup>161</sup> The image of the dragon-slayer in Anatolia and Seljuk Rum could as easily refer to Christian saints as the heroic ancestors of rulers in the nascent Ottoman state.<sup>162</sup> Such syncretistic practices, it has been suggested, were even fostered to encourage the assimilation of pre-existing religious and ethnic groups into the new world order. Writing about the religious picture of Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, where strict Shi'a/Sunni dichotomies were little in evidence, Cemal Kafadar has proposed that religious practice "should be conceptualized in part in terms of

---

<sup>160</sup> Elizabeth Key Fowden, "The Lamp and the Wine Flask: Early Muslim Interest in Christian Monasticism," in *Islamic Cross-Pollinations: Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. James E. Montgomery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-28; Kilpatrick, "Monasteries through Muslim Eyes: The *Diyārāt* Books," 19-38.

<sup>161</sup> Gerstel, "Art and Identity in Medieval Morea," 263-285; Ethel Sara Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufisim and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Byzantines and Italians on Cyprus: Images from Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 339-357.

<sup>162</sup> Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia," 151-164.

a ‘metadoxy,’ a state of being beyond doxies, a combination of being doxy-naïve and not being doxy-minded...”<sup>163</sup> The model proposed by Kafadar provides a way to go beyond the orthodoxy/heterodoxy divide, creating a context for understanding phenomena such as the bilingual inscriptions at Qar‘a, the imitative Fatimid coins that circulated in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and Muslim veneration at Şaydnāyā.

Because it is transgressive, instances of “metadoxy” are rarely addressed in medieval sources. It may even be that “ideological silence” was a prerequisite for the emergence of religious tolerance, serving both to obscure and reconcile the contradictions that characterized life in medieval frontier societies. Writing about the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, with its heterogeneous communities of Latin Christians, eastern Christians, and Muslims, Charles J. Halperin observed that “silence enabled medieval frontier societies to practice, albeit temporarily and with considerable difficulty, a type of religious pluralism which many modern societies seem unwilling or unable to imitate or duplicate.”<sup>164</sup> “Ideological silence” can be seen at work when rigorists such as al-‘Umarī choose not to record the Muslim veneration at Şaydnāyā known from other sources.

The metadoxy that flourished in the frontier, and the visual culture to which it gave rise, provides a framework for reconsidering the Crusader panel paintings at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai. Because the panels were discovered before the monuments in Syria and Lebanon came to light, the first wave of scholars to work on the icons accommodated many of them within the traditional categories formed out of the

---

<sup>163</sup> Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 76.

<sup>164</sup> Halperin, “The Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier,” 466.

study of European and Byzantine visual culture.<sup>165</sup> As we have already seen with the icon of St. Sergios and a donor (Fig. 45), subsequent scholars have persisted in assigning the ethnicity of the manufacturers and users of the icons, based primarily on style and sometimes on iconographic details.

Yet, in terms of its iconography, style, and decorative motifs the icon fits more comfortably in the interstices between categories, a feature that characterizes even the stable monuments in the region. On the icon, a youthful, bearless St. Sergios sits atop a western-style saddle as his horse gallops to the right, stopping for a small woman to grasp the foot of the saint in supplication. The saint holds a waving standard, familiar already from the paintings at Qar‘a and Deir Mar Musa, that associates him with the Crusader visual culture. The overall iconography and elegant style, with its precise linearity and polished finish, immediately calls to mind the paintings at Qar‘a and Bahdeidat. Other elements belong to the broader visual culture of the region. The frame of the icon, for example, features a scrolling motif so common to Christian and Muslim art alike that both might accurately be referred to simply as an arabesque.<sup>166</sup> Even if articulated in a more simplified and schematic manner, the jeweled crown of the saint nevertheless suggests affinities with representations of military saints in places like Bahdeidat and Deir Mar Musa. The paired features of the Crusader standard and the composite bow (famously a Turkish weapon) has led Jaroslav Folda to suggest that the icon represents St. Sergios as a *turcopole*, one of the lightly armed cavalrymen recruited from the local population to serve in the Crusader ranks. Yet even this suggestion might not capture the

---

<sup>165</sup> See discussion above.

<sup>166</sup> As Robert S. Nelson suggested several decades ago. See Robert S. Nelson, "An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Art Bulletin* 65 (1989): 218.

extent to which the objects that inspired the painting could circulate across communities. Based on careful readings of Crusader-era chronicles, Anthony Cutler has determined that weapons, not unlike other forms of booty, circulated regularly among soldiers of different political affiliations and religious creeds.<sup>167</sup> The mixed armor need not be read as a concerted effort to signify a *turcopole* with a Crusader allegiance, but may simply have arisen in the context of these general patterns of circulation. A similar point can be made about the portrait of the donor woman, who might represent a European patron, or simply a member of the local community patterning her devotional practices after that of her European overlords.

Other images suggest that the great stylistic diversity that characterizes the monuments in the region applies also to the production of portable icons. This is particularly evident in the small corpus of extant icons from the era depicting St. George and the boy, none of which resemble one another. Perhaps the most famous example from this group is the icon in the British Museum, dated by Jaroslav Folda to the thirteenth century and attributed to a Frankish artist (Fig. 43).<sup>168</sup> The iconography of the panel painting is readily recognizable from the monuments already discussed, with a youthful St. George on horseback, riding to the left over a craggy landscape, a small boy held protectively at his side. Like the representation of St. George at Bahdeidat, the saint wears a billowing red cloak and pearls articulate the major contours of the armor. The simple tiara on the icon of St. Sergios with a donor appears here again on St. George, as

---

<sup>167</sup> Cutler, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Invisible Muslim and Christian Self-Fashioning in the Culture of Outremer," 258-259.

<sup>168</sup> Folda, "Icon with Saint George and the Young Boy of Mytilene," 395. For the initial publication on the icon, see Cormack and Mihalarias, "A Crusader Painting of St. George: *'maniera greca'* or *'lingua franca'*," 132-139.

does the red and blue color scheme for the cloak and tunic. The style of the painting represents a sharp departure from the polished, precise linearity of the St. Sergios icon, favoring modeled, rounded forms that suggest volumetric figures occupying space. The scrollwork of the frame has been transformed into an all-over motif, worked in a raised gesso that might ultimately refer to metal icon revetments, as Nancy Ševčenko suggested several decades ago.<sup>169</sup> More recently, Antony Cutler has produced parallels for the field of scrollwork in other Crusader objects (as well as the visual culture of the neighboring Muslim powers), while the rounded faces of the figures suggest to him Mongolian manuscripts.<sup>170</sup> Curiously, the image lacks the blessing hand of God and river with fish seen in the images, perhaps suggesting a slight remove from the local expressions of the scene.

Although this icon has typically been associated with other panels of military saints that align closely in terms of the handling of the faces and horses, it is worthwhile to consider the image in relation to another icon at Sinai (Fig. 68). Also representing St. George saving the boy, the icon has been omitted from all publications on Crusader art, likely due its poor state of preservation and simpler execution. Yet, it is evident that the panel painting belongs to the same visual culture as the “Mongolian” icon just discussed, and – even more so – that of the churches of Syria and Lebanon through iconography and the mix of cultural affinities as seen in the little Crusader symbol on the boot, the garb of the boy, the general color scheme. If anything, the linear style is heightened on this icon,

---

<sup>169</sup> Ševčenko, "Vita Icons and 'Decorated' Icons of the Komnenian Period," 67.

<sup>170</sup> Cutler, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Invisible Muslim and Christian Self-Fashioning in the Culture of Outremer," 271-272.

whose execution favors flat forms over volume, and lines rather than gradations of color to suggest garment folds.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the icons are best understood as the products of a society in which diversity of styles was not the exception. Despite the similarities in the representations of military saints in the churches considered, their icons appear in painted programs in which the construction of both individual and collective identities drew on a multiplicity of sources. For this reason, attempts to accommodate the monuments in which these paintings appear within categories that conflate ethnic, territorial, iconographic, and stylistic categories of analysis, privileging notions of essential identities, make them appear anomalous.<sup>171</sup> This observation might also be extended to the painted icons of military saints at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, which have generated decades of scholarly debate over the ethnic and religious affiliation of both their producers and consumers.<sup>172</sup> In the heterogeneous urban nodes that formed the frontier, neither “Syrian,” “Greek,” or “Crusader,” nor for that matter “Christian” or “Muslim” characteristics can be taken as predictive of ethnicity or religious affinity. The very fact that the icons cannot be easily attributed suggests that, in this instance, contemporary viewers did not regard style as a signifier of ethnicity.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> For a parallel in the early Christian era, see Jaś Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Antique Jewish Art and Early Christian Art," *Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003): esp. 114-119. For a parallel in medieval India, see Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter*, chapter 1.

<sup>172</sup> As Robert Nelson has discussed in relation to an icon of Christ. See Nelson, "An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," 201-202.

<sup>173</sup> In relation to a bronze bird from al-Andalus, Oleg Grabar has noted: "The object would have been made for a market in which cultural or ethnic allegiances were less significant than the evaluation of an object's quality, where taste and functions remained constant for many decades, if not for centuries." Oleg Grabar, "About a Bronze Bird," in *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. Thelma K. Thomas and Elizabeth Sears (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 124. See also Idem., "Different but Compatible Ends," *Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 396-399.

### **Coda: visual translations**

When viewed together, the panel-painted icons from Sinai and the wall paintings in the Levantine churches suggest decentralized production and overlapping spheres of influence. In the surprisingly interconnected world system of the thirteenth century, these spheres could extend far beyond the hinterlands of the Crusader states. Variations on the iconography in the Levant find close parallels in Coptic visual culture. As Annemarie Weyl Carr has argued, an equestrian saint at Moutoullas in Cyprus, which represents St. George slaying a dragon, is indebted to the visual culture of the Crusader mainland.<sup>174</sup> Likewise, connections to Egypt can be seen in a fourteenth-century icon that represents St. George and the boy in an cycle of military martyrs with specifically Coptic associations.<sup>175</sup> The movement of images may even have gone in an opposite direction; an unusual image of St. George slaying an emperor at Deir Hammatur in Lebanon, for instance, relates closely to images in Egyptian monastic churches.<sup>176</sup> It is difficult to say how far these visual networks extended, but representations of crowned equestrian warrior saints in Nubia suggest a remarkably interconnected world. But was iconographic meaning as stable as these types?

In the Levant, reasons for the visual ambiguities range from the borrowing of motifs to the drawing upon the pictorial strategies of an earlier era, and suggest a desire for emulation of other sacred spaces. There are rare indications that medieval audiences,

---

<sup>174</sup> Carr, "Iconography and Identity: Syrian Elements in the Art of Crusader Cyprus," 127-151. See also Doula Mouriki, "The Wall Paintings of the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas, Cyprus," in *Byzanz und der Westen*, ed. I. Hutter (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), 171-214.

<sup>175</sup> Zuzana Skálová and Gawdat Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley* (Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing Company, 2001), cat. no. 10, 184-186. For the date of the icon, see Bolman, "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions," 99.

<sup>176</sup> Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, 94-95, fig. 12.

too, found the iconography less stable than the discussion above might suggest. The iconography of St. Theodore slaying the dragon, for example, became St. George slaying the dragon in the European context, as evidenced from the coins designed for Roger of Antioch.<sup>177</sup> Further east, the iconography gained popularity in the state of the Seljuks and their successors, though not as a reference to the Christian saints, George or Theodore.<sup>178</sup> For the audiences of the Anatolian images, the form signified instead the heroic ancestors of Islam. The extent to which this visual idea took root is captured by an account in a twelfth-century cosmography titled *ʿAjāʿib al-makhlūqāt* (Wonders of Creation) by the Persian author Muḥammad Ṭūsī. Ṭūsī records the existence of a set of statues in Constantinople, describing them as figures on horseback slaying a dragon. Given the context of the sculptures, they almost certainly represented military saints. Yet, he drew upon his own set of tradition of heroic ancestors to identify them as the prophet Muḥammad and his companions.<sup>179</sup> That Ṭūsī should make this attribution in a thoroughly Christian setting is an indication of the extent to which previous frameworks for interpreting images were at play even in the cross-cultural viewing of images.<sup>180</sup>

Images were not blank slates on which viewers could project any interpretation they might desire, but still the heterogeneous nature of frontier societies allowed greater fluidity in meaning than traditional categories of art history tend to allow. The examples above serve as a *caveat*, reminding us that viewers interpreted images within pre-existing frameworks and associations. This meant that beholders from different religious and

---

<sup>177</sup> Metcalf, *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, 8, figs. 55-57.

<sup>178</sup> Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia," 155-156.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> For Christian parallels, see Barbara Zeitler, "Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Imagery in the Middle Ages," *The Art Bulletin* 76, no. 4 (1994): 680-694.



ethnic backgrounds might inhabit proximate spaces and venerate the same figures but maintain quite divergent conceptions. Such “misunderstandings” may well have been essential to sustaining tolerance in the uncomfortable face of religious pluralism. In the final analysis, the heterogeneous visual character of the military martyrs becomes a metonym for the cultural fluidity that raised anxieties and fostered the need for strategic misapprehension.

**Chapter 7**  
**The Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea:**  
**Monks, Military Martyrs, and Monastic Genealogies**

During the medieval period in Egypt, a wealth of imagery related to military saints appeared in the fortified monasteries of Egypt, giving visual form to the powerful defenders of a faithful community under siege. Configuring heroic military triumph in hybrid visual idioms, these icons do not simply represent military saints. They also register the attempt of embattled religious communities to understand their own position as Christians in an *oikumēne* increasingly occupied by Islam and other forms of Christianity as but a continuation of the warrior saints' struggles. As such, these images stand as a creative response to life in what David Abulafia has called a "mental frontier" – places where the traditional norms and certainties of Christianity are replaced by a different set of conditions and relationships.<sup>1</sup> In the monasteries of Egypt, nowhere is this development more evident than at the monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea.

The monastery of St. Antony lies far from Cairo, within the remote valley of the Wādī al-‘Arbah, in the vast plains of the Eastern Desert (Fig. 69). Built at the base of Mount Qulzim, it stands beneath the cave where the renowned Egyptian, St. Antony, retreated to the desert in the fourth century and founded the movement that would become a definitive feature of the late antique spiritual landscape: ascetic monasticism. Writing in the thirteenth century, the Christian geographer Abū l-Makārim expressed

---

<sup>1</sup> David Abulafia, "Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity, c. 1100-c. 1500," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. Nora Berend and David Abulafia (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 33.

wonder at the verdant gardens and “many monks” dwelling within its fortified walls, declaring: “There is nothing like it among the other monasteries inhabited by Egyptian monks.”<sup>2</sup> Today, the complex comprises modern and medieval buildings including a keep, a refectory, and a church. In the shadow of the defensive keep stands the Church of St. Antony, constructed on the architectural remains of the cells that housed the first community to settle at the site. The church is a sixth-century structure built of humble, local materials: limestone brick and tafl clay mortar.<sup>3</sup> Its austere façade belies the richness of the interior, which features domes, a palatial ceiling, and wall paintings (Fig. 70).<sup>4</sup> Recently conserved, the quality of the paintings testifies to the prosperity and significance that the institution enjoyed during the middle ages.

Standing out among the paintings of saints and biblical episodes commonly depicted in Coptic churches is a cycle of paintings in the *naos* that presents to the beholder a visual genealogy of Coptic monasticism.<sup>5</sup> Executed by the painter Theodore and his workshop in 1232/1233, the cycle begins with martyrs from the early church, those brave Christians who died to ensure the continuation and survival of the larger community. Of the martyrs represented, the majority belongs to the class of military saints, soldiers who served in the Roman army during their lives and became martyrs for

---

<sup>2</sup> Translated in Tim Vivian, "St. Antony the Great and the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, ca. A.D. 251 to 1232/1233," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Jones, "The Church of St. Antony: The Architecture," *Ibid.* (New Haven), 26.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth S. Bolman and William Lyster, "The Khurus Vault: An Eastern Mediterranean Synthesis," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 143.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Scetis at the Red Sea: Depictions of Monastic Genealogy in the Monastery of St. Antony," *Coptica* 3 (2004): 1-16; *Idem.*, "Scetis at the Red Sea: Depictions of Monastic Genealogy in the Monastery of St. Antony," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Wadi al-Natrun*, ed. Maged S. A. Mikhail and Mark Mousa (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 143-158. These draw upon her work in *Idem.*, ed. *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 37-76.

refusing to renounce Christianity (Fig. 71). Their location in the program signifies their status, as both temporal and spiritual predecessors of those whose images follow: the desert fathers of late antique Egypt (Fig. 72). Emphasizing the conceptual link between monks and warriors, the cycle dramatically envisions monasticism as an enterprise in which asceticism is intimately bound to militant expressions of piety. In her work on the monument, Elizabeth Bolman has discussed the history of the program, its iconography, and its style, which incorporates elements from Islamic art but remains largely within the paradigms of traditional Coptic visual culture. In this chapter, I will focus on just one iconographic type, which I believe can shed light on the conceptual sources for the images and their significance to the program as a whole. By examining images of the military martyrs, this chapter will offer insight into the specific ways in which the past was construed, constructed, and integrated into the on-going present at the Monastery of St. Antony.

Theodore and his workshop painted the program during a dynamic period of cultural production, in which artists and artisans drew upon multiple sources of invention including Islamic, Byzantine, and Levantine material culture to produce new artistic forms and practices.<sup>6</sup> The Coptic mediation of these various forms in St. Antony, as elsewhere, offers visual testimony to the complex cultural negotiations that characterized the experience of the Coptic Christians in medieval Egypt. The approach to representing

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the essays in Lucy-Anne Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam: Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 2 vols. (London: Pindar Press, 1998). See also Thelma K. Thomas, "Christians in the Islamic East," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: Abrams, 1997), 364-372; Idem., "The Arts of Christian Communities in the Medieval Middle East," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 414-426.

the military martyrs, in particular, provides a prism through which to consider how visual culture could be used to understand and negotiate processes of dislocation and relocation.

### **Inscribing the monastic past: the genealogy**

Constructed of individual icons arranged in a horizontal register, the monastic genealogy lines the walls of the main church, where it forms an integral component of the mural program commissioned by the monastic community in 1232/1233. Four donor inscriptions list these patrons, some thirty-three individuals (monks, priests, and other clerics) who were likely members of the monastic community at St. Antony's.<sup>7</sup> The knowledge of Christian symbolism, monastic history, and theology that underlie the program is suggestive of close collaboration between painters and patrons.<sup>8</sup> As Elizabeth Bolman has demonstrated, this collaboration set the stage for the enunciation of a Coptic, monastic self: the program favors Coptic saints, utilizes a traditional Coptic visual vocabulary, and identifies saints with Coptic inscriptions, a language that had ceased to be spoken long before the thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup> That the community should create a genealogy that sought to conserve the traditional forms and figures associated with Coptic Christianity suggests complex engagements with the past and conceptualizations of community.

The location of the program, within the *naos* of the main church, places the images at the center of communal space within the monastery and suggests that it was

---

<sup>7</sup> For the inscriptions in Coptic and their translations, see Birger A. Pearson, "The Coptic Inscriptions in the Church of St. Antony," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 227-228, 230, 233, 235.

<sup>8</sup> Because some of the names are missing, it is possible that the number was closer to forty. Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> The planned nature of the program, which is evident through its pictorial sophistication, is further suggested by the presence of fluidly scrawled words on the plaster above some of the painting, which indicate the subject intended for each panel. See *Ibid.*, 54.

intended for the consumption of a broad audience. In the Monastery of St. Antony, as elsewhere in Egypt, the church formed both the architectural center of the monastery and, by virtue of its spiritual functions, the metaphoric center of the community.<sup>10</sup> Although the church provided an idealized symbol of a unified community for Coptic Christians, the built structure nevertheless utilized spatial arrangement and a series of barriers to replicate the spiritual hierarchies that characterized relationships between the laity and monastic clergy outside the celebration of the liturgy. The main church, which likely dates to the sixth century, takes the form of the modified basilica typical of Egyptian churches and has three main spatial components: *naos*, *khurus*, and sanctuary.<sup>11</sup> In the church of St. Antony, the *naos* is divided into eastern and western halves by an archway and a low partition. This area, which served as the designated space for members of the lay community, ended at the eastern end of the church with the *khurus*. The *khurus* is an architectural component specific to Egyptian churches that appeared ca. 700, a kind of choir most likely intended to provide an additional barrier of protection between the *naos* and the sanctuary where priests performed the sacred mysteries. It is thought that this narrow space accommodated members of the monastic clergy who were not participating in the liturgy. At the easternmost end of the church, succeeding the *khurus* is the sanctuary, called the *haykal* in Egypt and reserved for celebrants of the liturgy.<sup>12</sup> Not unlike the situation in Byzantium, churches in medieval Egypt witnessed the erection of

---

<sup>10</sup> This symbolism developed in a monastic context during late antiquity. See Caroline T. Schroeder, "A Suitable Abode for Christ: The Church Building as Symbol of Ascetic Renunciation in Early Monasticism," *Church History* 73, no. 3 (2004): 472-520.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth S. Bolman, ed. *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), fig. 21. There is also a side chapel.

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of the *khurus* and sanctuary, as well as their theological symbolism, see Gertrud J. M. Van Loon, *The Gate of Heaven: Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Khurus of Coptic Churches* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1999), 109-111.

visual barriers, typically wooden screens called *hijāb*.<sup>13</sup> These restricted visual access to both the *khurus* and the sanctuary, resulting in a greater emphasis on the icons of saintly figures in the *naos*, which provided the laity with their primary source of visual access to the divine during the liturgy. Both the history of public access to this space and the increasing importance of the icons to Coptic spirituality are captured in the accumulation of medieval graffiti scrawled beneath the paintings, left by the countless Christians who traveled to the monastery.<sup>14</sup>

The genealogy of saints in the church at St. Antony's is constructed as a series of monumental icons arranged in a register that frames the central communal space of the *naos* and provides its primary visual and spiritual focus. The program comprises two cycles arranged in relation to the divisions of the church, utilizing architectural space to create temporal structure. The first is a cycle of martyrs, situated in the western section of the *naos*, which is succeeded by a cycle of monastic saints in the eastern end. Spatial arrangement and content both suggest a progression in time, from the foundational moments of Christianity to the end of the late antique period. The majority of martyrs are depicted as equestrians since they are drawn from the ranks of the military saints, who served in the Roman army prior to their martyrdom. No fewer than nine military martyrs are represented: Theodore the Anatolian, Claudius of Antioch, Victor, Menas, Theodore

---

<sup>13</sup> For the most recent discussion of the *khurus* and its development in Egypt, see Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions," in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006), 73-106. For the parallel development in Byzantium, see Sharon E.J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle: College Art Association and University of Washington Press, 1999), 6-14.

<sup>14</sup> Although the majority of inscriptions record the prayers and aspirations of Egyptian Christians, there are inscriptions in Latin, Syriac, and Ge'ez, the language of medieval Ethiopia. For a selection of these, along with their translation, see Sidney H. Griffith, "The Handwriting on the Wall: Graffiti in the Church of St. Antony," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 185-194.

Stratelates, Sissinius, John of Heraclea (?), George of Cappadocia, and Phoebammon of Ausim. The parade of equestrian saints ends at the south wall, where it adjoins a cycle of four standing figures, depicted in monastic or priestly garb and representing within a painted arcade. Though visually distinct from the preceding saints, these figures also represented martyrs, all drawn from Egypt and associated with monasticism. They provide a conceptual link to the figures that follow: a series of nineteen monks depicted as standing figures under a continuous arcade, that culminates in a representation of St. Antony, the titular saint of the monastery.<sup>15</sup> Like the martyrs depicted on the eastern end of the church, these monks belong almost exclusively to the Egyptian canon. The juxtaposition of the two cycles forms a general progression from the earliest years of Christianity to the end of late antiquity, positioning the famous desert fathers as the spiritual successors to the early Christian martyrs. Depicting saints drawn solely from the late Antique period, the lineage serves to link the present community to an early Christian, pre-Islamic past, one that had its genesis in the sufferings of the martyrs.

By virtue of their number, size, and dynamic poses, the soldier saints dominate the cycle of martyrs and critically inflect its meanings. Like most martyrs venerated in the Coptic Church, the warrior saints depicted here are closely connected, bound together by a shared profession in life and common form of death: each served as a soldier in the Roman army, suffered during the Great Persecutions of the third century, and spilled their blood on Egyptian soil, gaining an instantaneous place in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> For the figures depicted and their arrangement, see Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 48-53, fig. 21.

<sup>16</sup> On the unique structuring of Coptic martyr cycles, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," *Dumbarton*



Their lives thus played out a paradox central to Christianity: the triumph of the weak over their persecutors through submission to torture and death. Their deaths modeled on the sacrifice of Christ himself, the martyrs became models of conduct in their own right and powerful symbols of Christian victory. In the program at St. Antony, visual strategies were deployed to present an equivalent image of their close relationship to one another. The general format of their painted icons is similar, creating a visual cohesion among the individual martyrs that serves to emphasize their nature as saintly types. Each saint appears within a square panel divided into three registers that evoke a landscape; each rides a horse held by a stable boy, and each receives a crown from a hand that extends from the upper register, implying a reward from on high. The panels all feature a large iconic representation of the saint, combined with narrative details and vignettes that allude to events in the lives of the saints or posthumous miracles. Most include a small building in the lowest register that represents the saint's shrine. The cycle combines three variations on the iconography of an equestrian saint: the saint slaying a dragon (Theodore, Sissinius, Theodore the Anatolian), the saint slaying a heretic (George, Claudius, John of Heraclea (?), Phoebammon), and the saint holding the martyr's cross (Menas and Victor). Two additional icons in the *khurus*, which represent St. Mercurios and St. George, augment the number of military martyrs and further the theme of Christian triumph.

In the cycle of the military saints, it is not simply the figures selected for depiction that recall the Coptic past, but also the mode of representation, inscriptions, and pictorial

---

*Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 75. Her work draws upon the insightful observations of Willy Clarysse, "The Coptic Martyr Cult," in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans*, ed. Louis Reekmans, Mathjis Lamberigts, and Peter van Deun (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 391-392.

forms. Evidence that these martyrs had a strong regional association, a claim made by encomiasts and biographers in the saints' passions and miracles, is further manifest through the near-exclusive use of Coptic inscriptions.<sup>17</sup> Serving a range of related functions, the inscriptions identify figures, record the divine speech of God, and cite apt quotations from the texts of the church fathers. In the image of St. Theodore the General, for example, Coptic texts in white painted letters record the names of the children bound to the tree beneath the martyr's horse (Figs. 29, 73). An inscription in the half-circle at the upper right corner of the image presents the address of God to Theodore, a citation of the words quoted in his passion, themselves the material traces of an ephemeral divine speech act (Fig. 74). Combining words with monograms and *nomina sacra*, the inscriptions that surround the halo of the saint identify him as "Theodore the General, Martyr of Jesus Christ."<sup>18</sup> Derived from late antique manuscript conventions, *nomina sacra* are abbreviations of divine names and semiotically charged holy words that allude to the effective nature of divine speech.<sup>19</sup> As Robert S. Nelson has demonstrated, the *nomina sacra* deployed in Christian icons constituted more than simple referential, denotative language, referring both to the persons indicated and, more importantly, to their spiritual significance.<sup>20</sup> In the icons at St. Antony's, the use of Coptic for *nomina sacra* simultaneously signifies the sanctity of the saints depicted and, by synecdochic

---

<sup>17</sup> On the local character of the Egyptian cult of saints, see Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 78; Clarysse, "The Coptic Martyr Cult," 382. The exception to Coptic appears in the representation of Barsuma, the Syrian father of monasticism, who holds a scroll with a non-standard Syriac inscription.

<sup>18</sup> For the Coptic inscriptions that relate to the Theodore painting, see Pearson, "The Coptic Inscriptions in the Church of St. Antony," 225.

<sup>19</sup> Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of power: ritual practices in late antiquity* (University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 23-24; Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 26-48.

<sup>20</sup> Robert S. Nelson, "Image and Inscription: Pleas for Salvation in Spaces of Devotion," in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), 101.

extension, claims the language as a privileged vehicle for access to Christian truths and sanctity.

Painted in a careful hand that ensures their legibility, the inscriptions beside other figures ostensibly perform an indicative task, naming the figures depicted; yet it is likely that this was not their sole function, or even their primary one. By the time Theodore and his team executed the wall painting program, the church's flock was made up almost exclusively of Arabic speakers, and the content of the inscription would have eluded all but the most erudite of viewers.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the letters were recognizable as the textual traces of the language spoken by Egyptians before the conquest and heard in the Coptic liturgy until the twelfth century. As much graphic symbol as semantic sign, the texts seen here circumscribe the saints, alluding to a common ethnic and religious origin that had its roots in the pre-Islamic era.

In visualizing a link between the military martyrs and a Christian Egyptian past, Coptic inscriptions are reinforced by the motif of the equestrian saint and its pictorial form, which offer to beholders a re-rendering of traditional models.<sup>22</sup> A ninth-century frontispiece in a Coptic collection of saints' lives in New York, which depicts Theodore the Anatolian, suggests that the thirteenth-century painters took care in creating

---

<sup>21</sup> According to Rubenson, Coptic had ceased to be a living language by the thirteenth century and translation work was restricted to a limited number of scholars and monks. Samuel Rubenson, "Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt," *Medieval Encounters* 2, no. 1 (1996): 11. For a general overview of the process of Arabization, see Terry G. Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, ed. C. F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 185-186.

<sup>22</sup> For a more extended discussion of the ways in which the program echoes earlier representations, see Elizabeth S. Bolman, "Theodore's Program in Context: Egypt and the Mediterranean Region," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 92-95.

representations that would evoke earlier works (Fig. 31).<sup>23</sup> Although the manuscript illumination represents an abbreviated and less lavish rendering than the saints on the walls at St. Antony's, the images deploy an identical format and similar pictorial motifs, as well as a flat, linear style that privileges form and pattern over a naturalizing idiom. Even conventions for indicating status through spatial ordering and scale are preserved; divine beings, the saints tower over the diminutive figures of mortals, who occupy the lowest register of each image, inhabiting the earthly realm.

Despite an evident desire to adhere to earlier models, a number of features in the wall painting suggest that the allusion to a model in this case is less replication than an alteration. While the manuscript image of Theodore the Anatolian bears the garb of a Roman soldier, the mural of Theodore Stratelates wears a mélange of Byzantine and Arab armor, his shield bears an Arabic inscription, and he carries a composite bow, the quintessential Turkish weapon.<sup>24</sup> By the thirteenth century, Coptic artists regularly translated features from contemporary life into representations of military saints, and so the depiction of St. Theodore continues a trend of rendering older models in terms of the distinctive formal treatment of contemporary Coptic art, itself a heterogeneous tradition that evolved in tandem with Fatimid artistic trends.<sup>25</sup> The mixed armor may have inflected the generalized sense of the motif; nevertheless, the image remained for the

---

<sup>23</sup> Leo Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Album of Photographic Plates*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), plate 19.

<sup>24</sup> William Lyster, "Reflections of the Temporal World," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 111-113.

<sup>25</sup> The relationship between Coptic and Islamic art is difficult to define, since both were likely produced by the same workshops. To further complicate matters, Coptic and Byzantine art have both been cited as sources for Islamic art. Oleg Grabar, "Imperial and Urban Art in Islam: The Subject Matter of Fatimid Art" (paper presented at the Colloque International sur l'Histoire du Caire, Cairo, 27 Mars - 5 Avril, 1969), 173-174.

viewer a symbol of Christian victory. In this mode of translation, the graphic elements work to recast in a current idiom an earlier original whose semantic units of meaning are preserved along with their paradigmatic structural order. Conservatism in pictorial form and language fosters the impression of an archaizing style, itself a strategy for absorbing present artistic and religious practices into those of the pre-Islamic past, inscribing the monument as a Coptic institution.<sup>26</sup>

### **Sectarian disputes, reuse, and competing claims of authority**

The community at the Monastery of St. Antony commissioned the 1232/1233 wall painting program at a critical moment of re-definition in the history of the institution. Although the paintings align it with the Coptic church, St. Antony had been under the authority of the Syrian Monastery in the Wādī al-Natrūn for centuries.<sup>27</sup> Two sources suggest that the Monastery of St. Antony and the near-by Monastery of St. Paul were in Syrian hands. No histories record its transfer from one sect to the other, but a scribal note in a thirteenth-century Syriac manuscript originally from the Syrian Monastery in the Wādī al-Natrūn alludes to the event that permanently altered the status quo. The note, which appears in a thirteenth-century Syriac manuscript from the library of the Monastery of the Syrians in the Wādī al-Natrūn, states that Abbot Constantine I, “fed up” with the insults of wicked monks fled the Monastery of the Syrians, went to St. Antony’s, and took the book of Mar Isaac with him, intending to return it; however he fell sick at the “Monastery of the glorious Mar Antonius and died there.” The note concludes: “Let the Syrian brethren who come after us to this monastery know that in the

---

<sup>26</sup> For parallels in the Islamic realm, see Finbarr Barry Flood, "Pillars, Palimpsests, and Princely Practices: Translating the Past in Sultanate Delhi," *Res* 43 (2003): 95-116.

<sup>27</sup> Vivian, "St. Antony the Great and the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, ca. A.D. 251 to 1232/1233," 14-15.

convent of Abba Paulus, beside the Monastery of Mar Antonius, which belonged to the Syrians like this [one], there are many Syriac books still. But...the Syrians were driven thence: the Egyptians took it.”<sup>28</sup> A marginal note in another thirteenth-century manuscript complains that the Syrians, legitimate owners of St. Paul’s, have just been dispossessed by the Copts. The Syrian monk describes the takeover of the monasteries by the Copts, the resultant dislocation of his sect, and the loss of cultural relics such as manuscripts. The monk does not mention the physical structure of the monastery, yet its relinquishment could only have been cause for greater mourning, for the institution stood on the very site where St. Antony retreated to the desert, performed superhuman feats of asceticism, and battled the demons of Satan to become the father of monasticism.

Medieval perception of the monastery revolved around the history of the institution and its extraordinary founder. The thirteenth-century geographical text *The History of the Monasteries and Churches of Egypt* preserves a compilation of the narratives that accumulated around the monastery over time, constituting a textual memorial to the history of its site and, by extension, the community that lived within its walls.

It was in the Egyptian desert that Anba Andunah, the Egyptian, appeared. He was also named Antonios, the Star of the Desert and Father of Monks. He was the first monk who lived in the desert; and monks gathered to him. He began the building of monasteries and the assembling of monks in them...This great saint, Antony, was the first monk who clothed himself in wool, and exhibited the monastic habit, and left the world and dwelt in the deserts.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 14. This text was first discussed in H.G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdi 'n Natrîn*, Part II (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932), 389-390. Vivian notes that Evelyn-White provides incorrect page numbers for the manuscript, which can be found in William Wright, *Catalogue of the Syrian Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired Since 1838* (London: British Museum Press, 1870-1872), no. 696, 580.

<sup>29</sup> B. T. A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries by Abu Salih the Armenian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 160-161.

Drawing attention to monastic garb, architectural structures and the practice of desert dwelling, the brief account enumerates characteristic features of the monastic life (both past and present), then locates their genesis “upon the holy mountain.” Assembled from earlier texts, the entry was written by the Christian scholar Abū l-Makārim during a time when the monastery was still in the hands of Syrian monks, whose very presence within the monastery becomes for him a testimony to the continuation of the first community assembled by the renowned Egyptian ascetic.<sup>30</sup> By virtue of its location, the monastery was in possession of a sacred history with an indexical relationship to monastic origins; as such, it held enormous potential to shape the identity of those who lived within its walls and to confer legitimacy upon them.<sup>31</sup> In annexing the monastery, the Coptic community synecdochically appropriated the sacred and distinguished past to which the ancient structures of the monastery bore witness.

In light of these sectarian politics, it seems likely that the Coptic monks who commissioned the program sought to bolster their claims of authority over the site, establishing their legitimacy through a visual genealogy that defined them as the rightful heirs to the monastic past that began with St. Antony. The attempt to foster a sense of legitimacy by forging an association with a distinguished religious lineage, and with the

---

<sup>30</sup> The authorship of the *History of the Monasteries and Churches of Egypt* has been traditionally, although erroneously, attributed to the Armenian, Abu al-Salih. Both the reattribution of the work and the structure of the text as a compilation have received their most in-depth treatment by Johannes van den Heijer. Johannes den Heijer, "The Composition of the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighboring Countries. Some Preliminary Remarks," in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies Washington 12-15 August 1992*, ed. D. Johnson (Rome: CIM, 1993), 209-219.

<sup>31</sup> On constructions of time, see Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (Oxford: Berg, 1992). I am also drawing upon Annette B. Weiner's insightful work on royal regalia and insignia as inalienable wealth. See Annette B. Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist* 12, no. 2 (1985): 210-227. For a discussion of these concepts in relation to Islamic monuments (which has inspired my own approach), see Flood, "Pillars, Palimpsests, and Princely Practices: Translating the Past in Sultanate Delhi," 95-116.

glories of a real or imagined past, had been a common concern for the Coptic church since Egypt came under Arab rule. When ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ conquered Egypt on behalf of the caliph ‘Umar in 642, the Christian population was not a united community, but a fragmented entity, fractured by years of bitter disputes over doctrinal differences. Comprised of multiple competing and complimentary ethnic and religious communities, Christians established dynamic alliances primarily with either the Chalcedonian Greek church or the Egyptian *miaphysite* church in response to shifting historical, cultural, and political conditions. Although the Chalcedonian church had been appointed by the Byzantine state, the new Muslim rulers did not distinguish between their Christian subjects, treating all the *ahl al-dhimma* (non-Muslim protected peoples) with an evenhanded indifference that resulted in the increase of sectarian disputes.<sup>32</sup> As ecclesiastics took a leading role in negotiating external politics and settling internal disputes, the prestige and authority of the *miaphysite* church increased, a trend aided by the legal status of *dhimma*.<sup>33</sup> Like their Muslim neighbors, non-Muslim “People of the Book” were expected to abide by the laws of their scripture, and so the church assumed a fundamental role in defining codes of conduct.<sup>34</sup>

As the primary text-producing institutions in the post-Conquest era, monasteries became central to the preservation and dissemination of Christian literature,<sup>35</sup> activities that gave monks enormous influence in shaping the intellectual trajectory of the church.

---

<sup>32</sup> Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," 186-187.

<sup>33</sup> Ewa Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 331-349.

<sup>34</sup> Néophyte Edelby, "The Legislative Autonomy of Christians in the Islamic World," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 37-82; S. D. Goitein, "Minority Selfrule and Government Control in Islam," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 159-174.

<sup>35</sup> Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," 190-191.



According to Arietta Papaconstantinou, monastic writers devoted much of their effort to the task of establishing a place for their community within the new world order. At odds with Byzantium over theological disputes since the Council of Chalcedon in 451, they sought to cut ties with the Greek Orthodox church and its *diophysite* Christological doctrine, which held that Christ was both human and divine, once and for all. To this end, Coptic ecclesiastics occupied themselves with the construction of a new religious history and identity, one that would be entirely independent and structured solidly around the Monophysite church and its institutions.<sup>36</sup> To facilitate this process, they adopted Coptic to address what was then still a largely bilingual Greek-Coptic population, performing a maneuver that simultaneously defined the Byzantines as “foreign” and invested Coptic with a religio-ethnic association.<sup>37</sup> By the early eleventh century, monastic scriptoria had adopted a new system for reckoning time, “the Era of the Martyrs,” which dated all events from the year 245 in commemoration of the Great Persecution.<sup>38</sup> Likely appropriated from Nubia, the new system was quickly adopted at local monasteries across Egypt. This ensured its dissemination to the larger community, since monastic scribes were responsible for drawing up documents and producing religious texts for the needs of the larger Christian community.<sup>39</sup>

For the Copts, as for their Muslim and Christian neighbors, history writing became a primary tool for explaining and interpreting the tumultuous events of the recent

---

<sup>36</sup> Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 81-82.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*: 85.

<sup>38</sup> Roger S. Bagnall and Klaas A. Worp, "The Era of Diocletian and of the Martyrs," in *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004), 63-87; Leslie S. B. MacCoull and Klaas A. Worp, "The Era of the Martyrs," in *Miscellanea papyrologica: in occasione del bicentenario dell'edizione della Charta Borgiana*, ed. Maria Capasso, Gabriella Messeri Savorelli, and Rosario Pintaudi, *Papyrologica Florentina* (Florence: Edizioni Gonelli, 1990), 375-408.

<sup>39</sup> Bagnall and Worp, "The Era of Diocletian and of the Martyrs," 67-68.

past.<sup>40</sup> While Muslim historiography represented an expansionist project, its aim to absorb new converts and define the religious in relation to a generalized Christian *oikumēne*.<sup>41</sup> Coptic theologians and historians dedicated themselves to the tasks of retention and consolidation. Accomplishing this objective was dependent upon establishing the legitimacy of the Monophysite church against the Chalcedonian church,<sup>42</sup> making it necessary for the Copts to break all ties with the church in Constantinople and display institutional continuity with the church of the past.<sup>43</sup> This ideological objective was met through a simple expedient: beginning texts such as *The History of the Coptic Church* with the first seven (or eight) chapters of the *Ecclesiastical History* composed by Eusebius, an account of the first three centuries of Christian history.<sup>44</sup> The selection of Eusebius' history over that of other early church historians held crucial consequences for the formulation of a specifically Coptic self, for Eusebius built his history around successive episodes of pagan persecution, foregrounding the role of martyrdom in

---

<sup>40</sup> Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 68-69. Thomas Sizgorich has made much the same point in relation to the early Muslim community. See Thomas Sizgorich, "Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity," *Past and Present* 185 (2004): 9.

<sup>41</sup> In the ninth and tenth centuries, Muslim historians bent to the task of creating narratives that would establish the legitimacy of their religion by defending the status of Muhammad as a prophet, while providing accounts of the heroes and exemplars needed to initiate new Muslims into a specifically Islamic past. Robert Hoyland, "Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography in the First Abbasid Century: An Inquiry into Inter-Cultural Traffic," *Aram* 3 (1991): 211-233. Sizgorich, "Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity," 9-42.

<sup>42</sup> This preoccupation with discrediting Byzantines as heretics is evident in both historiography and hagiography of the ninth and tenth centuries. See, for example, the "Encomium on Apa Claudius" attributed to Severus of Antioch. J. Drescher, "An Encomium Attributed to Severus of Antioch," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 10 (1944): 43-68.

<sup>43</sup> Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 79.

<sup>44</sup> On the structure of *The History of the Coptic Church*, see Tito Orlandi, "The Coptic Ecclesiastical History: A Survey," in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature, and Social Context*, ed. James E. Goehring and Janet A. Timbie (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 3-24.

shaping Christian identity.<sup>45</sup> Defining themselves primarily as the authentic heir to the late antique church of the martyrs, members of the *miaphysite* church wrest the legacy of the persecuted early church from what they perceived as their main rival, Byzantium. Based on the figure of the martyr, a powerful symbol of regeneration from death, they created a new identity for the *dhimmī* Christians, rooting it in the common memory of ethnic and religious suffering.

In painting a genealogical history that extended back to the heroic age of the martyrs, the monastic community replicated a gesture first performed in the post-conquest period, transforming what had been primarily a literary endeavor into a visual strategy. In the process, they both altered the confessional affiliation of the monastery and selectively reworked elements of their own monastic past. Because the martyrs stood at the heart of Coptic self-definition, beginning the genealogy with images of renowned early saints was both logical and strategic in its revival of motifs that would resonate with viewers. Yet, most of the martyrs represented in the cycle were not indigenous to Egypt. St. Theodore Stratelates and St. George of Cappadocia, in particular, bore strong associations with Byzantium, the realm that housed their shrines and first preserved their memories in Greek accounts of their lives.<sup>46</sup> In fact, lives of the saints received decidedly limited circulation in Egypt prior to the Islamic conquest, their popularity eclipsed by texts commemorating biblical figures. It was not until the seventh and eighth centuries

---

<sup>45</sup> Orlandi has suggested that Eusebius' history was selected for its frequent nods to the Patriarch in Alexandria. However, it seems likely that it was the ideological content of the history that appealed to Coptic ecclesiastics. *Ibid.*, 13. For a more extensive discussion of the rhetorical aims of Eusebius' text, see Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of the Greek traditions, see Christopher Walters, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), 44-66 and 109-145; Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (New York: Arno, 1909; reprint, 1975), 10-42 and 127-201, 43-75.

that hagiographical writing about post-biblical saints began in earnest, just as the Egyptian Monophysite church adopted the martyrs as their spiritual predecessors.<sup>47</sup>

In the matter of identifying heroic ancestors, sectarian boundaries proved remarkably flexible. Not limiting themselves to the documentation of their own martyrs, post-Conquest hagiographers appropriated famous “foreign” saints and doggedly set about the task of demonstrating their indigenous character. Monastic scribes translated their lives into Coptic, set the action within the Egyptian landscape, and supplied them with fictitious Egyptian origins, or at least final resting places.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Coptic hagiographers recorded the birthplace of Theodore the Stratelates as Shotep, a village in Upper Egypt, while the relics of George the Cappadocian were taken to the Banaha oasis, and the body of St. Mercurios translated to a village in Upper Egypt, inscribing the saints within the Egyptian landscape. When Theodore and his patrons selected these saints and represented them according to the distinct formal treatments of Coptic art, they reified the translations of these predecessors, and thus positioned themselves within a long line of hagiographical activity aimed at transforming a whole literary and historical tradition – one that had been common to Christians across the east – into what Papaconstantinou has called a “local story,” by presenting everything as being Egyptian.<sup>49</sup>

By the thirteenth century, these localized saints would have appeared quite naturally in a Coptic church; yet the way the program envisions warrior saints as the privileged ancestors of late antique monks constitutes a subtle re-formulation of each

---

<sup>47</sup> This link was first proposed by Clarysse and then elaborated upon by Papaconstantinou. See Clarysse, "The Coptic Martyr Cult," 394-395; Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 79.

<sup>48</sup> Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," 74-81.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*: 78.

figure as an exemplar. Models of conduct for a diverse flock, the martyrs venerated in the Coptic church came from all walks of life: bishops, virgins, doctors, monks, and soldiers.<sup>50</sup> While differentiated by profession, they nevertheless followed the same path to holiness: persecution, described in Coptic martyrdoms as escalating cycles of debilitating torture and revitalization that end, finally, in defiant death.<sup>51</sup> Regarding the monk as a successor to this inclusive set of martyrs was, already, a metaphorical extension of the term, since ascetics could not, of course, conform precisely to the classic model of pagan persecution and resistance. In redefining the terms of martyrdom, this patristic commonplace called upon Christians to forget the contributions of pre-monastic ascetic movements and to cast a negligent eye on strict chronology, for Roman persecution continued to make martyrs well into the fifth century, some two hundred years after the ascetic movement took hold in the late antique world.

When early patristic and monastic writers invoked the martyr as a metaphor for the monk, they were acting in recognition of overlapping practices and discourses within asceticism and martyrdom, which intersected at numerous points. Late antique Christians understood martyrdom as a form of sacrifice, one that demanded victims of special purity, whose destiny was often marked by their ascetic discipline. In the *Passion of St. George* attributed to Abba Theodotus of Ancyra, for example, the bishop begins his account by establishing the martyr's credentials: a "pure heart," "great zeal for God," and

---

<sup>50</sup> For an in-depth study of the martyrs venerated in the Coptic Church, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, *Le Culte des Saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides: L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001). See also Idem., "The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World?" in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: University of Harvard, 2007), 350-367.

<sup>51</sup> A particularly vivid example is provided by the corpus of Coptic martyrdoms of St. George. See Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts*. (London: D. Nutt, 1888); Idem., *George of Lydda: the Patron Saint of England* (London: Luzac & Co., 1930).

“perfect faith.”<sup>52</sup> These marks of sanctity are demonstrated later in the account, when George sings psalms throughout the night in prison and fasts in preparation for torture, all acts of piety that would become hallmarks of ascetic practice. The link is stated explicitly by Abba Theodotus, when he addresses the saint with customary rhetorical flourish: “You are more exalted than the righteous by reason of your patient endurance of hungering and thirsting and imprisonment, and of the tortures which have been inflicted on your body day and night for seven years and especially by reason of the purity of your body.”<sup>53</sup>

In ascetic discourse, the monk, too, could become a pure sacrifice through self-discipline and renunciation, directing the zeal of the martyrs towards asceticism in the absence of overt persecution. Thus, in drawing a parallel between the trials of the martyrs and ascetic practice, the biographer of Pachomios was referring to a rigorous form of asceticism that involved mortification, based upon the notion that self-inflicted violence against the body could serve as a substitute for the violence that the martyrs had endured. In *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, the monk Abba Macarius asks Abba Zacharias “...what is the work of a monk?” Abba Zacharias replies: “Father, in my opinion, he is a monk who does violence to himself in everything.”<sup>54</sup> Recorded in a Late Antique text that served as an instructional guide for monks, Abba Zacharias implicitly reified the concept of sanctity enshrined in martyrdoms and elevated the monastic life by defining it on those terms.

---

<sup>52</sup> Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts.*, 275.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>54</sup> *Apothegmata Patrum Zacharias* 1. Translated in Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 67.

The words of Abba Zacharias work to transfer the attributes of the afflicted martyr onto the scarred body of the monk, emphasizing shared practice to create a vivid link between the two types of saints. Although this motif persisted in monastic texts, the painters of the military saints at St. Antony's do not seem to draw directly upon this tradition, suggesting that the initial Coptic translation of saints was merely a point of departure for later refashioning. In relation to a rather different corpus of saints' images, the art historian Cynthia Hahn has drawn attention to the unstable nature of the representations and metaphorical meanings. Because saints possessed the ability to generate new narratives and because further strata of meaning could accrue, their representations (whether literary or artistic) provide "an almost archaeological layering of successive 'receptions' of sanctity."<sup>55</sup>

By associating early martyrs and later monastic saints, the program presents a version of history appeals to the regenerative symbol adopted by the Coptic church, but ultimately departs from the literary and historical prototypes of late antique and early medieval narratives. On the face of it, by glossing the monks as martyrs at St. Antony's, the collective subjects of early Christianity (their sense of group identity shaped by a shared experience of political persecution) were replaced by a smaller group of religious elites with decidedly sectarian loyalties and dogmatic leanings, who served as the living repository of Coptic religious traditions. Yet, in substituting military martyrs for the larger and more inclusive corpus, the program disregards the established, conventional paradox of regeneration in death in favor a new one: the victim become militant

---

<sup>55</sup> Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth Through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 5.

aggressor. The consequences of this substitution will become clear when we turn our attention to the representation of St. Mercurios.

### **St. Mercurios: militant piety, asceticism, and the monastic self**

The representation of St. Mercurios does not belong to the genealogy of military martyrs and monks depicted in the *naos* (Fig. 75). Instead, the popular saint is painted in the *khurus*. Thirteenth-century theologians interpreted this space as a symbol of Noah's ark, since both the church and the ark could be considered ships that convey the faithful to salvation.<sup>56</sup> Immediately preceding the *hijāb* (iconostasis) and restricted to members of the monastic community, the *khurus* served as a further partition between the altar and the congregation in the *naos*.<sup>57</sup> Fittingly, the cycle of paintings in the *khurus* represents Old Testament scenes with salvific themes, visually enunciating the symbolic meaning attributed to the architectural space.<sup>58</sup> On opposite walls just before the *hijāb* (iconostasis), an image of St. George stands as a complement and an ally to St. Mercurios, so that icons of the saints regarded in Coptic tradition as the heavenly army's two greatest generals flank the *haykal* (sanctuary) as spiritual defenders (Fig. 76). The prophylactic nature of the images – showing saints in poses of heroic triumph – extends the protective function of the architectural space into the visual realm.<sup>59</sup> A formal feature, the depiction of figures stepping outside the icon frame, reminds viewers of the saints' ability to reach beyond the confines of the icon in protecting the sacred spaces of

---

<sup>56</sup> For an analysis of the sources related to the symbolism of the *khurus*, see Van Loon, *The Gate of Heaven: Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Khurus of Coptic Churches*, 109-124.

<sup>57</sup> Bolman, "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions," 90.

<sup>58</sup> For an analysis of the *khurus* program, see Idem., "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233," 57-62.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of icons of equestrian saints (including this one) as apotropaic images, see Bas Snelders and Adeline Jeudy, "Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia," *Eastern Christian Art* 3 (2006): 103-140.



Christianity, an ability virtually enshrined in the miracle accounts that were appended to saint's passions and found their way into medieval histories.<sup>60</sup>

St. Mercurios was a late arrival to the Egyptian cult of saints, translated from Byzantium in the eighth century, some hundred years after the establishment of Arab rule.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the Coptic Christians embraced his cult and, with surprising rapidity, he assumed a position among the most venerated saints in Egypt, inspiring an elaborate literary mythology and visual tradition unparalleled in Byzantium.<sup>62</sup> Like the icons in the *naos*, the image of the saint performs a visual translation, representing the saint according to the traditional formal treatment of Coptic art. Although the sash tied around the saint's chest, known as the Herculean knot, establishes a visual link to Byzantine iconography, the saint is otherwise dressed as a contemporary thirteenth-century Ayyubid emir, even bearing a composite Turkish bow, wearing a *kalawta* (the standard form of headgear for Egypt's military elite), and riding a horse equipped with a Fatimid *tirāz* textile.<sup>63</sup>

The image of St. Mercurios is a richly layered representation that combines a saint's portrait, vignettes depicting post-humous miracles, a donor inscription, and figures outside the frame. Narrative elements to the right of the main image relate to the post-humous slaying of Julian the Apostate, and a scene depicted in the lower right-hand corner shows a miracle recorded in the synaxarium, in which Mercurios rescues his father

---

<sup>60</sup> Along with the military saint Theodore, George and Mercurios regularly appear in this role in *The History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. See, Johannes den Heijer, "Miraculous Icons and their Historical Background," in *Coptic Art and Culture*, ed. H. Hondelink (Cairo: Shouhdy Publishing House, 1990), 89-100.

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of the cult of St. Mercurios in Egypt, see Papaconstantinou, *Le Culte des Saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides: L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, 145-146.

<sup>62</sup> Delehayé noted that St. Mercurios was far more popular in Egypt than in Byzantium in his seminal work on the military martyrs. See Delehayé, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, 91.

<sup>63</sup> Lyster, "Reflections of the Temporal World," 113-116.

from *cenophales*. Also to the right of the main image, a panel contains a painted Coptic inscription that commemorates the local ecclesiastics responsible for the image and who sought, through the inscription, to establish a reciprocal relationship between themselves and God: “Lord, Jesus Christ, bless your servant, the priest Abba Michael, and his brother, the archdeacon Salib, the sons of (A)bu Ghalib. Lord, bless them, for they have provided for (the image of) the holy Mercurius. Lord, give them their recompense. Amen.”<sup>64</sup> Dressed in the garb of contemporary soldiers and holding standards, the two figures to the left of the icon represent the servants that attended noble warriors, perhaps showing the divine warrior in more earthly terms.<sup>65</sup> Each of these elements will be treated in turn, beginning with the portrait of Mercurios.

The memory of the saints was preserved in both texts and images, and so their representations were at once literary and artistic. Similarities in the format and iconographical content of monumental wall paintings and the frontispieces to manuscripts of passions reinforce the link between word and image. Coptic manuscripts rarely include full-page illuminations, but a few examples exist from the passions of military martyrs.<sup>66</sup> Produced over several centuries in scriptoria throughout Egypt, these often full-page images can be posited as a primary vehicle for the movement of objects and motifs in Christian communities.<sup>67</sup> Such commerce in images helped to create a visual

---

<sup>64</sup> Birger A. Pearson, "The Coptic Inscriptions in the Church of St. Antony," *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>65</sup> For the identification of the figures garb, see William Lyster, "Reflections of the Temporal World," *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>66</sup> Examples are well-represented in the catalog assembled by Leroy. See Jules Leroy, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1974), pls. 105.1-2, 106.1-2, 107.2.

<sup>67</sup> It is, however, likely that manuscripts were key to the dissemination of iconography. Several manuscript colophons provide evidence for the peregrinations of manuscripts from one monastery to another. The manuscripts transported from Nsibis to the Wādī al-Natrūn in Egypt provide the most vivid example. For examples of these colophons, see Wright, *Catalogue of the Syrian Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired Since 1838*, 8, 1073, 1083, 1102, 1110, 1141.

and iconographical coherence that extended to church furnishings such as *iconostases* and sanctuary lamps, where military saints often turned up.<sup>68</sup>

In the wall paintings at St. Antony's, the formal relationship of text and image demonstrated in manuscripts extends to the conceptual level, with pictorial strategies that translate the major *topoi* and narrative strategies of the passion into visual form. Thus, the icon of St. Mercurios in the *khurus* is dominated by a portrait of the saint on horseback, combined with figures that allude to episodes recorded in his passion and miracles, combined to construct a multi-layered and deeply meaningful narrative. Depicted in the guise of a soldier, St. Mercurios is represented in accordance with the biographical information that he served in the *Martenses* legion under the Roman Emperors Decius (r. A.D. 249-251) and Valerian (r. A.D. 253-260).<sup>69</sup> Like the other military martyrs, Mercurios actively opposed the policies of the Roman imperial army, which required its soldiers to demonstrate loyalty by sacrificing to the gods. When he refused to renounce his faith and sacrifice to the goddess Artemis, the leader of the *Martenses* subjected him to a series of escalating tortures that ended, finally, with his death. For his sacrifice, he received the crown of martyrdom, represented in the wall painting as a small circlet proffered by a hand descending from the heavenly realm.

---

<sup>68</sup> Medieval iconostases with representations of military saints as warriors on horseback may still be seen in the churches of Abu Maqar and Abu Sarga in Coptic Cairo. One sanctuary lamp with a micro cycle of military saints is now at the Louvre. For the iconostasis at Abu Sarga, see Gawdat Gabra and Marianne Eaton-Krauss, *The Treasures of Coptic Art in the Coptic Museum and Churches of Old Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), figs. 147-148. For the one in the church of Abu Maqar, see Edmond Pauty, *Bois sculptés des églises coptes (époque Fatimide)* (Cairo: l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1930), 27.

<sup>69</sup> Numerous manuscripts for the *martyria* of St. Mercurios are extant. For an English translation of the Coptic version in the British Museum, see Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: British Museum, 1915), 809-871. For a critical edition and Italian translation of the Pierpont Morgan manuscripts, see Tito Orlandi, *Passione e miracoli di S. Mercurio* (Milan: Cisalpino - Goliardica, 1976).

A standard feature in Coptic representations of Mercurios, the angel depicted in the upper right-hand corner of the image alludes to an episode from the saint's passion that marks his special sanctity, and, in turn, identifies him as a future member of the elect (Fig. 77). According to his passion, while Mercurios was in the *Martenses* he saw a vision of an angel who presented him with a sword. Promising him victory in battle, the angel said: "Take this sword from my hand, and go and attack the barbarians and you will conquer them. Forget not the Lord your God."<sup>70</sup> After his success in battle, the angel appeared to Mercurios again, and he converted to Christianity. The motif of the angel does not merely evoke a narrative episode, but depicts the significance of the event in visual terms. In the passion, the appearance of the angel serves as a sign of God's favor with Mercurios, while his message and gift sanctifies the act of warfare. In the wall painting, the angel rests one hand on Mercurios' sword, as if in benediction of the saint and his military endeavors; the other grasps a cross in a display of divine favor.

While the angel relates to a pivotal event that occurred during Mercurios' life, the other standard motif in his icon provides evidence that his power and sanctity continued on earth even after his death (Fig. 78). In his right hand Mercurios holds a spear surmounted by a cross which he thrusts into the head of a diminutive figure below, identified as the infamous fourth-century emperor, Julian "the Apostate." During his short and turbulent reign (361-363), Julian reinstated the pre-Christian religion and endeavored to overturn the church through a campaign of non-violent persecution, a ploy intended to circumvent the powerful martyrial discourse of Christianity.<sup>71</sup> Despite his

---

<sup>70</sup> Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, 811.

<sup>71</sup> His methods included economic sanctions, confiscation of church property, and other indirect measures intended to encourage Christians to return to the worship of the gods, without provoking the same degree of

best efforts, Christians characterized Julian not simply as a persecutor, but as a persecutor of the very worst kind. For, by adopting indirect forms of persecution, he failed to act in accordance with the established model of pagan persecution and denied the faithful their opportunity to make a public stand against the regime.<sup>72</sup>

By the fifth century, Christian tradition remembered the reign of Julian as a critical moment of crisis, when the dead martyrs of the past joined the living confessors to fight on behalf of the faith. The apostate emperor met his death on the battlefield, felled by a spear while fighting Persian troops, although it was unclear at the time whether an enemy or a member of his own guard struck the fatal blow.<sup>73</sup> Two centuries later, the chronicle of John Malalas attributed the feat to St. Mercurios and related how the renowned bishop Basil, one of the fathers of monasticism, learned of the posthumous miracle:

That same night Basil, the most holy bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, saw in a dream the heavens opened and the Saviour Christ seated on a throne and saying loudly, "Mercurius, go and kill the emperor Julian, who is against the Christians". St. Mercurius, standing before the Lord, wore a gleaming iron breast-plate. Hearing the command he disappeared, and then he re-appeared, standing before the Lord, and cried out, "The emperor Julian has been fatally wounded and has died, as you commanded, Lord."<sup>74</sup>

The earliest extant representation of St. Mercurios is not a panel painting but a Byzantine miniature: the miracle is represented in the lavish Homilies of Gregory of

---

resistance encountered in the reign of Diocletian. See Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 91.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>73</sup> Walters, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 105.

<sup>74</sup> John Malalas, *Chronicle*, 13.25. Translation in Elizabeth Jeffreys et al., *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 181-182.

Nazianzus, produced in the ninth century under imperial patronage in Constantinople.<sup>75</sup> The miniature appears in a cycle of images that relate to Gregory's "Second Invective Against Julian." Curiously, Gregory did not attribute the death of Julian to the military saint in his homily, and, while he regarded the emperor's demise as divinely ordained, he did not so much as mention the possibility of Mercurios' intervention.<sup>76</sup> This makes the miniatures depicting Julian's death the only images included in the manuscript whose subject matter originated outside the text of Gregory's homily. Their inclusion suggests that Christians associated the saint more with this militant feat than with the events of his life, and that he entered the medieval tradition not primarily as a martyr but as a quintessential defender of the Christian faith.

The posthumous miracle recorded in the chronicle of John Malalas found its way into the foundational histories of the Coptic church,<sup>77</sup> and later into portable objects such as manuscripts, some of which gave the episode visual form. The frontispiece in Vatican Copto 66 is of particular relevance, since it has been suggested that the manuscript belonged to the Monastery of St. Antony and perhaps served as the model for the more complex iconography of the wall painting (Fig. 79).<sup>78</sup> The line drawing renders the saint with minimal detail and narrative elaborations: the angel descending to proffer a sword to

---

<sup>75</sup> Paris cod. gr. 510, fol. 409v. Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 323-325.

<sup>76</sup> Gregory merely admits to having heard several reports attributed the emperor's death to various agents: one of his own soldiers, a barbarian, a jester, or a Saracen.

<sup>77</sup> The event is included in the *Chronicle of John of Nikiu*, Chapter 80.19-28. Translated in R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu, Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text* (London: William & Norgate, 1916), 78-79.

<sup>78</sup> Lucy-Anne Hunt has re-dated the drawing to the thirteenth century, although the linear style of the drawing and lack of comparanda make it difficult to determine with any certainty. Details such as the stable boy rendering of Mercurios' curved shoes appear in paintings of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Lucy-Anne Hunt, "Christian Art in Greater Syria and Egypt: A Triptych of the Ascension with Military Saints Reattributed," *al-Masaq* 12 (2000): 21.

Mercurios and a diminutive figure impaled on the end of the saint's spear, identified as "Julian the Apostate." Placed at the beginning of a manuscript that contains both the passion of the saint and his miracles, the frontispiece fittingly foreshadows the textual content, simultaneously referring to the earthly career of the saint and his posthumous appearance. The selection of these two events, moreover, serves to emphasize Mercurios' militant role, alluding to the nature of the saint first and foremost as a champion against pagan foes.

The reprisal of these elements on a late medieval icon preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai reinforces the impression that Christians in Egypt, like their Byzantine brethren, embraced the saint as an emblematic defender of the faith (Fig. 80).<sup>79</sup> The sole example of a panel painting that depicts Mercurios after the Coptic model, the Sinai icon is heavily restored and distinct in terms of both style and iconography, attributes that have made the work difficult to locate. Galavaris and Weitzmann both considered the icon to be the product of a ninth- or tenth-century Coptic artist, although Lucy-Anne Hunt has recently reattributed it to a thirteenth-century workshop in Cairo. Details of dress and ornament make it likely that an even later date, in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, is more appropriate. As an image, then, the Sinai icon is both late and rare. Nevertheless, it is notable, for very few panel paintings revive the Coptic pictorial conventions employed in manuscripts and wall paintings. Although the panel painting has not survived intact, enough remains to identify the major motifs: an angel descending to point at the sword given to Mercurios and a diminutive figure impaled on the end of

---

<sup>79</sup> I will return to the manuscripts later. For catalog entries on the icon, see Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine. The Icons*, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1976), 78-79, plates XXXI (in color) and CIV (restored, with detached section), no. B.49.

the saint's spear, who is almost certainly Julian. The basic format of the representation bears a striking resemblance to the earlier painting at St. Antony's, implying a model for the artist's rendering. However, there is a significant difference; this icon shows the hand of God extending from a half circle in the upper left corner. The divine hand grasps the crown of martyrdom and connects to Mercurios through a diagonal beam of light, representing an unambiguous chain of authority; it is God who ultimately stands behind the miraculous defeat of Julian and sends his general to accomplish the deed. The visual vocabulary of the icon articulates with remarkable clarity the claim made first in the chronicle of John Malalas and later reiterated in the ninth-century Coptic chronicle of John of Nikiu, that God had accomplished "his destruction...by the hand of his martyr St. Mercurios."<sup>80</sup>

While the artists at St. Antony's represented the same half circle, the pictorial field below is blank, the hand of God omitted.<sup>81</sup> The omission is not accidental; the icon does not depict the miracle account recorded in the Chronicle of John Malalas, but favors a later version that appeared around 800, included in the *Life of St. Basil* attributed to Pseudo-Amphilochios.<sup>82</sup> Selected to receive knowledge of Julian's death, the episode in the *Life* both proclaims Basil's sanctity, by demonstrating that his resistance to pagan

---

<sup>80</sup> *Chronicle*, Chapter 80.26. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu, translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic text*, 79.

<sup>81</sup> The hand that proffers a crown to Mercurios is not the hand of God, which is clearly represented in both the icon of St. George in the *khurus* (opposite Mercurios) and the icon of St. Theodore Stratelates in the *naos*. In those representations, the hand of God extends directly from the circle, in a gesture of blessing that points towards the saint. The texts painted beneath the hands represent the divine speech of God. In both instances, the words are hortatory, commanding Theodore to kill the dragon at the feet of his horse and ordering George to mete out punishment on the Roman general, Eutychios. This formula is completely absent from the Mercurios painting.

<sup>82</sup> For a recent discussions of the textual transmission of this legend, see Walters, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 104; Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 233-235.



persecution found favor in the eyes of God, and places Julian within a paradigm of divinely ordained retribution.<sup>83</sup> Just a century later, the iconophile theologian John of Damascus redefined the meaning of the miracle, incorporating the narrative into his eighth-century tract *In Defense of the Holy Icons* and absorbing the discourse of martyrdom into that of iconoclast polemics.<sup>84</sup> According to this version, Julian imprisoned Basil, who beseeched God to rescue the persecuted Christians while confined in prison. In his cell, there was an icon of St. Mercurios. After praying to God, Basil noticed that the icon was empty; the saint's image had disappeared from the panel. Mercurios' image reappeared the next day with a bloody spear grasped in his hand, signifying to the monk that God had heard his supplications and sent the spiritual warrior to dispatch Julian.

Responding to the account as a proof of the icon's power, Coptic theologians appropriated the story for their own purposes, enfolding the miracle account into their standard defense of holy images, albeit with a further alteration.<sup>85</sup> Among the versions in circulation during the thirteenth century, one relates that Basil did not pray to God but instead sat in his cell, dwelling on the fate of the Christian community at the hands of the apostate emperor. While agonizing over his inability to aid his co-religionists, he noticed that the icon was blank, the saint departed. In this iteration, the anxiety of Basil is quite

---

<sup>83</sup> As the ninth-century patriarch Photios put it: "Some people attributed his death to one of the Persian deserters, others to a mercenary; but the general view, closer to the truth, informs us that he was led to the slaughter by God." The quotation, along with a more-extended discussion of the Byzantine portrayals of the miracle, is included in Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 234-235.

<sup>84</sup> This appears in the documentation section appended to the *First Apology*. See David Anderson, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those who Attack the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 45.

<sup>85</sup> The account appears in Chapter 48 of the canonical tract, *The Sum of Aspects of the Religion*, by Al-Mu'taman abū Ishāq al-'Assāl. For a summary of Chapter, see Ugo Zanetti, "Les icônes chez les théologiens de l'église copte," *Le Monde Copte* 19 (1991): 80-81.

literally displaced onto the military martyr, who does the work that the confined bishop cannot carry out. Another account foregrounds the instigatory role of the monk still more, relating that Basil prayed to the icon of Mercurios and commanded the saint to slay Julian: “Mercurios, Mercurios, in sure confidence and trust we rely upon thee and God to slay Julian in war.”<sup>86</sup> Both versions privilege Basil over God, making Basil both the primary mediator and authoritative figure, and transforming the military martyr into the special general and ally of a monk rather than the deity. Thus, Mercurios reports his success to Basil, rather than God, proclaiming: “I have slain Julian, the apostate.”<sup>87</sup>

Because it foregrounds monastic authority and the power of icons, the Coptic version was uniquely suited to the needs and aspirations of the patrons at St. Antony’s. And, indeed, the latest version is the one to which the wall painting in the *khurus* alludes (Fig. 81). The artists depicted a domed building to the left of the icon that represents a monastery, with two monks standing within its walls: Basil of Caesarea and his brother Gregory. Leaning towards Mercurios, both monks extend a hand to point an authoritative finger at the warrior saint, who performs the miraculous feat at their bidding alone. In this image of Christian victory, monastic saints unambiguously command the church’s great spiritual defender under circumstances in which spiritual defense is represented as warfare against heretics, those who would endanger the survival of the church and its institutions.

Late antique monastic texts did, from time to time, frame the monk as a “spiritual soldier.” Most commonly, these draw upon an exegetical tradition that extends back to

---

<sup>86</sup> This is the Ethiopic version, almost certainly translated from Arabic. Trans. in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, 1186. The Coptic and Ethiopic church maintained close ecclesiastic ties and, consequently, share much of their hagiographic literature.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

St. Paul, who portrayed the Christian life in militaristic terms, as “fighting the good fight,” equipped with spiritual armor and weapons.<sup>88</sup> It is this notion that underlies an episode in the *Life* of the Desert Father Abba Macarios, when a cherub appears to the Egyptian in a vision to urge him to take up the ascetic life: “You will be crucified with Christ and you will join him on the cross with the virtues adorning you with their perfume, and your ascetic practices will spread to the four corners of the earth and will raise up a multitude sunk in the mire of sin and they will become warriors and soldiers in Christ’s army.”<sup>89</sup> Other texts, including the *Life of St. Antony*, identify the enemies of these spiritual soldiers as demons and temptations to sin.<sup>90</sup> A few seventh-century paintings from the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit even represent such demons, visualizing them as snakes, women, and hybrid animals.<sup>91</sup> In oratory 17, the warrior saint Sisinnius pursues temptation personified, surrounded by a swarm of fantastical creatures whose hybrid forms allude to their genesis beyond the realm of natural order (Fig. 9).<sup>92</sup> Depicted in a visual idiom of heroic triumph, the upright figure of the vanquishing saint presents a stark opposition to the curved form of the impaled female demon below,

---

<sup>88</sup> 1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 2.4. For a survey of the metaphor in relation to Byzantine monastic texts, see George T. Dennis, “Defenders of the Christian People: Holy War in Byzantium,” in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angelike Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks 2001), 36-37. For the metaphor in the *Apophthegmata patrum*, see John Wortley, “Military Elements in Psychopelitic Tales and Sayings,” in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, ed. George T. Dennis, T.S. Miller, and J. Nesbit (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 89-105.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Bolman, “Theodore, ‘The Writer of Life,’ and the Program of 1232/1233,” 51.

<sup>90</sup> *Life of St. Antony*, Chapter 65-66. In fact, the *Life of St. Antony* composed by St. Athanasius may be the first text to introduce the notion that demons were a hurdle a monk must overcome in order to shape for himself a virtuous life. Robert C. Gregg, *Athanasius, The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth S. Bolman, “Depicting the Kingdom of Heaven: Painting and Monastic Practice in Early Byzantine Egypt,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 419, 425.

<sup>92</sup> Deployment of representations (literary and visual) of monsters to signify existence beyond the normal order is a commonplace in the Middle Ages. For a useful discussion of the phenomenon in relation to western medieval literature, see Jeffrey J. Cohen, “Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Body of Gerald of Wales,” in *The Post Colonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 85-104.

replicating a pictorial formula familiar to late antique audiences from apotropaic amulets.<sup>93</sup> In this rendering, the visual and textual discourse of spiritual warfare mutually inspire and reinforce each other, presenting a coherent vision of the monastic life as the struggle against the onslaught of demonic forces. Scholars have long been intrigued by the resemblance of this painting to later figurations of military saints and have cited the painting at Bawit as a predecessor, in both its formal qualities and metaphorical meanings.<sup>94</sup> Yet, this image of combat against demons is not a precise match for the thirteenth-century depictions of saints slaying political adversaries.

Rather, the icon of St. Mercurios in the *khurus* of St. Antony's reformulates the relationship between monks and martyrs as it is evoked in late antique texts. Emphasizing a relationship between monk and martyr that regards them as allies in the fight for victory against a temporal and heretical regime, the visual narrative, moreover, redefines the role of violence in ascetic practice. If Abba Zacharias configured self-affliction as the path to sanctity, describing the monk as "he who does violence to *himself* in everything," then the representation of St. Mercurios represents a remarkable reversal.<sup>95</sup> For, the icon envisions a concept of sanctity in which the ability to inflict violence (albeit in defense) is privileged over the spiritual strength to endure suffering. The distinctive pairing of monk and military martyr seen here does not seem to belong to the traditional paradigm represented by Abba Zacharias' saying. This absence, in

---

<sup>93</sup> Jeffrey Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993); Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, vol. 49, University of Michigan Studies Humanistic Series (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 208-223.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, Oya Pancaroğlu, "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia," *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 151-164; Snelders and Jeudy, "Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia," 103-140.

<sup>95</sup> The emphasis is mine. For the reference, see above, fn 47.

addition to the evident willingness of Coptic Christians to draw upon multiple sources in framing self and collective identity, suggests that we should look beyond the ever-permeable boundaries of the Coptic tradition to elucidate the symbolic meaning of this image.

While pairing monks with militant warrior saints may appear paradoxical to modern audiences, Islamic narratives of the conquest indicate that historians in the early Muslim community, at least, regarded the association as the norm. In the eighth-century *Kitab al-Jihād*, the author ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) recorded an episode in which Muḥammad stated: “Islam has no monasticism. The monasticism of my community is the *jihād*.”<sup>96</sup> The tradition posits a conceptual association between the ascetic practice of monks and the military exploits of Muslim warriors that was later reinforced by the tenth-century historian al-Ṭabarī, who described the Caliph ‘Umar’s conquering army as “soldiers by day, monks by night.”<sup>97</sup> Nor was the perception of monasticism’s violent tendencies unique to the early historians of Islam: late antique historians anticipated their medieval counterparts, decrying those monks who resorted to violence against the material culture of the pre-Christian religion.<sup>98</sup> The destruction of idols was a typical episode featured in the biographies of saints, a feat which usually resulted in the conversion of multitudes and hastened the perpetrator to his or her martyrdom. Drawing inspiration from these accounts, late antique ascetics sometimes

---

<sup>96</sup> Sara Sviri, "Wa-Rahbanihatan Ibada'uhu: An Analysis of Traditions Concerning the Origin and Evolution of Christian Monasticism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1989): 195-208.

<sup>97</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh I*, 2125-6 [*The History of al-Tabari, xi, The Challenge to the Empires*], ed. and trans. Khalid Blankinship (Albany, 1993), 127.

<sup>98</sup> D. H. Raynor, "Non-Christian Attitudes to Monasticism," *Studia Patristica* 18 (1983): 267-272; Thomas Sizgorich, "'Not Easily Were Stones Joined by the Strongest Bonds Pulled Asunder': Religious Violence and Imperial Order in the Later Roman World," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2007): 75-101.

attacked temples and cult statues; yet, following the legalization of Christianity, their acts served no other purpose than to assuage a missionary impulse.<sup>99</sup> After witnessing the destruction of the temple in Antioch, Libanius derided the heavy-handed form of missionary work carried out by local monks: “For not by sword or spear or warfare is the truth proclaimed, but by persuasion and consultation.”<sup>100</sup> Such attempts to enforce orthodox religious behavior sometimes escalated, resulting in the more rigorous members of late antique monastic communities to carry out violence against priests, and in one case an entire village.<sup>101</sup> Such behavior produced rather ambivalent responses to monks in Christian and Muslim circles alike; some became figures to scorn, while others became figures to revere and points of authority.<sup>102</sup>

As Thomas Sizgorich has convincingly demonstrated, when early Muslims set about the task of creating their foundational myths and communal narratives, they did not look towards classical models but the authoritative texts that circulated in the regions where Islam came into political power. In these “borderlands,” no single cultural, religious or political entity exercised uncontested hegemonic power, creating a milieu that accommodated objects that incorporated, but did not necessarily assimilate, various

---

<sup>99</sup> Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 186-196.

<sup>100</sup> Sizgorich, “‘Not Easily Were Stones Joined by the Strongest Bonds Pulled Asunder’: Religious Violence and Imperial Order in the Later Roman World.” For another analysis of resistance to monastic violence, see Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 208-250.

<sup>101</sup> By the fifth century, monks had acquired a reputation for smashing idols and even beating the priests who tended the shrines of the pre-Christian gods. Since martyrdom was the primary vehicle for articulating ideas about violence in the Late Antique world, the language of martyrdom was used to justify these acts of violence as well. Shenoute, who declared, “there is no crime for those who have Christ,” had quite a reputation in this respect. See Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, 1-2. The Shenoute quotation comes from Johannes Leipoldt, *Shenoute von Atripe und die Entstehung des national ägyptischen Christentums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903), 79ff.

<sup>102</sup> Svirii, “Wa-Rahbanihatan Ibada’uhu: An Analysis of Traditions Concerning the Origin and Evolution of Christian Monasticism,” 195-208.

discursive economies and interests. In composing the accounts of Islam's heroic ancestors, historians such as al-Tabarī drew upon multiple sources, including (but not limited to) pre-Islamic poetry concerned with displays of military prowess and the accounts of local pious figures, primarily monks and military saints.<sup>103</sup> If late antique authors regarded monks as the natural successors to the early martyrs, then the Muslim writers who sought to shape and preserve the memory of early Islam found in monks qualities that were deemed desirable for the foundational heroes of their *umma*, the *mujāhidūn*— such as their commitment to both rigorous asceticism and militant piety. The *Kitāb al-Jihād* posits the movement as the new version of monasticism in an episode in which a follower asks the prophet about roving monasticism. Muḥammad declares: “God gave us in its stead the *jihād* for his sake and the *takbīr* on every hill.”<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, much of the narrative material produced by Christian and Muslim communities during the first two Islamic centuries incorporates motifs and themes associated with monks, *mujāhidūn*, and military saints, highlighting a dynamic and continuous process of cultural translation. Although Sizgorich focuses on Syria, there is ample evidence that Christians in Egypt, too, were trading partners in this new symbolic economy. Coptic hagiographers interpolated episodes with ascetics into the biographies of military martyrs at every turn: St. Menas defects from the Roman army to become an ascetic,<sup>105</sup> St. Pteleme encounters a hermit on the banks of the Nile who inspires his

---

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 144-167.

<sup>104</sup> Svirī, "Wa-Rahbanihatan Ibada'uhu: An Analysis of Traditions Concerning the Origin and Evolution of Christian Monasticism," 98. On roving monasticism, see Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>105</sup> James Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1946), 139.

conversion to Christianity,<sup>106</sup> and when Severus of Antioch uncovers the bones of Apa Claudius, they are dressed not in armor, but in monastic garb.<sup>107</sup> Likewise, the renowned warrior saint, George of Cappadocia, appeared in al-Ṭabarī's history, smashing the idols of pagan gods, an act of militant piety with missionary overtones that resonated well with the role accorded to Islam's own *ghāzīs*. Famously, in the eighth-century life of the Prophet by Ibn Ishāq, it is a Syrian ascetic, the monk Baḥīrā, who first recognizes the seal of prophethood on Muḥammad, then a young man traveling with a caravan for the Ḥijāz.<sup>108</sup> For Muslim audiences, the monk served as a point of authority, a revered figure from the old religion who revealed the new order, providing for Muslim audiences a necessary symbolic moment in Muḥammad's prophetic career.

The Arabic *Neo-martyrdom of St. Antony Ruwaḥ*, discussed in chapter 5, both speaks to the ways in which Christians regarded their status in an *oikumēne* ruled by an Islamicate empire and exemplifies the entangled concepts of piety that construed monks and warriors as conceptual parallels.<sup>109</sup> The martyrdom recounts the biography of a Koreshite noble (the tribe that included Muḥammad) who converted to Christianity, became a monk, and eventually died while confessing his faith before the legendary caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. When the narrative begins, the raider lord (*ghāzī*), Ruwaḥ, was occupying a monastery outside of Damascus. According to the hagiographer, Ruwaḥ spent his days harassing the monastic community, represented as powerless to respond.

---

<sup>106</sup> Leroy, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés*, 229.

<sup>107</sup> Drescher, "An Encomium Attributed to Severus of Antioch," 65.

<sup>108</sup> Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 505. Sidney H. Griffith, "Muhammad and the Monk Baḥīrā: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times," *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 146-174.

<sup>109</sup> For the Arabic edition, accompanied by a French commentary and translation, see Dick Ignace, "La passion arabe de S. Antoine Ruwaḥ, néo-martyr de Damas († déc 799)," *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 109-133.



The Muslim *ghāzī* embarked on his path to martyrdom when he entered the church and attacked an icon of St. Theodore, only to have his missile turned back to strike him in the hand. Inspired by the miracle, Ruwaḥ proclaimed Christianity a “truly...venerable and believable religion,” and soon thereafter converted.<sup>110</sup> In narrating the transformation of a Muslim raider into a pious Christian monk, and ultimately, into a sanctified martyr, the miracle account frames monastic identity in terms that recall late antique concepts of asceticism and militant piety, but, crucially, mediated through Muslim reception.<sup>111</sup>

Although the *Neo-martyrdom* of Antony Ruwaḥ gained its greatest following among the Melchite communities of Syria and Palestine, its thematic content would extend beyond sectarian boundaries and even reach into the rival community of Egypt’s Coptic Christians.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the fashion in which the *Neo-martyrdom* features the miraculous powers of the icon resonates with the later wall painting of St. Mercurios at St. Antony’s. Much like the miracle account of St. Mercurios and Julian, the icon in the neo-martyrdom performs a violent act that preserves the integrity of the Christian community. Where Mercurios’ miracle construes Christian victory as the death of the heretic Julian, the miracle in the neo-martyrdom expresses triumph by absorbing the threatening other. In the process, St. Antony Ruwaḥ is refashioned as a figure that embodies a series of dichotomies: Christian and Muslim, militant and monk, raider and martyr. The power of the military martyr to conquer through absorption is expressed in

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.: 121, 128.

<sup>111</sup> Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*, 246.

<sup>112</sup> The *neo-martyrdom* appears in abbreviated form within the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, enfolded into a larger cycle of conversion and martyrdom that occurs during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim. Yassa Abd al-Masih and O.H.E. Burmester, "History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church," in *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya and Antoine Khater O. H. E. Burmester (Cairo: Publications de la Société d’archéologie copte, 1943-1970), vol. 2, part 2, 165-167.

the image of Mercurios at St. Antony's, as well, alluded to by the small scene that represents another miracle in the lower right corner (Fig. 82). Beneath the raised hoof of Mercurios' horse, two dog-headed humans attack the father of Mercurios. According to the *Synaxarium of Alexandria*, Mercurios converted them to Christianity, and "rendered their nature sweet."<sup>113</sup>

The final narrative device common to both accounts is revelatory. Both the icon and the *Neo-martyrdom* present an image of a powerless, imprisoned monk in contrast to an image of a powerful, active image of an icon. In the image at St. Antony's the artist has gone to lengths to indicate that St. Mercurios is outside. His horse stands within the green fronds of a verdant, if imaginary landscape. The pose of the horse, with both left legs raised, would have resulted in the animal toppling over in real life. Here, it conveys a vivid sense of motion, emphasized by Mercurios' flying cape. By representing the saint as a warrior on horseback, the artist shifted the emphasis from a portrayal of a saint to a portrayal of saintly action. The vibrant, active image of Mercurios contrasts sharply with the representations of the monks, standing to the side. Confined to their monastic cell, their only action is to raise a hand, ordering Mercurios to ride out against the heretics of Christianity.

That pairing monks and military martyrs to emphasize their contrasting, but complementary, status became a theme in post-Conquest Coptic literature is further suggested by the recurrence of the trope in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church*. During the reign of al-Ḥākim, a Muslim youth known as Ibn Raja embarked on

---

<sup>113</sup> The episode is recorded in the Coptic Synaxarium, where it is given a separate day for commemoration. For a French translation and analysis of the episode, see Alexander Piankoff, "Saint Mercure Abou Seifein et les Cynocéphales," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 8 (1942): 17-24.

the *hajj*, and while traveling to Mecca, received multiple visions from a monk who cajoled him: “follow me, thou shalt profit thy soul.”<sup>114</sup> Ibn Raja became separated from the caravan and his traveling companions and was soon lost in the desert. Just as he was about to perish, the author relates, “a youth mounted on a horse, in a handsome garment and girdled with a girdle of gold” appeared before the hapless Muslim, took him on his horse, and flew with him to the Church of St. Mercurios in Cairo.<sup>115</sup> Closely modeled after the after the night ride of the prophet Muḥammad, what is revealed to the Muslim is not the heavenly city of Jerusalem, but that of the church, its altar adorned with icons. Seeing among them an image of St. Mercurios, the youth declared:

In truth this is the portrait of him who appeared to me, whom I saw in the desert, and (who) carried me on the back of his horse hither, and this golden girdle which I saw about his waist is the same shape as it. Now I will make known to thee that I am a Muslim man from among the inhabitants of this city and I agree on account of the miracle to become Christian.<sup>116</sup>

What follows for Ibn Raja (now called Paul after another famous convert to Christianity) is instruction in the traditional narratives of Christianity (the bible and the lives of the saints), baptism, and the adoption of an ascetic life. Eventually, the Muslim convert went into hiding, but a monastic mentor, a monk named Macarios, spurred him on towards martyrdom, chastising him: “God will not accept your conversion unless you go and show yourself publicly in Cairo.”<sup>117</sup> Ushering the narrative to its inevitable conclusion, Macarios supports Paul as he defies his Muslim family to make the public decree that brings shame to their honorable name and seals his own fate. The literary entangled of Muslim and Christian narratives and their accompanying formulations of sanctity

---

<sup>114</sup> *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, Vols. 2, Part 2. Translated in Abd al-Masih and Burmester, "History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church," 154.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, part 2, 154.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, part 2, 156.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

anticipate those represented in the thirteenth-century cycle of military martyrs at the Monastery of St. Antony. Both narrative histories draw upon sources associated with multiple religious communities, providing a vivid demonstration that, even if community was conceived in bounded terms, it was negotiated and actualized across borders.

Texts such as the neo-martyrdoms were not merely repositories of communal anxieties, but productive of them. It was the very permeability of boundaries that caused the more rigorous members of both communities to take violent measures (both imagined and real) to preserve their integrity, for the act of translation is often presupposed by the misrecognition of cultural homologies, common ground that might lead to further cultural dilution. It is telling that the Muslim geographer al-Biruni knew of the *Neo-martyrdom of St. Antony Ruwah* and scoffed at the legend, deriding the Christians as “gullible,” and casting aspersions on the authenticity of the events it narrates.<sup>118</sup> His unease suggests that the circulation of these hybrid figures, texts, and images both responded to and, ultimately, produced the anxieties that underlie their creation.

### **Monks and military martyrs: defenders of the faith**

The themes evoked by the layered narrative imagery of the Mercurios icon are all present, to varying degrees, in the cycle of military saints in the *naos*, while the saints themselves exemplify those models of martyrdom that gained popularity in the post-Conquest era. The warrior saints depicted in the cycle all date to the era of Roman persecutions and stand as representatives for the two models of military martyrs already encountered in the hagiography and historiography of post-Conquest and medieval Egypt: the warrior transformed into a monk (Apa Victor and Apa Mena), as well the

---

<sup>118</sup> Robert Griveau, "Les fêtes des Melkites Al-Birūnī par Abou Rîḥān al-Birouni," *Patrologia Orientalia* 10 (1914): 299.

armed defender (St. Claudius, St. John of Heraclea, St. Theodore Stratelates, St. Theodore the Anatolian, St. Sisinnios, St. George, and St. Phoebammon). The leitmotif of the program is the miraculous: each saint is depicted alongside his most paradigmatic feat, slaying dragons to protect the faithful, meting out punishment on those who would insult Christianity, or enduring the tortures that constituted the martyr's path to sanctity.

Like the image of Mercurios, each icon could stand alone as a complete narrative of salvation and Christian triumph; arranged in a continuous horizontal band, the images prompt the viewer to pull back from the individual saint, recognize the recurring motifs, and make the conceptual links that transform discrete motifs into themes. One after the other, saints stand in poses of Christian triumph, defending the integrity of the church against the insults of heretics and ensuring its preservation in the face of pagan aggression. On the north wall of the *naos*, St. George performs a miracle that recalls the *Neo-martyrdom of Antony Ruwah*, impaling a Jew caught in the hubristic act of stealing church fittings from his shrine, envisioned here as a golden candlestick (Fig. 83).<sup>119</sup> In this rendering, retribution is favored over the aggressive method of persuasion described in the miracle account. To the right of St. George, St. Phoebammon slays a figure identified in an inscription as Pasicrates, the Roman centurion sent to execute the Christian general (Fig. 84). An image of violence, Pasicrates pulls his sword out of its scabbard, the cross-tipped spear of Phoebammon slices through his cheek, spraying blood from the pagan soldier's face (Fig. 85). Across the *naos*, St. Claudius impales the infamous Roman emperor, Diocletian, who grasps the proclamation ordering the saint's execution (Fig. 32). The diminutive figure reaches up in an act of submission to clutch

---

<sup>119</sup> Miracle 3. Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts.*, 248-252.

the spear, even as his finger points dramatically towards Claudius, directing audience attention to the powerful saint who performs the miracle (Fig. 86). Nearby John of Heraclea slays Eutychedios, as he raises a hand in a visual echo of the gesture performed by Diocletian (Fig. 87). In each icon, hands extend from the celestial realm to crown the military martyrs, a gesture that renders violence heroic.

Productive images, the repetitions in form and subject matter both fulfill viewer expectations and demonstrate how each saint both conforms to and furthers established notions of sanctity. The desire to emphasize the similarity of deeds trumps the imperative to adhere strictly to the details recorded in each miracle account. In a late antique version of the miracle from a tenth-century manuscript, the saint whips the Jew with an ox-hide, employing force to inspire his conversion to Christianity.<sup>120</sup> By representing George impaling the offending Jew with a spear, the artist created a comforting visual repetition in iconographical form that, in turn, serves to prove the constancy of saintly action.

The similarity between images and deeds highlights the exemplary quality of saints and saintly action. Like their Christian neighbors, Copts understood saints according to types. In a thirteenth-century treatise, *The Remedy of Intelligence*, the Coptic theologian Ibn al-Ṭayyib, launching a defense of icons, asserted the importance of grouping saints according to their deeds in his defense of icons: “One should...make for the house of God representations of the cherubim who are his messengers, and his servants, the righteous men. One makes...icons in the churches according to the manner

---

<sup>120</sup> *Mir.* 3. *Ibid.* The icon may depict a variant form of the miracle account, or perhaps represents a conflation between the miracle performed by George and another performed by St. Mercurios, in which a Jew actually was impaled with the saint’s spear.

of their works...”<sup>121</sup> The notion that the identification of types were essential to understanding the nature of the saints underlies the structure of the program itself, which groups soldier martyrs, non-military martyrs, and monks. In the preface to an encomium on St. Victor attributed to Celestinus of Rome, the author calls upon his audience to consider the different works of the saints as different paths that lead to the same goal: witness of Christ.<sup>122</sup>

The position of the cycle of military saints within the larger program fosters an association between the typological, even figurative quality of saintly action, and the effective nature of icons. It is clear from Christian literature that both seeing and hearing the lives of the saints was demonstrably effective. St. Augustine heard the story of St. Antony and converted,<sup>123</sup> and Asterios of Amasia was moved to tears by the painted acts of the martyrs.<sup>124</sup> Upon hearing about the sufferings of St. Mercurios, Ibn Raja converted to Christianity, assumed the mantle of asceticism, and even embraced martyrdom for the sake of his religion.<sup>125</sup> In the structure of these episodes, the account of Ibn Raja follows the conceptual structure of traditional Coptic hagiography, in which martyrdoms were often grouped into cycles, with the saint in one story giving the next the courage to endure martyrdom. The grouping of saints represents a clear progression, in which the martyrs, who bore witness to Christ through their blood, inspired the great ascetic saints

---

<sup>121</sup> Ugo Zanetti, "Abū l-Ḥayr ibn al-Ṭayyib: sur les icônes et la croix," *Parole de l'Orient* 28 (2003): 680-681.

<sup>122</sup> Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1914), 301.

<sup>123</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* VIII.xii (29). Trans. in Henry Chadwick, *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 152-153.

<sup>124</sup> Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 38.

<sup>125</sup> See above.

of Egypt, who stood as witnesses through “dying to the world” to live in imitation of Christ.

The effective nature of icons remained an important aspect of the Coptic tradition well into the thirteenth century. As a “People of the Book,” the Coptic community enjoyed a relatively privileged position in the middle ages; nevertheless, they often envisioned themselves as a beleaguered community.<sup>126</sup> In this respect, an episode recorded in the *History of the Patriarchs* is inadvertently revelatory. According to the chronicle, Patriarch Shenoute I witnessed the desolation of his community in the ninth century when forces comprised of Arabs and Bedouins undertook a series of raids against the desert monasteries of the Wādī al-Natrūn. For Shenoute I, the event signified a rupture and transformation worthy of tears, “for the monks were like angels of God who ceased not from praising. The desert had become the dwelling-place of murderers and marauders, and the saints who were in the desert had sought refuge in all places...”<sup>127</sup> In the aftermath of the raids, Shenoute I “resolved to build a fortified wall around...the church.” “He did this,” his biographer explained, “that it might become a cave and a fortress after the Lord Christ...”<sup>128</sup> In referring to the fortress, the author prompted his audience to recall an image from the Book of Psalms, the Lord as a fortress protecting the refugees of Israel, envisioning the Egyptian desert as the site of Babylonian captivity.

---

<sup>126</sup> The observation of David Cook, that minority status alone is often enough to evoke a sense of oppression, seems apt in relation to the medieval Coptic community. David Cook, *Martyrdom In Islam, Themes in Islamic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2. Using the example of St. Francis of Assisi, Gaddis makes a similar point. See Gaddis, 164-65. On the status of the community, see Edelby, "The Legislative Autonomy of Christians in the Islamic World," 37-82; Goitein, "Minority Selfrule and Government Control in Islam," 159-174.

<sup>127</sup> *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, vol. 2, part 1. Translated in Abd al-Masih and Burmester, "History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church," 60.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*



No evidence for these raids exists in the material record; the attacks described with such vivid detail and heartfelt anguish almost certainly never occurred.<sup>129</sup> And indeed, there are indications that the Coptic church did not anticipate an attack on their people so much as on their cultural legacy. In the *Apocalypse of Samuel of Qalamūn*, a monk predicts loss of faith as the inevitable outcome of “believers...mixing with foreigners” and relinquishing “their original Coptic language.”<sup>130</sup> Because Christians would “no longer understand” what they heard in the churches and “their hearts would be inclined toward Arab books,” both theological truths and foundational myths were fated to pass into obscurity.<sup>131</sup> He lamented: “They will forget many of the martyrs in that time because their biographies will fall into disuse...And, when those biographies that do exist are read...many people will not know what is read, because they will not know the language.”<sup>132</sup> As a consequence of this loss, the prophet writes, “many churches...will be dilapidated and empty on the feast nights and Sunday nights as well.”<sup>133</sup> Paradoxically, this prophecy of the obliteration of the Coptic language exists only in Arabic. To translate and preserve such a text constitutes a peculiar gesture of defiance, for it denies the outcome predicted in the text and asserts the ability of the religion to endure.

---

<sup>129</sup> I have been unable to find any reference to attacks in the archaeological literature in the area. The improbability of such attacks has also been confirmed in a personal communication with Darlene Brooks-Hedstrom.

<sup>130</sup> The *Apocalypse of Samuel of Qalamūn*, which survives only in Arabic, has been variously dated from the seventh through twelfth centuries. For a discussion of the text and its date of composition, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, “They Shall Speak the Arabic Language and Take Pride in it’: Reconsidering the Fate of Coptic after the Arab Conquest,” *Le Muséon* 120, no. 3-4 (2007). For a translation and more in-depth discussion of this passage, see Jason R. Zaborowski, “From Coptic to Arabic in Medieval Egypt,” *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008): 27.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

In *Samuel of Qalamūn*, concerns for preservation revolve not around church doctrine or theology, but on texts related to religious practice and communal memory.<sup>134</sup> A similar concern for the preservation of culture, as well as an emphasis on those aspects of religion that were most visible, appears in contemporary tracts on icons. In the tenth century, the theologian Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqqaḥfaʿ wrote: “The church doctors, when they had convinced people of the legitimacy of icons, ordered that images decorate the walls of churches, so that people would not forget Christ, Mary, the angels, and the martyrs.”<sup>135</sup> For Ibn al-Muqqaḥfaʿ, icons are primarily efficacious mnemonic devices, an idea that persisted well into the later middle ages. According to the thirteenth-century theologian Ibn al-Ṭayyib, if members of other religions should question Christians regarding their faith, they would explain:

“This is the figure of such martyr, who did such thing, who submitted to torture of such instrument and who endured such torment: God has rewarded him in granting him such blessing.” This calls upon them to remain strong in their faith and to be ready for the sacrifice of their life if someone tries to make them change their religion.<sup>136</sup>

If icon lore demonstrated the power of icons through their miraculous abilities, Coptic ecclesiastics saw the representations of miracles within the icons as the site of real power. For it was these sacred narratives that proved the continued relevance and efficacy of their faith – or, as St. Antony Ruwaḥ said, that Christianity was “truly a venerable and believable religion.”<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> Arietta Papaconstantinou, “They Shall Speak the Arabic Language and Take Pride in it: Reconsidering the Fate of Coptic after the Arab Conquest,” *Le Muséon* 120, no. 3-4 (2007): 273-299.

<sup>135</sup> Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqqaḥfaʿ, *Kitāb tartīb al-kahanūt*, chapter 7. Assfalg, *Die Ordnung des Priestertums: Ein altes liturgisches Handbuch der koptischen Kirche*, 21-23 (Arabic text), 92-55 (German translation). French trans. in Zanetti, “Les icônes chez les théologiens de l’église copte,” 78.

<sup>136</sup> Abū l-Ḥayr ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Tiryāq al-‘uqūl fī ‘ilm uṣūl*, chapter 20. Idem., “Abū l-Ḥayr ibn al-Ṭayyib: sur les icônes et la croix,” 680 (French translation), 681 (Arabic text).

<sup>137</sup> See above.

Monasteries, too, were instrumental in maintaining traditions, defining correct social behavior, and preserving communal memory during the middle ages. Like their Muslim neighbors, non-Muslim “People of the Book” were expected to abide by the laws of their scripture, and so the church assumed a fundamental role in defining codes of conduct.<sup>138</sup> Because monasteries became the primary text-producing institutions in the post-Conquest era, they were instrumental in shaping the moral and intellectual trajectory of the church, a task accomplished through the preservation and dissemination of Christian literature.<sup>139</sup> Thus, it was monks and ecclesiastics who had translated the tradition into Coptic in the seventh and eighth centuries, and who consolidated and translated the tradition again in the middle ages – this time into Arabic.<sup>140</sup>

If the martyrs of antiquity preserved the integrity of Christianity through their defiant deaths and the military saints of the middle ages resisted through retaliation, contemporary monks were determined to preserve every text and image that represented their cultural heritage, loosing nothing to Arab hegemony. Although the icons of military martyrs and monks at St. Antony’s may have been a local display of monastic authority, their symbolic meaning has relevance beyond the history of one institution. What is represented on the walls of the church is a history of the glorious and miraculous past of Coptic monasticism. On this important site, the monastic community represented their history through icons of saints in their most paradigmatic form and performing their most renowned miracles, preserving the memory of these defenders of the faith for future generations. For a church that lay in the shadow of the mosque, the painted program

---

<sup>138</sup> See above.

<sup>139</sup> Wilfong, “The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities,” 190-191.

<sup>140</sup> Rubenson, “Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt,” 4-14.

constituted a vivid demonstration that the tradition would not suffer obliteration; for, the attack had already been anticipated and shored up against by the tradition itself.

## Conclusion

In the early middle ages, the cult of the military saints became one of the most important and widespread saints' cults in the medieval eastern Mediterranean. Although the cult has often been understood as a Byzantine phenomenon, the warrior saints gained particular devotion in frontier zones (both real and mental), such as Egypt and the Levant. Though beyond the political boundaries of the Byzantine Empire, the icons of warrior saints produced in these regions provide key insights into the nature and function of the cult, as well as devotional practices in the frontier. It has been the purpose of this dissertation to explore the cult of the military saints through the lens of its icons, which provide insights into interfaith relations and communal self-fashioning.

In this study, the icons of warrior saints produced in Egypt and the Levant emerge as local expressions of a regional cult. The icons are broadly similar in their iconographic forms, represent many of the same saints, and received veneration in relation to analogous texts across the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, different Christian communities adapted the saints to local conditions and their own histories, using devotional practices to support and reinforce sectarian boundaries.

Although the warrior saints were incorporated into different communal histories in the early middle ages, medieval representations and understandings of the saints developed out of a common late antique heritage. Examination of the late antique corpus suggests that the cult of the warrior saints did not exist prior to the ninth century. Before

this, individual warrior-saints had risen to various levels of prominence at a local level, but there is no evidence to suggest that Christians identified a universal group of saints associated with a military life. To the contrary, saints destined to become major military martyrs – such as Demetrios – were not even regarded as soldiers. Over the course of the late antique period, a number of competing discourses arose that facilitated the emergence of a group of saints regarded as holy warriors, believed to fight on behalf of the faithful. Because of this function, they gained a particular following in frontier zones, where the existence of other religions and political powers challenged the dominance of Christianity.

In Egypt and the Levant, the dynamics of the frontier shaped the form, function, and perception of the warrior saints. In the Levant, exchange among communities facilitated the migration of the cult across communal boundaries, creating a heterogeneous visual culture in which the quest for the ethnic origins of objects cannot be pursued. Instead, the images emerge as part of a culture in which exchange and shared religion were more the norm than the exception.

The warrior saints served as a nexus of cross-cultural traffic among Muslims and the various sects of eastern Christians that lived in Egypt and the Levant; however, the miracle accounts that circulated (across communal boundaries) in conjunction with images of the saints configured the warrior saints as figures that defined and enforced communal boundaries. The triumphalist narratives promoted in miracle accounts both provide a parallel to, and an inspiration for, the representations of warrior saints seen in the region. In doing so, both the icons and miracle accounts provide a framework for

understanding and mediating the position of Christians within a world inhabited both by Christians and Muslims.

At the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, military martyrs are depicted as the temporal and spiritual predecessors to monks, establishing a conceptual link between asceticism and militant expressions of piety. The representations of warrior saints at the monastery draw upon Islamic understandings of monks and military martyrs to represent the monks as defenders of the faith, where the spiritual battle is understood as the struggle for communal survival in the face of Islamic triumph. In this monument, the depictions of the military martyrs define Egypt as a frontier of faith and provide insight into the Copts' self-perception as an embattled community.

## Figures



Figure 1. St. Demetrios with donors, mosaic in naos, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki, Greece.





Figure 2. St. Demetrios, ivory plaque, Constantinople, 10<sup>th</sup> century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.



Figure 3. St. Bacchos, wall painting in naos, 1208/1209, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.



Figure 4. St. George with accompanying rider, wall painting in naos, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon.



Figure 5. St. George slaying the Jew and St. Phoibammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 6. Church of St. George, 4<sup>th</sup> century, Thessaloniki, Greece.



Figure 7. Detail of St. Onesiphoros, dome mosaics of the rotunda, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century, Church of St. George, Thessaloniki, Greece.



Figure 8. St. Phoebammon, (now lost) wall painting in Oratory 17, Monastery of Apollo at Bawit, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Asyut, Egypt.

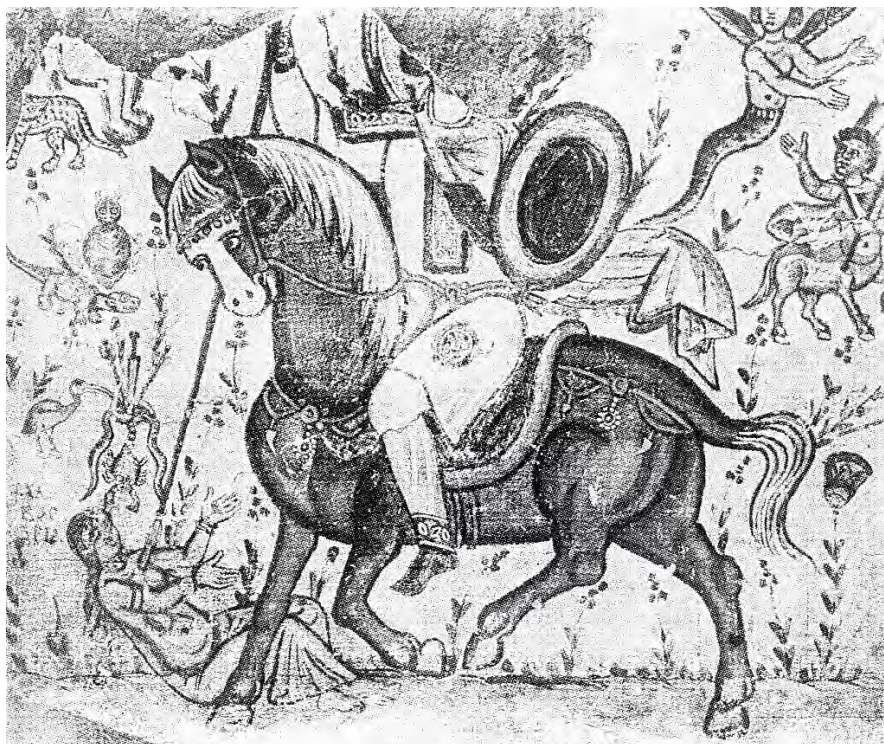


Figure 9. St. Sissinius slaying the demon Alabastria, (now lost) wall painting in Oratory 17, Monastery of Apollo at Bawit, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Asyut, Egypt.

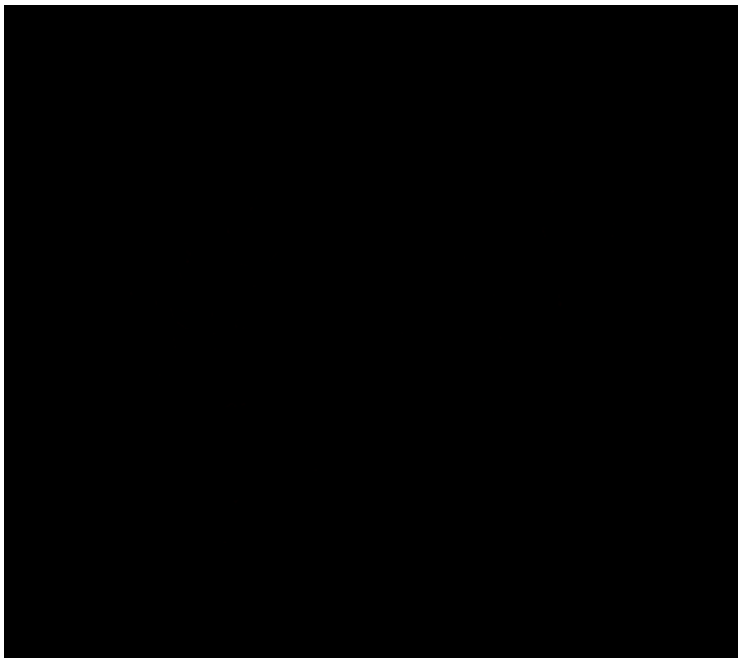


Figure 10. St. Menas on ivory pyxis, Alexandria (?), 6<sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London.



Figure 11. St. Sergios, mosaic in naos, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki, Greece.



Figure 12. St. Sergios as rider saint with cross, pilgrimage flask, lead alloy, Syria, 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, Syria, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



Figure 13. St. Theodore Teron, icon, Egypt, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Coptic Museum, Cairo, Egypt.



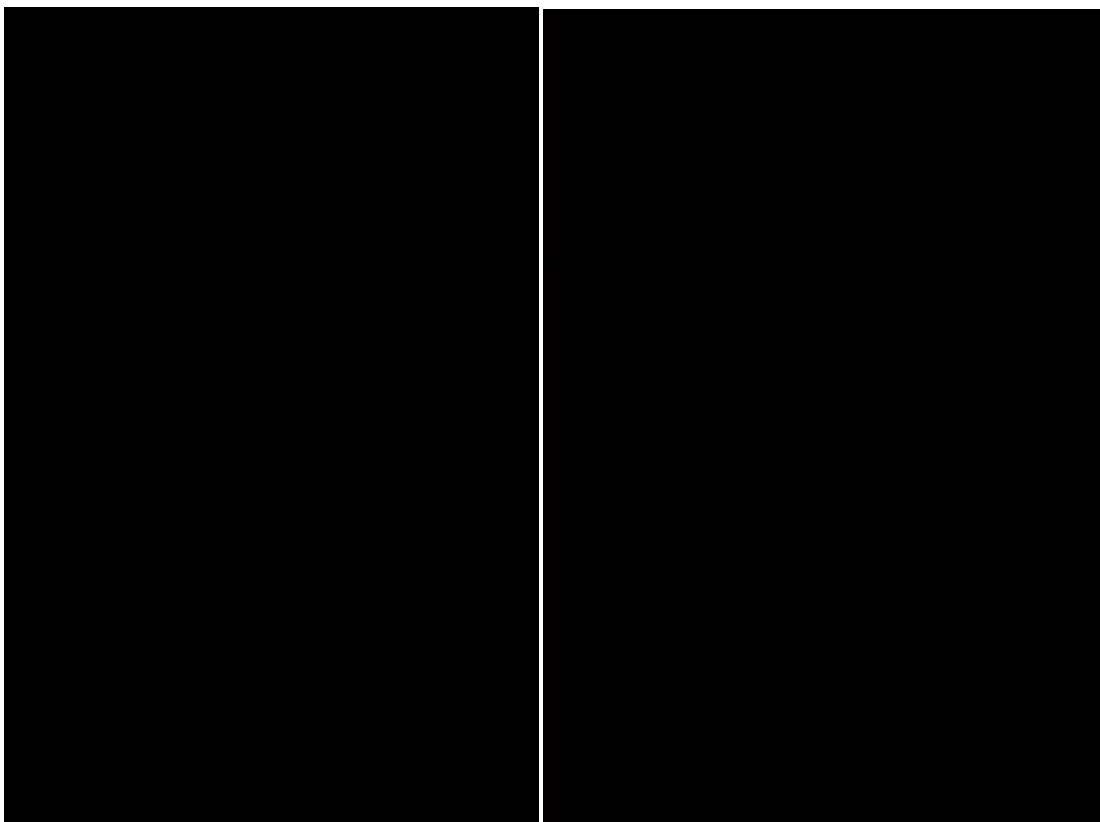


Figure 14. Nielloed figures depicting Christ (top), Virgin orans (center), angels (left and right), and a military saint impaling a serpent (bottom), pectoral cross, gold, 6<sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London.



Figure 15. Sts. Eugenios, Eustratios, and Auxentios, wall painting in north-west chapel, early 11<sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.



Figure 16. St. Procopius, mosaic in naos, early 11<sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.



Figure 17. St. Theodore Tiron, mosaic in naos, early 11<sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.



Figure 18. St. George, mosaic in naos, early 11<sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.



Figure 19. St. Demetrios, mosaic in naos, early 11<sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.



Figure 20. St. Sergios, mosaic in naos, early 11<sup>th</sup> century, Hosios Loukas Monastery Church, Boetia, Greece.



Figure 21. St. George, pectoral cross reliquary, bronze, Anatolia (?), 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 22. Deesis with Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Baptist (upper center panel); Sts. James, John the Theologian, Peter, Paul and Andrew (lower center panel); Sts. Theodore Teron, Eustathios (?) (upper left wing), Procopios, and Arethas (lower left wing); Sts. Theodore Stratelates, George (upper right wing); Sts. Demetrios, and Eustratios (lower right wing), ivory triptych, Constantinople likely a commission for Emperor Constantine VII (945-59), Palazzo Venezia, Rome.





Figure 23. Deesis with Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Baptist (center panel, top); Sts. James the Great, John the Theologian, Peter, Paul, and Andrew (center panel, bottom); Sts. Theodore Teron and Theodore Stratelates (left wing, top); Sts. Mercurios, Thomas, Eustralios and Arethas (left wing, bottom); Sts. George and Eustathios (right wing, top); Sts. Philip, Panteleimon, Demetrius, and Procopios (right wing, bottom), ivory triptych, Constantinople, late 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century (?), Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 24. Basil II triumphs over his enemies, Psalter of Basil II, ca. 1000, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS Gr. 217, fol. 3.



Figure 25. Alexios I with St. George, coin of Alexios I Comnenos, 1067-1068, obverse.



Figure 26. Manuel II with St. Theodore, coin of Manuel II Comnenos, 1083-1084, obverse.



Figure 27. St. Theodore Stratelates, steatite icon, Constantinople (?), 11<sup>th</sup> century, Museo Sacro, Vatican.

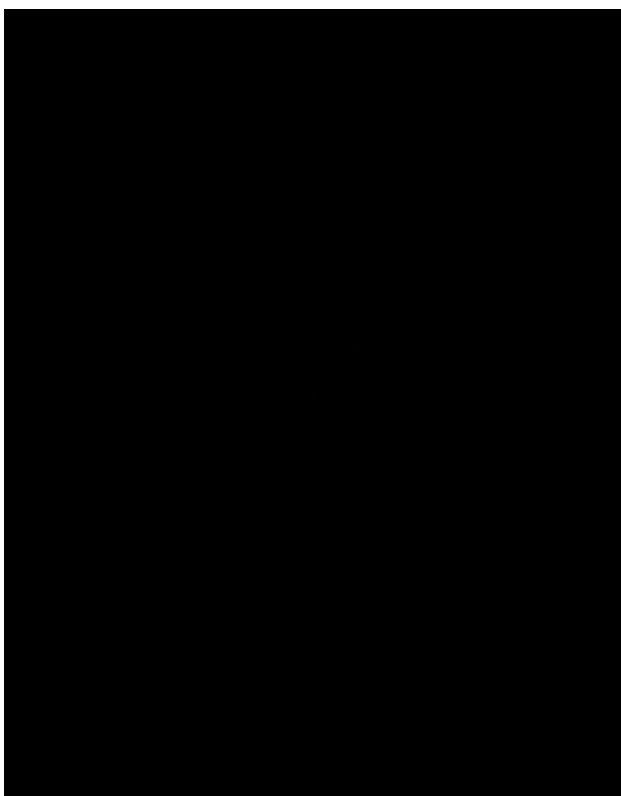
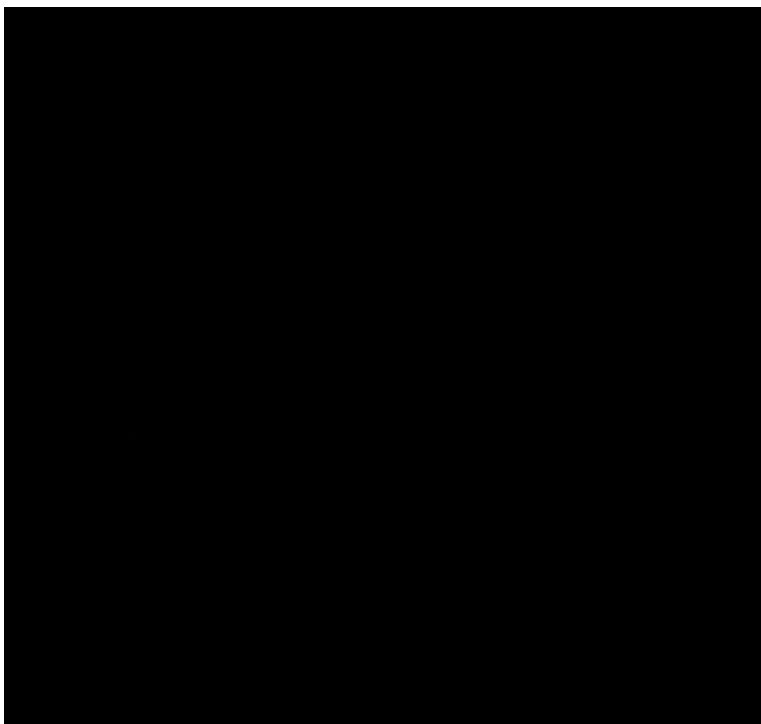


Figure 28. St. George on enkolpion of St. Demetrios, enamel, Thessaloniki, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, British Museum, London.



Figure 29. St. Theodore Stratelates slaying a dragon, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.

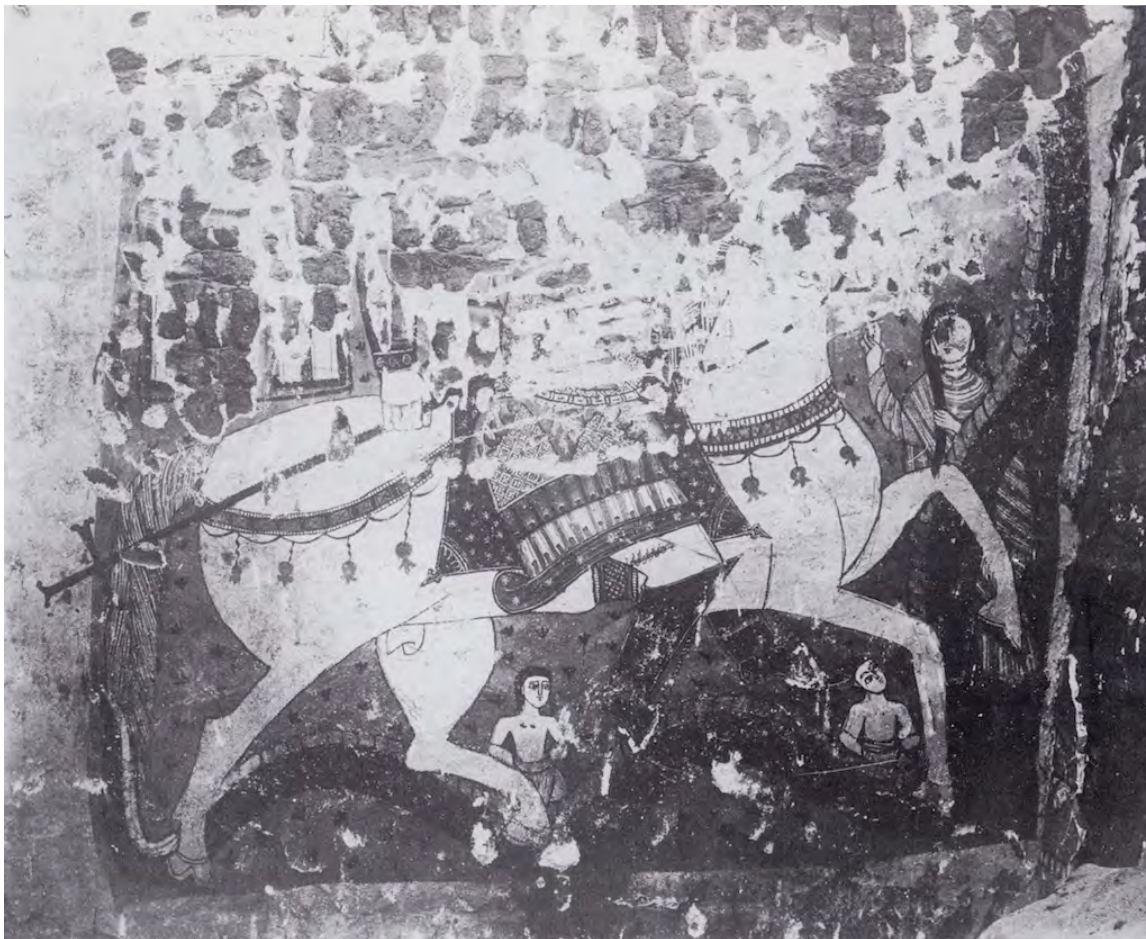


Figure 30. St. Theodore Stratelates slaying a dragon, wall painting, 10<sup>th</sup> century, unidentified building, Tebtunis, Egypt.



Figure 31. St. Theodore the Oriental slaying a dragon, frontispiece of Martyrdom of SS. Theodore the Anatolian (the Oriental), Leontius the Arab, and Panigerus the Persian, 867, Pierpont Morgan, MS Coptic, M.613, fol.1v.





Figure 32. St. Claudius of Antioch slaying Diocletian, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 33. St. Claudius of Antioch slaying an emperor, wall painting in naos, 1179/1180, Monastery of the Martyrs, Esna, Egypt.



Figure 34. St. Claudius of Antioch slaying an emperor, wall painting in naos, 11<sup>th</sup> century, Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel, Fayoum, Egypt.



Figure 35. St. Victor, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 36. St. Theodore Stratelates slaying a dragon, wall painting in naos, late 13<sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon.



Figure 37. St. Theodore and St. George, wings of triptych, panel-painting, Sinai, 10<sup>th</sup> century, Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, Egypt.



Figure 38. Donor portrait with St. George, Basil Giagoupes and the Lady Tamar, wall painting in naos, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey.



Figure 39. St. George slaying the dragon, wall painting in naos, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey.



Figure 40. Detail of St. George slaying the dragon, wall painting in naos, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey.



Figure 41. St. George with accompanying rider, wall painting in naos, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Kırk Dam Altı kilise, Belisırma, in the region of Hasan Dağı, Turkey.



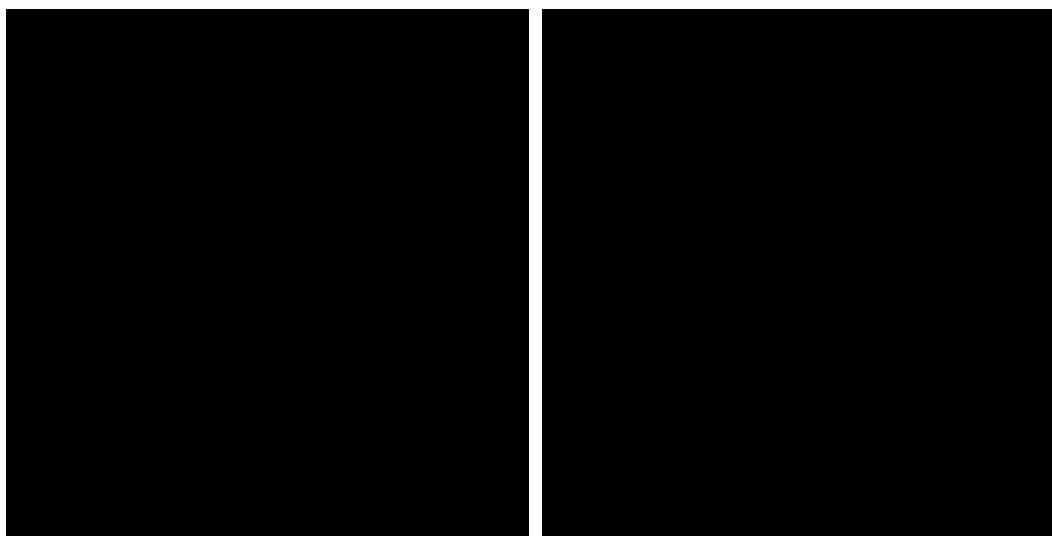


Figure 42. St. Demetrios with accompanying rider, pilgrimage token, lead, Thessaloniki, 12<sup>th</sup> century, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ.



Figure 43. St. George with accompanying rider, icon, eastern Mediterranean, 13<sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London.



Figure 44. Sergios and Bacchos, double-sided icon with the Virgin, eastern Mediterranean, 1260s-70s, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, Egypt.



Figure 45. Icon with Saint Sergios with female donor, eastern Mediterranean, 1260s-70s, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai.



Figure 46. Besant with imitation Fatimid legend, gold, 12<sup>th</sup> century, Jerusalem mint, American Numismatic Society, New York.



Figure 47. Besant with Christian legend and cross, gold, 12<sup>th</sup> century, Jerusalem mint.



Figure 48. St. George slaying the dragon, follis of Roger of Antioch, bronze, 1112-1119, Antioch mint, American Numismatic Society, New York.



Figure 49. St. George and St. Demetrios (obverse) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (reverse), pilgrimage flask, lead alloy, Jerusalem, 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century, British Museum, London.



Figure 50. Ruṣāfa treasure. Censur, Mesopotamia or Iran, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century; Paten, Syria (?), early 13<sup>th</sup> century; Chalice, Syria, early 13<sup>th</sup> century; Chalice foot, Syria (?), early 13<sup>th</sup> century; Cup with heraldic shields, Northern France (?), ca. 1290, National Museum, Damascus.



Figure 51. Cup with heraldic shields, silver with gilding, Northern France (?), ca. 1290, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus.

Figure 52. Paten, silver with gilding, Syria (?), early 13<sup>th</sup> century, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus.



Figure 53. Chalice, silver with gilding, Syria, early 13<sup>th</sup> century, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus.

Figure 54. Interior detail of chalice showing the Mother of God with angels, silver with gilding, Syria, early 13<sup>th</sup> century, from the Ruṣāfa treasure, National Museum, Damascus.





Figure 55. St. Theodore, wall painting in naos, 1260s-1290s, Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos, Qar'a, Syria.



Figure 56. St. Sergios, wall painting in naos, 1260s-1290s, Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos, Qar'a, Syria.

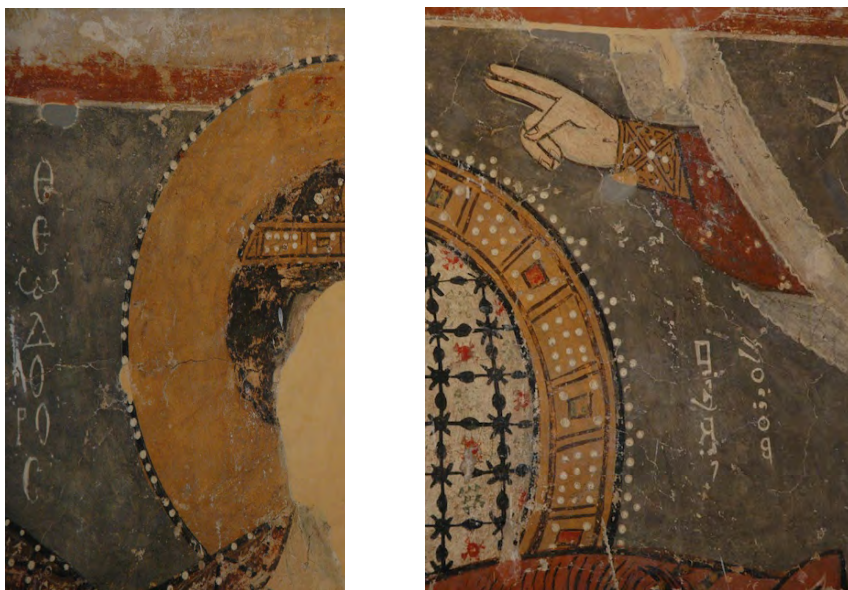


Figure 57. Greek inscription (left) and Syriac inscription (right), St. Theodore, wall painting in naos, 1260s-1290s, Church of SS. Sergios and Bacchos, Qar'a, Syria.

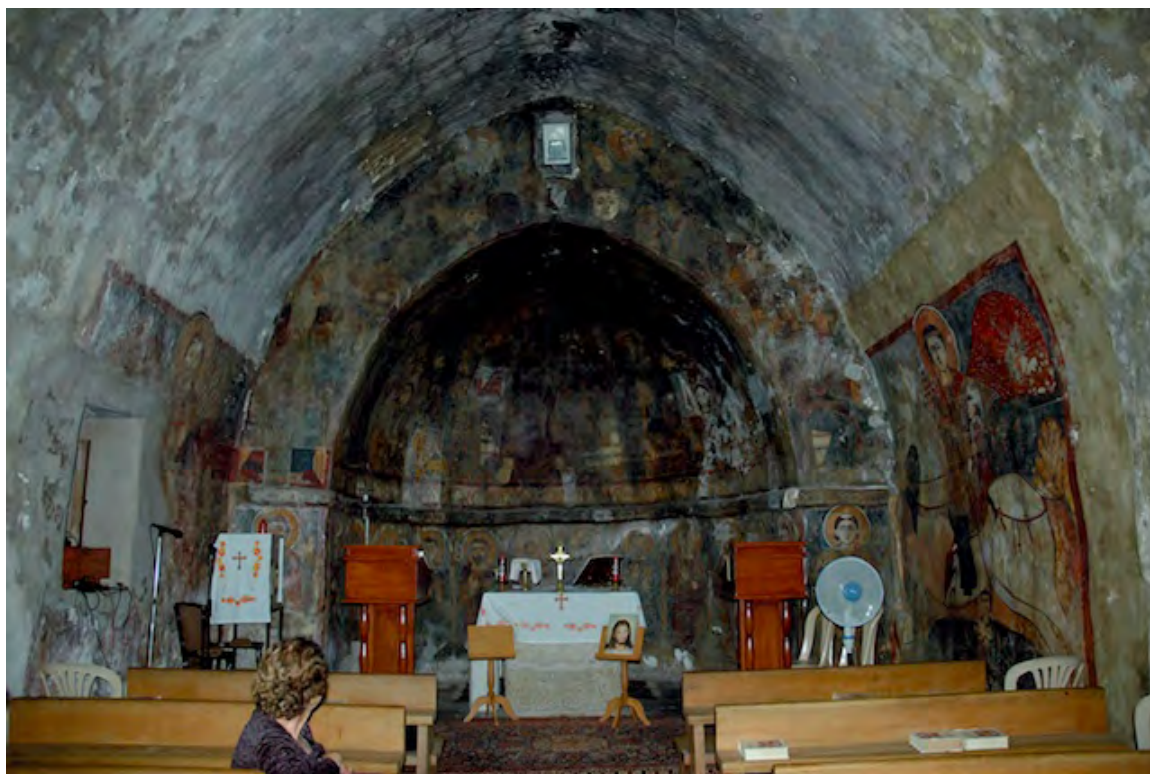


Figure 58. Interior looking towards apse, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon.



Figure 59. Donor portrait with St. Theodore, wall painting in naos, late 13<sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon.



Figure 60. Donor portrait with St. George, wall painting in naos, late 13<sup>th</sup> century, Church of Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, Lebanon.



Figure 61. St. George with accompanying rider, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.



Figure 62. St. Theodore slaying a dragon, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.



Figure 63. St. Sergios, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.



Figure 64. St. Demetrios (?), wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.



Figure 65. Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.



Figure 66. Detail of the saved, Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.



Figure 67. Detail of the damned, Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek, Syria.



Figure 68. Detail of the saved, Last Judgment, wall painting in naos, 1208/09, Deir Mar Musa, Nbek , Syria.





Figure 69. View of the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea and Mount Qulzim, Wadi al-'Arbah, Egypt.



Figure 70. Interior view of church from the naos looking into the khurus, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 71. St. Victor, St. Menas, St. Theodore Stratelates, St. Sisinnios, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 72. Abba Pishoi, Abba John, and Abba Pisentius. wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 73. Detail of widow's children with Coptic inscription, St. Theodore Stratelates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 74. Detail of shield, St. Theodore Stratelates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 75. St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 76. St. George slaying Euchios, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 77. Detail of angel, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 78. Detail of Julian the Apostate, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.





Figure 79. St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, illustration in manuscript of homilies and hagiographical texts, 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century, Vatican MS Copto 66, f. 687 v.



Figure 80. St. Mercurios slaying Julian the Apostate, icon, Egypt, 10th-13th century, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, Egypt.



Figure 81. Detail of Sts. Basil and Gregory, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 82. Detail of *cenocephales*, St. Mercurios, wall painting in khurus, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 83. St. George slaying the Jew, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 84. St. Phoebammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 85. Detail of St. Phoebammon slaying Pasicrates, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.



Figure 86. Detail of St. Claudius slaying Diocletian, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.





Figure 87. John of Heraclea (?) slaying Euctychianos, wall painting in naos, 1232/1233, Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, Egypt.

## Bibliography

- Abd al-Masih, Yassa, and O.H.E. Burmester. "History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church." In *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, edited by Aziz S. Atiya and Antoine Khater O.H.E. Burmester. Cairo: Publications de la Société d'archéologie copte, 1943-1970.
- Abulafia, David. "Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity, c. 1100-c. 1500." In *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, edited by Nora Berend and David Abulafia, 1-34. Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002.
- . "Trade and Crusade, 1050-1250." In *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period*, edited by M. Goodich, S. Menache and S. Schein, 1-20. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- al-Shābushtī, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Abū l-Ḥasan. *Kitāb al-diyārāt*, edited by Kūrķīs 'Awwād. Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1966.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 2006.
- Assfalg, Julius. *Die Ordnung des Priestertums: Ein altes liturgisches Handbuch der koptischen Kirche*. Le Caire: Centre d'Etudes Orientales de la Custodie Franciscaine de Terre-Sainte, 1955.
- Assmann, Jan. "Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability." In *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, edited by Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, 25-36. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Atiya, Aziz S. "Crusades, Copts and the." In *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, edited by Aziz S. Atiya, 663-665. New York: Macmillan, 1991.
- Aufhauser, Joannes B. *Miracula S. Georgii*. Lipsiae: Teubner, 1913.
- Auzépy, Marie-France. "L'évolution de l'attitude face au miracle à Byzance (VII<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècle)." Paper presented at Miracles, Prodiges et Merveilles au Moyen Age. XXV<sup>e</sup> Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S., Orléans, juin 1994 1995.
- Ayoub, Mahmoud. "Dhimmah in Qur'an and Hadith." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 37-82. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- Bachrach, Bernard S., and David S. Bachrach. *The Gesta Tancredi of Ralph of Caen: A History of the Normans on the First Crusade*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
- Bakirtzis, Ch. "Byzantine Ampullae from Thessaloniki." In *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, edited by Robert Ousterhout, 140-149. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.
- Bakirtzis, Charalambos. "Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 175-192.
- Baraz, Daniel. "The Incarnated Icon of Saidnaya Goes West." *Le Muséon* 108 (1995): 181-191.

- Baumer, Christoph. *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*. New York: I. B. Taurus, 2006.
- Becker, C. H. "Christian Polemic and the Formation of Islamic Dogma." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert G. Hoyland, 241-258. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.
- Bernardini, L. "Les donateurs des églises de Cappadoce." *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 118-140.
- Bolman, Elizabeth S. "The Coptic *Galaktotrophousa* as the Medicine of Immortality." Dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1997.
- . "The Coptic *Galaktotrophousa* Reconsidered." In *Coptic Studies on the Treshold of a New Millennium*, edited by M. Immerzeel and J. Van der Vliet, 1173-1184. Leuven: Peeters, 2004.
- . "The Enigmatic Coptic *Galaktotrophousa* and the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Egypt." In *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, edited by Maria Vassilaki, 13-22. London: Ashgate, 2005.
- . "Joining the Community of Saints: Monastic Paintings and Ascetic Practice in Early Christian Egypt." In *Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism*, edited by Sheila McNally, 41-56. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001.
- . *The Milk of Salvation? Gender, Audience and the Nursing Virgin Mary in the Eastern Mediterranean*. In progress.
- , ed. *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- . "Scetis at the Red Sea: Depictions of Monastic Genealogy in the Monastery of St. Antony." In *Christianity and Monasticism in Wadi al-Natrun*, edited by Maged S. A. Mikhail and Mark Mousa, 143-158. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009.
- . "Scetis at the Red Sea: Depictions of Monastic Genealogy in the Monastery of St. Antony." *Coptica* 3 (2004): 1-16.
- . "Theodore, 'The Writer of Life,' and the Program of 1232/1233." In *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, edited by Elizabeth S. Bolman, 37-76. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- . "Theodore's Program in Context: Egypt and the Mediterranean Region." In *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, edited by Elizabeth S. Bolman, 91-102. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- . "Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions." In *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, edited by Sharon E. J. Gerstel, 73-106. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006.
- Bonner, Campbell. *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*. Vol. 49, University of Michigan Studies Humanistic Series. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.
- Bonner, Michael. *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

- Boyd, Susan A., and Marlia Mundell Mango, eds. *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium: Papers of the Symposium Held May 16-18, 1986, at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.* Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1992.
- Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Translated by Siân Reynolds. 2 vols. New York: Harper and Row, 1973-1977.
- Brauer, Ralph W. "Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 85, no. 6 (1995): 1-73.
- . "Geography in the Medieval Muslim World: Seeking a Basis for Comparison of the Development of the Natural Sciences in Different Cultures." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 26 (1992): 73-110.
- Brightman, E. F. *Liturgies, Eastern and Western*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Brooks, E. W. *Acts of St. George, Syriac and English*. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006.
- Brown, Peter. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Budge, Ernest A. Wallis. *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l Faraj the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932.
- . *Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*. London: British Museum, 1914.
- . *George of Lydda: The Patron Saint of England*. London: Luzac & Co., 1930.
- . *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Texts*. London: D. Nutt, 1888.
- . *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. London: British Museum, 1915.
- Bushnell, Amy Turner. "Gates, Patterns, and Peripheries: The Field of Frontier Latin America." In *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, edited by Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, 15-28. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Camille, Michael. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Campagnolo-Pothitou, M. "Les échanges de prisonniers entre Byzance et l'Islam aux IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles." *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 7 (1995): 1-55.
- Campbell, Elizabeth. "The Heaven of Wine: Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East." Dissertation, University of Washington, 2009.
- Campbell, Stephen J., and Stephen J. Milner. "Art, Identity, and Cultural Translation in Renaissance Italy." In *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City*, edited by Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, 1-13. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Canard, Marius. "La guerre sainte dans le monde islamique et dans le monde chrétien." *Revue africaine* (1936): 605-623.
- Canepa, Matthew P. "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among Ancient and Early Medieval Visual Cultures." *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010): 7-30.
- . *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009.

- Caner, Daniel. *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
- Carr, Annemarie Weyl. "Byzantines and Italians on Cyprus: Images from Art." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 339-357.
- . "Court Culture and Cult Icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople." In *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, edited by Henry Maguire, 81-100. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997.
- . "Iconography and Identity: Syrian Elements in the Art of Crusader Cyprus." *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 127-151.
- . "Perspectives on Visual Culture in Early Lusignan Cyprus: Balancing Art and Archaeology." In *Archaeology and the Crusades*, edited by Peter Edbury and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 63-82. Athens: Pierides Foundation, 2007.
- Cavadini, John C., ed. *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.
- Chatterjee, Paroma. "Narrating Sanctity: The Narrative Icon in Byzantium and Italy." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007.
- Cheyne, Jean-Claude. "Le culte de Saint Théodore chez les officiers de l'armée d'Orient." In *Byzantium, State and Society in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, edited by Anna Avramea, Angelike Laiou and E. Chrysos, 137-153. Athens: Byzantine Institute, 2003.
- . "Par Saint Georges, par Saint Michel." In *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*, edited by Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche, 115-134. Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2002.
- Clédat, Jean. *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1904.
- Cohen, Mark R. "What Was the Pact of Umar? A Literary-Historical Study." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100-157.
- Cohen, Mark R., and Sasson Somekh. "Interreligious Majlis in Early Fatimid Egypt." In *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, edited by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Mark R. Cohen, Sasson Somekh and Sydney H. Griffith, 128-136. Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999.
- Collins, Kristen M. "Ascension of Christ." In *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins, 130-133. Los Angeles: The Paul J. Getty Museum, 2006.
- Comnena, Anna. *Alexiad*. Translated by E. Sewter. London: Penguin, 1969.
- Constable, Olivia Remi. "Funduq, Fondaco, and the Khan in the Wake of Christian Commerce and Crusade." In *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, edited by Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, 146-157. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001.
- Constantinou, Stavroula. "The Morphology of Healing Dreams: Dream and Therapy in Byzantine Collections of Miracle Stories." In *Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond*, edited by C. Angelidi. Aldershot: Ashgate, in press.
- Cormack, Robin. *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks, and Shrouds*. London: Reaktion Books, 1997.

- Cormack, Robin, and Stavros Mihalarias. "A Crusader Painting of St. George: "maniera greca" or "lingua franca"." *Burlington Magazine* 126 (1984): 132-139.
- Cotsonis, John. "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth Century)." *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 383-497.
- Cramer, J. A. "Appendix ad excerpta poetica: codex 352 suppl." In *Anecdota Graeca e Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecae Regiae Parisinae*. Oxford: Academic Typographs, 1841.
- Crisafulli, Virgil S., and John W. Nesbitt. *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Crone, Patricia, and Shmuel Moreh. *The Book of Strangers: Medieval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia*. Princeton, N.J.: Markus Weiner, 2000.
- Cuffel, Alexandra. "Henceforward all Generations will call me Blessed': Medieval Christian Tales of Non-Christian Marian Veneration." *Mediterranean Studies* 12 (2003): 37-60.
- Cutler, Anthony. "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Invisible Muslim and Christian Self-Fashioning in the Culture of Outremer." In *France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades*, edited by Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney, 253-281. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- . "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 245-276.
- . "Visual Communities in Byzantium and Medieval Islam." In *Visions of Community in the Pre-Modern World*, edited by Nbek . Honre, 37-73. Notre Dame, I.Nbek .: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.
- d'Aguilers, Raymond. *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*. Translated by John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968.
- Dagron, Gilbert. *Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle: Texte grec, traduction et commentaire*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1978.
- Davis, Stephen J. *The Cult of St. Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . "Variations on an Egyptian Female Martyr Legend: History, Hagiography, and the Gendered Politics of Medieval Arab Religious Identity." In *Writing "True Stories": Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, edited by Arietta Papaconstantinou, 205-218. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010.
- de Pinoteau, Hervé. "Heraldische Untersuchungen zum Wappenpokal." In *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, edited by Thilo Ulbert, 77-86. Mainz: Verlag, 1990.
- Debié, Muriel. "Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation." *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 93-114.
- Degen, Rainer. "Die Inscriften." In *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, edited by Thilo Ulbert, 65-76. Mainz: Verlag, 1990.
- Delehaye, Hippolyte. *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*. New York: Arno, 1909. Reprint, 1975.

- . "Les recueils antiques de miracles des saints." *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925): 1-85.
- . "Martyrs of Egypt." *Analecta Bollandiana* 40 (1922): 5-154, 299-364.
- den Heijer, Johannes. "Miraculous Icons and their Historical Background." In *Coptic Art and Culture*, edited by H. Hondelink, 89-100. Cairo: Shouhdy Publishing House, 1990.
- . "Relations between Copts and Syrians in the Light of Recent Discoveries at Dayr as-Suryan." In *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August - 2 September 2000*, edited by Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet, 929-944. Leuven: Peeters, 2004.
- Depuydt, Leo. *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Leuven: Peeters, 1993.
- . *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Album of Photographic Plates*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Leuven: Peeters, 1993.
- Détorakis, Th., and J. Mossay. "Un office byzantin inédit pour ceux qui sont morts à la guerre, dans le *Cod.Sin.Gr* 734-735." *Museon* 101 (1998): 183-211.
- Devos, Paul. "Un récit des miracles de S. Ménas en Copte et en Éthiopien." *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959): 451-463.
- Dodd, Erica Cruikshank. *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2001.
- . *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon, Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004.
- Drake, H. A. "Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance." *Past and Present* 153 (1996): 3-36.
- Drescher, James. *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary*. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1946.
- Eastmond, Antony. "Art and Frontiers Between Byzantium and the Caucasus." In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, edited by Sarah T. Brooks, 154-169. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- . "Body vs. Column: The Cult of St. Symeon Stylites." In *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 87-100. Ashgate: Varorium, 1999.
- . "Ivory Pyx with Marytrdom of St. Menas." In *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, edited by David Buckton, 74, cat. 65. London: British Museum Press, 1994.
- Ebied, Rifaat, and David Thomas, eds. *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Edelby, Néophyte. "The Legislative Autonomy of Christians in the Islamic World." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 37-82. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- Efthymiadis, Stephanos. "Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles: A Chronological and Bibliographic Survey." *Symbolae Osbenses* 74 (1999): 195-211.

- el-Hayek, Elias. "Struggle for Survival: The Maronites of the Middle Ages." In *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, 407-422. Toronto: Pontifical Institute Medieval Studies, 1990.
- el-Leithy, Tamer. "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293--1524 A.D." Dissertation, Princeton University, 2005.
- Ellenblum, Ronnie. "Were There Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages?" In *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, edited by David Abulafia and Nora Berend, 105-119. Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002.
- Elsner, Jaś. "Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Antique Jewish Art and Early Christian Art." *Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003): 114-128.
- Entwistle, Christopher. "Gilded Plaque with St Theodore." In *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, edited by David Buckton, 147-148, cat. 160. London: British Museum Press, 1994.
- Entwistle, Christopher, and David Buckton. "Pilgrim-Flask with Soldier-Saints and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre." In *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, edited by David Buckton, 187. London: British Museum Press, 1994.
- Evans, Helen C. "Imperial Aspirations: Armenian Cilicia and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century." In *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, edited by Anthony Eastmond, 243-258. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001.
- Evetts, B. T. A. *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abû Şâlih the Armenian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895.
- Festugière, A. J. *Collections grecques de miracles: Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges*. Paris: Picard, 1971.
- Fiey, Jean Maurice. *Saints syriaques*. Edited by Lawrence I. Conrad, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam. Princeton: Darwin Press, Inc., 2004.
- Flood, Finbarr Barry. *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Flori, Jean. *Guerre sainte, jihad, croisade: violence et religion dans le christianisme et l'islam*. Paris: Le Seuil, 2002.
- Flusin, Bernard. *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1992.
- Folda, Jaroslav. *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- . "Crusader Frescoes at Crac des Chevaliers and Marqab Castle." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36 (1982): 177-210.
- . "Icon with Saint George and the Young Boy of Mytilene." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 395. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- . "Icon with Saint Sergios on Horseback, with Kneeling Female Donor." In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, edited by Helen C. Evans, 347, cat. 229. New York: Yale University Press, 2004.



- . "Two-Sided Icon with the Virgin Hodegetria and Saints Sergios and Bakchos." In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, edited by Helen C. Evans, 375, cat. 230. New York: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Foss, Clive. "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 129-151.
- Fowden, Elizabeth K. *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.
- . "Sharing Holy Places." *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002): 124-146.
- Gabra, Gawdat. *Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture*. New York: American University at Cairo Press, 2002.
- Gaddis, Michael. *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Geary, Patrick. "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 169-194. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Georgopoulou, Maria. "Orientalism and Crusader Art: Constructing a New Canon." *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 3 (1991): 289-321.
- Gerry, Katherine B. "Pilgrim Flask of St. Sergios." In *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, edited by Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and James Robinson, 44, cat. 24. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Gerstel, Sharon E. J. "Art and Identity in Medieval Morea." In *Crusaders from the Perspective of the Byzantine and Muslim Worlds*, edited by Angeliki Laiou, 263-285. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001.
- . *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*. Seattle: College Art Association and University of Washington Press, 1999.
- Godlewski, Włodimierz. "Les peintures de l'église de l'Archange Gabriel à Naqlun." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 39 (2000): 89-101.
- Goitein, S. D. "Minority Selfrule and Government Control in Islam." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 159-174. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- Goodich, Michael E. *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
- Grabar, Oleg. "About a Bronze Bird." In *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, edited by Thelma K. Thomas and Elizabeth Sears, 117-125. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- . "The Crusades and the Development of Islamic Art." In *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, edited by Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, 235-246. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001.
- . "Different but Compatible Ends." *Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 396-399.
- . "Jerusalem Elsewhere." In *Jerusalem, 173-185*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2005. Reprint, 2005.
- . "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange." In *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*,

- edited by Vladimir P. Goss and Christine Verzár Hornstein, 441-445. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986.
- . "The Shared Culture of Objects." In *Byzantine Court Culture, 829 to 1204*, edited by Henry Maguire, 115-129. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Graf, Georg. *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. 5 vols. Vatican City: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1944-1953.
- Greene, Molly. *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Greenfield, R. P. H. "Saint Sisinnios, the Archangel Michael and the Femal Demon Gylou. The Typology of the Greek Literary Sources." *Byzantina* 15 (1989): 83-142.
- Gregg, Robert C. *Athanasius, The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus*. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.
- Grierson, Philip. *Byzantine Coins*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982.
- Griffith, Sidney H. "Answering the Call of the Minaret: Christian Apologetics in the World of Islam." In *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, edited by J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre - van den Berg and T. M. Van Lint, 91-126. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.
- . *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1992.
- . "Christians, Muslims, and Neo-Martyrs: Saints' Lives and Holy Land History." In *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, edited by A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa, 163-207. Jerusalem: Yad Ihak Ben Zvi, 1998.
- . *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- . "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 175-200. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- . "The Handwriting on the Wall: Graffiti in the Church of St. Antony." In *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, edited by Elizabeth S. Bolman, 185-194. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- . "Images, Islam, and Christian Icons: A Moment in the Christian/Muslim Encounter in Early Islamic Times." In *La Syrie de Byzance à Islam, VII<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 121-138. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1992.
- . "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period." In *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, 13-65. Wiesbaden, 1999.
- . "Muhammad and the Monk Baḥīrā: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times." *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 146-174.
- . "The 'Philosophical Life' in Tenth Century Baghdad: The Contribution of Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī *Kitāb tahdhīb al-akhlāq*." In *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, edited by David Thomas, 129-150. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

- . *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons Written in Arabic by Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harrān (C.755-C. 830 A.D.)*, Eastern Christian Texts in Translation. Louvain: Peeters, 1997.
- Griveau, Robert. "Les Fêtes des Melchites, par Abou Rîhan al-Birouni." *Patrologia Orientalis* 10 (1915): 291-314.
- Grossmann, Peter. *Abū Mīnā*. Mainz am Rhein: P. on Zabern, 1989.
- Grotowski, Piotr. "The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art." *Series Byzantina* 1 (2003): 27-77.
- Grotowski, Piotr Ł. *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*. Translated by Richard Brzezinski. 2010.
- Hahn, Cynthia. "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines." *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (1997): 1079-1106.
- Haldon, John. "The Miracles of Aretmios and Contemporary Attitudes: Context and Significance." In *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories*, edited by Virgil S. Cristafulli and John W. Nesbitt., 33-75. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- . *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- . *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204*. London: UCLA Press, 1999.
- Halperin, Charles J. "The Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984): 442-466.
- Halsall, P. "Women's Bodies, Men's Souls: Sanctity and Gender in Byzantium." Dissertation, Fordham University, 1999.
- Hamilton, Bernard. "Our Lady of Saidnaiya: An Orthodox Shrine Revered by Muslims and Knights Templar at the Time of the Crusades." In *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History: Papers Read at the 1998 Summer Meeting and the 1999 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, edited by Robert Nbek . Swanson, 207-215. Woodbridge, UK, 2000.
- Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches." *Byzantion* 58 (1988): 295-308.
- Hasluck, F. W. *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929.
- Helms, Mary. "Essay on Objects: Interpretations of Distance Made Tangible." In *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, edited by Stuart B. Schwartz, 355-377. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Hélou, Nada. "L'icône bilatérale de la Vierge de Kaftoun au Liban: Une oeuvre d'art syro-byzantin à l'époque des croisés." *Chronos* 7 (2003): 101-131.
- Hélou, Nada, and Mat Immerzeel. "Kaftoun 2004: The Wall Paintings." *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 16 (2005): 453-458.
- Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*. Routledge: New York, 1999, 2000.
- Hirschfeld, Yizhar. *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Hoffman, Eva R. "Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory." *Gesta* XLIII, no. 2 (2004): 129-142.

- . *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.
- . "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth through the Twelfth Century." *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 17-50.
- Hogel, Christian. "The Redaction of Symeon Metaphrastes: Literary Aspects of the Metaphrastic Martyria." In *Metaphrastes: Redactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography*, 7-21. Oslo: The Research Council of Norway, 1996.
- . *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization*. Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Press, 2002.
- Horden, Peregrine, and Nicholas Purcell. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Hoyland, Robert. "Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography in the First Abbasid Century: An Inquiry into Inter-Cultural Traffic." *Aram* 3 (1991): 211-233.
- Hunt, Lucy-Anne. "Christian Art in Greater Syria and Egypt: A Triptych of the Ascension with Military Saints Reattributed." *al-Masaq* 12 (2000): 1-36.
- . "A Woman's Prayer to St. Sergios in Latin Syria: Interpreting a Thirteenth-Century Icon at Mount Sinai." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 51 (1991): 96-145.
- Ibn al-'Assāl, al-Mu'taman. "Summary of the Principles of Religion (*Maju'uṣūl al-dīn*)." edited by A. Wadi'. Cairo and Jerusalem: The Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, 1997-1998.
- Ignace, Dick. "La passion arabe de S. Antoine Ruwah, néo-martyr de Damas († déc 799)." *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 109-133.
- Immerzeel, Mat. "Divine Cavalry: Mounted Saints in Middle Eastern Christian Art." In *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations*, edited by Krijnie Ciggaar and Herman Teule, 265-286. Leuven: Peeters, 2003.
- . "Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria." *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 29-60.
- . *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta. Leiden: Peeters, 2009.
- . "Medieval Wall Paintings in Lebanon: Donors and Artists." *Chronos* 10 (2004): 7-47.
- . "The Monastery of Saydnaya and its Icon." *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 13-26.
- . "Some Remarks about the Name of the Monastery and an Enigmatic Scene." *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 127-133.
- Immerzeel, Matt. "Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria." *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 29-60.
- Innemée, Karel. "Recent Discoveries of Wall-paintings in Deir Al-Surian." *Hugoye*, no. 2 (1998).
- Jacoby, David. "Before Louis IX: Aspects of Crusader Art at St. Jean d'Acre, 1191-1244." In *France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades*, edited by Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney, 138-160. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

- James, Liz. "Bearing Gifts from the East: Imperial Relic Hunters Abroad." In *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, edited by Anthony Eastmond, 119-132. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001.
- Jaritz, Felicitas. *Die Arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archaologischen Instituts Kairo. Islamische Reihe. Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 1993.
- Jenkins-Madina, Marilyn. "Dagger." In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, edited by Helen C. Evans, 430, cat. 257. New York: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Johnson, Sarah Iles. "Riders in the Sky: Cavalier Gods and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century A.D." *Classical Philology* 87, no. 4 (1992): 303-321.
- Johnson, Scott Fitzgerald. *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Jolivet-Lévy, Catherine. "Hagiographie cappadocienne: A propos de quelques images nouvelles de Saint Hiéron et de Saint Eustathe." In *Eufósunon: afiéroma ston Manóle Hatzedáke*, 205-218. Athens: Ekdose tou tameíou arkaiologikon póron kai apallotrioseon, 1991.
- . *La Cappadoce: Mémoire de Byzance*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 1997.
- Jotischky, A. "History and Memory as Factors in Greek Orthodox Pilgrimage to the Holy Land Under Crusader Rule." In *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, edited by R. Nbek . Swanson, 110-112. Suffolk: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2000.
- Jubayr, Ibn. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. Translated by R. J. C. Broadhurst. London: The Camelot Press, Ltd., 1952.
- Kafadar, Cemal. *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Kalavreou-Maxeiner, Ioli. *Byzantine Icons in Steatite*. Wien: Verlag, 1985.
- Kalavrezou, Ioli. "The Harbaville Triptych." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 133-134, cat. 80. New York: Abrams, 1997.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst H. "Gods in Uniform." *Proceedings fo the American Philosophical Society* 105 (1961): 368-393.
- Katsarelias, Dimitrios G. "Cameo with Saint George and Saint Demetrios Blessed by Christ." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 178, cat. 132. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- . "Enkolpion Reliquary with St. Demetrios." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 167-168, cat. 116. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- Kazhdan, Alexander. "Military Saints." In *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, edited by Alexander Kazhdan, 1374. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- . "The Noble Origin of Saint Menas." *Byzantina* 13, no. 1 (1985): 667-671.
- Kazhdan, Alexander, and Henry Maguire. "Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 1-22.
- Kedar, Benjamin Z. "Convergences of Oriental Christian, Muslim and Frankish Worshippers: The Case of Saydnaya." In *De Sion Exhibit lex et verbum domini de*

- Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, edited by Yitzak Hen, 59-69. Brepols: Turnhout, 2001.
- . *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . "Latins and Oriental Christians in the Frankish Levant." In *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land First-Fifteenth Centuries CE*, edited by A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa, 208-222. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998.
- Kennedy, Hugh. "The Melkite Church from the Islamic Conquest to the Crusades: Continuity and Adaptation in the Byzantine Legacy." In *The 17th International Byzantine Congress*, 325-343. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986.
- Kennedy, Philip F. *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Key Fowden, Elizabeth. *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- . "The Lamp and the Wine Flask: Early Muslim Interest in Christian Monasticism." In *Islamic Cross-Pollinations: Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, edited by James E. Montgomery, 1-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Khater, Antoine. "Les Miracles des Saints Serge et Bacchus." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 15 (1958-60): 101-123.
- Kilpatrick, Hilary. "Monasteries through Muslim Eyes: The *Diyārāt* Books." In *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule*, edited by David Thomas, 19-38. Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Kleinbauer, W. E. "The Orants in the Mosaic Decoration of the Rotunda at Thessalonike: Martyr Saints or Donors?" *Cahiers Archéologiques* 30 (1982).
- Kohlberg, Etan. "Medieval Muslim Views on Martyrdom." In *Afdeeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe reeks*. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1997.
- . "Shahid." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by H. A. R. Gibb, 203-307. Leiden: Brill, 1960.
- Kuhn, K. H., and W. J. Tait. *Thirteen Coptic Acrostic Hymns from Manuscript M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library*. Oxford: The Griffith Institute, 1996.
- Kühnel, Gustav. *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988.
- Laiou, Angeliki E. "Byzantine Trade with Christians and Muslims During the Crusades." In *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, edited by Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, 158-197. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001.
- Laurent, Vitalien. "Note additionnelle: l'inscription de l'église saint-Georges de Bélisérana." *Revue des Études byzantines* 26 (1968): 367-371.
- Leemans, Johan, and Pauline Allen. "Let Us Die that We May Live": *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Lemerle, Paul. "Byzance et la Croisade." In *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche*, 595-620. Florence, 1955.

- . *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*. 2 vols. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979.
- Leroy, Jules. "Découvertes de peintures chrétiennes en Syrie." *Les annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* 25, no. 1-2 (1975): 95-112.
- . *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés*. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1974.
- . *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient: album*. Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1964.
- . *Les peintures des couvents du désert d'Esna*. Vol. 1, La peinture murale chez les coptes. Cairo: IFAO, 1975.
- LeStrange, Guy. *Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land*. Beirut: Khayats Oriental Reprints, 1965.
- Little, Charles T. "Icon with Saint Demetrios." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 135, cat. 81. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- MacEvitt, Christopher. *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- MacGregor, James B. "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200." *Church History* 73, no. 2 (2004): 317-345.
- Mack, Rosamund E. "Oriental Script in Italian Paintings." In *Bazaar to Piazza*, 51-79. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
- Magoulias, Harry J. *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984.
- Maguire, Henry. *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- . "The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 205-214.
- Makariou, Sophie. "Calice." In *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002*, 108. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001.
- . "Coupe ou géméliion." In *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002*, 107. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001.
- . "Encensoir." In *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002*, 109. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001.
- . "La trouvaille de Rusâfa'." In *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002*, 106-109. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001.
- . "Patène." In *L'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002*, 109. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2001.
- Malone, Edward E. "The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr." Catholic University of America, 1950.

- Mango, Cyril. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.
- Marcuzzo, Giacinto Būlus. *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hāšimī à Jérusalem vers 820*, Textes et Études sur l'Orient Chrétien. Rome 1986.
- Mark-Weiner, Temily. "Narrative Cycles of the Life of St. George in Byzantine Art." Dissertation, New York University, 1977.
- Maspéro, Jean, and Étienne Drioton. *Fouilles exécutées à Baouit*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1932, 1943.
- Mayer, Hans Eberhard. "The Origins of the Lordships of Ramla and Lydda in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem." *Speculum* 60, no. 3 (1985): 537-552.
- McCullough, John C. "Appendix I. The Syriac Inscriptions." In *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, edited by Erica Cruikshank Dodd, 145-155. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2001.
- Meinardus, Otto. *The Copts in Jerusalem*. Cairo: Commission on Oecumenical Affairs of the See of Alexandria, 1960.
- . "A Study of the Relics of Saints of the Greek Orthodox Church." *Oriens christianus* 54 (1970).
- Meri, Josef W. *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . *A Lonely Wayfarer's Guide to Pilgrimage: 'Alī Bakr al-Harawī's Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Ma'rifat al-Ziyārāt*. Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, Inc., 2004.
- . "Re-Appropriating Sacred Space: Medieval Jews and Muslims Seeking Elijah and al-Khidr." *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 3 (1999): 237-264.
- Metcalf, David M. *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*. 2nd ed. London: University of Oxford Ashmolean Museum, 1995.
- . "Islamic, Byzantine, and Latin Influences in the Iconography of Crusader Coins and Seals." In *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations II. Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle in May 1997*, 163-175. Leuven: Peeters, 1999.
- Micheau, François. "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century): Copts, Melkites, Nestorians, and Jacobites." In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Michael Angold, 373-403. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Mondésert, C. "Inscriptions et objets chrétiens de Syrie." *Syria* 37 (1960): 116-130.
- Moralee, Jason. "The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 2 (2006): 183-215.
- Morony, Michael G. "History and Identity in the Syrian Churches." In *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, edited by J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre - van den Berg and T. M. Van Lint, 1-34. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.
- Mouriki, Doula. "Thirteenth-Century Icon Painting in Cyprus." *The Griffon*, no. 1-2 (1985-86): 9-112.



- . "The Wall Paintings of the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas, Cyprus." In *Byzanz und der Westen*, edited by I. Hutter, 171-214. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984.
- Nasrallah, Laura. "Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki: Interpreting the Early Christian Rotunda." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, no. 4 (2005).
- Nau, François. "Un martyrologe et douze ménologes syriaques." *Patrologia Orientalis* 10 (1915): 3-166.
- Nelson, Robert S. "An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries." *Art Bulletin* 65 (1989): 201-218.
- Nesbitt, John W. "Apotropaic Devices on Byzantine Lead Seals in the Collections of Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art." In *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton*, edited by Christopher Entwistle, 107-113. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003.
- Nicolle, David C. *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050-1350*. Vol. 2. White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1988.
- . *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050-1350*. Vol. 1. White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1988.
- Nirenberg, David. *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Noth, Albrecht. "Problems of Differentiation between Muslims and Non-Muslims: Re-reading the 'Ordinances of 'Umar' (*Al-Shurūṭ al-'umariyya*)." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 103-124. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- O'Leary, de Lacy. *The Saints of Egypt*. Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1937. Reprint, 1974.
- O'Shea, Stephen. *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World*. New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2006.
- Obolenski, Dimitri. "The Cult of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slav Relations." *Balkan Studies* 15 (1974): 3-20.
- Oikonomides, Nicholas. "Le déblouement de saint Théodore et les villes d'Euchaïta and d'Euchaneaia." *Analecta Bollandiana* 104 (1986): 327-335.
- Oikonomides, Nicolas. "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories." In *Peace and War in Byzantium*, edited by T. S. Miller and J. Nesbit, 62-88. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- Pancaroglu, Oya. "The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia." *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 151-164.
- Papaconstantinou, Arietta. "The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World?" In *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, edited by Rogert S. Bagnall, 350-367. Cambridge: University of Harvard, 2007.
- . "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 65-86.
- . *Le culte des saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides: L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001.
- . "'They Shall Speak the Arabic Language and Take Pride in it': Reconsidering the Fate of Coptic after the Arab Conquest." *Le Muséon* 120, no. 3-4 (2007): 273-299.

- Parani, Maria G. "Defining Personal Space: Dress and Accessories in Late Antiquity." In *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, edited by Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift and Toon Putzeys, 497-529. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- . *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Parry, Kenneth. "Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros on Image-Making as a Christian Imperative." *Byzantion* 59 (1989): 164-183.
- Pearson, Birger A. "The Coptic Inscriptions in the Church of St. Antony." In *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, edited by Elizabeth S. Bolman, 217-241. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Peers, Glenn. "Chapter 4: Saint George and His Iconic Bodies." In *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium*, 126-. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.
- . *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.
- Peeters, P. "Un miracle de SS. Serge et Théodore dans Faustus de Byzance." *Analecta Bollandiana* 39 (1921).
- Pentcheva, Bissera V. *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.
- Phokas, John. *The Pilgrimage of Joannes Phocas in the Holy Land (in the Year 1185 A.D.)*. Translated by Aubrey Stewart. London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1889.
- Piatnitsky, Yuri. "Icon with the Military Saints George, Theodore, and Demetrios." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 122-123, cat. 69. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- Pitarakis, Brigitte. *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales Byzantines en bronze*. Paris: Picard, 2006.
- . "Objects of Devotion and Protection." In *A People's History of Christianity. Byzantine Christianity*, edited by Derek Krueger, 164-181. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.
- Prawer, Joshua. "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The 'Minorities'." In *A History of the Crusades*, edited by Kenneth M. Setton, 117-192. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Prentice, W. K. *Greek and Latin Inscriptions, The Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900*. New York: Century, 1908.
- Pringle, Denys. *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Raymond, André. *Cairo*. Translated by Willard Wood. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Redford, Scott. "Byzantium and the Islamic World, 1261-1557." In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, edited by Helen C. Evans, 388-396. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- . "Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery." *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 219-236.

- Reinert, Stephen W. "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th-15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations." In *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, edited by Angelike Laiou, 125-150. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998.
- Reinink, Gerrit J. "East Syrian Historiography in Response to the Rise of Islam: The Case of John bar Penkaye's *Ktābā d-rēš mellē*." In *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, edited by J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre - van den Berg and T. M. Van Lint, 77-90. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.
- Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- . "Government and the Indigenous in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem." In *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, edited by Nora Berend and David Abulafia. Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002.
- Roggema, Barbara. "Muslims as Crypto-Idolaters - A Theme in the Christian Portrayal of Islam in the Near East." In *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule*, edited by David Thomas, 1-18. Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Romeny, Bas ter haar, Johannes den Heijer, Mat Immerzeel, and Stephan Westphalen. "Deir Mar Musa: The Inscriptions." *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 133-187.
- Rosenqvist, Jan Olof. *The Hagiographic Dossier of St Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154*, *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia*. Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1996.
- Rothaus, Richard. "Christianization and De-Paganization: The Late Antique Creation of a Conceptual Frontier." In *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, edited by Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan, 299-305. Aldershot: Varorium, 1996.
- Rubenson, Samuel. "Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt." *Medieval Encounters* 2, no. 1 (1996): 4-14.
- Ryden, Lennart. "New Forms of Hagiography: Heroes and Saints." Paper presented at the The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers, 1986.
- Sahas, Daniel J. "What an Infidel Saw that a Faithful Did Not: Gregory Dekapolites (d. 842) and Islam." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31 (1986): 47-67.
- Samuel, Bishop, and Abu Al Makarem. *History of the Churches and Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the Thirteenth Century*. Translated by Mina al-Shamaa' and rev. Mrs. Elizabeth. Cairo: Institute of Coptic Studies, Anba Reweis, 1992.
- Sanders, Paula. *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Sartre-Fauriat, A. "Georges, Serge, Élie et quelques autres saints connus et inédits de la province d'Arabie." In *Romanité et cité chrétienne: Permanences et mutations, intégration et exclusion du Ier au VIe siècle: Mélanges en l'honneur d'Yvette Duval*, 295-314. Paris: De Boccard, 2000.
- Schenke, Gesa. "Creating Local History: Coptic Encomia Celebrating Past Events." In *Writing "True Stories": Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, edited by Arietta Papaconstantinou, 21-30. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010.

- Ševčenko, Ihor. *Observations on the Study of Byzantine Hagiography in the Last Half Century or Two Looks Back and One Look Forward*. Toronto: Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies, 1995.
- Ševčenko, Nancy Patterson. "Art and Liturgy in the Later Byzantine Empire." In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Michael Angold, 127-153. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- . "Canon and Calendar: The Role of a Ninth-Century Hymnographer in Shaping the Celebration of the Saints." In *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, edited by Leslie Brubaker, 101-114. Burlington, VT: Aldershot, 1998.
- . *The Life of St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1983.
- . "The Vita Icon and the Byzantine Painter as Hagiographer." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999): 149-165.
- . "Vita Icons and 'Decorated' Icons of the Komnenian Period." In *Four Icons in the Menil Collection*, 56-69. Houston: Menil Foundation, 1992.
- Sharon, Moshe. "Ludd." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, 798-803. Leiden: Brill, 1960.
- Sigal, Pierre-André. "Histoire et hagiographie: Les Miracula aux XI<sup>e</sup> et au XII<sup>e</sup> siècles." *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest* 87 (1980): 41-49.
- Sizgorich, Thomas. "'Do Prophets Come with a Sword?' Conquest, Empire, and Historical Narrative in the Early Islamic World." *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 993-1015.
- . *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Skálová, Zuzana, and Gawdat Gabra. *Icons of the Nile Valley*. Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing Company, 2001.
- Skreslet II, Stanley H. "The Greeks in Medieval Islamic Egypt: A Melkite Community under the Patriarch of Alexandria (640-1095)." Dissertation, Yale University, 1988.
- Smith, Jonathan K. "What a Difference a Difference Makes." In *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, edited by Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, 3-48. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985.
- Snelders, Bas, and Adeline Jeudy. "Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia." *Eastern Christian Art* 3 (2006): 103-140.
- Southern, Richard W. *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Spier, Jeffrey. "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993): 25-62.
- Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1984.
- Stroumsa, Sarah. "Jewish Polemics against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 201-210. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- Talbot, Alice-Mary. "Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges and Its Art." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 135-165.

- Talbot, Alice-Mary, and Denis F. Sullivan. *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005.
- Taylor, David G. K. "Your Sweet Saliva is the Living Wine': Drink, Desire, and Devotion in the Syriac Wine Songs of Khākmīs Bar Qardāhē." In *The Syriac Renaissance*, edited by Herman Teule, Carmen Fotescu Tauwinkl, Bas ter Haar Romeny and J. J. Van Ginkel, 31-52. Leuven: Peeters, 2010.
- Teule, Herman. "The Syriac Renaissance." In *The Syriac Renaissance*, edited by Herman Teule, Carmen Fotescu Tauwinkl, Bas ter Haar Romeny and J. J. Van Ginkel, 1-30. Leuven: Peeters, 2010.
- Thierry, Nicole, and Michel Thierry. *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce région du Hasan Daği*. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1963.
- Thomas, Thelma K. "The Arts of Christian Communities in the Medieval Middle East." In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, edited by Helen C. Evans, 414-426. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- . "Christians in the Islamic East." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 364-372. New York: Abrams, 1997.
- Thorpe, Nigel, ed. *The Old French Crusade Cycle*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992.
- Tilley, Maureen A. *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996.
- Tolan, John V. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Toueir, Kassim. "Appendix II. The Arabic Inscriptions." In *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi*, edited by Erica Cruikshank Dodd, 156-179. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2001.
- Trombley, Frank. *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*. 2d ed. 2 vols 1993.
- Trombley, Frank R. "War, Society, and Popular Religion in Byzantine Anatolia (6th-13th Centuries)." In *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th-12th centuries)*, 97-139. Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1998.
- Troupeau, Gérard. "Les couvents chrétiens dans la littérature arabe." In *Etudes sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Age*, 265-279. Aldershot: Varorium, 1975.
- Ulbert, Thilo. *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiupolis*. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1984.
- . *Resafa III. Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*. Mainz: Verlag, 1990.
- Van Loon, Gertrud J. M. *The Gate of Heaven: Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Khurus of Coptic Churches*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1999.
- Vikan, Gary. "Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 65-86.
- Vila, David. "The Struggle Over Arabization in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography." *al-Masaq* 15 (2003): 35-46.
- Vryonis, Speros. "The Inscription of the Church of St. George of Beliserama." *Byzantina* 9 (1977): 9-22.

- Vyronis, Speros Jr. "The Panēgyris of the Byzantine Saint: A Study in the Nature of a Medieval Institution, its Origins and Fate." In *The Byzantine Saint: Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, edited by Sergei Hackel, 196-226. London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1981.
- Waardenburg, Jacques. "Muslim Studies of Other Religions: The Medieval Period." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, edited by Robert Hoyland, 211-240. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.
- Walker, Joel Thomas. *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Walter, Christopher. *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*. Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003.
- Walters, C. C. "Christian Paintings from Tebtunis." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 75 (1989): 191-208.
- Walters, Christopher. *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*. Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003.
- Ward, Benedicta. *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.
- . *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984.
- Weigand, E. "Der Kalenderfries von Hagios Georgios in Thessalonike." *Byzantinisch Zeitschrift* 39 (1939): 116-145.
- Weiner, Annette B. "Inalienable Wealth." *American Ethnologist* 12, no. 2 (1985): 210-227.
- Weitzmann, Kurt. "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 50-83.
- . "The Icons of the Period of the Crusades." In *The Icon*, edited by Kurt Weitzmann, 201-235. New York: Knopf, 1982.
- . "Icons on Mount Sinai." *Art Bulletin* 45 (1963): 179-203.
- . "Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (1963): 179-205.
- Weltecke, Dorothea. "Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity." *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 115-125.
- Wentzel, H. "Datierte und datierbare byzantinische Kameen." In *Festschrift für Friedrich Winkler*, 9-21, 1959.
- Werthmuller, Kurt J. *Coptic Identity and Ayyubid Politics in Egypt*. New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2010.
- Westphalen, Stephan. *Christliche Wandmalereien in Syrien: Qara and das Kloster Mar Yakub*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005.
- . "Deir Mar Musa: Die Malschichten 1-3." *Eastern Christian Art* 4 (2007): 99-126.
- Wilfong, Terry G. "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities." In *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, edited by C. F. Petry, 175-197. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Witt, Janette. *Werke der Alltagskultur Teil 1: Menasampullen*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2000.

- Wixom, William D. "Enkolpion." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 164, cat. 111. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- . "Enkolpion with Saint Demetrios and Saint Nestor." In *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, 161-162, cat. 108. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
- Wolf, Kenneth Baxter. *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Wolper, Ethel Sara. *Cities and Saints: Sufisim and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.
- Woodfin, Warren T. "An Officer and a Gentleman: Transformations in the Iconography of a Warrior Saint." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 111-144.
- Wortley, John. *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057: Introduction, Text and Notes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Yasin, Ann Marie. *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Zaborowski, Jason R. *The Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijōit: Assimilation and Conversion to Islam in Thirteenth-Century Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- . "From Coptic to Arabic in Medieval Egypt." *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008): 15-40.
- Zalesskaya, V. "Thessaloniskie ikon'i-eulogii i obraski epokhi latinsko imperii." In *The Pilgrims: Historical and Cultural Phenomenon of Pilgrimage*, 78-82. St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2001.
- Zanetti, Ugo. "Les icônes chez les théologiens de l'église copte." *Le Monde Copte* 19 (1991): 77-91.
- . *Les lectionnaires coptes annulés: Basse-Égypte*. Vol. 35. Louvain: Publications of the Orientalist Institute, 1985.
- Zeitler, Barbara. "Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Imagery in the Middle Ages." *The Art Bulletin* 76, no. 4 (1994): 680-694.
- Zibawi, Mahmoud. *Images de l'Égypte chrétienne. Iconologie copte*. Paris: Picard, 2003.
- Zuckerman, Constantine. "The Reign of Constantine V in the Miracles of St. Theodore the Recruit (BHG 1764)." *Revue des Études Byzantines* 46 (1988): 191-210.