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The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia*

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Abstract

The image of a figure on horseback impaling a large serpent or “dragon” was reincarnated over many centuries in medieval Anatolia, each reincarnation affirming the iconographic stability and contextual adaptability of the image. Tracing this image from the end of Late Antiquity to the establishment of Turkish polities in Anatolia reveals the wide horizon of identities and functions that characterizes this iconography of heroic sainthood. Appearing on amulets, coins, icons, secular courtly decoration, and in funerary settings, the equestrian dragon-slayer assumed multiple and parallel identities in Christian and Muslim contexts. These identities intersect, in turn, with analogous narratives of sainthood and heroism in which the dragon slayer plays a distinct role in forging associations between traditions. The visual and narrative representations of the dragon slayer speak to the psychological primacy of certain types of images, revealed by their ability to transcend the passage of time and peoples. In the case of medieval Anatolia, the manifestations of the equestrian dragon-slayer challenge easy assumptions about the nature of cultural encounter, difference, and assimilation. From mutation to regeneration, analysis of the visual and textual representations of the dragon slayer facilitates the mapping of complex cultural experiences in medieval Anatolia.

In the spring of 1555 the Flemish ambassador Baron Ghiselin de Busbecq and his entourage were traveling to eastern Anatolia to appear before Sultan Süleyman during the latter’s campaign against the Safavids.¹ In early April the embassy stopped at a dervish lodge in a village one day’s journey west of the town of Amasya. The Europeans stayed there overnight and were regaled by their hosts with the colorful story of a saint on horseback named “Chederle,” whose slaying of a dragon to save a maiden was said to have taken place nearby. Baron de Busbecq reported in his *Letters* that the dervishes held this saintly man to be identical with St. George in addition to being a companion of Alexander the Great. This multiplicity of identities prompted the cynical baron to postulate that “the Turks have no idea of chronology and dates, and make a wonderful mixture and confusion of all the epochs of history; if it occurs to them to do so, they will not scruple to declare that Job was master of ceremonies to King Solomon, and Alexander the Great his commander-in-chief, and they are guilty of even greater absurdities.”²

Quick to pass judgment, Busbecq remained ignorant of much else that he may have gleaned about a different kind of history during his visit to the lodge. In contrast, Hans Dernschwam, a self-financed Bohemian humanist in the company of the embassy, not only recorded a plan of this lodge with a distinct cruciform component but also documented old Greek inscriptions including the name Theodore from the site.³ Indeed, the village where the embassy stayed overnight was located near ancient Euchaïta, the city of the ruined sanctuary of St. Theodore who, along with St. George, is one of the dragon-slaying saints of eastern Christian lore. The dervish lodge had been founded in the fourteenth century by a Sufi master named Elvan Çelebi, a great-grandson of one Baba Ilyas who is credited with leading the heterodox uprising, the Baba’i revolt, against the Seljuks of Rum in the mid-thirteenth century and whose identity posthumously joined the company of the mythical. Hence Busbecq’s “Chederle,” who can be none other than Hızır-Ilyas, a savior saint of compound identity who had a special place in the popular belief systems of the Turks in Anatolia and whose image was seen to be reflected in the likes of Baba Ilyas. Thus, by the time of Busbecq’s voyage across north-central Anatolia in the sixteenth century, aspects of the cult that had once flourished at the nearby sanctuary of St. Theodore had been absorbed locally into Turco-Islamic beliefs and practices together with some inscriptional and decorative remains of the sanctuary, which were reused—and are still visible—in the architecture of the lodge.

This type of local transference exemplifies the versatile process of sociocultural recognition and regeneration of saintly identities that took place especially around cult sites, epitomizing the encounter of Christian and Turco-Islamic popular traditions in medieval Anatolia.⁴ The account of dragon slaying that Busbecq heard from the dervishes constitutes an early modern recension of an ancient story transmitted via a succession of interconnected and multilayered identifications characteristic of both the medieval cult of saints and the transmission of heroic narratives. The weblike complexity of these identifications is evident particularly in the case of the dragon-slaying saint-hero whose legend and iconography readily traversed the fluid cultural boundaries between Christian and Muslim societies of medieval Anatolia. These boundaries first emerged after the defeat of the Byzantine army by the forces



FIGURE 1. Relief carving of St. Theodore, 915–921, Church of the Holy Cross, Aght'amar (Van, Turkey) (photo: Der Nersessian, Aght'amar, Church of the Holy Cross, Fig. 50, by permission of the publisher).

of the Great Seljuk sultan Alparslan at Manzikert in 1071, allowing nomadic and opportunistic Turks to swiftly penetrate Anatolia. A precarious principality based in Nicea was established by a member of the extended Seljuk family as early as 1081. This early headlong Turkish political establishment in Anatolia was challenged not only by the Byzantines and the Crusaders but also by the competition among nascent rival Turkish polities including the Seljuks of Rum, the Danishmendids, and the Saltukids. The social and political viability of the Turkish populations in Anatolia was proven only by the second half of the next century, when the Rum Seljuks, now based in Konya, began to gain the upper hand over their rivals and create the necessary conditions for effective sociopolitical institutions and cultural products.

In visual culture, representations of equestrian dragon-slayers produced during the Turkish settlement of Anatolia between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries bring to light significant aspects of cross-cultural encounters at the popular level. The iconography of many of these images is very closely related to specimens from earlier and contemporaneous Byzantine, Armenian, and Georgian contexts that depict, with only minor variations, a figure mounted on a horse, his raised arm poised to thrust a spear diagonally into the gaping jaws of a threatening serpent or “dragon,” frequently represented with a pretzel-like knot in its midsection (Fig. 1). Examination of images of the equestrian dragon-slayer produced before and after the Turkish settlement of medieval Anatolia reveals the contextual adaptability of such images and their role as markers of cultural integration in the transformation of the land and its peoples.

Roots and Routes of Dragon Slayers in Medieval Anatolia

In a basic sense, successful dragon combat symbolizes the universal theme of humankind’s capacity to triumph over evil. By extension of this basic symbolism, the battle between man and beast, in both textual and visual traditions, came to be associated with Christian military saints as a motif that mirrored their spiritual triumph over the persecution inflicted by tyrant pagan rulers. It is improbable, however, that the feat of exterminating a dragon—or even a serpent—was ever an “original” aspect of the miracles attributed to these saints in their respective hagiographies. Scholars agree that the idea of this deed passed from pagan Antiquity into Early Christianity by means of various intermediaries and eventually joined the accretion of popular legends around military saints, probably most effectively through the agency of images.⁵ It is virtually impossible to delineate the chronological and geographical development of any type of representation, whether narrative or visual, with precision or certainty. Indeed, any attempt to tally up images with narratives reveals that, in the medieval Byzantine lands and the neighboring realms of Armenia and Georgia, visual and textual representations of the dragon slayer existed in a fluid relationship to each other.

In fact, the image of the equestrian dragon-slaying saint is rooted in an ancient tradition of magical amulets with so-called Holy Rider iconography, which appeared as early as the sixth century in Byzantine Syria and Palestine and which also circulated in Anatolia.⁶ These amulets with images of the generally unidentified Holy Rider from the pre-Iconoclastic period are iconographic precursors of the identifiable dragon-slaying military saints such as St. Theodore; the main difference is that, on the amulets, the spear is thrust, not at a serpent-dragon, but at a prostrate female demon with long hair. Inscriptions on some of these early amulets invoke Solomon and/or St. Sisinnios, allowing the Holy Rider to be identified with either or both of these figures. Solomon, through the use of his magical seal, was the archetypal exorciser of evil

demons, and he became the quintessential warrior-magician in syncretistic and popular Judeo-Christian traditions. St. Sisinnios appears to have been the first Christian saint who absorbed the magical dimension of Solomon's image as a horseman vanquishing a demon.⁷

Other instances of the Holy Rider from the early Byzantine period suggest a connection forged with the myth of Alexander the Great.⁸ In the pre-Iconoclastic period, such saintly heroic imagery was characterized by ambiguity and replication, becoming integrated into household magic as repetitive designs on textiles and everyday items probably perceived to constitute a direct connection to supernatural forces.⁹

In the post-Iconoclastic period, the enduring image of the equestrian demon/dragon-slayer was partly brought into line with the church's emphasis on the intercessory rather than autonomous function of such images. As a result, depictions of the equestrian dragon-slayer came to employ portrait types of individually identifiable military saints conceptualized, not as embodiments of magical powers, but as intercessors with the divine to whom prayers should be directed.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the "unorthodox" and ambiguous connection between the Holy Rider, Solomon, and St. Sisinnios persisted well into the twelfth century, as evinced by a group of amulets that are primarily attributed to Anatolia and Greece. A silver amulet in the Ashmolean Museum represents on one side a horseman impaling a female demon figure with a cross-shaped spear while a winged angel stands to one side (Fig. 2). The inscription on this side identifies the rider as St. Sisinnios. On the other side of the amulet, there are a number of images and magical devices and a legend referring to the Seal of Solomon.¹¹

Among the military saints, Theodore and George were most widely—though not exclusively—associated with the miracle of dragon slaying.¹² In the hagiographical tradition, St. Theodore clearly preceded St. George in acquiring this miracle. The earliest surviving text connecting St. Theodore with dragon slaying may be dated to the eighth century, whereas the earliest extant account of St. George killing a dragon to save a princess is found in a Georgian manuscript no earlier than the eleventh century.¹³ The earliest dated and identified visual equestrian representation of St. Theodore spearing a dragon is a relief depiction on the exterior of the tenth-century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar (Fig. 1).¹⁴ However, a number of undated and unidentified images may be regarded as the earliest representations of St. Theodore engaged in dragon slaying. On a number of seventh- to eighth-century lead seals—some inscribed with the name of Peter, bishop of Euchaita—a standing military saint spears a serpent on the ground, demonstrating the association of this miracle with the saint at his sanctuary.¹⁵

Two side panels of a ninth- or tenth-century Constantinopolitan triptych icon in St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai appear to bear out St. Theodore's comparatively earlier connection with dragon slaying and St. George's later acquisition of the same feat, probably through his association with



FIGURE 2. Silver amulet with the Holy Rider, Anatolia, 12th century, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980.53 (photo: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

St. Theodore within the cohort of military saints.¹⁶ The saints, identified by name and differentiated by their distinct portrait types, are represented in military costume on horseback, each wielding a spear. St. Theodore is represented in the act of impaling a serpent while St. George is dispatching an elderly male figure, probably the emperor Diocletian.¹⁷ The visual parallel of the pair of mounted military saints who mirror each other's action reinforces the conceptual parallel of the two vanquished evildoers, serpent and tyrant ruler. Although they appear to substantiate the notion that St. George post-dates St. Theodore in acquiring the miracle of dragon slaying, it is not possible to interpret these triptych images as illustrative of a specific phase in a diachronic evolution of either the iconography of the saints or the legends surrounding their cult. Above all else, the paired Sinai images seem to speak for the sway of pictorial symmetry that induced the visual and conceptual pairing of the two saints. In other words, as no narrative basis—or *pretext*—may be found for this pairing of the saints, it appears that the conceptual paralleling of them was primarily suggested and reinforced by a composition of visual proximity and symmetry. The inclination to compose in this way may well originate in the repetitive deployment of Holy Rider imagery on pre-Iconoclastic textiles. In the exterior relief decoration of the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross



FIGURE 3. Stone relief plaque with two saints slaying a prostrate tyrant, from Amasya, 11th or 12th century, Benaki Museum, Athens, 33630 (photo: © 2004 by Benaki Museum, Athens).

at Aght'amar, the phenomenon of repetition was amplified to include a sequence of three saints on horseback—Theodore, Sergius, and George—each wielding a spear against, respectively, a dragon, a panther, and a fettered man.¹⁸

The interdependent roles of visual symmetry and conceptual interchangeability in the pairing or serializing of equestrian saints are further illustrated by images in which two mounted saints join forces in the act of spearing a prostrate tyrant or, more frequently, a dragon. Some of these images, which occasionally include angels accompanying the saints, are contemporary with or even predate the Sinai icon and were produced primarily in Cappadocia and Georgia. Perhaps the earliest example of this iconography is a poorly preserved painting in the Cappadocian rock-cut church known as Mavrucan 3, which depicts two figures on horseback aiming their spears at two serpents coiled around a tree in the center.¹⁹ A relief frieze carved over the western entrance of the tenth-century Georgian church at Mart'vili shows two equestrian saints (probably Theodore and Demetrius), each accompanied by an angel, killing a double-headed dragon.²⁰ Stylistically comparable to the Mart'vili image is another stone relief plaque

dated to the eleventh or twelfth century in the collection of the Benaki Museum, Athens (Fig. 3).²¹ In this composition, two mounted saints spear a figure lying on the ground. Although there are no names inscribed and the portrait types are not particularly differentiated, the plaque is said to have been part of the exterior decoration of a church in Amasya (Amaseia), the city of St. Theodore's martyrdom.

The popularity of the symmetrical composition was, in all likelihood, a function of its visual impact, which allowed the representation of the two mounted saints to be perceived as a doubly potent emblem that could be understood even in the absence of a specific narrative connecting the two figures. Thus, in the visual tradition, the identity of the horsemen remained secondary to—though not entirely independent of—their image. Identity functioned as an evolving accessory to the essential message of the triumph of good over evil conveyed by the composition.²² The universal relevance of this message meant that the saintly slayer of dragons and/or tyrants, whether associated with his partner or striking out on his own, traveled in a variety of contexts in Byzantium and the wider world of medieval Christian cultures in and around

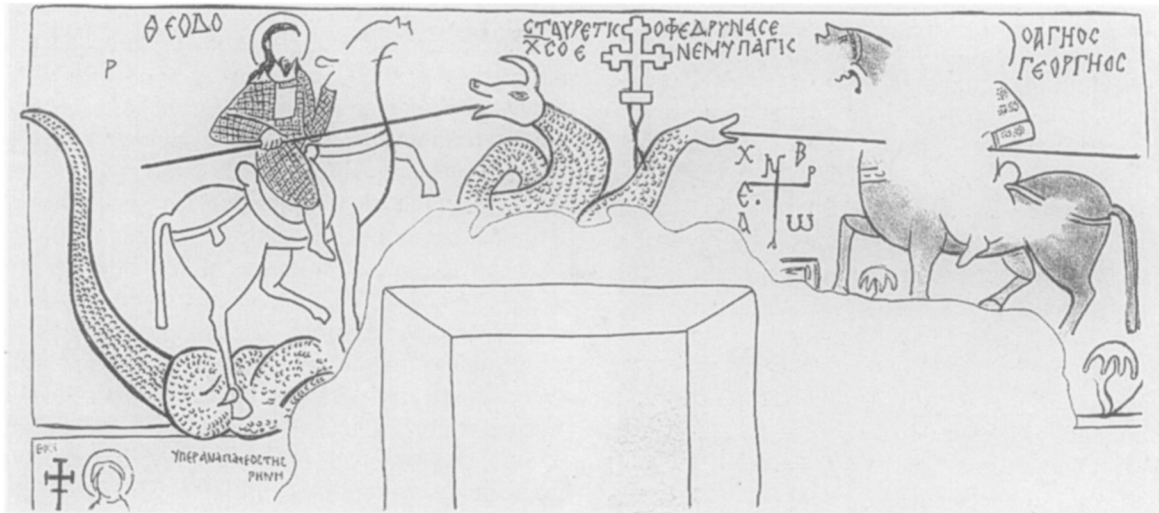


FIGURE 4. Wall painting of St. George and St. Theodore slaying a double-headed dragon (drawing by Nicole Thierry), 10th century, Yılanlı Kilise, Ihlara Valley in Cappadocia (Turkey) (photo: © Nicole Thierry).

Anatolia. Some of these images were created as iconic cult images, while others operated on or beyond the margins of orthodoxy. One remarkable Cappadocian example is a painting of the two saints over the vestibule door of a funerary chapel known as the Yılanlı Kilise (Church of the Serpent) in the Ihlara Valley (Fig. 4). Here, Theodore and George are shown mounted and facing each other, both aiming their spears at a double-headed serpent who rises up between the two horses. Just above the two heads of the serpent is a cross with an inscription running to either side that establishes a semantic relationship between the idea of Christ's triumph over evil on the cross and the saints' victorious impaling of the dragon. The pictorial and textual elements in the composition of this entryway painting have been interpreted as an apotropaic design.²³ As such, it recalls Early Byzantine magical notions regarding the defeat of infernal demonic forces that were established in the amuletic tradition and are adapted here in a Christian funerary context.

If the amulets and the Yılanlı Kilise painting make a case for a persistent syncretistic link between images of the equestrian dragon-slaying saints and deeply rooted magical practices, it should come as no surprise that analogous images appeared in Byzantine art outside the realm of either orthodox or heterodox religion. A depiction on the front panel of an ivory casket probably produced in twelfth-century Constantinople demonstrates the secular relevance of the equestrian dragon-slayer, whose identity as a Christian military saint could be visually maneuvered for the sake of thematic association with a host of figural subjects decorating a luxury object (Fig. 5).²⁴ The equestrian dragon-slayer in this secular context is juxtaposed with vignettes depicting episodes from the lives of Herakles and Alexander the Great, as well as an "orientalizing" musician-ruler figure. Seen among this diverse cast of

characters, the dragon slayer could have been identified specifically as one of the military saints. However, that identification would have been understood in a secular or parareligious sense, detached from the cult of either saint and allied instead with the accompanying series of courtly and heroic imagery, collectively sharing in and contributing to the aura of this luxury object, which seems to have communicated carefully crafted imperial messages.²⁵ Moreover, the front panel on which the equestrian dragon-slayer is paired with another equestrian scene depicting Herakles' labor of taming the horses of Diomedes recalls the symmetrical compositions of St. Theodore and St. George.

As pervasive as the cult of saints and as resilient as the magical practices that produced the amulets, the remarkably stable iconography of equestrian dragon/tyrant/demon-slayers was maintained and transmitted across the Byzantine world and beyond even as its identity revolved within a limited selection of attributes. Perhaps the most revealing testimony to the transcendent malleability of this image is the account of a statue of a dragon slayer in Byzantium related by Muhammad Tusi, the mid-twelfth-century author of a Persian cosmography titled *'Aja'ib al-makhlūqat* (Wonders of Creation).²⁶ In this account, Tusi refers to a hidden group of three talismanic statues in Constantinople, which are reported to be portraits of the Prophet Muhammad and two of his closest companions, Bilal, the first muezzin, and 'Ali, his son-in-law and the fourth caliph. 'Ali's statue is described as a figure on horseback, killing a dragon with a spear. Along with other statues described by Tusi, these signify the divinely preordained victory of Islam in the world. Tusi's account is clearly based on the fame of Constantinople as the repository of marvelous statuary; the inclusion of the equestrian dragon-slayer in the group demonstrates the medieval Muslim association of this



FIGURE 5. Front panel of the Darmstadt Casket, ivory, probably Constantinople, 12th century, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt (Germany), KG 54:215 a (photo: Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt).

iconography with Byzantium. In addition, the messianic identification of the dragon slayer as ‘Ali manipulates that association for the benefit of Islam, a manipulation made possible by the universal legibility of the image.

The image of the equestrian dragon-slayer functioned like a mold from which interrelated and new identities could be generated, ensuring the continuous reproduction of the image itself. In the long term, the image proved to be meaningful both within and beyond the Christian cult of saints. The Christian cult may have ensured its popularity and sustained its basic iconography, but it did not restrain the reproduction and reidentification of the dragon slayer in alternative contexts, whether narrative or visual. The staying power of the image meant that it could be effortlessly recontextualized in the new cultural *mélange* that resulted from the Turkish incursions into Anatolia from the end of the eleventh century.

In Recharted Territory? Dragon Slayers and Turks in Medieval Anatolia

One of the earliest extant depictions of the equestrian dragon-slayer from Turco-Islamic Anatolia is on a copper coin type of Nasir al-Din Muhammad (r. 1162–1170 and 1175–1178), the last Danishmendid ruler of Malatya (Fig. 6). The Danishmendids (1071–1178) were one of the earliest Turkish principalities to be established in Anatolia, with their territories comprising first the north-central towns of Tokat, Amasya, and Çorum and later the east-central towns of Kayseri, Sivas, and Malatya. They maintained a dominant position in the constantly shifting social and military circumstances of Anatolia from the end of the eleventh century until the late twelfth century, when they were finally eliminated from the geopolitical scene by their rivals, the Rum Seljuk dynasty (ca. 1081–1307).²⁷ For much of its existence, the Danishmendid dynasty maintained a frontier ethos, forging tenuous alliances and fighting a relentless succession of battles not only with the Byzantines but also with the Armenians, the Seljuks of Rum, and the Crusaders.

Following the same basic iconography of Byzantine, Georgian, and Armenian images of the equestrian dragon-slaying saints, this coin type may be seen in the light of the Danishmendids’ strong interest in and numismatic experimentation with the symbols of the Byzantine tradition current in Anatolia during their rule.²⁸ The strategy of bilateral cultural and political affiliation that the Danishmendids employed is apparent not only from their figural copper coinage, which is one of the earliest instances of so-called Turkoman figural copper coinage of Anatolia and the Jazira, but also from their use of Grecized versions of names and Islamic titles in their inscriptions.²⁹ As an increasingly decentralized dynasty in a demographically turbulent land, the Danishmendids experimented in crafting their cultural identity loosely out of a state of flux, choosing their openly displayed symbols from an ongoing process of cultural encounter. The choice of the equestrian dragon-slayer image as a coin type, with an iconography no doubt immediately recognizable by the Christian inhabitants of Anatolia, represents one instance of such display. It may be of particular significance, or at least of poignancy, that this coin type, representing a most potent symbol of triumph, was issued in the twilight of the Danishmendids in Malatya, the one city for which they fought the hardest and longest but which they ultimately lost to the Seljuks of Rum.

In 1178 Malatya was conquered by the ascending Rum Seljuk forces, bringing the Danishmendid house to its effective end. In the early years of the Seljuk takeover of Malatya, a new copper coin with an equestrian dragon-slayer image was minted by Mu‘izz al-Din Qaysarshah (r. 1186–1201 with an interruption in 1191), the Seljuk prince who was given the governorship of the city when his father, Sultan Qilich Arslan II (r. 1156–1192), divided the Rum Seljuk territories of Anatolia among his ten sons (Fig. 7).³⁰ Qaysarshah’s dragon-slayer coin may be a political statement of historical continuity and legitimacy achieved by appropriating the last Danishmendid copper coin struck in Malatya as a response to the city’s increasingly precarious situation in the frontier region between the Seljuks of Rum and the Ayyubids of Syria. However, the image of the mounted dragon-slayer on this coinage is also consistent with the conspicuous and almost continuous interest in equestrian images that distinguished Rum Seljuk figural coinage from that of their contemporaries. Variations on the equestrian theme appeared on copper and some silver coins well into the 1240s. These coins often included images of riders shown with a scepter, sword, or bow and arrow, or with a lance sometimes spearing a feline animal.³¹ Of this series, only Qaysarshah’s coin type includes a dragon in the composition, making a reference both to established Rum Seljuk equestrian numismatic imagery and to the last coin type of the Danishmendids in Malatya. If this bilateral visual connection was intentional, it may have been provoked by the rivalry between Qaysarshah and his elder brothers. As a result of their conflict, this Seljuk prince of Malatya was pushed off his territory twice: once in 1191, when he sought



FIGURE 6. Copper coin of Nasir al-Din Muhammad (obverse) from Malatya, 1170s, American Numismatic Society, 1917.215.840 (photo: American Numismatic Society).



FIGURE 7. Copper coin of Mu'izz al-Din Qaysarshah (obverse) from Malatya, 1186–1201, Yapı Kredi Bank, Vedat Nedim Tor Museum, Istanbul (photo: Yapı Kredi Bank, Vedat Nedim Tor Museum Collections).

refuge in the Ayyubid court; and again in 1201 for good. Thus, Qaysarshah's revival of the dragon-slayer on his copper coinage may have been conceived to forge a link with Malatya's recent Danishmendid past in the face of mounting political pressures. Because the circulation of copper coinage would have been restricted to local exchange, Qaysarshah's dragon-slayer coin must have derived its significance, legitimacy, and value from local monetary history and context.

Geopolitics notwithstanding, can or should the dragon-slayer image on these coins be identified with a specific figure or be contextualized within a narrative? The iconographic correspondence makes a case for at least a casual identification with the military saints Theodore and George. The native Christians of Malatya and beyond may have made a connection between either or both of the two saints and the coin images in the same way as, for example, a Constantinopolitan Byzantine audience might have identified the secularized dragon-slayer on the twelfth-century ivory box (Fig. 5); that is, by perceiving the image of the dragon slayer within the extended context of rulership. However, it is also possible that the choice of the numismatic images was reinforced by popular heroic narratives of particular regional relevance. Thus, there may be another level of connection between this image and the region of Malatya (Melitene) in the upper Euphrates Valley, which had been the epicenter of popular frontier legends going back to the first Arab incursions into Byzantine territory in the Umayyad period. These legends were formed against the background of a succession of conquest and counterconquest of Malatya by the Byzantines and the Arabs between the mid-seventh and the early twelfth century, when the city was taken over by the Danishmendids.³²

On the Byzantine side, this frontier experience is embodied in the Greek epic-romance *Digenis Akritis*, whose eponymous hero, the offspring of a Greek-Arab marriage, guards the eastern limits of the empire from his base along the upper Euphrates River.³³ Digenis' exploits in love and battle

are matched only by his feats of hunting; his unrivaled prowess is proven when he rescues his wife from the consecutive perils of a three-headed dragon, a lion, and unruly guerillas.³⁴ From the Arab side of the border come similarly romantic epics like the *Sirat Dhat al-Himma*, which recounts the fabulous adventures of such early Muslim warriors as al-Battal and 'Abd al-Wahhab, whose romantic and military engagements are centered on the Euphrates Valley, particularly around Malatya.³⁵ These local cycles of heroic legends were engendered by the frontier experience of Malatya during the Arab-Byzantine encounters from the seventh century onward and resonated with the Turkish newcomers beginning in the twelfth century. In their Turkish retelling, these epic narratives were further infused with wondrous and miraculous events. Malatya was once again featured as the city of such romanticized early Muslim frontier warriors as al-Battal and 'Abd al-Wahhab, whose deeds became prime material in the making of such Turkish Anatolian epic wonder tales as the *Battalname*.³⁶

The Danishmendids, in particular, attached great importance to Malatya and to heroes like al-Battal and 'Abd al-Wahhab, whose impact on their own epic romance known as the *Danışmendname* is unmistakable.³⁷ In this narrative recounting of the exploits of Malik Danishmend, the eponym of the dynasty, the hero slays a dragon at a monastery called Deryanos following guidance he receives in a dream. In this dream, 'Abd al-Wahhab instructs Malik Danishmend to recite the prayer of Hızır the holy man; with this prayer, Malik Danishmend, armed with a pointed lance and mounted on a horse, subdues and kills the dragon.³⁸ This story demonstrates how the miracle of dragon slaying became an accessory to the narrative intersection of otherwise unconnected heroic and holy figures. It also provides a glimpse into the processes by which the identities of these figures became linked and frequently conflated within the context of a region with persistent borderland status. Both the *Battalname* and the *Danışmendname* incorporate the long-term experience of the upper Euphrates Valley into their narratives, even including an appearance by a native son, Digenis Akritis.³⁹

In this process of association, the function of malleable frontier legends was complemented by the role of cult sites in Anatolia where Christian popular religious practices informed and eventually overlapped with Turco-Islamic beliefs. This is most apparent at locations such as the dervish lodge of Elvan Çelebi, which Baron de Busbecq and Hans Dernschwam visited in the sixteenth century. This lodge, which also incorporates the tomb of the Sufi master, is located in a village about four miles from a ruined site known as Avkat, generally identified as the location of the town of Euchaita where the sanctuary of St. Theodore was located.⁴⁰ *Spolia* incorporated into the building of the dervish lodge of Elvan Çelebi possibly belonged to this sanctuary, which was an active cult site well into the eleventh century and which hosted fairs on the saint's feast day.⁴¹ As the Turkish settlers encountered the cult of St. Theodore centered on and spread around his sanctuary,

they must have also taken stock of accounts of his miracles, including his slaying of a dragon said to have taken place at a nearby location, possibly the site appropriated for the Sufi lodge and tomb of Elvan Çelebi in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The profile of St. Theodore as a holy man on horseback delivering salvation undoubtedly resonated with the new settlers. They enhanced the similarities they perceived between the dragon-slaying Christian saint and the holy figure of the immortal Hızır-Ilyas—Busbecq’s “Chederle”—who was credited with powers to rescue and rejuvenate.

This Islamic holy man of composite character was the result of a fusion between Khidr (or al-Khadir, Arabic for “evergreen”) and the prophet Elijah.⁴² Khidr was identified in Muslim tradition as the divinely blessed anonymous companion of Moses during his journey searching for knowledge as recounted in the Quran (18:60–82). In popular legend, Khidr is also identified as the travel companion of Alexander the Great, who attained immortality after finding the Water of Life and who comes to the rescue of those in distress with powers to revive and rejuvenate; hence the connection between “Chederle,” St. George, and Alexander, which Busbecq declared as “absurdities.” The cult of Khidr was prominent particularly in Syria and Palestine, and in these regions his cult and identity overlapped with those of St. George. Khidr and George were jointly venerated at multiple locations. As F. W. Hasluck noted, “the functions and conceptions of Khidr are at once so varied and so vague as to adapt him to replace almost any saint, or indeed to occupy any site independently. His sudden appearances make it specially easy to associate him with any spot already hallowed by previous tradition or notable for recent supernatural occurrences. . . .”⁴³

The protean Khidr was widely associated with the biblical prophet Elijah, also immortal, as one who could deliver those caught up in adversity.⁴⁴ The resulting composite saint Hızır-Ilyas was particularly embraced in Turkish popular tradition, both retaining his attributes as they developed in Islamic lore and further accommodating new ones. The commemoration of the cult of Hızır-Ilyas (usually contracted to “Hıdırellez”) in Anatolia overlapped with the feast day of St. George with whom Khidr was already associated in Syria and Palestine and is even today celebrated on 6 May (23 April in the Julian calendar).⁴⁵ The close link between St. George and St. Theodore as expressed at least in the popular visual culture of medieval Christian Anatolia meant that the door was left open for Hızır-Ilyas to preserve his link with St. George while absorbing the dragon-slaying miracle of St. Theodore especially in places where the latter was venerated.⁴⁶

In medieval Turco-Islamic lore, the versatile figure of Hızır-Ilyas not only assumed a number of attributes from various sources but also passed some onto prominent figures who benefited from wearing the mantle of the immortal holy man posthumously if not during their lifetime. Thus, in hagiographical literature, Baba Ilyas, the leader of the thirteenth-century heterodox Baba’i revolt and the great-grandfather of

the fourteenth-century Sufi master Elvan Çelebi, was seen as a manifestation of Hızır-Ilyas, an association that must have been induced, at least in part, by the common name Ilyas.⁴⁷ Underlying this connection between identities is a historical connection between regions: the Baba’i revolt emerged in the Euphrates Valley but advanced to north-central Anatolia, especially the region around Amasya, where Baba Ilyas was killed in the Rum Seljuk suppression of the revolt almost a millennium after St. Theodore was martyred in the same town.

Still other Turkish figures were operating in medieval Anatolia who were credited, mostly posthumously, with dragon slaying as part of their repertoire of extraordinary feats. Among these are both peripatetic warriors, such as Malik Danishmend, and heterodox spiritual leaders such as Emirci Sultan (a figure associated with the Baba’i revolts and also credited with dragon slaying). All played active roles on the Anatolian stage, and each established overlapping spheres of influence.⁴⁸ The ascription of such miracles as dragon slaying to these figures of legendary status, sometimes through the influence of the pivotal Hızır-Ilyas, may be seen as part of the process of cultural adaptation in which the idea of contextual and conceptual continuity was fundamental.

The surviving textual tradition of epic romances and hagiographies that recounts the dragon-slaying exploits of these pioneering figures postdates both the time of their lives and the time when images of the equestrian dragon-slayer were first depicted in Turkish Anatolian contexts. This chronological discrepancy is probably the result of a natural lag between the production of oral and written versions of such narratives. But it may also speak to the symbolic primacy of images in the process of acculturation, which did not depend on the assignment of a specific identity to any one image. In this process, the image of the equestrian dragon-slayer was an ideal choice which, already in pre-Turkish Anatolia, resisted a single fixed identity and transcended a variety of religious and secular contexts.

The Danishmendid and Seljuk coins of Malatya represent the earliest extant use of the image of the dragon slayer for the expression of rulership in medieval Turkish Anatolia. A comparable use of this image may be seen on a stucco relief found in the belvedere now called Alaeddin Köşkü, once part of the Rum Seljuk palace in Konya, datable to about 1200 (Fig. 8).⁴⁹ It shows a mounted figure impaling a particularly scaly dragon juxtaposed with another figure on horseback battling a lion. Representing a hunting scene of mythic dimensions, this relief demonstrates that the dragon slayer was incorporated by the Rum Seljuks into the repertoire of royal imagery decorating a courtly setting. Compositionally, the two mounted hunters facing each other are also reminiscent of the symmetrical disposition of SS. Theodore and George.

A number of candlesticks of inlaid metalwork usually attributed to thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century Anatolia (Fig. 9 and Colorplate 2) also reveal the association of the equestrian dragon-slayer with notions of princely authority



FIGURE 8. Stucco relief with mounted dragon and lion slayers, late 12th–early 13th century, from Konya, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, 2831 (photo: Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts).



FIGURE 9. Bronze candlestick inlaid with silver, Anatolia, 13th century, Nuhad Es-Said Collection of Islamic Metalwork, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, LTS2000.1.7 (photo: courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC)

and privilege.⁵⁰ On these candlesticks the equestrian dragon-slayer typically appears in a composition with a polo player and a falconer, exemplifying, respectively, the princely pastimes of sporting and hunting. Each is on horseback and contained within a roundel. The shared equestrian motif draws the



FIGURE 10. Steel mirror inlaid with silver and gold, Anatolia, early 13th century, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul, 2/1792 (photo: Topkapı Palace Museum).

three images together conceptually, thereby casting a princely aura on the dragon slayer. Scenes of pleasure such as music making also appear on the candlestick, further reinforcing the thematic incorporation of the dragon slayer into courtly iconography. A similar conceptualization governs a thirteenth-century Anatolian steel mirror, which is decorated in low relief with a princely falconer on horseback accompanied by a hound running alongside the horse and surrounded by a dragon, a fox, and a bird in flight (Fig. 10).⁵¹ Though much reduced in scale and not being impaled, the dragon with its familiar gaping mouth and a knot in its midsection occupies its usual position with respect to the horse and rider, revealing further the visual and conceptual absorption of the equestrian dragon-slayer into a magnified representation of princely hunting. This assimilation, likely inspired by the general theme of victory common to both dragon slaying and hunting, was indispensable to a representation of princely prerogative. As such, the production of such images for the courtly environments of the Rum Seljuk period may also have been informed by stories from the early-eleventh-century Persian national epic, the *Shāhnāma*, in which pre-Islamic kings and heroes of Iran are recurrently pitted against beastly dragons.⁵² This semantic horizon is particularly relevant in the case of the Rum Seljuks, whose cultural affiliation with the Persian tradition of kingship was especially pronounced, as demonstrated by the pre-Islamic Iranian royal names favored by the sultans.

The hunting scene on the steel mirror is encircled by a band of animals—bears and gazelles—alternating with fabulous creatures—griffins and centaurs—in symmetrical arrangement beginning at the handle of the mirror and culminating at the top in a pair of confronted dragons. Incorporating the dragon motif both in the central hunting scene and in the focal point of the frame, the composition on the mirror suggests the possibility of another layer of meaning invested in medieval Islamic representations of the dragon battle. This meaning has to do with the astrological concept of the ecliptic dragon, *al-jawzahr*, which at this time was a well-established visual motif across the eastern Islamic world. *Al-Jawzahr* was conceived as an invisible pseudoplanet believed to be responsible for the solar and lunar eclipses; it took the form of a bipartite or two-headed dragon thought to “devour” the sun or the moon.⁵³ As the sun and the moon were always observed to emerge unscathed from being eclipsed, representations of the double dragon subdued by a princely personification of the sun or the moon became a common visual motif of celestial triumph translated into temporal terms. These images, produced most frequently between the mid-twelfth and the late thirteenth century from eastern Iran to the eastern Mediterranean as part of the rise in astrological and figural imagery in Islamic art, were also employed as apotropaic devices, especially on architecture. A well-known example is the carving that decorated the early-thirteenth-century Talisman Gate of Baghdad.⁵⁴ Here, two fearsome dragons were depicted submitting to a seated princely figure—possibly a personification of the sun—who is clutching the tongues of the two beasts. Other contemporary architectural examples on which the dragon battle is used as an apotropaic device include two gates in northern Mesopotamia: the gate of al-Khan in the Sinjar region showing, in each spandrel of the archway, a dragon being impaled by a figure on foot; and the Mosul Gate of Amadiyya, on which an interlace motif framing the archway culminates in two dragon heads, each being impaled by a standing figure.⁵⁵ All three of these gateway images feature, in a symmetrical composition, one or two human figures, either seated or standing, overpowering two dragons. No comparable representations remain from Anatolia proper, but there are instances of doubled and intertwined dragons without the dragon slayer on Rum Seljuk architecture. This may be related conceptually to the apotropaic dragon-battle depictions and informed, to a certain extent, by the astrological concept of the ecliptic dragons.⁵⁶

Yet, while the semantic horizon of the equestrian dragon-slayer in Turco-Islamic Anatolia may be logically extended to include both the heroic material from the *Shāhnāma* and the astrological concept of the ecliptic double-dragon used as an apotropaic device, its visual form remained largely rooted in the visual culture of early medieval Anatolia. This is apparent particularly in the coin images and the depictions on the candlesticks, where both the equestrian figure and the dragon retain the appearance they developed in Christian

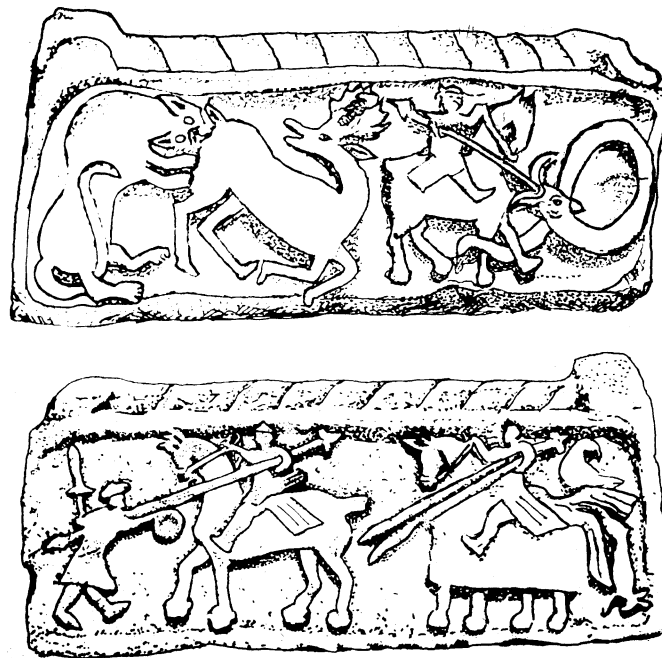


FIGURE 11. *Tombstone with figural decoration (drawing of two sides), from Afyon region, 14th century, Afyon Museum, 1555 (photo: from A. Seyirci and M. Topbaş, Afyonkarahisar Yöresi Türkmen Mezar Taşları [İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi Yayınları, n.d.], Figs. 19–20).*

contexts, raising the distinct possibility that they may have been produced in imitation of the Christian models. This close visual affiliation is echoed by the similarities between the conceptual and contextual malleability of the image and its identity in both the Christian and Turco-Islamic traditions of Anatolia.

Two final examples of the equestrian dragon-slayer from Turco-Islamic Anatolia with a close affinity to Christian models illustrate this point by showing the continuation of the contextual adaptability of this image. The first occurs on a tombstone found in the region of Afyon in west-central Anatolia and usually dated to the fourteenth century (Fig. 11). This tombstone is one of a discrete group of about a dozen that are distinguished by the presence of figural decoration and the absence of inscriptions and that are thought to belong to a community of Turkomans.⁵⁷ On one side of this tombstone, the equestrian dragon-slayer is juxtaposed with a depiction of a gazelle attacked by a lion. Continuing the theme of victory suggested by these two juxtaposed images, the other side of the same tombstone features two armed riders, one of whom advances toward a diminutive figure on foot. Though the theme of victory illustrated by the equestrian dragon-slayer in conjunction with other images of combat may be obvious, the funerary context in which this representation appears is significant. Substituting figural representation for writing, these tombstones stand outside conventional orthodox Islamic funerary traditions and point to a social environment



PLATE 2. *Bronze candlestick inlaid with silver, Anatolia, 13th century, Nuhad Es-Said Collection of Islamic Metalwork, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, LTS2000.1.7 (photo: courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC).*



FIGURE 12. *The angel Shamhurash, from Daqa'iqa al-haqa'iqa, Anatolia, mid-to late 13th century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS pers. 174, fol. 83 (photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France).*

in which the direct appeal of easily legible images apparently prevailed over the message of traditional formulaic inscriptions.⁵⁸ Given that it is harnessed to express the notion of victory in a funerary context, the presence of the dragon slayer on this tombstone seems to echo the popular eschatological symbolism of the painting decorating the entrance of the Yılanlı Kilise in the Ihlara Valley.

A painting in the unique Anatolian manuscript known as *Daqa'iqa al-haqa'iqa* represents yet another avatar of the equestrian dragon-slayer (Fig. 12).⁵⁹ It differs from all the other examples discussed so far in that the dragon slayer is depicted as an angel who is called Shamhurash. The manuscript of *Daqa'iqa al-haqa'iqa* consists of a compilation of five different Persian texts on various topics related to astrology and magic. The dragon-slaying angel is one of the illustrations in a treatise on geomancy and talismans. Both the upward-gaping dragon with a pretzel-like knot in its midsection and the rider betray a close affinity to Byzantine images of the equestrian

dragon-slaying saints. The weapon of choice—sword rather than spear—however, recalls the stucco relief from the Seljuk palace in Konya. Perhaps more significant, the identity of this dragon slayer as an angel and the presence of magic writing on the page strongly evoke Byzantine magical amulets on which the demon-slaying Holy Rider—Solomon or St. Sisinnios—was frequently accompanied by an angel (Fig. 2). This possibility gains support from the talismanic subject of the text in this section of the manuscript. Both visually and textually, then, the manuscript reflects a social environment with a distinct interest in syncretistic beliefs and practices.

* * *

The apparent semantic distance between the dragon slayer on the coins, which expresses notions of authority and rulership, and the dragon-slaying angel in the manuscript of *Daqa'iqa al-haqa'iqa*, which illustrates magical texts, indicates the range of mutating identities ascribed to the image of the equestrian dragon-slayer in Turco-Islamic Anatolia. Yet, as in the Christian examples, that semantic distance was mediated by the relatively stable iconography of the image, which underlies the maintenance of meaning transcending contextual and conceptual difference. Careful examination of the contextual and conceptual metamorphoses of these images provides a special view of the mechanisms of continuity, which moderated some cultural and demographic encounters in medieval Anatolia. In the centuries that preceded and followed the Turkish incursions, the dragon slayer enjoyed a freedom of identity and context, which no doubt ensured its popularity. Sorting through the regenerations of the dragon slayer requires negotiating the mixed strata of interrelated identities that gave birth to both narratives and representations.

It may be impossible to reconstruct the precise sequence of the layers that correspond to the life stages of the dragon slayer, but a bird's-eye view of the manifestations of the image highlights the role of cross-cultural points of contact and recognition. The images gain resonance from hagiographical or epic narratives that display the same patterns of mutation and conflation in which the motif of the dragon slayer epitomizes the fundamental themes of rescue, relief, triumph, and resurrection. From the Turco-Islamic perspective, the visual currency of the equestrian dragon-slayer in the former Byzantine territories of Anatolia seems to serve as a symbol that addresses the challenges of settlement and integration in a new land and furthers the process of cultural self-identification among the various segments of the incoming and settled populations. Throughout the changes that affected medieval Anatolia, the adaptable image of the equestrian dragon-slayer retained its popularity and forged a path among the orthodox and heterodox groups, among the sedentary and nomadic peoples, and among the rulers and the ruled. Retracing that path reveals the multiple intersections of image and identity in a land with a wide horizon of cultural experiences characterized by receptiveness, adaptability, and continuity.

- * A preliminary version of this paper was presented in October 2000 at the symposium "From Rum to Rumi: Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Art of Medieval Anatolia," held at the University College Dublin. I would like to thank Scott Redford for his helpful comments on an earlier draft and Alicia Walker for her many valuable suggestions and for sharing her thoughts on journeys into similar medieval visual borderlands.
- O. G. de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, trans. E. S. Forster (Oxford, 1968), 54–56.
 - Ibid., 55.
 - Hans Dernschwam's Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553/55)*, ed. F. Babinger (Munich and Leipzig, 1923), 201–206.
 - For recent studies on the social, cultural, and political relations between the two populations, see N. Necipoğlu, "The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Medieval Anatolia (Eleventh–Twelfth Centuries)," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, V (1999–2000), 58–76; and M. B. Livet, *Romanie byzantine et pays de Rûm turc: Histoire d'un espace d'imbrication gréco-turque* (Istanbul, 1994), 27–111. See also S. Vryonis Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971).
 - The basic concept of gods and heroes defeating monstrous beasts may be ultimately traced to Greco-Roman and ancient Near Eastern (including Hittite and Egyptian) mythologies. Dragon-slaying Christian military saints have been more immediately associated with Late Antique and Early Christian equestrian intermediaries such as imperial triumphal imagery and apotropaic images of Solomon and St. Sisinnius linked with Greco-Roman magical practices. C. Walter, "The Thracian Horseman: Ancestor of the Warrior Saints?" *Byzantinische Forschungen*, XIV (1989), 659–673; idem, "The Intaglio of Solomon in the Benaki Museum and the Origins of the Iconography of Warrior Saints," *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἡταιρείας*, XV (1989–90), 35–42; idem, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot, 2003), 33–38. The crucial role of images in the process of transmission has been aptly emphasized by N. Thierry in "Aux limites du sacré et du magique. Un programme d'entrée d'une église en Cappadoce," *Res Orientales*, XII (1999), 241: "L'imagerie des saints cavaliers vainqueurs du mal (essentiellement Théodore et Georges) semble avoir eu un développement graphique et votif qui ne concorde pas chronologiquement avec les légendes qui nous sont parvenues. Les images semblent avoir véhiculé des mythes venus du fonds des âges et facteurs de ceux de l'Antiquité classique et de légendes hagiographiques."
 - J. Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *JWCI*, LVI (1993), 25–62; idem, "Middle Byzantine (10th–13th Century AD) Stamp Seals in Semi-precious Stone," in *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton*, ed. C. Entwistle (Oxford, 2003), 114–126; J. W. Nesbitt, "Apotropaic Devices on Byzantine Lead Seals and Tokens in the Collections of Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art," in *Through a Glass Brightly*, 107–113; Walter, "Intaglio of Solomon"; idem, *Warrior Saints*, 33–38; J. Russell, "The Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC, 1995), 35–60; E. Dauterman Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Urbana and Chicago, 1989), Nos. 133–136, 25–28; W. Fauth, "Der christliche Reiterheilige des Sisinnios-Typs in Kampf gegen eine vielnamige Dämonin," *Vigilae Christianae*, LIII (1999), 401–425.
 - Fauth, "Der christliche Reiterheilige." See also R. P. H. Greenfield, "Saint Sisinnios, the Archangel Michael and the Female Demon Gylou: The Typology of Greek Literary Stories," *Byzantina*, XV (1989), 83–141.
 - For a sixth- or seventh-century lead token charm with a Holy Rider impaling a dragon and inscribed with a monogram for Alexander, see Nesbitt, "Apotropaic Devices," 109. This early connection between equestrian dragon-slayers and Alexander also challenges Busbecq's assumption that the link between the dervishes' mounted dragon-slayer and Alexander was fabricated by Turks.
 - H. Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1996), 120–132.
 - Ibid., 137–145.
 - Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets," Nos. 33, 30, 38, Pl. 3a. This example, said to be from Asia Minor, belongs to a group of amulets that were apparently designed to protect against problems believed to be related to ailments of the womb (*hysteria*).
 - H. Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris, 1909); C. Walter, "Theodore, Archetype of the Warrior Saint," *Revue des études byzantines*, LVII (1999), 163–210; idem, "The Origins of the Cult of Saint George," *Revue des études byzantines*, LIII (1995), 295–326. Most recently, see idem, *Warrior Saints*; and idem, "Saint Theodore and the Dragon," in *Through a Glass Brightly*, 95–106.
There are two saints named Theodore in the Orthodox tradition: Theodore Tiron ("the recruit") and Theodore Stratelates ("the general"). The latter appears in the hagiographical literature only from the ninth century and seems to have been biographically modeled on the former whose cult was based in the town of Euchaita and who was the first to be associated with dragon slaying; see A. Kazhdan and N. S. Patterson, "Theodore Teron," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991), III, 2048–2049, and idem, "Theodore Stratelates" in *ibid.*, III, 2047. See also N. Oikonomides, "Le dédoublement de Saint Théodore et les villes d'Euchaïta et d'Euchaneia," *Analecta Bollandiana*, CIV (1986), 327–335. Oikonomides suggested that the "doubling" of Theodore may have occurred in the post-Iconoclastic period when the re-discovery of (at least) two different types of icons of St. Theodore in the towns of Euchaita and Euchaneia (modern Çorum) may have created confusion, giving rise to the cult of a second Theodore in the latter town. It may not be possible to prove this theory with any certainty, but the idea that images shape or give rise to identities resonates with the later example of the visual pairing of St. Theodore and St. George through the agency of dragon slaying discussed below.
 - Walter, "Theodore, Archetype of the Warrior Saint," 165–172; idem, "Origins of the Cult of Saint George," 320–322; idem, "Saint Theodore and the Dragon," 96–97; idem, *Warrior Saints*, 44–49 (on Theodore), 140–142 (on George). However, it is worth bearing in mind that in a much earlier text, the seventh-century *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon, St. George is featured more than once as an exterminator of demons; *ibid.*, 115–118. See also B. Schrade, "Byzantium and Its Eastern Barbarians: The Cult of Saints in Svanet'i," in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, ed. A. Eastmond (Aldershot, 2001), 177 note 56.
 - S. Der Nersessian, *Aght'amar: Church of the Holy Cross* (Cambridge, 1965), 19 and 24.
 - Walter, "Saint Theodore and the Dragon," 97; Oikonomides, "Le dédoublement de Saint Théodore et les villes d'Euchaïta et d'Euchaneia," 328; Nesbitt, "Apotropaic Devices," 110–112.
 - K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons, I, From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976), 71–73, Pls. B33–34.
 - The image of St. George on horseback slaying the tyrant emperor often identified as the "impious king Diocletian" was particularly prevalent in medieval Georgia; see, for example, the tenth- or eleventh-century silver repoussé icon from the Svanet'i region in O. Z. Soltes, ed., *National Treas-*

- asures of Georgia* (London, 1999), No. 117. See also Schrade, "Byzantium and Its Eastern Barbarians," 177. Antony Eastmond ("Cults and Saints in Georgia," in Soltes, *National Treasures of Georgia*, 111) remarks that St. George in medieval Georgia may well have been a Christian reincarnation of a pagan sun deity.
18. Der Nersessian, *Aghtamar*, 19.
 19. Nicole Thierry dates this church as early as the seventh century; see "Art byzantin du haut Moyen-Age en Cappadoce. L'Église N° 3 de Mavruçan," *Journal des savants*, 1972, 233–269. The motif of the tree with the coiled serpents, which does not appear to have had a continuing association with the dragon-slaying saints, is cited as an "oriental" influence of probably Sasanian origin; see also Walter, "Saint Theodore and the Dragon," 99–102, where the author lists and describes Cappadocian examples of equestrian images of St. Theodore, either alone or paired, spearing a dragon. If the pre-Iconoclastic dating of Mavruçan 3 is correct, it would make the painting three hundred years earlier than the next set of preserved paintings from the region, which are generally dated to the tenth century or later. No names seem to have been found inscribed on the Mavruçan 3 painting.
 20. Thierry, "Aux limites du sacré," Fig. 5.
 21. A. Delivorrias, *A Guide to the Benaki Museum* (Athens, 2000), 65, 69.
 22. At the tenth-century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross at Aghtamar, the three spear-wielding saints on horseback (Theodore, Sergius, and George) appear after a representation of Eve's temptation by the serpent, which functions as a conceptual prompt signaling the idea of good versus evil, which is then picked up by the image of Theodore slaying the serpent-dragon and echoed by the actions of his two cohorts. I would like to thank Lynn Jones for pointing out this juxtaposition to me.
 23. Thierry, "Aux limites du sacré." Thierry dates this church to the ninth century, although it may be slightly later, possibly tenth century.
 24. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261* (New York, 1997), ed. H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom, No. 151, 227–228.
 25. For a new reading of the images on the Darmstadt casket and its re-attribution to the twelfth century, see A. Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Art and Aesthetics: 843–1204 C.E." (Dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 2004), 317–367.
 26. O. Pancaroğlu, "Signs in the Horizons: Concepts of Image and Boundary in a Medieval Persian Cosmography," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, XLIII (2003), 31–41.
 27. C. Cahen, *La Turquie pré-ottomane* (Istanbul, 1988), 33–48; I. Mélikoff, "Dānīshmendids," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al., 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1960–); A. Özaydın, "Dānīshmendīler," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1988–). On the cultural history of the dynasty, see M. Bayram, "Selçuklular Zamanında Anadolu'da Bazı Yörelere Arasındaki Farklı Kültürel Yapılanma ve Siyasal Boyutları," *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1994, 79–92; and idem, "Dānīshmendōğulları Devletinin Dini Siyaseti," in *IV. Kayseri ve Yöresi Tarih Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (Kayseri, 2003), 10–22 (both reprinted in idem, *Türkiye Selçukluları Üzerine Araştırmalar* [Konya, 2003]).
 28. On Danīshmendid coinage, see E. J. Whelan, "A Contribution to Dānīshmendid History: The Figured Copper Coins," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes*, XXV (1980), 133–166; N. Oikonomides, "Les Danīshmendides entre Byzance, Bagdad et le Sultanat d'Iconium," *Revue numismatique*, XXV (1983), 189–207. Some of the Byzantine images used by the Danīshmendids include representations of the bust of Christ, the Virgin crowning the emperor (the second coin type issued by Nasir al-Din Muhammad of Malatya, which was clearly modeled on a nearly contemporary Byzantine coin type), and a lion rider (possibly a representation of St. Mamas of Caesareaia/Kayseri, where this type was struck). It is worth noting that while some of the images derived from Byzantine numismatic types, the possible sources of others such as the lion rider and the equestrian dragon-slayer, which are not found on Byzantine coins, are open to speculation.
 29. R. Shukurov, "Turkoman and Byzantine Self-Identity: Some Reflections on the Logic of the [sic] Title-making in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-century Anatolia," in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, 259–276; Oikonomides, "Les Danīshmendides."
 30. İ. Artuk and C. Artuk, *İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Teşhirdeki İslami Sikkeler Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1970) I, No. 1068; Istanbul, Yapı Kredi, *Yapı Kredi Sikkeler Koleksiyonu Sergileri 2* (Istanbul, 1994), No. 22.
 31. Silver and copper coins struck in 608–609 AH/1211–1212 by 'Ala al-Din Kayqubad during his governorship of Tokat depict a rider spearing a feline (probably a lioness), which is sometimes confused with a dragon. Better-preserved specimens reveal that the animal is feline with a long tail, and not a dragon; see I. Artuk, "'Ala el-Din Keykubad' in Meliklik Devri Sikkeleri," *Bellefen*, XLIV (1980), 265–270.
 32. E. Honigsmann, "Malatya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
 33. E. M. Jeffreys, ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge, 1998). See also E. M. Jeffreys and M. J. Jeffreys, "Digenes Akritas," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991), I, 622–623; N. Oikonomides, "L'épopée de Digènes et la frontière orientale de Byzance aux Xe et XIe siècles," *Travaux et mémoires*, VII (1979), 377–397.
 34. For Digenis' slaying of the dragon, see Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, 155–156. For so-called Akritic imagery on Byzantine pottery—usually depicting a standing figure slaying a dragon—see A. Cutler, "Akritic Imagery," in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, I, 47–48; M. A. Frantz, "Akritas and the Dragons," *Hesperia*, X (1941), 9–13; J. A. Notopoulos, "Akritan Ikonography on Byzantine Pottery," *Hesperia*, XXXIII (1964), 108–133; D. Papanikol-Bakirtzi et al., *Byzantine Glazed Pottery in the Benaki Museum* (Athens, 1991), Nos. 130, 134.
 35. M. Canard, "Les principaux personnages du roman de chevalerie arabe *Dāt al-Himma wa-l-Battal*," *Arabica*, VIII (1961), 158–173 (reprinted in idem, *Miscellanea orientalia* [London, 1973]). Although the historical al-Battal was an Umayyad warrior and the historical Abd al-Wahhab was the Abbasid governor of northern Mesopotamia, they became companions in epic literature.
 36. Y. Dedes, *Battalname*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1996); I. Mélikoff, "Al-Battal (Sayyid Battal Ghazi)," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*.
 37. I. Mélikoff, *La Geste de Melik Dānīshmend*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1960); A. Y. Ocak, "Dānīshmendnāme," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1988–).
 38. Mélikoff, *La Geste*, I, 260–262, II, 75–77.
 39. *Ibid.*, I, 169, 404–407.
 40. St. Theodore was persecuted and killed in Amaseia (modern Amasya), but his relics were transferred to hillside town of Euchaita (name preserved in the toponym of the mountain Avkat Dağı), where his cult was established in the fourth century. The sanctuary appears to have been located just outside the walls of the lower city and was therefore subject to numerous attacks and devastation in the course of Persian and Arab raids, especially in the sixth and seventh centuries. On Euchaita, see C. Foss, "Euchaita," in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, II, 737; H. Delehay, "Euchaita et la légende de Saint Théodore," in *Anatolian Studies Presented to W. M. Ramsay* (Manchester, 1923), 129–134 (reprinted in idem, *Mélanges d'hagiographie grecque et latine* [Brussels, 1966], 275–280); F. Trombley, "The Decline of the Seventh-Century Town: The Exception of Euchaita," in *Byzantine Studies in Honor of M. Anastos*, ed. S. Vryonis Jr. (Malibu, 1985), 65–90; F. Cumont, J. G. C. Anderson, and H. Grégoire, *Studia Pontica* (Brussels, 1903–10), I, 8–13, III, 207–215; C. Mango and I. Sevcenko, "Three Inscriptions of

- the Reigns of Anastasius I and Constantine V," *BZ*, LXV (1972), 379–84; Oikonomedes, "Le dédoublement."
- On the village (Tekkeköy) and lodge of Elvan Çelebi, see F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, ed. M. M. Hasluck (New York, 1929), I, 47–49; F. Taeschner, "Das Heiligtum des Elvan Çelebi in Anatolien," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, LVI (1960), 227–231; S. Eyice, "Çorum'un Mecidözü'nde Âşık Paşa-Oğlu Elvan Çelebi Zâviyesi," *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, XV (1969), 211–244; A. Gürbüz, "Elvan Çelebi Zaviyesi'nin Vakıfları," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, XXIII (1994), 25–30; E. S. Wolper, "Khidr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia," *Muslim World*, XC (2000), 309–322. A discussion of the lodge is also included in the editors' introduction to Elvan Çelebi's hagiographical chronicle of his family's history; Çelebi, *Menâkıbu'l-Kudsiyye fî Menâsibi'l-Ünsiyye (Baba İlyas-ı Horasânî ve Sülâlesinin Menkabevî Tarihi)*, ed. I. E. Erünsal and A. Y. Ocak (Ankara, 1995), xxvii–xxx.
41. It is also possible that the building of this lodge, which incorporates a cruciform structure, is an expansion or partial rebuilding of another Byzantine sanctuary, perhaps one associated with the location of St. Theodore's slaying of the dragon. The earliest inscription from the building qua lodge is dated 1282 and is found in the wooden prayer hall. For a recent photograph of Byzantine *spolia* with inscriptions at this site, see Çelebi, *Menâkıbu'l-Kudsiyye*, Fig. 8. According to Dernschwam (see note 3 above) and Eyice ("Çorum'un," 230 note 54), the name of Theodore appears in some of the Greek inscriptions found at this site.
 42. A. Y. Ocak, *İslâm-Türk İnançlarında Hızır Yahut Hızır-İlyas Kültü* (Ankara, 1985); P. N. Boratav, "Khidr-Ilyās," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; A. J. Wensinck, "Al-Khadir," in *ibid.*; I. Omar, "Khidr in the Islamic Tradition," *Muslim World*, LXXXIII (1993), 279–295.
 43. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 329–331.
 44. For a study of the joint veneration of Khidr and Elijah by Jews and Muslims in medieval Syria, see J. Meri, "Re-appropriating Sacred Space: Medieval Jews and Muslims Seeking Elijah and al-Khadir," *Medieval Encounters*, V (1991), 237–264.
 45. A. Y. Ocak, "XIII.–XV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu'da Türk-Hıristiyan Dinî Etkileşimler ve Aya Yorgi (Saint Georges) Kültü," *Belleten*, LV (1991), 661–673.
 46. Aspects of Khidr/Hızır-Ilyas' contextual adaptability is discussed by Wolper, "Khidr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia."
 47. Ocak, *İslâm-Türk İnançlarında Hızır Yahut Hızır-İlyas Kültü*, 133–135; Çelebi, *Menâkıbu'l-Kudsiyye*, 25, 59, lines 285, 660. On Baba İlyas and the legacy of the revolt associated with his name, see *idem*, *Babailer İsyanı*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul, 2000).
 48. *Idem*, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri* (Istanbul, 2000), 205–214. On Emirci Sultan, see A. Y. Ocak, "Emirci Sultan ve Zaviyesi," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, IX (1978), 130–208; *idem*, "Emirci Sultan," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1988–).
 49. N. Ölçer et al., *Türk ve İslâm Eserleri Müzesi* (Istanbul, 2002), 114–115.
 50. On these candlesticks, see D. S. Rice, "The Seasons and the Labors of the Months in Islamic Art," *Ars Orientalis*, I (1954), 13–39; A. Hauptmann von Gladiss, "Zum Metallhandwerk in Anatolien im 13. Jahrhundert," in *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Kleinasien. Festschrift für Kurt Bittel*, ed. R. M. Boehmer and H. Hauptmann (Mainz, 1983), 233–250; and A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Anatolian Candlesticks: The Eastern Element and the Konya School," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, LIX (1987), 225–267.
 51. Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, *Sultanların Aynaları* (Istanbul, 1998), 64–65, 74–75. The mirror is attributed to southeastern Anatolia or Konya.
 52. For the earliest extant illustrated copies of the *Shāhnāma* (dating to the very end of the thirteenth century), see M. S. Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic: The Earliest Shahnama Manuscripts* (New York and London, 1979).
 53. Conceptualized as a bipartite dragon, *al-jawzahr* was styled either as a pair of dragons or a single dragon with a head at either end. On representations of *al-jawzahr* especially on metal objects, see W. Hartner, "The Pseudoplanetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies," *Ars Islamica*, V (1938), 113–154; *idem*, "The Vaso Vescovali in the British Museum: A Study on Islamic Astrological Iconography," *Kunst des Orients*, IX (1973–74), 99–130; E. Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting: A Note on Medieval Islamic Iconography," in *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn*, ed. A. Daneshvari (Malibu, 1981), 13–19; J. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork: The Nuhad Es-Said Collection* (London, 1982); O. Pancaroğlu, "'A World Unto Himself': The Rise of a New Human Image in the Late Seljuk Period (1150–1250)" (Dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 2000), 224–229. For further discussion of dragons in Islamic art, see also A. Daneshvari, "The Iconography of the Dragon in the Cult of the Saints of Islam," in *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, ed. G. Martin Smith and C. W. Ernst (Istanbul, 1993), 15–25; and J. Gierlichs, *Drache, Phönix, Doppeladler. Fabelwesen in der islamischen Kunst* (Berlin, 1993), 10–17. For Anatolia in particular, see G. Öney, "Anadolu Selçuk Sanatında Ejder Figürleri (Dragon Figures in Anatolian Seljuq Art)," *Belleten*, XXXIII (1969), 171–192.
 54. The Talisman Gate (*Bāb al-tīlsam*) was built in 1221 by the latter-day Abbasid caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah but was destroyed in 1917; see J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs in Anatolien und Mesopotamien* (Tübingen, 1996), 30, 38, Pl. 66.
 55. For both representations, see Gierlichs, *ibid.*, 223–227, Pl. 56. See also *idem*, "An Unusual Portrayal of the Dragonslayer Motif in Medieval Islamic Art," in *Ninth International Congress of Turkish Art* (Istanbul, 1995), II, 167–180. The compositions of these examples employing a standing dragon-slayer are reminiscent of Byzantine pottery with so-called Akritic imagery; see note 34 above.
 56. Öney, "Ejder Figürleri."
 57. On these tombstones, see M. Seyirci and A. Topbaş, *Afyonkarahisar Yöresi Türkmen Mezar Taşları* (Istanbul, n.d.); K. Otto-Dorn, "Türkische Grabsteine mit Figurenreliefs aus Kleinasien," *Ars Orientalis*, III (1959), 63–76. On this particular example, see H. Gündoğdu, "Afyon'da Yeni Bulunmuş Figürlü Bir Mezar taşı Hakkında," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, XII (1982), 61–93.
 58. It may be suggested that the community of people to whom these tombstones belong were largely illiterate and therefore chose figural tombstones over textual ones because they had no access to inscriptions. On the other hand, a group of tombstones from medieval Anatolia, found mostly in the nearby town of Akşehir, include both images and writing; see S. Eyice, "Kırşehir'de H. 709 (= 1310) Tarihli Tasvirli Bir Türk Mezar taşı. Anadolu'da Tasvirli Türk Mezar taşları Hakkında Bir Araştırma," in *Reşid Rahmeti Arat İçin*, ed. M. Ergin (Ankara, 1966), 208–243; Ş. Yetkin, "Yeni Bulunmuş Figürlü Mezar Taşları," *Selçuklu Araştırmaları Dergisi*, I (1969), 149–156.
 59. The manuscript, which is in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Pers. 174), was written by Nasir al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Abdallah al-Rummāl al-Mu'azzam al-Sa'ati al-Haykali in 1272–1273 and dedicated to the Rum Seljuk sultan Giyath al-Din Kaykhusraw III; see F. Richard, *Catalogue des manuscrits persans I, Ancien fonds, Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1989), 191–195; M. Barrucand, "The Miniatures of the Daqa'iq al-Haqa'iq (Bibliothèque nationale Pers. 174): A Testimony to the Cultural Diversity of Medieval Anatolia," *Islamic Art*, IV (1991), 113–128.