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The Intaglio of Solomon in the Benaki Museum and the Origins of the Iconography of Warrior Saints

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THE INTAGLIO OF SOLOMON IN THE BENAKI MUSEUM AND THE ORIGINS OF THE ICONOGRAPHY OF WARRIOR SAINTS

In Memory of Laskarina Bouras

The Benaki Museum possesses an intaglio of oxide ore (haematite), measuring 2.8×1.6×0.3 cms¹. On one face is incised a figure in armour seated on a prancing horse. He holds a spear which is pointed downwards towards a prostrate naked female figure with long hair; she raises her right hand towards the rider. A legend around the border identifies the figure as Solomon ΣΟΛΟΜΩΝ. On the reverse there is no figure but another legend: seal of God ΣΦΡΑΓΙΣ ΘΕΟΥ accompanied by a sign. However, since the name of Solomon is not inscribed mirror-fashion, the intaglio may not have been intended actually to be used as a seal (Fig. 1).

A number of similar intaglios have been published. Long ago Gustave Schlumberger described one acquired in Beirut and now in the Cabinet des Médailles (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), which differs only from that in the Benaki Museum in that other signs are marked on it. In particular, there is a star beside the mounted figure². Schlumberger suggested a connection with the men in the Apocalypse 7,2-8; 9,4, who do or do not bear the mark of the seal of (the living) God. However Perdrizet came closer to the truth in referring the legend on these intaglios to the Testament of Solomon, a text which, apparently, Schlumberger did not know³. Of the other eight examples in the Cabinet des Médailles, no. 376 is distinguished by the presence of the serpent Ourobours surrounding the rider and prostrate figure and by the three crossed sigmas—the sign of Chnoubis—on the reverse⁴.

The same distinguishing features occur on the intaglio in the University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology⁵. Another at Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, has a star beside the rider, as on Schlumberger's, and, on the reverse, a key⁶. Further examples, with no special distinguishing features in their iconography, exist in the Palestine Archaeological Museum⁷ and the Hermitage (Leningrad)⁸. This last intaglio has a gold mount. If this is original, it provides our only evidence that these intaglios were intended to be worn.

The intaglios on which Solomon is represented spearing

a fallen female figure are sometimes derided for their lack of artistic refinement⁹. Nevertheless they are perhaps the noblest examples of this genre of apotropaic objects, on most of which the figurative representations are reduced to hieroglyphs, each, nevertheless, being a 'science'¹⁰. The rider and the prostrate woman, only once attested in monumental art in the wellknown fresco at Bawit where the rider is called Sissinius¹¹, recur frequently on pendants, rings and armbands. It is customary to call these objects amulets, a word which Bonner defined as "any object which by its contact or its close proximity to the person who owns it... exerts power for his good, either by keeping evil from him... or by endowing him with positive advantages"¹². This defini-

1. Inventory number, 13.539. I thank the direction of the Benaki Museum for allowing me to study the intaglio and for providing me with the photographs.

2. C. Schlumberger, *Amulettes byzantins anciens*, Paris 1892, no. 13, p. 12; P. Perdrizet, *Σφραγίς Σολομώνος*, REG 16 (1903), p. 49-50; A. Delatte - Ph. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes*, Paris 1964, no 371.

3. P. Perdrizet, *Negotium perambulans in tenebris*, *Études de dé-mologie gréco-orientale*, Paris 1922, p. 32-35.

4. Delatte - Derchain, *op.cit.* (note 2), nos 369-377.

5. C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor/Oxford 1950), no. 296; G. Vikan, *Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium*, DOP 38 (1984), p. 79 note 93, fig. 19.

6. Bonner, *op.cit.* (note 5), no. 294; Vikan, *art.cit.* (note 5), p. 79 note 93, fig. 20.

7. E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, New York 1953-1968, II, p. 227; III, fig. 1046.

8. Alisa Bank, *Gemma s izobraženiem Solomona*, *VizVrem* 8 (1956), p. 331-338; *Iskusstvo vizantii v sobranijah SSSR*, Moscow 1977, no. 80.

9. Delatte - Derchain, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 261.

10. Plotinus, *Enneads V viii 6*, edited P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzen, Paris/Brussels 1951-1959, II, p. 390.

11. J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit*, Cairo 1904, p. 80-81; *Idem*, *Baouit*, DACL 2, 247-248, fig. 1285, dating the painting to the sixth century; Perdrizet, *op.cit.* (note 3), p. 13-16.

12. Bonner, *op.cit.* (note 5), p. 2.



Fig. 1. Intaglio in the Benaki Museum.

tion, although, no doubt, correct, does not enlarge on the mechanics of amulets: how they exerted power for good and preserved the wearer from evil. It will be argued in this article that the introduction of the figure of Solomon spearing the prostrate woman corresponded to a radical change in the theory of their mechanics.

The function of the amulet was not to counteract evil in the abstract but rather the machinations of demons. Demonology was much studied in late antiquity¹³. The δαίμων or δαιμόνιον was an ambivalent and capricious being, sometimes working for man's good and sometimes for his evil. Their maleficence was particularly manifest in illness and the consequences of the evil eye. Their influence could be countered by the recital of incantations (ἐπωδή), or inscribing certain phrases on a leaf of metal (πέταλον) which was then attached to the body, or by representing certain signs or words on an amulet (περίαμμα, φυλακτήριον) which was also worn on the body. An interesting example of the last is in the University of Pennsylvania Museum. It is inscribed: "Holy names and symbols and dread characters protect from all dangers the man or woman who carries your august (?) divine powers"¹⁴. It seems that these apotropaic practices and objects were expected to be effective *ex opere operato*. However, as is usual with magical

practices, those who resorted to them do not provide an explanation of the source of their power. On the other hand those who opposed such practices had very clear ideas as to their mechanics: the maleficent demons against whom these methods were used themselves rendered them effective.

Such was the view of Christian writers, upon whose condemnation of the use of apotropaic practices and objects we depend for much of our information about them. This condemnation was part of their radical assault on pagan cult and magic. Christian writers distinguished between angels who were good and demons who were evil. The ambivalent pagan δαιμόνια were for them all intrinsically evil¹⁵. The apparent success of pagan apotropaic practices was explained by the hypothesis that a demon which had entered a body and caused illness could leave it, thereby simulating a cure¹⁶. The use of amulets against the evil eye was dismissed by Basil of Caesarea out of hand. The possibility of exercising fascination (βασκανία) was an old wives' superstition¹⁷. In general, resort to apotropaic practices of the pagan kind was, like the consultation of oracles or astrologers, equivalent to offering cult to demons¹⁸.

There were official condemnations of these practices, as, for example, canon 36 of the council of Laodicea (Phrygia), which, in the late fourth century, forbade priests

and clerics to be magicians (μάγοι), enchanters (ἐπαιδοί) or astrologers¹⁹. At about the same date, the Apostolic Constitutions refused admission to baptism those who made amulets (περιάμματα)²⁰. Later, about 500, the so-called Gelasian decrees rejected *phylacteria* which were inscribed with the names of demons²¹.

There are two texts in which Church Fathers reject these apotropaic practices as a means of curing a sick child. Basil of Caesarea condemns those who have recourse to an enchanter, who places useless characters (τοὺς περιέρρους χαρακτήρας) around the child's neck²². John Chrysostom commends the parents who in similar circumstances do not make an amulet (περίαπτα)²³. Other texts suggest an alternative remedy. A fragment attributed (spuriously ?) to Athanasius scorns the witch who, for the price of a quarter of wine, charms the serpent (ἐπαιοιδὴν τοῦ ὄφεως). Instead it is recommended that Psalm 40, 5: "Heal my soul", should be chanted, rather than deny "the seal of the cross of salvation"²⁴. Gregory of Nazianzus, after rejecting the use of amulets and incantations, along with which the devil gains access, recommends recourse to the Trinity, "the great and good φυλακτήριον"²⁵.

Thus apotropaic practices were not rejected in themselves. Gregory of Nyssa's sister Macrina wore an iron cross which is described as a φυλακτήριον. She also wore a ring containing a fragment of the "wood of life"²⁶. Psalm verses replace incantations; Christian images replace pagan ones. However, if pagan and Christian apotropaic practices were materially the same, the theory of their mechanics was not. It seems likely that Christian adaptation of apotropaic practices owed much to the Jews. This brings us back to Solomon.

The cult of Solomon in Judaic tradition has been admirably described by D. C. Duling²⁷. The wisdom which he received from God, as recounted in I Kings 5, 9-14 (Septuagint III Kings 4, 29-34), was interpreted in subsequent tradition as including both medical knowledge and power over demons, which, of course, were closely connected. Josephus, in the first century A.D., wrote that "God granted him the knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of men. He also composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved"²⁸. A leaf of metal, dating from the second or third century and intended to protect an unborn child, refers specifically to Solomon's seal²⁹.

All these traditions are brought together in the Testament of Solomon, a Judaeo-Christian text compiled not later than the third century³⁰. According to the Testament, in response to Solomon's prayer for aid, the archangel Michael gave Solomon a seal ring by means of which he was able to exercise power over demons. The

same text reveals the names of demons responsible for specific maladies, notably that of Obyzouth, the female demon with dishevelled hair who, among other maleficent practices, strangled newborn infants at birth.

The first explicit reference in Christian sources to the Testament is in the Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila (ca 400)³¹. However, Hippolytus (ca 160-236) wrote that Hezekiah had suppressed, among other things, Solomon's medical advice for curing illness, because people would be tempted to use these remedies rather than seek

13. Among many articles in encyclopedias, see particularly the comprehensive one Geister (Dämonen), RAC 9, 546-797; see also J. Daniélou, Démon, Dictionnaire de spiritualité 3, col. 153, 164-165; O. Böcher, Dämonen, Theologische Realenzyklopädie 8, col. 270-274.

14. Bonner, *op.cit.* (note 5), no. 317.

15. Origen, Contre Celse II 51, edited M. Borret, Paris 1967, p. 404 note 1 (Clavis patrum graecorum 2855).

16. So Tatian (fl. 120-165), Oratio ad Graecos 18, PG 6, 848 (Clavis 1104).

17. Basil, De invidia, PG 31, 380 (Clavis 2855).

18. So Gregory of Nazianzus, De baptismo, PG 36, 381 (Clavis 3010). Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesis 4, 36, PG 33, 501 (Clavis 3585); John II of Jerusalem, Catechesis 19, 8, PG 33, 501 (Clavis 3586); Severus of Antioch, Homily 120, PO 29, edited M. Brière, Paris 1960, p. 79 (583)-81 (585) (Clavis 7035).

19. H. Leclercq, Amulettes, DACL 1, 1787 (Clavis 8607).

20. Constitutiones apostolicae 8 32, PG 1, 1128-1133 (Clavis 1730).

21. H. Leclercq, Gélisien (Décret), DACL 6, 745.

22. Basil, Homilia in Psalmum 45, PG 29, 417 (Clavis 2836).

23. John Chrysostom, In epistolam ad Colossenses 3, Homilia 8 5, PG 62, 337 (Clavis 4433).

24. Athanasius, Fragmentum, PG 26, 1320 (Clavis 2165).

25. See above, note 18.

26. Gregory of Nyssa, Life of Saint Macrina, 30, edited P. Maraval, Paris 1971, p. 240 = PG 46, 989 (Clavis 3166, BHG 1012). Maraval cites Clement of Alexandria, Paedagogus II 11 59 2, edited H. Marrou, Paris 1970, III, p. 124-125 = PG 8, 633 (Clavis 1376), about suitable signs for Christians to have engraved on their rings. Idols are excluded, but not, it seems, on account of possible magical connotations. Leontius of Naples, in his Life of Saint Symeon Salos, tells of Symeon's encounter with a witch who made φυλακτάρια καὶ ἐπαιοιδία. He asked her if she would like a φυλακτὸν against the evil eye. He then wrote on a πιττάκιον that she would no longer turn men away from God. Thereafter she was incapable of μαντεία and of making a φυλακτὸν, PG 93, 1736 (BHG 1677).

27. Testament of Solomon. A New Translation and Introduction by D. C. Duling. The Old Testament Pseudepigraphia, edited J. H. Charlesworth, I, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments, London/New York 1983, p. 944-951. For bibliography, see J. H. Charlesworth, The Pseudepigraphia and Modern Research with a Supplement, Scholars Press, no city named, 1981, p. 197-202.

28. Duling, p. 946-947.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 948.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 960-987. Conveniently accessible in Greek in PG 122, 1316-1358 (BHG 2390).

31. F. C. Conybeare, The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila, Oxford 1898, p. 70 (Clavis 7794); Duling, p. 940.

healing from God³². Origen (ca 185-254) referred to adjurations composed by Solomon taken from Hebrew³³. It seems that, outside Judaeo-Christian milieu, Solomon's medical knowledge and power over demons were regarded with some reticence.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fantasies and syncretistic borrowings which characterize pseudoepigraphic writings about Solomon's power over demons, their theology, for both Jews and Christians, was basically sound. Solomon's power over demons came from God. On the Benaki intaglio, as on others, the legend refers to the seal of God. Thus the mechanics of apotropaic practices associated with Solomon, unlike those of earlier pagan ones, are clearly revealed. In Judaeo-Christian tradition only God ultimately has power over demons, although this was delegated to angels and thence, according to the Testament, through the intermediary action of the archangel Michael, to Solomon. Consequently, although the practices attributed to Solomon resemble those of pagan magic, it may be open to question whether it is correct to call Solomon's seal ring, as Duling does, 'magic', or to refer to Solomon as a 'magician'. Admittedly we are concerned here with 'popular' rather than 'official' religion. In popular religion, among Jews and Judaeo-Christians, Solomon was the person who, *par excellence*, triumphed over demons.

The tradition continued in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem, where the anonymous pilgrim saw near the pool at Bethesda the crypt in which Solomon tortured demons³⁴. Between 381 and 384 Etheria would have venerated near Golgotha, along with a fragment of the True Cross, Solomon's ring³⁵. Twelve silver jars were also shown, in which Solomon imprisoned demons³⁶. The author of the *Life of Saint Marina of Antioch* also knew of these jars, which were opened by someone seeking treasure, so releasing the demons inside them³⁷. Bagatti suggests plausibly that the cult of Solomon in Jerusalem came to an end with the Persian conquest³⁸. However the increasing antipathy of Christians towards Jews may have contributed to its disappearance. John Chrysostom had already denounced Jewish magical practices, incantations, amulets and medicines³⁹. A later libel against Photius may allude implicitly to Solomon. Photius met a Jew who asked him what he would give to become erudite and wise. Photius replied that he would give half his inheritance. The Jew then said that it was only necessary that Photius deny the "sign (τύπον) on which we nailed Jesus". When Photius complied, the Jew gave him an amulet (φυλακτόν). He then became learned in magic and astrology⁴⁰. The author was, it seems, intent not only to denigrate Photius but also to insinuate that his 'wisdom', like that of Solomon, was

mainly concerned with the occult. Thus by the ninth century Christian antipathy towards Jewish use of amulets was as great as it had earlier been towards pagan use. Both were intended to pervert Christians and bring them under the power of demons.

Bonner observed that it is unfortunate that these objects "cannot be dated even within fairly wide limits"⁴¹. He considered the haematites, such as the Benaki intaglio, to be the earliest, but not earlier than the third century. For the most part amulets have been obtained through antiquarians, so that the exact place of their discovery is not known. However one now in the University of Pennsylvania Museum was discovered on an archaeological site at Beisan in a stratum of excavation dated earlier than 325⁴². This one is an amulet against the evil eye, with the rider piercing the prostrate woman and an inscription: εἰς θεός... Amulets of this kind are fairly common. Three others were found in tombs at El Jish along with a coin of Constantine (323-327)⁴³. One of them is also an amulet against the evil eye. The other two are marked with the cross. On none of them, it should be noted, is the rider named Solomon. Yet another was found in Anemurium (Isauria), again against the evil eye, without the name of Solomon⁴⁴. With it was an amulet bearing only legends: 'holy, holy holy', and 'the seal of Solomon holds the evil eye' (βασκανία). These amulets can only be dated earlier than the mid-seventh century when the premises where they found were evacuated.

Vikan, who was concerned principally with medical objects, dates amuletic armbands to the sixth and seventh centuries, rings to the seventh and eighth centuries, while he places simple amulets yet later, possibly to the seventh and eighth centuries, more commonly to the ninth century⁴⁵. It must be said that his argument on this point is not transparently clear. If he is referring only to the "hystera" amulets, intended to control the functioning of the womb, then he may be right. If he is referring to medical amulets in general—and including the haematite intaglios like that in the Benaki Museum among them—then it is difficult to follow him.

Even if it is not possible to date specific amulets of the rider spearing the prostrate woman exactly—for the same iconographical formula could have been used over a long period—one can, perhaps, establish a rough chronological schema for them. The first specific reference to a medical amulet seems to be that in Plutarch's *Moralia*. Isis, when pregnant, put on an amulet (περιάψασθαι φυλακτήριον)⁴⁶. The iconographical type of Solomon triumphing over the prostrate female figure, Lilith or Obyzouth, was then invented. It is likely that this practice existed earlier than the date of the composition

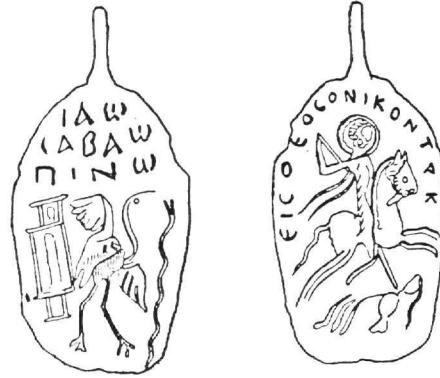


Fig. 2. Amulet against the evil eye. (Schlumberger no. 1).

Fig. 3. Amulet against digestive disorders. (Schlumberger no. 8).

Fig. 4. Amulet from Koula. Solomon and Araaf.

of the Testament and that is was of Jewish inspiration. Thus an intaglio like that in the Benaki Museum could be dated as early as the third century. Whether these haematites were all intended for medical use, or whether they offered a wider coverage against the maleficence of demons, we cannot know, except when they are marked with a specifically medical sign like that of Chnoubis. We cannot, for example, be sure that a key was intended, as Vikan suggests, to look up the womb, for Solomon was attributed the power to lock up demons⁴⁷. The next development was to combine representations of Solomon with pagan signs. Of these, the most common formula was that of the evil eye: an eye pierced with daggers and attacked by lions, a bird (an ibis or an ostrich?), a scorpion and a serpent⁴⁸. Also fairly common is the bird attacking the serpent with the legend: $\pi(\epsilon)\iota\nu(\acute{\alpha})\omega$ (I am hungry)⁴⁹. Seyrig suggested that this type of amulet was used to cure digestive disorders⁵⁰ (Figs 2, 3).

Solomon is sometimes accompanied by an angel called Araaf of Arlaf⁵¹. Perdrizet suggested that the name derived from that of the son of Solomon's vizier, known in Arab tradition as Assaf⁵². On a leaf of metal, apparently found in a tomb at Samsum (Turkey), an incantation is inscribed, in which Arsaph is implored to be a "good

ti, I Giudeo-cristiani e l'anello di Salomone, *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972), p. 151.

35. Egérie, *Journal de voyage*, edited P. Maraval, Paris 1982, p. 64. Possibly the rings in the British Museum inscribed $\sigma\phi\rho\alpha\gamma\iota\varsigma$ Σολομῶνος (βοήθει) originated at this shrine. O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities*, London 1901, nos 155, 156.

36. Bagatti, *art.cit.* (note 34), p. 159.

37. H. Usener, *Acta S. Marinae et Christophori, Festschrift zur fünften Säculafeier der Carl-Ruprecht-Universität zu Heidelberg*, Bonn 1886, p. 15-46 (BHG 1165, 1166); Perdrizet, *art.cit.* (note 2), p. 60.

38. Bagatti, *art.cit.* (note 34), p. 159.

39. John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos* 8 5, PG 48, 935 (Clavis 4327).

40. Symeon Magister, *Annales* 31, PG 109, 732 = Bonn, p. 670.

41. Bonner, *op.cit.* (note 5), p. 221.

42. *Ibid.*, no. 303.

43. N. Makhoully, *Rock-cut Tombs at El Jish*, QDAP 8 (1939), p. 45-47.

44. J. Russell, *The Evil Eye in Early Byzantine Society. Archaeological Evidence from Anemurium in Isauria*, XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten II/3, JÖB 32/3 (1982), p. 539-548.

45. Vikan, *art.cit.* (note 5), p. 75-78.

46. Plutarch, *Moralia* II, *De Iside et Osiride*, 377b, 378b, edited J. Babbitt, V, London/Cambridge Mass. 1957, p. 152, 156-158; edited O. Froidefond, V, Paris 1988, p. 235, 239.

47. Vikan, *art.cit.* (note 5), p. 80.

48. For example, Schlumberger, *op.cit.* (note 2), nos 1, 9, 10; Bonner, *op.cit.* (note 5), nos 298-303.

49. Schlumberger, *op.cit.*, no. 8; Bonner, *op.cit.*, nos 304, 325.

50. H. Seyrig, *Invidiae Medici*, Berytus 1 (1934), p. 1-2.

51. Perdrizet, *art.cit.* (note 2), p. 48-49 (one from Koula near Smyrna, another from Carthage); Ayvaz collection, Beirut, no. 57 (from Aleppo), R. Mouterde, *Objets magiques*, recueil S. Ayvaz, MéUSJ 25 (1942-1943), p. 121; Al. Sorlin Dorigny, *Phylactère alexandrin contre les épitaxis*, REG 4 (1891), p. 287-296 = Goodenough, *op.cit.* (note 7), II, p. 229; III, fig. 1052.

52. Perdrizet, *ibid.*, p. 51-52.

32. Hippolytus (fl. 160-231), *Commentary on the Canticles*, PG 10, 628-629 (Clavis 1871).

33. Origen, *Commentarii in Matthaem* 110, PG 13, 1757 (Clavis 1871).

34. P. Geyer, *Itinera hierosolymitana*, Vienna 1891, p. 21; B. Bagat-

demon" (ἀγαθὸς δαίμων)⁵³. The text ends with a reference to Moses, which suggests that the object was Jewish. Nevertheless the reference to a good demon seems to be pagan. Possibly Araaf of Arlaf is a Jewish adaptation of the name of a pagan demon (Fig. 4).

At this stage of iconographical development, Solomon is "masterminding" operations against demons. In the next stage, probably in Judaeo-Christian communities, Christian signs were introduced, as foreseen in the Testament⁵⁴. In this text they are mainly presented by allusions. However, one demon tells Solomon that he is thwarted by the mark of the Saviour: "this is the sign of the cross"⁵⁵. We have a few dated Christian amulets from the fourth century. It was also in the fourth century that Christian writers began to inveigh seriously against the use of pagan apotropaic practices. Whether their invective was directed only against those with no Christian sign, or whether it included those which were syncretistic, we cannot know.

The cross is the most frequent Christian sign on these amulets. However a bust of Christ, sometimes between personifications of the sun and moon, may also be represented, as on the amulet mentioned by Perdrizet which was found at Koula near Smyrna⁵⁶. On one side the rider is represented spearing the prostrate woman who is also approached by a serpent. An angel stands beside the rider, while, behind them, are engraved a cross with an alpha and an omega as well as a star. The legend invokes both Solomon and Araaf. On the other side the prostrate woman is again represented, but this time she is attacked by a lion. Christ appears above with a cruciform nimbus between personifications of the sun and moon. There are two legends: "heaven and earth (are) full of (your) glory"; "seal of the living God protect the wearer. Holy, holy, holy, Lord" (Fig. 4).

No explicitly pagan symbol appears on this amulet. However, the significance of the lion needs to be explained. Two lions attack the evil eye, with which Obyzouth was associated. The presence of the lion could, in consequence, derive from the iconography of the evil eye. The lion was an ambivalent symbol, sometimes signifying evil (the devil marauding like a roaring lion), sometimes good. On this amulet, the lion is certainly an instrument of good, since it is attacking the hateful Obyzouth. As the lion of Judah, it could be interpreted as a type of Christ. Jacob's reference to Judah as a young lion (Genesis 49, 9) was taken up in the Apocalypse 5, 5, in this sense: "The lion from the tribe of Judah, the Scion of David, has won the right to open the scroll and break its seven seals". John Chrysostom, in his commentary on Genesis, interpreted the lion of Judah in the same sense⁵⁷. There does exist an amulet



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6



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against the evil eye, on which Christ as the lion of Judah is invoked along with the seal of Solomon, but the legend is in Latin⁵⁸. Unfortunately no such legend is

53. S. Pétridès, Amulette judéo-grecque, EO 8 (1905), p. 88-90.

54. Duling, *op.cit.* (note 27), p. 955.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 977.

56. See note 51. Cf the amulet in a private collection in Mainz, H. Menzel, Ein christliches Amulett mit Reiterdarstellung, JbZMus Mainz 2 (1955), p. 253-261, fig. 4.

57. John Chrysostom, Homiliae in Genesim 67 8, PG 54, 574 (Clavis 4409).

58. H. Leclercq, Leo de tribu Juda, DAFL 8, 2528.

Fig. 5. Amulet with anonymous rider and Christ in mandorla. (Ayvaz no. 55).

Fig. 6. Clasp formerly in Strasbourg. Anonymous rider.

Fig. 7. Cup at Uçguli. Anonymous rider.

Fig. 8. Tissue in the Louvre. Anonymous rider.



Fig. 9. Funerary stele in Cirencester. Sextus Valerius Genalis.

known on Greek amulets. It can therefore only be proposed as a hypothesis that the lion who is represented fairly frequently attacking the prostrate woman, so doubling Solomon's action, is intended to be a symbol of Christ.

A fourth stage in iconographical development may now be proposed. Often when there are Christian signs on an amulet, the name of Solomon is not mentioned in the legends. On such amulets, the rider's spear may be sur-

mounted by a cross, and his victim may be a beast or serpent rather than a woman. Bonner has published several such amulets. On one, formerly in the Ayvaz collection (Beirut) and now in Michigan, the rider, whose spear is surmounted by a cross, pierces an animal⁵⁹. On the reverse, besides a lion and a serpent, Christ in a mandorla is surrounded by the four apocalyptic beasts. This amulet may be compared with an object, described as a clasp, which was formerly in Strasbourg

Museum⁶⁰. The rider is haloed and beside him is a seven-pointed star. Again he is not named. Two of those found at El Jish bear Christian signs and an unnamed rider⁶¹. Such amulets may carry a legend: εἰς θεός ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά⁶² (Figs 5-6).

On the pilgrim armbands studied by Vikan, the rider is also not named⁶³. Since they also carry scenes from the life of Christ, they are evidently Christian, even if these scenes are accompanied by Chnoubis and the pentagram. With them may be associated a cup at Učguli (Georgia)⁶⁴. Its stem is 7 cm high, the cup 8,2 cm, with a diameter of 11 cm. It is decorated with six plaques of silver *repoussé* work, on which are represented: the Nativity, the Baptism (twice), the Entry to Jerusalem, the Crucifixion and a figure on horseback, who wears a hood and is haloed, spearing a prostrate figure with horns on the head. From the top right hand corner an angel extends a hand in blessing (Fig. 7). Čubinašvili proposed a Syrian provenance for the cup and a sixth-century date, which coincides with that proposed by Vikan for the armbands⁶⁵. The angel blessing is a new element, borrowed from imperial triumphal imagery. It already appears on the Barberini ivory (Louvre, Paris) of an emperor (Anastasius or Justinian?), which may be dated to the early sixth century⁶⁶. Aladašvili has already made the comparison between this ivory and the two figures on horseback spearing a dragon and blessed by angels who are represented on the façade of the church at Martvili (Georgia)⁶⁷. Their function is obviously apotropaic, but they also are anonymous.

At this point Solomon, it seems, is no longer masterminding operations against demons. Moreover the iconography of the rider spearing a figure or animal symbolizing evil has now become respectable; it has been accepted into "official" ecclesiastical art. What is the identity of the anonymous riders? It is to the amulets that we have to turn for an answer to this question. On the Učguli cup, the anonymous rider and the Entry to Jerusalem are juxtaposed. They also figure on some armbands. Vikan noted that the Entry to Jerusalem was "the one biblical episode wherein Christ was, in effect, a 'holy rider'; moreover, the victorious nature of the event was itself fully appropriate to amulets"⁶⁸. Further, as has been noted, the legend: "one God conquering evil" recurs on amulets with a representation of the anonymous rider. Thus he is associated with Christ and the one God. As Goodenough put it, he symbolizes "destruction of evil by the good in a more abstract sense"⁶⁹.

Such abstraction is alien to the spirit of Byzantine art. The apotropaic powers, once attributed to the Old Testament king, were to be taken on by Christian saints. With these powers they were also to take over his icono-

graphy. If we have only one example, the fresco of Sisinnius at Bawit, of this iconography in its original form, in which a prostrate female figure is speared, in its more developed form, where a dragon or an evil man replaces her, it was, of course, common currency for the warrior saints.

Sisinnius is nevertheless a key person in this transition period when Christian saints were taking over the apotropaic functions of Solomon. On some amulets he is invoked along with Solomon⁷⁰. In both the Ethiopian and the Byzantine versions of his Life, he is presented as the protector of new-born babies against the female demon who kills them⁷¹. In the Ethiopian version it is his own sister, possessed by a demon, who kills the babies. Sisinnius, before becoming a Christian, actually kills his own sister. In the Byzantine version, he saves his own sister's babies from the female demon who is now called Gyllou. In Ethiopian tradition Sisinnius is said to have been born in Antioch, the home also of

59. Now Michigan 26119, Bonner, *op.cit.* (note 5), no. 324; formerly Ayvaz no. 55, Mouterde, *art.cit.* (note 51), p. 122-123.

60. R. Forrer, *Varia mérovingiens, cimetières franco-mérovingines inédits, Cahiers d'archéologie et d'histoire d'Alsace* 99-100 (1934), p. 232-233; H. Leclercq, Strasbourg, DACL 15, 1691. When I visited the museum in 1985, I was told that the object had been lent to an exhibition in Trier in the 1950's but had never been recovered.

61. Makhoully, *art.cit.* (note 43), kokh 14, no. 2a; kokh 4, no. 2.

62. E. Peterson, *Εἰς Θεός*, *Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Göttingen 1926, p. 91-129.

63. Vikan, *art.cit.* (note 5), p. 74-76. See also M. Piccirillo, *Un braccialetto cristiano della regione di Betlem, Liber annuus* 29 (1979), p. 244-252.

64. G. N. Čubinašvili, *Sirijskaja čaša v Ušgule*, *Bulletin du Musée de Géorgie* 11-B (1941), p. 1-19; Kity Mačabeli, *Trésors d'art en Svanétie*, Tbilisi 1982, p. 65-73, 186-187.

65. Nicole Thierry considered this dating too precocious, proposing instead the eighth or ninth century, *Un encensoir protobyzantin à Lagurka. A propos des trésors d'art en Svanétie, Bedi kartlisa* 42 (1984), p. 119 note 2.

66. *Age of Spirituality*, edited K. Weitzmann, New York 1979, no. 28.

67. N. A. Aladašvili, *Monumental'naya skulptura Gruzii*, Moscow 1979, p. 52-56.

68. Vikan, *art.cit.* (note 5), p. 75 note 57.

69. Goodenough, *op.cit.* (note 7), II, p. 228.

70. For example, Schlumberger no. 1, *op.cit.* (note 2). See Fig. 2.

71. J. M. Sauget, *Sisinnio*, *Bibliotheca sanctorum* 11, 1246-1247; Perdrizet, *op.cit.* (note 3), p. 16-19; K. N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* 5, Venice/Paris 1876, p. 573-575, where the account of Sisinnius's intervention to save the children of his sister Melitene (BHG 2403) is printed with the writings of Psellus, along with accounts of Gyllou and formulae for exorcising her, one of which is addressed to saint Mamas.

another apotropaic saint, Philotheos⁷². In Byzantine tradition he is the member of a Constantinopolitan family. In the fresco at Bawit, he not only spears the prostrate female figure but is also accompanied by the iconographical formula against the evil eye. Clédat's dating of the fresco to the sixth century fits in well enough to the iconographical schema which I am proposing⁷³.

Sisinnius, along with Solomon, disappears, but the iconographical formula remains. This is the special interest of the Benaki intaglio and related objects. For, if Solomon's power over demons was notorious in Judaic and Judaeo-Christian tradition, as exercised by his seal ring, it was not self-evident that he should be represented on amulets as a triumphal figure on horseback spearing a she-devil. Scholars have speculated as to the origin of the formula. Goodenough suggested that it derived from Egypt and that it was taken over from the Thracian good Hero⁷⁴. However, triumphal figures on horseback trampling or spearing a fallen enemy were so common in antique imperial and funerary imagery that it is hardly possible to fix a precise origin for the triumph of Solomon, any more than one can be established for his Testament. To demonstrate the hazards of such tentatives, it is sufficient to cite the funeral stele of Sextus Valerius Genalis in Cirencester⁷⁵. The iconography is close to that of Solomon, but, surely, Solomon's cult as a protector against demons did not originate in Roman Britain (Fig. 9).

The amulets of Solomon may owe something to the smaller objects of imperial cult, but it is also possible that influence travelled in the opposite direction. We have noted examples of Solomon accompanied by an angel, which recall such an object was the wellknown medallion of Justinian's *Adventus*, once in the Cabinet des Médailles (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)⁷⁶. However, between Justinian and the angel, as between Solomon and the angel, is placed a star, which on amulets may have originally been a pentagram.

In speculating on the origins of the cult and iconography of the warrior saints, scholars have often proposed, quite unscientifically to my mind, that they are reincarnations of Perseus, Hercules, Horus, the Thracian Hero and so on. I have tried to show elsewhere the extreme difficulty of establishing a *filière*⁷⁷. In this ar-

ticle I wish to maintain that an origin in the iconography of Solomon can be more easily demonstrated. Even if the objects on which he is represented cannot be precisely dated, a rough chronology of iconographical developments to which they witness can be proposed. The type of Solomon himself, as represented on the Benaki intaglio, may be as early as the third century. By the fourth century it was being christianized. In the next stage, perhaps as early as the fifth century, the rider became anonymous and a beast or serpent was being substituted for the prostrate woman. By the sixth century the rider was receiving a new identity, that of a Christian saint, and, more specifically, that of a warrior: Theodore, George and, later, Demetrius. However, the essential "message" of the iconographical type did not change: the rider receives from God the power to triumph over evil.

72. Philotheos is represented as a standing figure piercing with his spear the human head of a curled serpent on a pen-case found in Egypt. He is invoked in favour of the scribe to whom the pen-case belonged, H. Leclercq, *Calame*, *DAFL* 2, 1582-1583. Philotheos, who was adept in expelling demons from idols, was particularly venerated in Egypt, J.-M. Sautet, *Filoteo*, *Bibliotheca sanctorum* 5, 805-808. Less easy to place is the unnamed rider spearing a serpent who appears on Coptic tissues. He may be merely decorative with no apotropaic connotations, P. du Bourguet, *Musée National du Louvre, Catalogue des étoffes coptes* 3, Paris 1964, H 48, AC 552. See Fig. 8.

73. See above, note 11.

74. Goodenough, *op.cit.* (note 7), II, p. 228.

75. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Britain under the Romans*, Oxford 1964, p. 191.

76. *Op.cit.* (note 66), no. 44.

77. Ch. Walter, *The Thracian Horseman: Ancestor of the Warrior Saints; Byzantine Thrace. Image and Character*, First International Symposium for Thracian Studies, Komotini 1987, *ByzF* 14 (1989), I, p. 657-673; II, pls 249-255. I take the opportunity to note that I failed to call attention to pictures of Saint Demetrius on horseback in Cappadocia. Dominique Le Henaff de Maulde cites three examples in *Recherches sur l'iconographie des saints militaires en Cappadoce*, *Mémoire de maîtrise*, Paris I 1978, p. 35-36.

Credit lines for illustrations: 1, Benaki Museum; 2 and 3, after Schlumberger, *op.cit.*, (note 2); 4, after BCH 12 (1893), p. 638; 5, after Mouterde, *art.cit.* (note 51); 6, after Forrer, *art.cit.* (note 60); 7, after Mačabeli, *op.cit.* (note 64); 8, Musée du Louvre; 9, Corinium Museum, Cirencester.