of a fourteenth-century Italian lampas silk, symmetrically patched at the heels with a green and gold 'Tartar' silk from Central Asia or northern China. The catalogue describes the gold brocading weft of the Italian silk as bound in an improbable 1/5 weft twill with missing binding warp threads. From the shoe in London, it can be ascertained that the brocading weft is actually bound in tabby (a simple one-over/one-under interlace). Happily, the publication of this new catalogue of the collection at Halberstadt will facilitate the identification and comparison of further related items.

Despite the ravages of time and of external predation, Halberstadt Cathedral still possesses one of the most important collections of textiles in the world. The authors and their publisher are to be congratulated for bringing such an enormous work to fruition. It is a truly magnificent achievement, and there is little doubt that this excellent and invaluable catalogue will be warmly received.

1 S. Desrosiers: *Soieries et autres textiles de l'Antiquité au XVIe siècle: catalogue du Musée National du Moyen Âge, Thermes de Cluny*, Paris 2004, p.367, no.202.

Warrior Saints in Medieval Georgian Art

Edited by Nikoloz Aleksidze and Ekaterine Gedevanishvili. 460 pp. incl. 389 col. + b. & w. ills. (Giorgi Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation, Tbilisi, 2025). ISBN 978–9941–8–7414–7.

by **MANUELA STUDER-KARLEN**

This volume of essays presents the first comprehensive study of the cults and visual representations of such warrior saints as St George, St Demetrios and St Theodore Tēron in Georgia between the sixth and eighteenth centuries, examining how their worship was shaped by practices, texts, images and literary traditions within a broader transcultural context.[1]

In the introduction, Nikoloz Aleksidze, who edited the book together with Ekaterine Gedevanishvili, explores the political role of the cult of saints. He demonstrates that the evolution of warrior sainthood in Georgia was closely linked to broader political, military and cultural transformations in the late antique and medieval Mediterranean, such as the growing influence of Byzantium, the militarisation of frontier societies and the consolidation of the unified Georgian kingdom. Aleksidze analyses textual sources, including works of medieval epic poetry, such as the *Shahnameh* and the *Amirandarejaniani*, which allow him to trace the changing functions and meanings of images of warrior saints over time. For example, he shows that the cult of martyred warrior saints in Georgia was strongest during periods of warfare or foreign occupation and that their systematic integration into military rhetoric gained momentum under the Byzantine Macedonian dynasty (867–1056), whose emperors actively promoted the cults of military saints. This helps to explain one of Aleksidze's key observations, namely that Georgian visual culture focused on the military attributes of warrior saints, in contrast to the Byzantine world, where such saints appeared primarily as martyrs. St George, whose cult was 'nationalized' (p.19) and closely linked to Georgian royal ideology under King David IV, 'the Builder' (reg.1089–1125), and Queen Tamar (reg.1186–1213), appeared on standards of Georgian monarchs and feudal lords (Fig.3).

In 'The iconography and visual tradition of warrior saints in medieval Georgia', one of three chapters in the volume by Gedevanishvili, the spatial distribution of representations of warrior saints within sacred space is analysed with a view to identifying features that are distinctive of medieval Georgian art. Particularly valuable is her discussion of the relationship between warrior saints, archangels and the cult of the Virgin, as well as their functions on liturgical objects. One of the uniquely Georgian phenomena she identifies is the depiction of scenes from the Life of St George that entirely cover pre-altar crosses, for example the so-called Cross of Mestia (c.1030; St George, Mestia). Gedevanishvili also highlights composite metalwork icons of St George (fifteenth century?; State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg) and St Demetrios (thirteenth century; St George of Lahili, Nakipari), which include antique spolia heads as the faces of the saints. She traces the increasing prominence of warrior saints in church decoration between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries and sheds light on the role of historically lesser-known warrior saints in these programmes.

The following chapter, also by Gedevanishvili, offers a detailed analysis of the cult of St George and related visual representations across a wide range of Georgian ecclesiastical contexts and media, from pre-altar crosses and icons to metalwork and wall paintings. Many of these are largely unknown or have been insufficiently studied in previous scholarship, particularly outside of Georgia. Notably, Gedevanishvili demonstrates that from the tenth century onward the motif of St George slaying Emperor Diocletian became a dominant theme in Georgian art. The saint's various representational types (triumphant, standing and half-length) are discussed separately in dedicated subchapters. Images pairing St George with another warrior saint, as well as more unusual iconographic types such as a bearded St George – found, for example in reliefs that decorate the church of St George, Ilori, underscore the variety of the material. Gedevanishvili interprets wall paintings in dialogue with textual sources, local traditions and liturgical practices. For example, she analyses depictions of the martyrdom on the wheel in relation to the national feast of St George, which places special emphasis on this episode of the saint's life.

Gedevanishvili's third chapter is dedicated to St Demetrios, whose cult shifted from an early focus on martyrdom to an emphasis of his military identity in the tenth century. The earliest Georgian depictions date to the tenth and eleventh centuries. Although rarer than images of St George, they reflect St Demetrios's particular significance as a patron of the Georgian royal family, and the prominence of his cult in the wider Byzantine world during the Macedonian dynasty, especially from the reign of Leo VI (reg.886–912) onward, when military saints gained increasing ideological and political importance in Byzantine imperial culture. The author analyses the saint's appearances in Georgian church painting, including a cycle in a chapel discovered in 2015 at the monastery of Dodork'a, part of the complex of Davit'gareja. A useful list of monuments featuring the characteristic pairing of St George and St Demetrios is also provided.

In the next chapter, Tamar Dadiani examines the cult and visual representations of St Theodore Tēron and St Theodore Stratēlates, analysing stone reliefs, repoussé icons, reliefs on liturgical objects and wall paintings. The iconography of these saints was established in the tenth century and developed in the late Middle Ages. The dragon-slaying St Theodore appeared frequently alongside St George. The concluding chapter, by Gedevanishvili

and Irma Mamasakhlisi, explores the cult of St Eustathios Plakidas. They discuss numerous written sources – hagiographic texts, liturgical manuscripts, synaxaria and dedicatory inscriptions – that attest to the saint's exceptional popularity, and interpret the apparation he had of Christ between the antlers of a stag in connection with key episodes in the Christianisation of the region of Kartli. Especially relevant in this context is the depiction of the Exaltation of the Cross. Early examples appear on stelae, whereas later ones can be found on church façades and interior walls, for example in the wall paintings of the St Demetrios chapel in the monastery of Dodork'a, which are probably from the twelfth century. The authors also examine the early thirteenth-century church at Ert'acminda and its relic, the hand of Eustathios, which, along with related liturgical objects, were important in the diffusion of his cult. As Gedevanishvili and Mamasakhlisi observe, St Eustathios's supposed martyrdom with his family made him a patron saint of families.

There is a valuable appendix by Aleksidze and Ketevan Mamasakhlisi. It provides a catalogue of warrior saints represented in medieval Georgian texts, working in many cases from untranslated sources. A number of martyrdom accounts, liturgical commemorations, hymns and related writings are published for the first time here, with English translations by the authors. Taken together, they offer a broad and nuanced perspective on the formation and development of the cult of warrior saints in Georgia. Although each chapter concludes with a concise summary reinforcing its arguments, a concluding chapter that summarises its many arguments is unfortunately missing. The book includes a large number of high-quality colour photographs alongside drawings and schematic illustrations. Although some images are reproduced only at a small scale, the overall ambition to illustrate nearly all the examples under discussion enhances the reader's engagement with the arguments, as well as the book's broader value as a research tool.

3. *St George slaying the emperor*. Georgia, 11th–12th century. Wood and gilded silver, 33.7 by 31.3 cm. (Niko Berdzenishvili Kutaisi State Historical Museum).

1 The book is available as print on demand and free of charge as an e-book at rustaveli.org.ge/res/docs/e9416a58f59b2fccf8ca738dd8ff5b00b4469c13.pdf, accessed 30th April 2026.

Renaissance Skin

By Evelyn Welch. 388 pp. incl. numerous col. ills. (Manchester University Press, 2025), £55. ISBN 978-1-5261-6775-0.

by **FRANCIS AMES-LEWIS**

When engaging with this challenging book, the reader confronts on the cover a detail of Agnolo Bronzino's *Portrait of a young woman and her son* (c.1540; National Gallery of Art, Washington). Typically of Bronzino, the sitter's expression is cool, even supercilious; her complexion is exquisite, her cheeks perfectly smooth and unbroken. But, sadly, she fails to reappear in the text; Bronzino is not listed in the index and Evelyn Welch discusses only a few examples of such pure, unblemished, 'spot-free surface[s]' of facial countenance (p.73). The book's focus is, rather, on the types, conditions and uses of skin experienced by men and women during the 'long' Renaissance – here the period from c.1500 to c.1700. That the headings of the three sections into which the book's twelve chapters are divided read 'Skin as Surface', 'Skin as Matter' and 'Skin as Knowledge' offers a clue as to the book's character, and points towards the great breadth of subject fields broached by Welch and her research team, led by her co-investigator Hannah Murphy, as well as the sophistication of analysis and deduction that the author contributes.

Welch followed her American undergraduate degree with doctoral study at the Warburg Institute, London, and is well known in the world of Renaissance studies as a historian of art and material culture within the tradition of wide interdisciplinary study. It is therefore unsurprising that she models her approach on Michael Baxandall's celebrated 'period eye' – 'how Quattrocento people [. . .] attended to visual experience in distinctively Quattrocento ways', as he