The turn of the third and fourth centuries saw the intense persecution of Christians, particularly during the reigns of Diocletian (284–305), Maximian (285–310) and Maximinus Daia (306–13), the last of whom is regularly equated in the hagiographic accounts with Maximian. Among the Christians martyred at this time there were, according to the hagiographic texts, a number of soldiers who had refused to worship the gods or the emperor (though they had not refused military service). Members of this group include Theodore Teron, George,^3

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1 Walter (2003a, 266, 292) also lists these emperors along with Julian the Apostate as prototypes for the character of Maximian; he further points out that a long period usually passed between a saint’s martyrdom and the writing down of his Passion or Miracles, thereby reducing the reliability of such texts.

2 According to Gregory of Nyssa’s homily [BHG 1760], Theodore was a military recruit, who came from the East along with his tagma to where Gregory was living, Cavarnos, 10/1:65^4^6 (= MPG, 46:741): δὲ ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ὁπλιτικοὺς καταλόγους, ὡστὸ μετὰ τοῦ ἰδίου τάγματος πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν διέβη χώραν, τῆς χειμερινῆς ἀναπαύσεως τοῖς στρατιώταις ἐνθάδε παρὰ τῶν κρατούντων διάταξης. There, after setting fire to the Temple of Cybele in Pontic Amaseia he was himself burnt to death on the order of the emperor Maximian. According to the later texts of Chrysippus, presbyter of Jerusalem (died 479) [BHG 1765c, d], John Mauropous (mid-11th C.) [BHG 1770–1772], Ouranos [BHG 1762m] and other authors, Theodore is already widely called ‘Teron’ (recruit—on the military class of τείρωνας and the opinions of ancient authors on it see Lydos, pp. 74^2^5–76^2^0 [I 12/48]), see AS Novembris, 4:23, 40, 59; Halkin 1962a, 314; while certain versions of his passion state that he was martyred during the rule of Maximian and Maximinus (Delehaye 1909, 127^1^, 136^1^). The latest findings on the dating of the various hagiographic accounts are presented by Walter 1999, 165–70; and 2003, 45–8, esp. n. 7 (where he is in favour of the authenticity of Gregory of Nyssa’s Encomium).

3 According to the earliest preserved, 10th-C. version of the legend of George, he was the grandson of John, the governor of Cappadocia, and son of Kira Theognosta, daughter of the doux of Diosopolis (Lydda) (or according to another version, the son of Anastasius from Cappadocia and Theobasta from Lydda). Despite his young age he commanded a formation of five thousand troops, equivalent in numbers to a legion (see the English translation of the Coptic text by Wallis Budge, p. 57, and also 33–4); meanwhile in the Syrian text he appears as tribune of the army serving in Cappadocia, see the summary in Wallis Budge, p. 50, on the basis of the English translation by J.E. Matzke, “Contributions to the History of the Legend of Saint George”, vols. 1–2 in Publications of the Modern Language Association, vol. 17 (1903). In the Greek version of his Passio [BHG 670g] George is called a komes (by Dadianos ὁ κόμης) see Canart 1982, 98^6^ (= Krumbacher 1911, 160), while Symeon Metaphrastes in his
the five martyrs of Sebaste, Sergios and Bakchos, Hieron, Merkourios,

Menologion even describes him as κόμης τοῦ νομέρῳ (MPG, 115:144 and Synaxarium CPL, 623–6). On the earliest passage of George’s Life (including the dependence of the Ethiopian redaction on an earlier, lost Greek version) see Myslivec 1934, 304; Mazal 1990, 102–4; Frend 1982; while on early references in the Life of St Theodore of Sykeon see Walter 1995, 296–9, 317; and 2003, 115–17. The saint’s executioner, the pagan king Dadianos (who appears in various references) is not a historical figure and is sometimes identified with Maximinus Daia or alternatively with Diocletian who appears in later versions of the Passio. On the martyrdom of George see also the reference by Kedrenos (1:464–23); and for more on the early references, e.g. by Ammianus Marcellinus, by Pope Gelasius (from 494), and in Syrian church inscriptions, see Wallis Budge, pp. 8–17; and Marković 1995, 583. Both Rystenko (1909, 459) and Walter (2003, 111–12, 122, n. 85) draw attention to the popularity of George in Georgia, noticing his connection with the local moon-war god, although Walter rules out an identification with St Nino. More generally on St George’s hagiography and cult see also Ivanov 2003, 59–67.

4 According to legend Eustratios Kyrisikes served as skinarios in the army of the comes of Lysia in the time of Diocletian, and after confessing his faith was tortured and killed along with four companions, the priest Auxentios and his converts Eugenius, Mardarios and Orestes (see the short description by Metaphrastes, MPG, 116:468–505 [BHG, 646–646c], and also on the five martyrs: Mouriki 1985, 1:144–7; Weitzmann 1979 and Halkin 1970). Orestes is depicted in art as a military saint and is venerated on 13 December like the others of the group, but he should not be identified with the Cappadocian martyr from Tyana of that name (a physician by trade, venerated in Constantinople on 10 November); cf. AS Novembris, 4:391–9, and also the legend included in it on the martyrs of Sebaste on p. 392.

5 According to the Passio [BHG 1624] written shortly after the erection of their first martyrion by Alexander of Hierapolis (before 431), Sergios and Bakchos held the posts of primicerius and secundarius in the schola gentilium, and after refusing to offer sacrifices to Zeus were beheaded on the order of ‘Maximian’, who is identified with Maximinus Daia rather than with Galerius or Julian the Apostate, see Gheyen 1895 (although Woods [1997, 344] favours Julian); Key Fowden 1999, 8–17; Walter 2003a, 147–55 (together with a description of the spread of the cult and early iconography), esp. 147–8, where he draws attention to the vision described in the Passio antiquior where Bakchos (who had been beheaded earlier) appears clad in military attire to Sergios. See also the version of the Passio according to Metaphrastes (MPG, 115:1005–32). A third version of the Passio is preserved in the 10/11th-C. Cod. Sinaiit. 497 and also in Cod. Athon Laurae Δ 50, which dates from AD 1039 [BHG 1624b].

6 The earliest (possibly 6th-C.) text of the Passio of Hieron (BHG 749)—according to which he was a vineyard labourer who was forced to serve in Diocletian’s army, was converted in jail and suffered death along with his companions in Melitena in Cappadocia—is published in Passio S. Hieronis et sociis martyribus Melitinae in Armenia, AS Novembris, 3:329–39; see also Synaxarium CPL, 199–201, 203–4, which states they were venerated in Constantinople on 7 November, and also a later version in Metaphrastes (MPG, 116:109–20). Walter (2003a, 177–8) summarizes the legend, which he considers as a completely false compilation of various hagiographic threads. Hieron’s cult always had a local character connected with Cappadocia (Jolivet-Lévy 1992, 205–08, 218). Parani (2003, 154) notes the existence of a hagiographic tradition that Hieron was a ‘vine-dresser’ rather than a soldier.

7 According to the Greek versions of his Passio ([BHG 1274] Delehaye 1909, 234–42; and [BHG 1275] Binon, pp. 27–39, and also Metaphrastes [BHG 1276] Dele-