



Digenis Akritas: Two-Blood Border Lord

By Denison B. Hull

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Among the epic romances of post-Barbarian Europe, such as *Roland* and *El Cid*, *Digenis Akritas* has been the least known in the West—outside Greece. It is the story of a half-breed prince who guarded the eastern border of the Roman Empire of Byzantium on the Euphrates in the tenth century. His name and cognomen sum up the curious richness of the heritage: Roman by politics, Arab and Cappadocian by birth, Greek in language and orthodox by faith—*Basil, the Two-Blood Border Lord*.

On an incursion into Byzantine territory, an Arab Emir captures a Christian lady. Her relatives, in raiding to rescue her, convert the Emir and his people to Christianity and bring them back to the Empire. Basil is born of this union. A prodigy of valor, his miraculous strength in hunting and in battle win him an Arab bride and the loyalty of her family. He settles in a splendid garden palace by the Euphrates, pacifies the Border, fights dragons and bandits only to die young at the same instant as his wife.

The poem in English verse translation is full of humor, fairy-tale, and a moving religious devotion. it recaptures an urbane vanished civilization.

The translator has collated all the known texts and supports the translation with commentary, a bibliography, and a map.

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