



## Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios

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# Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios

CHARALAMBOS BAKIRTZIS

*Most happy martyr of Christ, you who love the city, take care of both citizens and strangers.*<sup>1</sup>

This prayer, which accompanies the mosaic of the distinguished cleric of Thessalonike to whom St. Demetrios frequently appeared,<sup>2</sup> reflects the crucial role of citizens and strangers<sup>3</sup> in the rebuilding of the basilica of St. Demetrios at the beginning of the seventh century.<sup>4</sup> So, in discussing Thessalonike as a pilgrim center from the seventh to the fifteenth century, I turn to the city's best-known *locus sanctus*, the tomb of the *myroblytes* St. Demetrios.

## I

Between the seventh and the fifteenth century, the cult of St. Demetrios may be divided into two periods: before and after the appearance of the *myron*.<sup>5</sup> There is no historical

<sup>1</sup> “Πανόλβιαι Χριστοῦ μάρτυς φιλόπολις / φροντίδα τίθη κ(αὶ) πολιτῶν κ(αὶ) ξένων”; G. and M. Soteriou, *Ἡ βασιλικὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης* (Athens, 1952), 196: read “Πανόλβιε τοῦ Χριστοῦ.”

<sup>2</sup> See Th. Papazotos, “Τὸ ψηφιδωτὸ τῶν κτητῶρων τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης,” *Ἀφιέρωμα στὴ μνήμη Στυλιανοῦ Πελεκανίδη* (Thessalonike, 1983), 372, and *Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θαύματα. Οἱ συλλογές τοῦ ἀρχιεπισκόπου Ἰωάννου καὶ Ἄωνύμου. Ὁ βίος, τὰ θαύματα καὶ ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου*, intro. and comm. Ch. Bakirtzis, trans. A. Sideris (Athens, 1997), 414–15, where it is stated that the cleric depicted is the writer of the mosaic inscriptions of the basilica and of the first three chapters of the second book of the *Miracula* of St. Demetrios. Could it be that the book with the valuable binding he is holding is not a Gospel lectionary but the *Miracula* of St. Demetrios?

<sup>3</sup> For the meaning of the word ξένος as “stranger” or “traveler,” the equivalent of *peregrinus*, see C. Mango, “The Pilgrim’s Motivation,” in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie, Bonn 22.–28. September 1991*, *JbAC, Ergänzungsband 20*, 2 vols. (Münster, 1995), 1:2. See also M. Mentzou, *Der Bedeutungswandel des Wortes “Xenos”* (Hamburg, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> Soteriou, *Βασιλική*, 143–46. P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1979–81), 2:110 dated the destruction and reconstruction of the basilica in ± 620. On the extent of reconstruction, see J.-M. Spieser, *Thessalonique et ses monuments du IVe au VIe siècle. Contribution à l’étude d’une ville paléochrétienne* (Paris, 1984), 46–47. P. Speck, “*De Miraculis Sancti Demetrii, qui Thessaloniam profugus venit, oder Ketzerisches zu den Wundergeschichten des Heiligen Demetrios und zu seiner Basilica in Thessalonike*,” *Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά* 12, *Varia* 4 (1993) doubts the historic value of the *Miracula*. He distinguishes several writers of these hagiographic texts and argues for their final composition in the 9th and not in the 7th century. See analysis by J. C. Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki. Civic Patron and Divine Protector, 4th–7th centuries CE* (Harrisburg, 1999), 107–15.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. Bakirtzis, “Le culte de saint Démétrius,” in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie* (as above, note 3), 2:65–66.

evidence for *myron* from the tomb of St. Demetrios until 1040.<sup>6</sup> It has been suggested that the *myron* of St. Demetrios may have appeared even earlier, judging from certain events at the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century reported in the miracles of St. Eugenios of Trebizond assembled by John Lazaropoulos in the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Before the *myron* appeared, the focal point of the pilgrim cult of St. Demetrios was his splendid hexagonal silver-plated wooden ciborium “established in the middle of the church and toward the left side,”<sup>8</sup> which Archbishop John of Thessalonike discusses at length in the first book of the *Miracula of St. Demetrios*.<sup>9</sup> However, there are very few archaeological finds to give us some idea of its form and function. A hexagonal marble base or stylobate with sides measuring 2.4 m, which was found under the floor of the nave of the basilica, somewhat to the north, or left, side (Fig. 1:1), is the only proof that Archbishop John is telling the truth and describing something specific.<sup>10</sup> The silver ciborium is documented not only by textual sources. It was depicted in the mosaics in the small north colonnade in the basilica of St. Demetrios, which are known to us only from old photographs and colored drawings of them.<sup>11</sup> The ciborium depicted in them matches Archbishop John’s description:<sup>12</sup> it is hexagonal (ἑξαγώνω σχήματι), closed by walls (κίοσιν ἕξ καὶ τοίχοις ἰσαριθμοῖς), with a horizontal cornice supporting the triangular parts of the roof (τὴν ὀροφήν ὡσαύτως ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξαγώνων πλευρῶν κυκλοφορικῶς ἀνίσχουσας) and a cross with spherical base on the top of the roof (σφαῖράν τε ἀργυρέαν μεγέθους οὐ μικροῦ φέρουσαν ἄνωθεν, . . . ὧν πάντων ἐπάνω τὸ κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου πεπηγὸς τρόπαιον ἀκτινοβολεῖ). The mosaic differs from the description only with respect to the columns.

<sup>6</sup> Ioannes Skylitzes, Σύνοψις, ed. T. Thurn (Berlin, 1973), CFHB 5, 413.13–17: μιᾷ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν τῷ τάφῳ τοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρος Δημητρίου προσελθόντες οἱ ἐπιχώριοι, καὶ πάννυχον ἐπιτελέσαντες δέησιν καὶ τῷ μύρῳ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ θείου τάφου βλύζοντι χρησάμενοι, ὡς ἐκ μιᾶς ὀρμῆς ἀναπετάσαντες τὰς πύλας ἐξέρχονται κατὰ τῶν Βουλγάρων. See R. Macrides, “Subvention and Loyalty in the Cult of St. Demetrios,” *BSI* 51 (1990): 194.

<sup>7</sup> J. O. Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athens Dionysiou 154* (Uppsala, 1996), 300–304, and cf. commentary on p. 431.

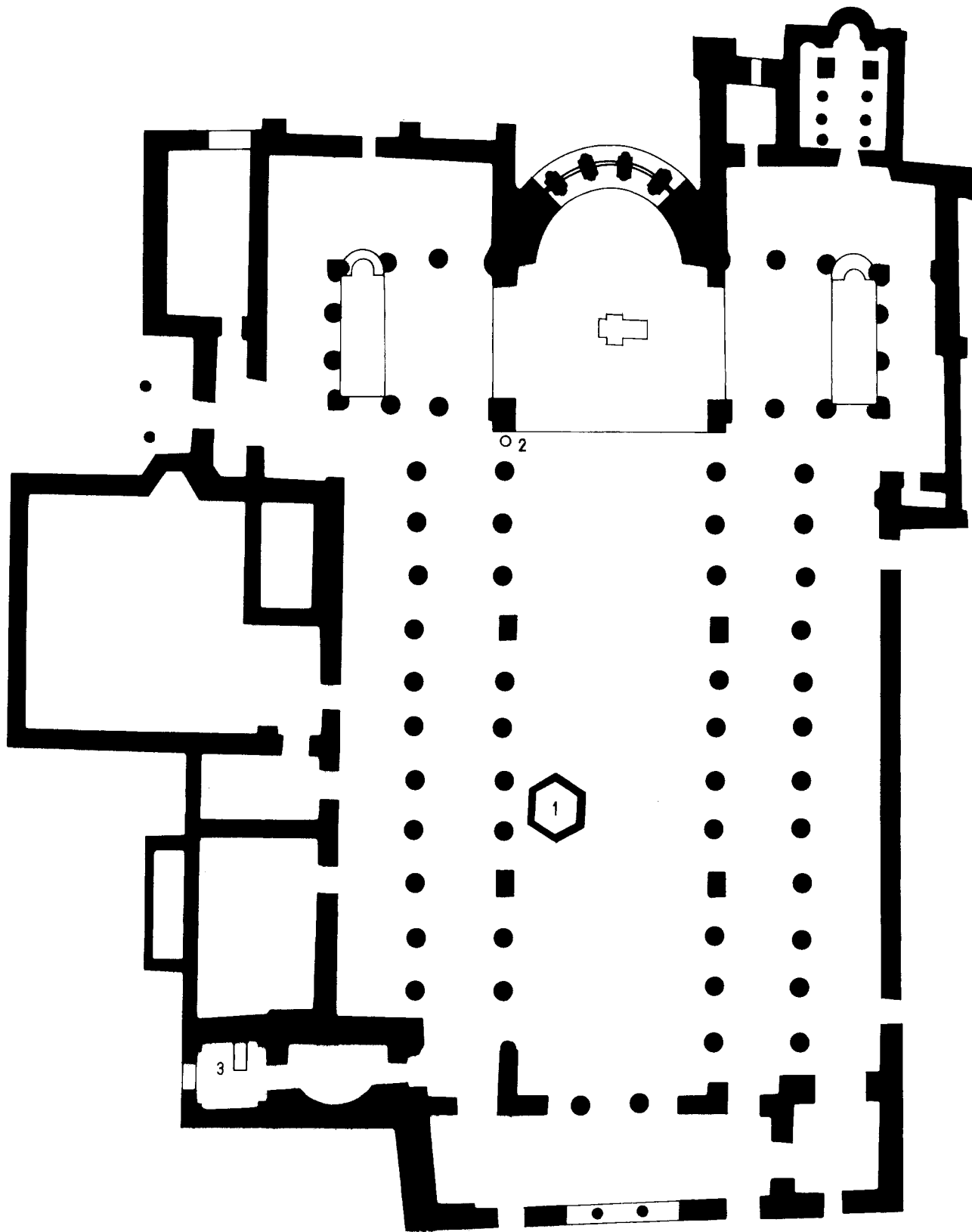
<sup>8</sup> “κατὰ μέσον τοῦ ναοῦ πρὸς τοῖς λαοῖς πλευροῖς ἐφιδρυμένον” (*Miracula*, 1:10 §87). For the ciborium see D. Pallas, “Le ciborium hexagonal de Saint Démétrios de Thessalonique,” *Zograf* 10 (1979): 44–58. R. S. Cormack, “St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki: The Powers of Art and Ritual. Themes of Unity and Diversity,” in *Acts of the XXVth International Congress of History of Art (1986)*, ed. I. Lavin, 3 vols. (University Park, Pa.–London, 1989), 3:547–56; Bakirtzis, “Le culte,” 62–64; A. Mentzos, *Τὸ προσκόνημα τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης στὰ βυζαντινὰ χρόνια* (Athens, 1994), 56–67. Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 89–94.

<sup>9</sup> P. Lemerle, *Miracles*, 2:32–40.

<sup>10</sup> G. Soteriou, “Ἐκθεσις περὶ τῶν ἐργασιῶν τῶν ἐκτελεσθεισῶν ἐν τῇ ἡρειλωμένῃ ἐκ τῆς πυρκαϊᾶς βασιλικῇ τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης κατὰ τὰ ἔτη 1917–1918,” *Ἀρχ. Δελτ., Συμπλήρωμα* (1918), 32–33, fig. 46. Soteriou, *Βασιλική*, 100, pl. 26a.

<sup>11</sup> P. N. Papageorgiou, “Μνημεῖα τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονικῇ λατρείας τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου,” *BZ* 8 (1908): 342–47, pls. I–IV; F. I. Uspenskij, “Ο νηον otkrytyh mozaikah v cerkvi Sv. Dimitrija v Soluni,” *IRAİK* 14 (1909): 1–61, pls. 1–16; R. S. Cormack, “The Mosaic Decoration of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki: A Re-examination in the Light of the Drawings of W. S. George,” *BSA* 64 (1969): 17–52, repr. in idem, *The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage* (London, 1989). He states that a late 5th-century date of these mosaics is highly appropriate. R. S. Cormack, *The Church of Saint Demetrios. The Watercolours and Drawings of W. S. George*, Catalogue of an exhibition organized by the British Council (Thessalonike, 1985), repr. in *The Byzantine Eye*, article no. II.

<sup>12</sup> *Miracula*, 1:10 §87: ἑξαγώνω σχήματι, κίοσιν ἕξ καὶ τοίχοις ἰσαριθμοῖς ἕξ ἀργύρου δοκίμου καὶ διαγεγλυμμένου μεμορφωμένον, καὶ τὴν ὀροφήν ὡσαύτως ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξαγώνων πλευρῶν κυκλοφορικῶς ἀνίσχουσας καὶ εἰς μίαν στρογγύλην ὡσεὶ ποδὸς ἀπολήγουσαν σύνδεσιν, σφαῖράν τε ἀργυρέαν μεγέθους οὐ μικροῦ φέρουσαν ἄνωθεν, ὅφ’ ἦν ὡς κρίνου βλαστοὶ θαυμάσιοι περιέχονται, ὧν πάντων ἐπάνω τὸ κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου πεπηγὸς τρόπαιον ἀκτινοβολεῖ. George colored the ciborium in various tones of gray and articulated it with blue; it seems likely that silver tesserae had been used: Cormack, “Mosaic Decoration,” 32.



1 Ciborium (1), well (2), and tomb (3), Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike, 5th/7th century

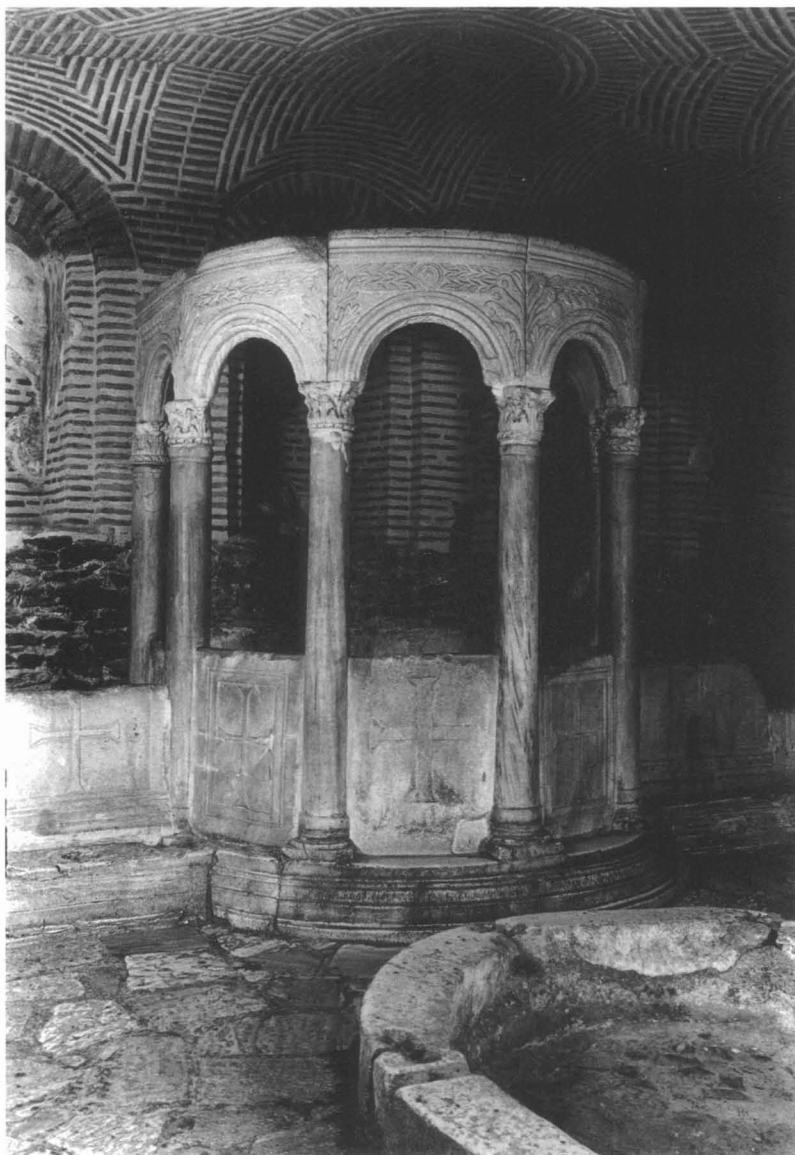


0.00 0.10 0.20 0.30 cm.

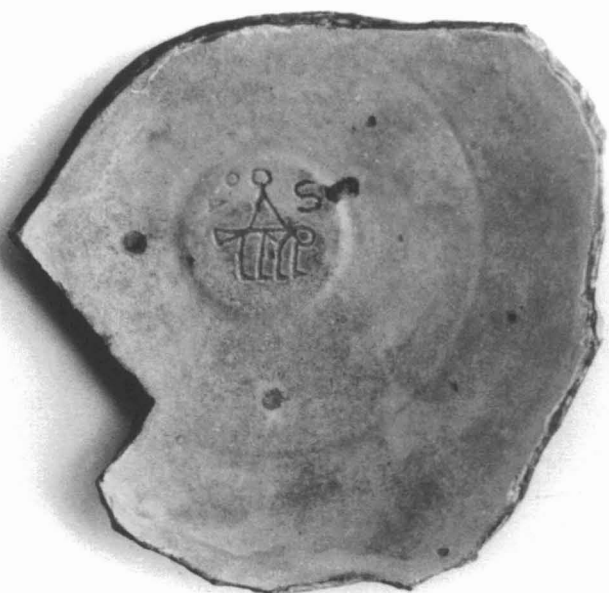
2 Mosaic, west end of first south aisle, detail: Marble ciborium of St. Demetrios, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike, 5th century



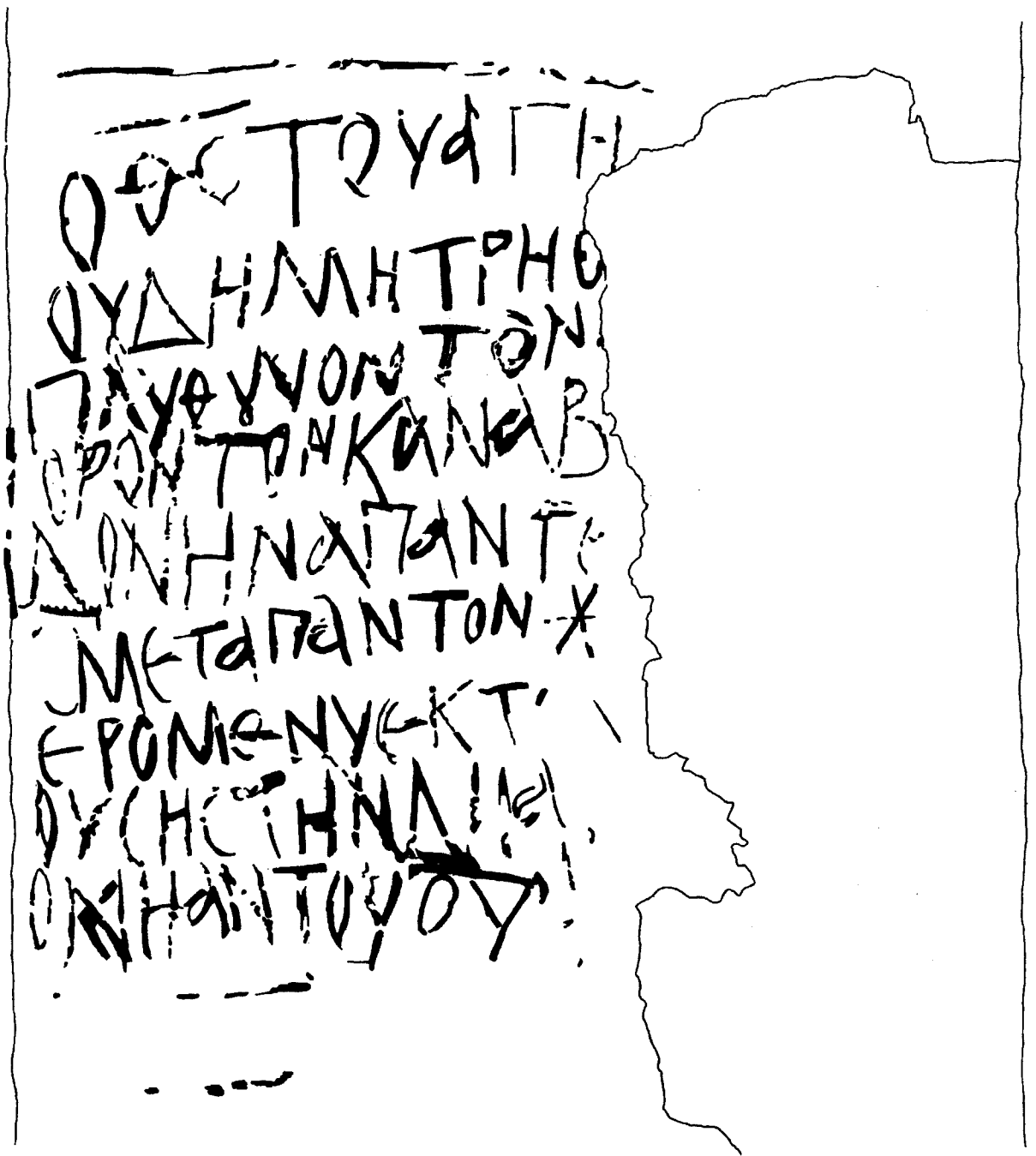
3 Marble arch, crypt, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike, 10th/12th century



4 Spring of the *myron*-cum-holy water and cistern, crypt, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike



5 Bowl with monogram of St. Demetrios, crypt, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike, 13th/14th century



Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΕΙΟΥ  
 ΟΥΔΗ ΜΗΤΡΗΣ  
 ΠΑΥΣΑΝΟΥΣ ΤΟΝ  
 ΠΟΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΗΡΑ  
 ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΑΝΤΕ  
 ΜΕΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΟΝ Χ  
 ΕΡΟΜΕΝΟΥ ΚΤ  
 ΟΥΧ ΗΣΙ ΗΝΝΑ  
 ΟΝ ΗΑΙΤΟΥΟΥ

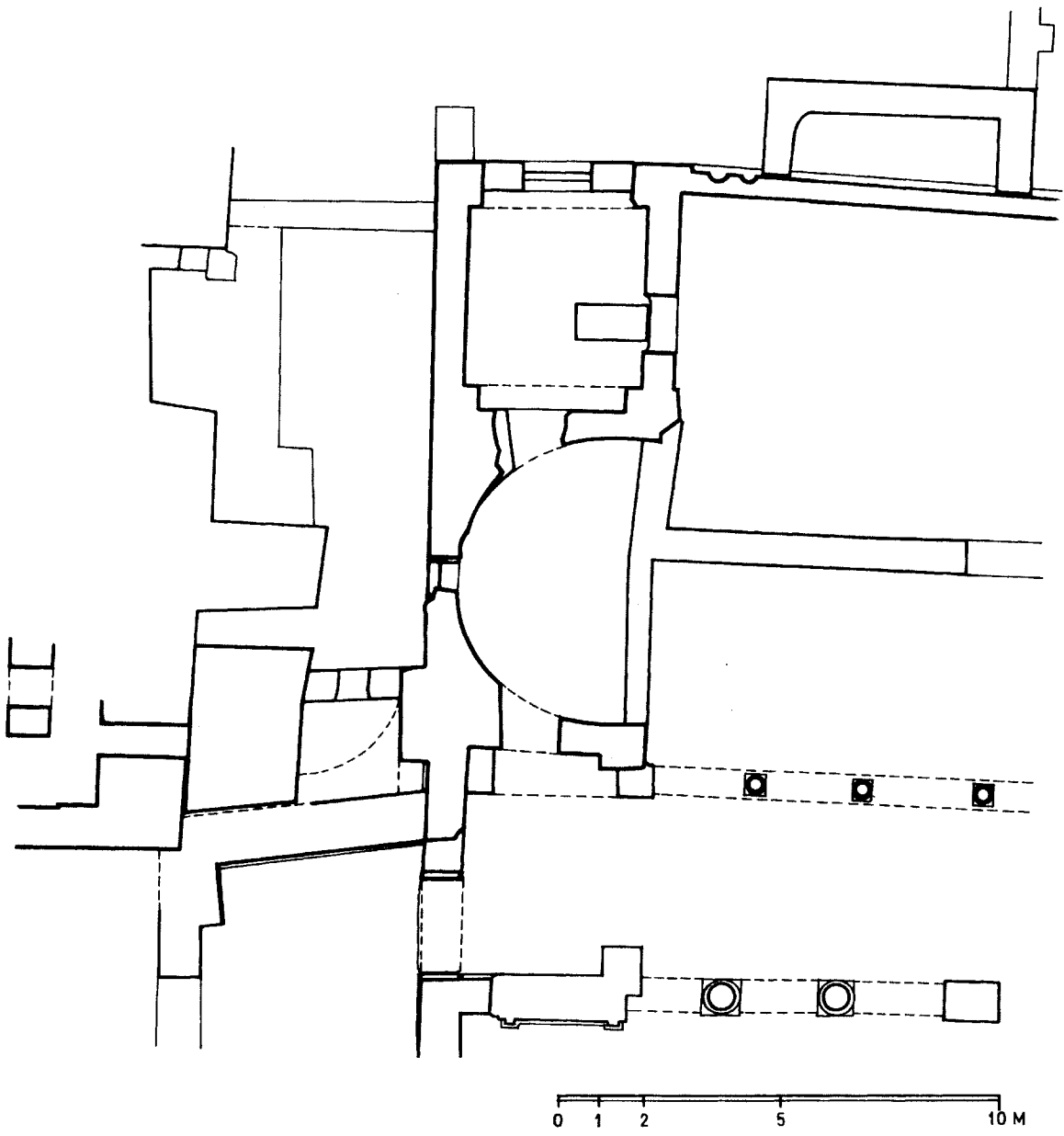
000 005 010 020 cm.

6 Inscription in the south wing of the transept, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike, 1430-1493



7 Peristyle and phiale, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike, 1430–1493  
(photo: Fred Boissonnas, 1913)

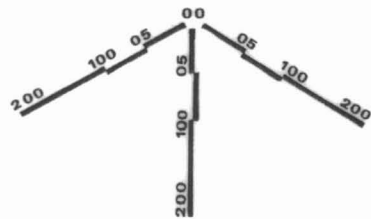
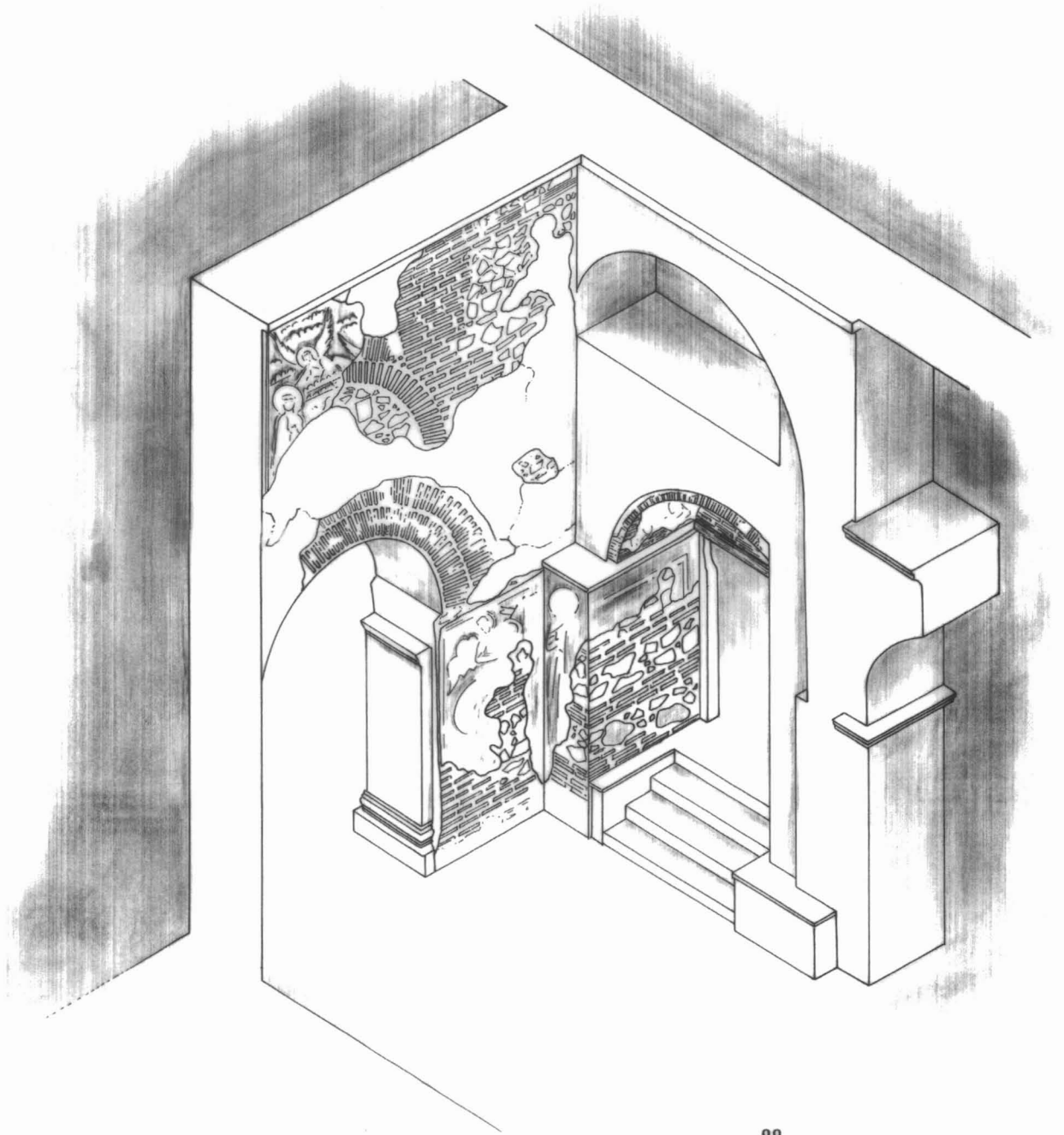




8 Chambers, northwest corner, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike (after G. and M. Soteriou, 'Η βασιλική τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης [Athens, 1952], pl. I)



9 Tomb of St. Demetrios, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike



10 Entrance, tomb of St. Demetrios, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Thessalonike (drawing: Eirene Malle)

What was the ciborium of St. Demetrios? In the *Miracula*, a text that reflected the views of the Church of Thessalonike, Archbishop John repeats three times an unconfirmed local oral tradition that the tomb of St. Demetrios was underneath his ciborium.<sup>13</sup> He also explains why his knowledge of this is uncertain: during the days of paganism the Christians of the city, fearing the wrathful idol worshipers, quietly and secretly buried the bodies of their martyrs. “Thus even at the present time it is not known clearly where the tombs of those who were martyred in Thessalonike are hidden, except for the tomb of St. Matrona.”<sup>14</sup> So we see that, while John avoids taking an overt stand on the existence of the tomb of St. Demetrios, by saying that he does not know where it is, he indirectly gives us to understand that it does in fact exist. John’s position is no different from that taken by his predecessors. When Justinian I (527–565) and Maurice (582–602) asked for some of St. Demetrios’s relics to be transferred to Constantinople, John’s predecessors denied any confirmed knowledge of the precise location of the martyr’s tomb. But without specifically denying its existence, they dug “at a point in the most venerable church, where they thought they would find the sacred relics,”<sup>15</sup> though they do not specify in their official replies to the emperors the location of the digging. The excavation was never completed, of course: it was halted by divine intervention, and the existence of the tomb of St. Demetrios was never established.

Based on John’s statement in the *Miracula*, Lemerle suggested that the relics and the tomb of the city’s patron saint were not in the basilica of St. Demetrios in Thessalonike.<sup>16</sup> If the *Miracula* are taken literally, then Lemerle was undoubtedly right. But if the Church of Thessalonike had its own reasons for using more diplomatic language on this subject, neither Archbishop John nor his sixth-century predecessors ever specifically denied the existence of the tomb of St. Demetrios, though they did avoid pinpointing its location. On various pretexts, and substituting the ciborium for the tomb, the hierarchy firmly refused to surrender the relics of St. Demetrios to Constantinople. This act on the part of the Church of Thessalonike, exhibiting local patriotism, was under the influence of Rome’s

<sup>13</sup> *Miracula*, 1:1 §22: ἔνθα φασί τινες κείσθαι ὑπὸ γῆν τὸ πανάγιον αὐτοῦ λείψανον, 1:6 §55: τὸ ἡγιασμένον μνημεῖον τοῦ μάρτυρος λέγεται περιέχειν, and 1:10 §88: ἐκέισε παρὰ τῶν πατέρων ἠκούσαμεν κείσθαι θεοπρεπῶς τὸν ὑπερένδοξον ἀθλοφόρον Δημήτριον. The excavation carried out by Soteriou in 1917 in the area of the ciborium did not confirm this oral tradition (Soteriou, Βασιλική, 100–101).

<sup>14</sup> *Miracula*, 1:5 §50: δέει τοῦ μὴ τὰ τίμια σώματα τῶν μαρτυρούντων ἁγίων τοῖς τῶν εἰδωλολατρῶν προδοῦναι θυμοῖς, ἐχεμύθως ταῦτα καὶ μυστηριωδῶς ἐν γῆ κατετίθεισαν, ὡς μηδὲ μέχρι νῦν τηλαυγῶς μηδενὸς τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ μαρτυρησάντων τὰς ἀγιοδόχους θήκας γνωσθῆναι ὅποι τυγχάνοιεν ἀποκείμεναι, πλὴν τῆς σεμνοτάτης καὶ παναγίας παρθένου Ματρῶνης. See discussion in Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 86–88.

<sup>15</sup> *Miracula*, 1:5 §53: ἐν τινι τοῦ πανσέπτου αὐτοῦ ναοῦ διορύξαντες τόπω, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ πανάγιον εὐρίσκειν ᾤοντο λείψανον.

<sup>16</sup> P. Lemerle, “Saint-Démétrius de Thessalonique et les problèmes du martyrium et du transept,” *BCH* 77 (1953): 673, and Lemerle, *Miracles*, 2: App. 2, 218. This view is connected with a challenge to the historicity of St. Demetrios and with the view that his cult came to Thessalonike from Sirmium (H. Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* [Paris, 1909], 108). For this lengthy debate and the objections to these views, see G. Theoharides, “Σίρμιον ἢ Θεσσαλονίκη; Ἐπανεξέτασις μίας κριτικῆς ἐξετάσεως τῆς περὶ ἁγίου Δημητρίου παραδόσεως,” *Makedonika* 16 (1976): 269–306, and Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 7–40. It is widely accepted that the relics of St. Demetrios were missing in the period before the *myron* appeared in his cult. Soteriou, Βασιλική, 61–62, avoids taking a position on the question and argues that the basilica’s *enkainion* was the tomb of St. Demetrios and that the small glass vial of ground blood inside it was the saint’s relic. See also Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 56. Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 87–88, examines the subject from a theological point of view and, with reference to the absence of the relics, asserts that the bones of St. Demetrios were not available for veneration.

tradition against the division and relocation of relics.<sup>17</sup> Thus I agree with R. Cormack that “we might argue that it was the paraded notion of the lack of relics that protected the city against the physical removal of the saint and his cult to Constantinople.”<sup>18</sup>

The Church of Thessalonike adopted the same pose of apparent ignorance of the whereabouts of the tombs of other martyrs of the city, apart from that of St. Matrona.<sup>19</sup> And it was a pose sometimes adopted by the emperors too. In his letter to the Church of Thessalonike, asking that some of St. Demetrios’s relics be transferred to Constantinople, Maurice stated that he was making the request out of a desire to verify the Thessalonians’ renowned ἀκρίβειαν πρὸς τοὺς μάρτυρας.<sup>20</sup> I am of the opinion that the word ἀκρίβεια refers not to the “piété fameuse des thessaloniens envers les martyrs”<sup>21</sup> but to “the Thessalonians taking care for the martyrs.”<sup>22</sup>

When the emperors stopped sending requests that St. Demetrios’s relics be sent to Constantinople, there was no longer reason to profess ignorance about the existence of his tomb. For this reason, the edict of Justinian II, an official imperial document issued in 688/89, twice mentions the existence of the relics of St. Demetrios in his basilica in Thessalonike.<sup>23</sup> This text does not contradict the *Miracula* at all. On the contrary, it states in writing the emperor’s agreement with the Church of Thessalonike’s firm opinion that it should maintain possession of St. Demetrios’s relics.<sup>24</sup> There is therefore no reason to detract from the value of this testimony.

The ciborium was believed to be the saint’s dwelling place, and anyone who wanted to meet him would go there. This is why the early mosaics show the saint in front of the open door of the ciborium welcoming people coming to see him.<sup>25</sup> The ciborium was not always closed. Pilgrims, or some of them at least, went inside to light candles and tapers on a candlestand and to see the low couch in the middle, which was “like a silver bed, on which was imprinted the face of the martyr,” no more than 1.7 or 1.8 m in length.<sup>26</sup> One

<sup>17</sup> H. Delehay, *Les origines du culte des martyrs* (Brussels, 1933), 66.

<sup>18</sup> Cormack, “St. Demetrios,” 548. He also states that “St. Demetrios was one of the few, and perhaps even the only, Byzantine saints whose regional cult was not transferred to Constantinople,” and “his localized cult may have helped the city to be one of the few in the Byzantine empire gradually to develop a local identity.” This upholding of the localized and regional importance of relics was not an isolated phenomenon. Antioch’s reply to a request by Emperor Leo I (475–474) for the body of Symeon the Stylite included the statement: “The holy corpse . . . is for our city both a rampart and a fortress” (quoted by Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 87 note 9).

<sup>19</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>20</sup> *Miracula*, 1:5 §51: τὴν τῶν πολιτῶν πρὸς τοὺς μάρτυρας βοωμένην ἀκρίβειαν πειράσαι βουλόμενος.

<sup>21</sup> Lemerle, *Miracles*, 1:87.

<sup>22</sup> See G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. ἀκρίβεια, 3 = John Damaskenos, *Vita of Barlaam and Joasaph*, PG 96:1057D: ἐν τῇ περὶ τὸν κύριον μου . . . ἀκρίβειαν ἠμέληκα.

<sup>23</sup> J.-M. Spieser, “Inventaires en vue d’un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. I. Les inscriptions de Thessalonique,” *TM* 5 (1973): 156–59, no. 8, line 3: δωρεὰ τῷ σεπτῷ ναῷ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐνδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος Δημητρίου ἐν ᾧ τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ κατάκειται λείψανον, and line 8: DONAMUS τῷ σεπτῷ αὐτοῦ ναῷ ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ ἀπόκειται λείψανον. Spieser states that “la présence des reliques a un caractère légendaire, et l’on ne savait pas où elles se trouvaient exactement.”

<sup>24</sup> Once again, the precise location of the relics (the tomb) inside the basilica is not specified.

<sup>25</sup> See notes 11 above and 43 below.

<sup>26</sup> *Miracula*, 1:1 §22: ὡσανεὶ κραβάτιον ἐξ ἀργύρου, ἐνθα καὶ ἐντετύπεται τὸ θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον τοῦ αὐτοῦ πανσέπτου ἀθλοφόρου. According to N. Theotoka, “Περὶ τῶν κιβωρίων τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως,” *Makedonika* 2 (1953): 413; Lemerle, *Miracles*, 2:214; Pallas, “Ciborium,” 50, it was a kind of mortuary *kline* of the sort found in Hellenistic Macedonian tombs.

pilgrim, a relative of the eparchs of Thessalonike, also saw in a vision inside the ciborium, at either end of the couch or bed, a gold throne with St. Demetrios sitting on it and a silver throne on which sat the Lady Eutaxia, who is the personification of the Tyche of Thessalonike.<sup>27</sup>

While protecting the relics of St. Demetrios from being divided up, the Church of Thessalonike gave to important pilgrims and sent to the emperors sweet-smelling earth from the spot where the saint lay buried.<sup>28</sup> The fragrant earth was kept in the sacristy of Thessalonike's metropolitan church, which was the large five-aisled basilica on the site of the later Hagia Sophia. We do not know in what kind of reliquaries it was distributed, but they were probably shaped like the ciborium of St. Demetrios. The Moscow reliquary (1059–67) is an exact replica of one of them.<sup>29</sup> This also explains the similarities and differences between this eleventh-century octagonal reliquary and the descriptions and depictions of the saint's early Christian hexagonal ciborium.

## II

The appearance of *myron* in the cult of St. Demetrios is not an isolated phenomenon in the post-iconoclastic period. We know that *myron* flowed from the intact relics of saints who enjoyed wide popular appeal and political support after Iconoclasm, such as St. Nicholas at Myra, St. Mary the Younger at Vize, St. Theodora at Thessalonike, St. Nikon at Sparta, among others. The emergence of *myron* directly from the intact relics of the saints<sup>30</sup> and its distribution to large numbers of pilgrims satisfied demand for direct contact with the redemptive grace of the saints, and at the same time it protected the relics from being cut up into tiny pieces and disappearing.

*Myron* was *myron*, just as water is water and oil is oil. But if we want to take a more pragmatic approach, we can turn to Niketas Choniates, who, in his account of the Normans' outrageous treatment of the *myron* of St. Demetrios when they conquered Thessalonike in 1185, tells us that they fried fish in it and also smeared it on their boots.<sup>31</sup> In other words, *myron* was a kind of sweet-smelling oil. The oil did not first appear in the cult of St. Demetrios as *myron*. The oil from the lamp of St. Demetrios had therapeutic properties before the *myron* appeared. The use of this oil is already attested in the last chapter of the sec-

<sup>27</sup> On the relation of the Lady Eutaxia with the Tyche of Thessalonike, see Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 380–83, Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 127, and Ch. Bakirtzis, "Lady Eutaxia of Thessaloniki," *Museum of Byzantine Culture* 6 (1999): 18–29.

<sup>28</sup> *Miracula*, 1:5 §53: κύψαντες τὸν ἐν γῆ χοῦν πρὸ τοῦ φθάσαι τὸ πῦρ ὅσον οἰοί τε γεγόνασιν ἀνελέξαντο, τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν ὁσμὴν μετ' εὐωδίας ἀφάτου συνεφελκόμενον, and 1:5 §54: ἐστείλαμεν ὑμῖν ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς τοῦ ἁγίου χοῦς εὐλογίας. See also Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 374.

<sup>29</sup> Σαφῆς πέφυκα τοῦ κιβωρίου τύπος τοῦ λοχονόκτου μάρτυρος Δημητρίου. reads the inscription of the reliquary; see A. Grabar, "Quelques reliquaires de Saint Démétrios et le martyrium du saint à Salonique," in *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1968), 1:446–53, esp. 447 (= *DOP* 5 [1950]: 3–28); *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, ed. H. Evans and W. Wixom, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1997), 77–78, no. 36; add to the bibliography I. A. Sterligova, "Vizantiiskii moshchevik Dimitriia Solunskogo iz Moskovskogo Kremlia i ego sud'ba v Drevnei Rusi," *Dmitrievskii sobor vo Vladimire: k 800-letiiu Sozdaniia* (Moscow, 1997), 220–54.

<sup>30</sup> Eustathios of Thessalonike, "Λόγος ἐγκωμιστικὸς εἰς τὸν ἅγιον μεγαλομάρτυρα Δημήτριον," ed. T. L. F. Tafel, *Eustathii metropolitae Thessalonicensis Opuscula* (Frankfurt, 1832; repr. Amsterdam, 1964), 171.

<sup>31</sup> Niketas Choniates, ed. J. A. van Dieten (Berlin, 1975), CFHB 11, 305.39–306.44.

ond book of the *Miracula*, in connection with events that took place in north Africa and are dated before 665.<sup>32</sup>

Such a radical change in the cult of St. Demetrios also implies changes in the layout of the space to facilitate veneration. Various solutions have been proposed for how the ciborium was adapted to meet the challenge of the appearance of *myron*, first and foremost being the replacement of the silver ciborium with a marble one.<sup>33</sup>

The sources cease to mention the ciborium early on. The last reference to the ciborium in the *Miracula* comes in the last chapter of the second book, which relates events before 665.<sup>34</sup> Lemerle suggests that it is not the ciborium of St. Demetrios that is meant here, but the ciborium over the altar in his basilica.<sup>35</sup> By the time the *myron* appeared in the cult of St. Demetrios, the terms *tomb* (τάφος), *larnax* (λάρναξ), and  *Soros* (σορός) were already established, and new terms, such as *fragrant-oil receptacle* (μυροθήκη) and *fragrant-oil-exuding relic* (μυροπόροα σορός) were appearing.<sup>36</sup> It is significant that the first historical appearance of the *myron* (1040) occurred in the saint's tomb and not in his ciborium.<sup>37</sup> The Moscow reliquary is referred to in its inscription as the "ciborium" (κιβώριον) of St. Demetrios, and not as his "tomb" or "larnax" because, as I have already explained, the eleventh-century Moscow reliquary is an exact replica of a sixth-century reliquary, which was a replica of the ciborium of St. Demetrios.<sup>38</sup> The precise description of the archbishop of Thessalonike Eustathios, for instance, in the second half of the twelfth century, speaks not of a ciborium but of a *taphos* (tomb) decorated with gold and silver, and of anterooms (προτεμενίσματα), where the *myron* emerged<sup>39</sup>—a structure that bears no relationship, either ideologically or functionally, to the ciborium.

We might even argue that there was no ciborium at this time, if it were not described by the archbishop of Thessalonike Niketas (first half of the 12th century).<sup>40</sup> I do believe, however, despite established views to the contrary, that the lengthy description of the hexagonal marble ciborium at the beginning of Niketas's account of the miracles of St.

<sup>32</sup> *Miracula*, 2:6 §315: ἀπαλλάττονται τῷ ἐλαίῳ τῆς αὐτοῦ κανδήλας χριόμενοι . . . εἰ συμβῆ διχθῆναί τινα ἐκ τῶν σκορπίων, ἐκ τοῦ ἐλαίου τῆς κανδήλας αὐτοῦ περιχρίεται εἰς τὸ πληγὴν μέλος, καὶ τῆς οὐδύνης θάττον ἀπαλλάττεται, and Lemerle, *Miracles*, 2:169. In the Life of St. Phantinos (late 10th–early 11th century), it is stated that the saint sought to heal a little girl from Thessalonike using oil from the church of St. Demetrios (ἐλαϊον . . . ἐκ τοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρος Δημητρίου); E. Follieri, *La Vita di San Fantino il Giovane* (Brussels, 1993), 81; Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 118 note 272.

<sup>33</sup> The replacement is not mentioned in the texts. It is generally accepted that the silver ciborium was destroyed by fire ca. 620 (Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 66). Soteriou, Βασιλική, 19 and 181, supposes that the replacement took place after the siege of Thessalonike by the Saracens (904).

<sup>34</sup> *Miracula*, 2:6 §313, 314; Lemerle, *Miracles*, 2:169.

<sup>35</sup> Lemerle, *Miracles*, 2:163 note 253. See also Ch. Bakirtzis, "Un miracle de Saint Démétrius de Thessalonique au Maghreb," in *L'Africa romana, Atti del XIII convegno di studio, Djerba, 10–13 dicembre 1998* (Rome, 2000), 1450.

<sup>36</sup> Ch. Bakirtzis, "Ἡ μυροβλυσία τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου," in idem, Θαύματα, 514. The terms λείψανον, λάρναξ, σῶμα, and σορός appear in the hymnography of the iconoclast period: Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 106–12; D. Vaccaros, Τὸ μύρον τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου τοῦ Θεσσαλονικέως (Thessalonike, 1984): 85–93.

<sup>37</sup> See note 6 above.

<sup>38</sup> See note 29 above.

<sup>39</sup> *La espugnazione di Tessalonica*, ed. S. Kyriakidis (Palermo, 1961), 106.16, 116.12, 126.32; Eustathios, *Opuscula*, 171.79.

<sup>40</sup> A. Sigalas, "Νικῆτα ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης εἰς τὰ θαύματα τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου," Ἐπ. Ἐτ. Βυζ. Σπ. 12 (1936): 332.25–333.7. On the identification of Niketas, see Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 140–41.

Demetrios does not apply to a contemporary structure, but reproduces an earlier description of an earlier ciborium.<sup>41</sup> I base this view on Niketas's own statement to the effect that the information in the first five chapters of his account is taken from copies of texts on St. Demetrios that predate those in John's collection, and that he does not intend to add anything new to these.<sup>42</sup>

This early marble ciborium, older than the silver one, is depicted in the mosaic at the west end of the first south aisle, which shows St. Demetrios in front of his ciborium receiving children who are being dedicated to him.<sup>43</sup> The form of the ciborium depicted on this mosaic corresponds to Niketas's description (Fig. 2): it is hexagonal, with closure slabs decorated with three rows of standing saints in relief and spiral columns with Theodosian capitals (λευκοῖς δὲ συμπτυσσόμενοι εἰς ἐξάγωνον ἅπαν τὸ σχῆμα διαμορφουσι μαρμάροις); the columns are linked by marble arches in which are fishscale metallic (golden?) grilles (ἐκ λίθου δὲ τούτοις πάλιν μαρμαίροντος ἄνωθεν στοαὶ ἐφίζάνουσιν); and the curving triangles of the vaulted canopy rest upon the hexagonal cornice (τῇ ἐξαγώνῳ σφενδόνη κοσμούμεναι καὶ εἰς στενὸν κομιδῇ τὸν ὄροφον μαρμάροις ἐτέροις ἀύγοειδέσιν εὐθύουσιν). The mosaic is dated before the fire of ca. 620.<sup>44</sup> I am therefore of the opinion that the silver ciborium described by John and depicted in the mosaics in the small north colonnade is more recent than the marble one described by a text that predates John's and is depicted in the mosaic at the west end of the first south aisle. We have no information about the date of construction of the first ciborium. I suggest that it was built at the same time as the basilica or immediately afterwards.<sup>45</sup> I believe that the ciborium was a more monumental replacement for the *oikiskos*-martyrion (οἰκίαν, σηκός) of St. Demetrios, which was built, according to the *Passiones* of St. Demetrios, on the site where the martyr was buried, and

<sup>41</sup> The description of the ciborium, "Ἐκφρασις τοῦ Κιβωρίου," is included in the first five chapters of the collection in the fourth chapter. It follows the chapters "Περὶ Λεοντίου ἐπάρχου τῆς ἰάσεως" (On the healing of the Eparch Leontios), "Περὶ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς τοῦ ναοῦ" (On the building of the church), "Ἐκφρασις τοῦ ναοῦ" (Description of the church), and comes before the chapter "Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Ἰστρου ποτὲ περαιώσεως" (On the crossing of the Istros). Therefore it is included in the description of the first basilica of St. Demetrios founded by Leontios. N. Theotoka, "Περὶ τῶν κιβωρίων τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως," *Makedonika* 2 (1953): 399 proposed that Niketas describes the ciborium as it was in his days. This opinion was also supported by later scholars.

<sup>42</sup> Niketas, 322 and 334.8–15: Τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸν πιστότατον Λεόντιον τσαῦτα καὶ τηλικαῦτα τοῦ Θεομάρτυρος τὰ θαυματουργήματα, χρόνῳ δὲ ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν πρεσβύτερα, ἀρχαιοτέροις ἀντιγράφοις καὶ τῇ γε ἀκολουθίᾳ πιστεύσαντι, ὅθεν καὶ τὰ πρεσβεῖα τῆς τάξεως τούτοις ἀποδεδώκαμεν. Τὰ δ' ἐφεξῆς τῶ ἐν ἁγίοις Ἰωάννη συγγεγραμμένα ἀκολουθῶς τῇ τάξει λελόγισται καὶ συντέτακται δεύτερα, τὸ παράπαν παρεκτροπὴν οὐδεμίαν προσδεξαμένων τῶν ὑποθέσεων, ὅτι μὴ κατὰ μόνην τὴν ἐπιτομὴν καὶ τοῦτο συναφῶς ἔνεκεν τῶν λοιπῶν διὰ τὸ εὐμαθὲς καὶ εὐσύνοπτον.

<sup>43</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 192–93, pl. 62. The marble ciborium is done in gold and silver tesserae to reflect the notion that it radiates spiritual light. It is outlined in dark blue, and the shadows are rendered in three tones ranging from blue to gray. The decoration of the footstool in the same mosaic indicates that it is of marble, not gold or silver; yet it too is done in gold and silver tesserae, because it is in direct contact with St. Demetrios.

<sup>44</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 193. A. Xyngopoulos, *Les mosaïques de l'église de Saint Démètre à Thessalonique* (Thessalonike, 1969), 16–17, dates the mosaic in the 5th–6th century. E. Kitzinger, "Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm," in *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West, Selected Studies*, ed. W. E. Kleinbauer (Bloomington, Ind.–London, 1976), 178, dates the mosaic from the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 7th century. R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London, 1985), 83–84, suggests a number of possible dates between the middle of the 5th to the beginning of the 7th century. For the discussion about the date of the mosaic, see Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 72–73.

<sup>45</sup> The *Passiones* of St. Demetrios mention the founding of the basilica but not the erection of the ciborium.



demolished so that the basilica could be built.<sup>46</sup> I base this opinion on a feature shared by both the *oikiskos* and the ciborium of St. Demetrios: both are connected with the existence of an underground tomb of St. Demetrios beneath them.<sup>47</sup> We do not know when the marble ciborium was replaced by the silver one. I could date the replacement purely hypothetically to the reign of Justinian I, being connected with that emperor's ardent love for St. Demetrios, as evidenced by his request for the transfer of the relics to Constantinople and by a gift he made to the basilica, attested in a very fragmentary inscription.<sup>48</sup>

No mention of the ciborium exists in the texts of the Latin occupation of Thessalonike (1204–24). On the contrary, we find allusions to the “fragrant-oil tomb” (μυροφόρος τάφος) or the “fragrant-oil exuding holy *larnax*” (τιμία λάρναξ . . . τὰ μύρα προχέουσα).<sup>49</sup> After the Latin conquest, John Staurakios, the *chartophylax* of the Church of Thessalonike, in the second half of the thirteenth century—who, unlike Niketas, adapts the details of the miracles to the circumstances of his time and adds new miracles—also ignores the ciborium and refers almost exclusively to the *larnax* and the *taphos* of the saint.<sup>50</sup> Even the vision of the Lady Eutaxia is described as taking place at the site of the *larnax*, which was not inside the ciborium, but in some other, unspecified, place metaphorically described as a “divine mansion.”<sup>51</sup> The *larnax* was a double marble structure, with a visible upper section (a cenotaph) and a burial chest below, incorporating the body of the saint from which *myron* exuded.<sup>52</sup> It was, according to Staurakios, not in a ciborium, but in another burial space of the basilica which was not always accessible because its doors were usually closed, was entered from the north aisle in the company of a sacristan, and was called *hibotos* (κιβωτός, “ark”).<sup>53</sup> The *larnax* is replicated by the luxurious reliquaries of Halberstadt, the Great Lavra, and Vato-

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of the *oikiskos*, see Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 354–56.

<sup>47</sup> For the *oikiskos*: *Passio prima*, §8: τὴν περιέχουσαν τὸ πανάγιον λείψανον οἰκίαν. *Passio altera*, §15: καὶ ἀνεκλίθη ἐν τῷ σεβασμίῳ σικῶ, ἔνθα ἦν ὑπὸ γῆν κείμενον τοῦ ἀγίου τὸ λείψανον. For the ciborium, see note 13 above.

<sup>48</sup> D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du IIIe au VIe siècle*, BCH, suppl. 8 (Athens, 1983), 81–82, no. 81. Spiesser, *Thessalonique*, 211 note 298: “l’attribution à Justinien 1er paraît certaine et il s’agit vraisemblablement d’une donation (il est sûr, en tout cas, qu’il est question de Saint-Démétrius et de son église).”

<sup>49</sup> Letter of Ioannes Apokaukos, bishop of Naupaktos, to Theodore Doukas in 1217–24: V. Vassilevski, “Epirotica saeculi XIII,” *VizVrem* 3 (1896): no. 4, 247.25; another letter of Ioannes Apokaukos to Patriarch Germanos II from Thessalonike in 1227, *ibid.*, no. 27, 294.10. In another of his letters to Constantine Mesopotamites, archbishop of Thessalonike (1225–27), he is mentioned as a caretaker (*epimeletes*) of the tomb (N. Bees, “Unedierte Schriftstücke aus der Kanzlei des Johannes Apokaukos des Metropolitens von Naupaktos (in Aetolien),” *BNJ* 21 [1971–76]: no. 67, 124.107). Letter of Demetrios Chomatenos to Patriarch Germanos II, who scolded him for crowning Theodore Doukas using the *myron* of St. Demetrios (J. B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra et classica spicilegio Solesmensi parata*, vol. 6 (7) [Paris–Rome, 1891; repr. Farnborough, 1967], no. 114, 494).

<sup>50</sup> Ioakeim Iberites, “Ἰωάννου Σταυρακίου λόγος εἰς τὰ θαύματα τοῦ ἀγίου Δημητρίου,” *Makedonika* 1 (1940): 324–76, §§10, 13, 18, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Staurakios, 350.22: τὸ τῷ ναῶ περιγραφόμενον τοῦ Μεγάλου (Δημητρίου) θεῖον ἀνάκτορον. 368.23–25: ὁ δὲ νεωκόρος ἐνταῦθα τὸ μαρτυρικὸν πρὸς ὄρθρον ὑπανοίξας ἀνάκτορον . . . εἰσῆι ἐκπληκτος ἦν θεασάμενος τὴν βασιλικὴν πορφύριδα ἐφηπλωμένην λάρνακος τῆς μαρτυρικῆς.

<sup>52</sup> Staurakios, 353.10–15: τὴν ἱερὰν μετέστησαν λάρνακα καὶ μαρμάρους ἐκέλευεν ἦραν ἐκ μέσου ἐπὶ καὶ πρὸς ὀρυγὴν μὲν ἀμοιβαδὸν τοῦ ἐκεῖσε χώματος ἐνησχόληντο. . . . Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡ ὀρυγὴ φθάσει πύχτων ἄκρι τριῶν καὶ μικρόν τι πρὸς, λάρναξ ἐφάνη τούτοις περικεκαλυμμένη μαρμάρῳ λευκῶ. See other examples in Th. Pazaras, “Ὁ τάφος τῶν κτητόρων στὸ καθολικὸ τῆς μονῆς Βατοπεδίου,” *Byzantina* 17 (1994): 418–21.

<sup>53</sup> Staurakios, 353.8–10: ὡς δ’ ἐγγὺς τῆς θείας κιβωτοῦ τοῦ μάρτυρος γένοιτο, εἰσελθέτων ἄμφω ἐκ τοῦ λαιοῦ καὶ τὰς θύρας μετέθεντο καὶ τὴν ἱερὰν μετέστησαν λάρνακα. 353.29–31: εἶθ’ οὕτω τὴν σεπτὴν καὶ πάλιν μαρτυρικὴν κιβωτὸν θυρήσαντες, ὡς πρότερον, ἐξῆλθον καὶ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τῆς πόλεως. 357.16–18: ταῖς θύραις τῆς ἱερᾶς

pedi, which date to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, contained *lythron* or *myron*, and were reserved for important officials.<sup>54</sup>

The *myron* exuded from the body of the saint and, flowing through pipes, filled cisterns located in the *kibotos* around the larnax and in the middle of the nave, where large numbers of pilgrims gathered, taking *myron* and applying it to their bodies.<sup>55</sup> When ordinary pilgrims took *myron* out of the basilica and away from Thessalonike, they carried it in lead ampullae known as *koutrouvia*, which resembled early Christian *eulogiai* in both shape and size.<sup>56</sup> The oldest of these ampullae date to no earlier than the eleventh or twelfth century and are decorated with the likeness of St. Demetrios dressed as a warrior on one side and the Virgin, St. Nestor, or St. George and St. Theodora on the other.

Apart from the silver reliquaries and lead ampullae, there are also the luxurious encolpia (ἐγκόλπια or ἐπικόλπια)<sup>57</sup> in the British Museum (12th–13th century) and the Dumbarton Oaks collection (13th–14th century), which contained *myron* and bore a representation, underneath the lid, of St. Demetrios in his tomb. They are respectively inscribed “anointed with thy blood and thy *myron*” (αἵματι τῷ σῶφ καὶ μύρω κεχρισμένον) and “revered receptacle of blood of Demetrios with *myron*” (σεπτὸν δοχεῖον αἵματος Δημητρίου σὺν μύρω).<sup>58</sup>

Hence, although in the period before the *myron* the sources mention the ciborium and say nothing about the tomb, in the following period, after the *myron* had appeared, they mention the tomb and say nothing about the ciborium. This means that, since there was

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μαρτυρικῆς κιβωτοῦ . . . τὸν Μέγαν διᾶραι τὰς θύρας καὶ τοῖς φανεῖσι προαπαντήσαι. 358.1–3: ὁ Μέγας . . . αὐθις παλινοστεῖ τῇ σορῶ καὶ αἱ θύραι κατασφαλίζοντο. 375.15–17: ὁ Χριστομίμητος ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν ἐγγύς ἰατρὸς καὶ μόνη τῇ μετὰ πίστεως ἀδιστάκτου προσφαύσει τῆς σεπτῆς αὐτοῦ κιβωτοῦ, πᾶν πονηρὸν μακρὰν δραπετεύσειεν. A. Xyngoroulios, “Βυζαντινὸν κιβωτίδιον μετὰ παραστάσεων ἐκ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἀγίου Δημητρίου,” *Αρχ. Ἐφ.* (1936): 110 note 2 (repr. in A. Xyngoroulios, *Θεσσαλονίκη μελετήματα* [Thessalonike, 1997], article V, 79–118), repeated by Grabar, “Reliquaires,” 453, understands the *kibotion* (κιβώτιον) or *kibotos* (κιβωτός) as ciborium (κιβώριον). However, the meaning of κιβώτιον is different from the κιβώριον: E. Kriaras, *Λεξικὸ τῆς μεσαιωνικῆς δημόδους γραμματείας 1100–1669*, vol. 7 (Thessalonike, 1985), s.vv. κιβώριον and κιβώτιον.

<sup>54</sup> Grabar, “Reliquaires,” 437–45; Xyngoroulios, “Κιβωτίδιον”; *Glory of Byzantium*, 161–62, no. 108.

<sup>55</sup> Staurakios, 353.18–22: Καὶ ἰδοὺ μυρίαί τρήσεις τῷ μάρτυρι ἐκ τραχήλου μέχρι καὶ ὀσφύος αὐτῆς πεπυκνωμένοι καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀκριβῶς προσεγγίζουσαι . . . σκεῦος οἶον μυριοπὸν καὶ μύρων μυρίων φλέβες ἐκ τῶν ὀπῶν ἐπήγαζον. 373.3–17: κύκλω τῆς θείας αὐτοῦ σοροῦ μυροδόχων δεξαμενῶν. Αὐταὶ ἐκ πηγῆς τῶν μύρων τοῦ μάκαρος μέχρις αὐτῶν δεχόμεναι τὸν εὐώδη ῥοὺν διακρουνιζόμενον . . . ἄνδρες, γυναῖκες καὶ νήπια, ὅλαις χερσὶν ὅσα καὶ σίφωσι, πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς τὸ μύρον ἐκείθεν ἐφέλκουσι. Καὶ οἱ μὲν ὀφθαλμοὺς, οἱ δὲ στόμα καὶ ὦτα τοῦτ᾽ καθαγιάζουσιν, οἱ δὲ καὶ στέρνα καὶ πᾶσαν τοῦ σώματος ὀλομέλειαν τῷ μύρω προσεπιχρῖουσι καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν, ἀκορέστως ἔχουσι τῆς ἐκ τούτου καταμυρίσεως . . . ὀρῶν οὕτως ἀκορέστως ἀλειφομένους τοὺς πάσης ἡλικίας καὶ γένους τῶν μύρων τοῦ μάρτυρος καὶ μᾶλλον γυναῖκας καταχριομένας ἀπλήστως βλέφαρα καὶ στήθη, μαστοὺς καὶ βραχίονας. 373.34–374.2: καὶ τῇ χειρὶ κατέχων βακτηρίαν λεπτήν, ταύτη τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ μύρου διέγραψεν, ἐκ τῆς μυροφόρου κινήσας ταύτην σοροῦ καὶ εἰς πρόσωπον τοῦ ἐδάφους κατευθεῖαν ἐξέρρει καὶ τῷ ἐδάφει τοῦ ναοῦ ὁμαλῶς καὶ ἠπίως περιελίμναζε . . . αὐθις ἀνοῖξει τὰς κλεισθείσας αὐτῷ τὸ πρῶην μυροδόχου δεξαμενᾶς . . . καὶ οὕτω μόλις στήναι τὸν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τοῦ ναοῦ χεόμενον μυρόκρουνον ποταμόν.

<sup>56</sup> Ch. Bakirtzis, “Byzantine Ampullae from Thessaloniki,” in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout (Urbana–Chicago, 1990), 140–49; *Glory of Byzantium*, 169, no. 118; Museum of Byzantine Culture, *Συλλογὴ Γεωργίου Τσολοζίδη. Τὸ Βυζάντιο μὲ τὴ ματιὰ ἐνὸς συλλέκτη* (Athens, 2001), 34–35, no. 50. Καθημερινὴ ζωὴ στὸ Βυζάντιο, ed. D. Papanikola-Bakirtzis (Athens, 2002): 184–85, nos. 203–5.

<sup>57</sup> Manuel Philes uses the term *enkolpia* (*Manuelis Phileae Carmina*, ed. E. Miller, 2 vols. [Paris, 1855–57], 1:34, 133–34, 2:74, 238). For the term *epikolpia*, see Eustathios, *Opuscula*, 173: πολλοὶ γοῦν ἐπικόλπια φέροντες τοιαῦτα ἐκ τῶν τοῦ μάρτυρος.

<sup>58</sup> *Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. D. Buckton (London, 1994), 185–86, no. 200; *Glory of Byzantium*, 167–68, nos. 116 and 117; Καθημερινὴ ζωὴ, 178–83, nos. 201–2.

no reason to conceal the relics, after the appearance of the *myron* the interest of pilgrims shifted from the ciborium to the tomb of St. Demetrios. All the same, I have no reason to believe that the tomb of St. Demetrios, documented by the texts of the second cult period, after the appearance of the *myron*, has any correlation with a ciborium standing on the hexagonal marble base or stylobate in the nave of the basilica.<sup>59</sup> If a kind of ciborium existed somewhere in the basilica, it would have been a kind of baldachin for the saint's tomb and icon.<sup>60</sup> Inside the British Museum and Dumbarton Oaks reliquaries, St. Demetrios is depicted within his tomb, which is under an arch or baldachin.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, in a center of pilgrimage like the basilica of St. Demetrios, there were several *loca sancta*, roofed and framed by baldachins and arches.

We know that a number of marble arches have been found in the basilica. Two of them have similar decoration, are dated in the tenth or twelfth century, and, according to G. Soteriou, belonged to the hexagonal ciborium standing on the marble stylobate in the nave (Fig. 3).<sup>62</sup> But, given that more than six arches were found in the basilica, it is most likely that they belong to an octagonal ciborium standing somewhere in the basilica and not on the hexagonal stylobate.<sup>63</sup> I believe that, although, as already noted,<sup>64</sup> the Moscow reliquary (1059–67) is a replica of the early Christian hexagonal ciborium of St. Demetrios, its octagonal shape is an innovation and reflects the existence in the basilica of St. Demetrios in the eleventh century of an octagonal baldachin, which was erected over his larnax and his icon.

The sources do not tell us where in the basilica the receptacle for St. Demetrios's *myron* was located, and the subject is shrouded in mystery. This is why the whole question is confused. Soteriou accepted the existence of the ciborium but did not identify the ciborium with the saint's tomb. He believed that the *enkainion* of the basilica served as the tomb and that relics of St. Demetrios (i.e., *lythron* and blood) had been deposited in it.<sup>65</sup> He suggested that the *myron* flowed into the crypt, where the central area was organized accordingly.<sup>66</sup> Mentzos, in the belief that Archbishop Niketas is describing a ciborium of his own time,

<sup>59</sup> For the texts see Vacaros, Μύρον, 85ff; Bakirtzis, "Μυροβλυσία," 511ff.; and Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 106ff.

<sup>60</sup> Konstantinos Akropolites, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν μεγαλομάρτυρα καὶ μυροβλύτην Δημήτριον," ed. A. Papadopoulou-Kerameus, Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1891; repr. Brussels, 1963), 161.14: γονυπετήσας τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐπέθηκα τῇ σορῶ καὶ τὴν θείαν περιεπτυσάμην εἰκόνα. See the baldachin over the tomb of St. Demetrios in a Palaiologan miniature in ms. gr. Th. Fi. of the Bodleian Library, A. Xyngoroulos, Ὁ εἰκονογραφικὸς κύκλος τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου (Thessalonike, 1970), 30–32, pl. III. A baldachin over the tomb of St. Demetrios and not the ciborium is depicted in Dečani (A. Xyngoroulos, "Τὸ προκάλυμμα τῆς σαρκοφάγου τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου," Δελτ.Χριστ.Ἀρχ. Ἐτ. 5 (1969): 192, pl. 81a and b (repr. in Θεσσαλονίκη μελετήματα, article xxvii, 474).

<sup>61</sup> Grabar, "Reliquaires," 446, and A. Grabar, "Un nouveau reliquaire de saint Démétrius," in *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1968), 1:456 (DOP 8 [1954]: 307–13). See the article by Carr in this volume, Fig. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 19–20 and 179–82, fig. 72, pl. 55 (10th century); A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Age, II. XIe–XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1976), 104, pl. LXXXI (12th century).

<sup>63</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 179–82 states that the other six arches have similar decoration but of lower quality and they can be related to the sides of the bema. Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 143–44 states that all the above arches belong to a proskynetarion or to the templon of the basilica.

<sup>64</sup> See note 29 above.

<sup>65</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 61–63.

<sup>66</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 54–55.

posits the existence in the nave of a Byzantine hexagonal marble ciborium containing a kind of larnax of St. Demetrios with *lythron* inside it, and suggests that the ciborium was surrounded by basins into which the *myron* flowed.<sup>67</sup>

### III

Early in the fourteenth century there was a significant change in the tradition of the *myron*.<sup>68</sup> In his encomium of Thessalonike's patron saint, which he wrote in 1330, Nikephoros Gregoras mentions an at first sight rather curious belief that the martyr's body had been cast into a well, from which rivers of *myron* had subsequently flowed.<sup>69</sup> This remark might have passed unnoticed had it not been repeated by St. Demetrios's most noted encomiasts, the metropolitans of Thessalonike Isidore (1388) and Symeon (1416/17–29) and by the German soldier Johann Schiltberger (1427), and had it not been mentioned in the inscription on the Palaiologan mosaic icon of St. Demetrios in the Sassoferato Museum near Ancona.<sup>70</sup>

This new belief is connected with a change in the constitution of the *myron* and the mixing of it with water from the well into which the martyr's body had been thrown. This must have raised questions in the mind of the public and of the multitudes of pilgrims who came to venerate the saint, and the rumor that the *myron* was "concocted" had to be refuted in a very revealing encomium by Demetrios Chrysoloras at the beginning of the fifteenth century: "*myron*, which miraculously flows instead of water . . . [*myron*] is not water, for it is more viscous, but nor does it resemble, nor is it more fluid, nor is it more dry than any other natural substance that is within the earth or around it, nor is it like unto any substance that is concocted."<sup>71</sup> The encomium explains that the *myron* was a natural substance and describes how it welled up from a source "above the body" of the martyr, was channeled along two pipes, and distributed to the faithful. But where did all this take place?

The crypt of St. Demetrios was a kind of eastern atrium to the basilica in the absence of a western atrium. There was a spring of holy water in the crypt from the early Christian period on.<sup>72</sup> The system by which the holy water was supplied consisted of a conduit

<sup>67</sup> Mentzos, Προσκύνημα, 146, fig. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Bakirtzis, "Μυροβλυσία," 518.

<sup>69</sup> B. Laourdas, "Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά ἐγκώμια εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Δημήτριον," *Makedonika* 4 (1960): 92–93.

<sup>70</sup> B. Laourdas, Ὁμιλίες εἰς τὰς ἐορτὰς τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου (Thessalonike, 1954): 22; D. Balfour, Συμειῶνος ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης ἔργα θεολογικά (Thessalonike, 1981), 192; S. Tambaki, Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη στίς περιγραφές τῶν περιηγητῶν, 12ος–19ος αἰ.μ.Χ. (Thessalonike, 1998), no. 4; A. A. Vasiliev, "The Historical Significance of the Mosaic of Saint Demetrius at Sassoferato," *DOP* 5 (1950): 32; M. Théoharis, "Ψηφιδωτὴ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου καὶ ἡ ἀνεύρεσις τῶν λειψάνων τοῦ ἁγίου εἰς Ἰταλίαν," Ἀκαδ. Ἀθη. Πρ. 53 (1978): 508–36. The lead ampulla with the likeness of St. Demetrios and St. Theodora incorporated in to the wooden frame of the icon dates to the 14th century, and in the 17th century it was cased in gold with the inscription Τὸ ἅγιον μύρον.

<sup>71</sup> B. Laourdas, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν μέγαν Δημήτριον καὶ εἰς τὰ μύρα," *Gregorios Palamas* 40 (1957): 349: μύρον, ὃ τοῦ θαύματος, ἀνθ' ὕδατος ρέουσα . . . [τὸ μύρον] ὕδωρ οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐπεὶ τὸν χαρακτῆρα φέρει παχύτερον, ἀλλ' οὐδέ τι ἐν τῶν ἐν τῇ γῆ ἢ καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὴν ὑγροτέρων ἢ ξηροτέρων ἄλλω μετ' ἄλλων ὁμοιον· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῶν σκευαστῶν ἴσον ἐτέρων. Doubt about the authenticity of the *myron* of St. Demetrios is also expressed by John Staurakios, 351.26: σκευαστὸν τὸ μύρον τουτὶ ἐπιδαμλεῖται. The point of Staurakios's account of the miracle (written in the second half of the 13th century) was to prove that the *myron* was not "concocted."

<sup>72</sup> A. Grabar, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte, les reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1946), 1:453 and 2:207.

that led from the well in front of the northwest pier of the sanctuary to the outlets in the crypt and into the cisterns (Fig. 4).<sup>73</sup> If we accept that the well mentioned in the sources since the beginning of the fourteenth century into which St. Demetrios's body was thrown is the well in front of the northwest pillar of the sanctuary (Fig. 1: 2), then there is no reason not to accept that in the Palaiologan period the *myron*-cum-holy-water of St. Demetrios was channeled into the conduit of the early Christian holy water and filled the cisterns in the crypt.<sup>74</sup>

The *myron*-cum-holy-water was drawn for immediate use in clay bowls, which were impressed or engraved with the monogram of St. Demetrios (Fig. 5) and were found in large quantities during the excavation of the crypt. These clay receptacles, which date no earlier than the second half of the thirteenth century, traveled back home with the numerous pilgrims and have been found in Istanbul and Varna.<sup>75</sup>

If it is to the appearance of the *myron*-cum-holy-water in the cult of St. Demetrios that Nikephoros Blemmydes is referring in the lyrics to St. Demetrios written in 1239/40 or shortly afterwards,<sup>76</sup> then we could accept that the tradition about throwing the body of the martyr in the bottom of the well as a protection of the relics appears right after the Frankish kingdom (1204–24). The Latin archbishop of Thessalonike Warinus, who sent numerous relics of saints to the West,<sup>77</sup> may have been involved with the first known division of the relics of St. Demetrios and the appearance of one of his relics at Mans.<sup>78</sup>

The discovery in 1978 of the relics of St. Demetrios in the abbey of San Lorenzo in Campo near Sassoferrato is a matter of some interest.<sup>79</sup> Documents of 1599 and 1779 indicate that the relics of the “illustrious Thessalonian martyr” were found on 20 June 1520 under the main altar (“altare maggiore”). In the parish register we read that the relics were

<sup>73</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 54–55; Xyngopoulos, Βασιλική, 18–9. Recent investigation came to the conclusion that the whole construction had no relation with the preparation of the *myron* in the 9th century, as Soteriou suggested, but with the holy water spring dated to the early Christian period (Bakirtzis, “Μυροβλυσία,” 522 note 1).

<sup>74</sup> Laourdas, “Λόγος,” 353.

<sup>75</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 238–39, pl. 95 c–d. See D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, “The Palaeologan Glazed Pottery of Thessaloniki,” in *L'art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle, Recueil des rapports du IVe colloque serbo-grec* (Belgrade, 1987), 204, with related bibliography on the discovery of similar vessels also outside Thessalonike. See also Bakirtzis, “Μυροβλυσία,” 523, and *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics. The Art of Sgraffito*, ed. D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi (Athens, 1999), 22, fig. 6, 82, no. 88.

<sup>76</sup> A. Heisenberg, *Nicephori Blemmydae curriculum vitae et carmina* (Leipzig, 1896), 121.42–46: ἄλλως δὲ βαπτίσματι πολλοὺς προσφέρων / ἐξ ἀνίκμου λάκκου μὲν ὕδωρ λαμβάνεις, / οὐδὲν τὸ καινόν, ὡς πολὺ σου τὸ σθένος. / ἔχεις δὲ πάλιν καὶ λίαν καινοτρόπως / τὰς σὰς προχύσεις ὡς ἔλαιον, ὡς μύρον.

<sup>77</sup> O. Tafrafi, *Thessalonique des origines au XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1919), 213.

<sup>78</sup> O. Tafrafi, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1913), 136. The Church of Thessalonike never permitted the saint's relics to be divided. In 1149, by order of Manuel I Komnenos, the “cover” of the larnax, which bore a representation of St. Demetrios orans, was taken to the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople, and a new one was put in its place (Soteriou, Βασιλική, 15–17; Xyngopoulos, “Προκάλυμμα,” 187–99). In 1197 Prince Vsevolod III transferred from Thessalonike to the church of St. Demetrios in Vladimir a piece of the saint's cloak or of the cover of his tomb, together with a wooden board that had covered his tomb and that bore a representation of St. Demetrios as a soldier (E. Smirnova, “Culte et image de St. Démètre dans la principauté de Vladimir à la fin du XIIe–début du XIIIe siècle,” in *International Symposium on Byzantine Macedonia, 324–1430 A.D., Thessalonike, 29–31 October 1992* [Thessalonike, 1995], 267–77; eadem, “Khratovaia ikona Dmitrievskogo sobora: Sviatost' Solunskoi baziliki vo Vladimirsom khrame,” in *Dmitrievskii sobor vo Vladimire: k 800-letiiu sozdaniiia*, 220–54).

<sup>79</sup> Théocharis, “Ψηφιδωτή εικόν,” 517–21; Vacaros, Μύρον, 8–21. The relics of St. Demetrios were transferred to the basilica of Thessalonike in 1980.

taken to San Lorenzo in Campo by a monk from “Thessaly,” as Thessalonike and the surrounding area was called from the ninth century on.<sup>80</sup> The documents do not specify when the relics were moved. An inscription accompanying the relics was dated in 1970 by Father Antonio Ferrua and Professor Campana, as experts of the Vatican, to the 12th/13th centuries.<sup>81</sup> If the relics were indeed taken from Thessalonike to Italy at that time, then the appearance immediately afterwards, early in the fourteenth century, of the belief that the martyr’s body had been cast into a well seems justified, in the sense that it accounts for the absence of all or some of the relics from the basilica.

#### IV

John Anagnostes, who described Thessalonike’s final conquest by the Ottomans in 1430, mentions not a ciborium but a marble tomb of St. Demetrios, which was violently destroyed by treasure seekers.<sup>82</sup> He also speaks of the respect that some of the Turks showed for the saint’s healing *myron*: “but those who were wiser than the others (οἷς νοῦς ὑπὲρ τοῦς ἄλλους ὑπῆν), took care to carry it to their homeland and to touch it devoutly and respectfully; for they had heard from men of experience (πεπειραμένων) that it is more effective than medicinal remedies for any sickness that one takes it for.”<sup>83</sup> I believe that Anagnostes is referring in this case to events that took place after the fall of Thessalonike, specifically to pilgrimages not only by Christians but also by Muslims who did not refuse to venerate Christian saints, and whom Anagnostes describes as “wiser.”<sup>84</sup> The men of experience (πεπειραμένοι), who Anagnostes says were aware of the healing properties of the *myron* of St. Demetrios and advised the other Turks to respect it and to take it home, were, I believe, none other than the Turks who had already been established in Thessalonike since 1387 and their descendants, who came into contact with the local Christians and were influenced by their customs and traditions. So the Muslim cult of St. Demetrios-Kasim traces its origins back to this time.<sup>85</sup> These devotional connections had already been established when Murad II entered the basilica of St. Demetrios (1430), sacrificed a ram as a token of respect, and ordered that the basilica should remain in the hands of the Christians, while at the same time establishing Muslim participation in the cult of St. Demetrios.<sup>86</sup>

However, things were not as they had been. The discovery of numerous late Byzantine and early post-Byzantine ceramics in the excavation fill of the crypt means that this part

<sup>80</sup> Théocharis, “Ψηφιδωτὴ εἰκόν,” 522–33.

<sup>81</sup> Théocharis, “Ψηφιδωτὴ εἰκόν,” 518–9.

<sup>82</sup> Ioannes Anagnostes, *Διήγησις περὶ τῆς τελευταίας ἀλώσεως τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, ed. Y. Tsaras (Thessalonike, 1958): 48.31–50.1: Διὸ καὶ καταβεβληκότες τὰς ἐπ’ αὐτῆ μαρμάρους τῶν μύρων ἔσπευδον αὐτὴν ἐκκενώσαι καὶ τὸ ἱερόν καὶ θεῖον λείψανον τοῦ μάρτυρος ἐκβαλεῖν.

<sup>83</sup> Anagnostes, 50.6–11: οἷς δὲ νοῦς ὑπὲρ τοῦς ἄλλους ὑπῆν, τοῦτοις ἦν ἐπιμελὲς πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτῶν τοῦτο μετακομίζειν καὶ μετ’ αἰδοῦς ἄπτεισθαι καὶ σεβάσματος· ἡκῆκείσαν γὰρ πρὸς τῶν πεπειραμένων ὡς ἰατρικῶν φαρμάκων ἐστὶν ἐνεργέστερον, εἰς οἶον ἂν τις χρῆσαιτο πάθος.

<sup>84</sup> F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (Oxford, 1924), 16–17 and 263–64. Christian saints were worshiped by heterodox Muslims; see G. Voyatzes, *Ἡ πρώτη ὀθωμανοκρατία στὴ Θράκη. Ἄμεσες δημογραφικὲς συνέπειες* (Athens, 1998), 407–17.

<sup>85</sup> According to popular Islamic beliefs, Demetrios and Kasim are identical saints; see M. Kiel, “Notes on the History of Some Turkish Monuments in Thessaloniki and Their Founders,” *Balkan Studies* 11 (1970): 143.

<sup>86</sup> Doukas, *Ἱστορία*, CSHB, 29, p. 201: Τὰ δὲ τῶν μοναστηρίων κρειττότερα, ὡς αἱ φῆμαι πανταχοῦ ἐκηρύττοντο, ἐποίησε βωμοὺς τῆς αὐτῶν θρησκείας, πλὴν τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου μάρτυρος Δημητρίου· καὶ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰσελθὼν καὶ θύσας κριὸν ἓνα οἰκείαις χερσὶ, προσηύξατο, εἶτα ἐκέλευσε τοῦ εἶναι ἐν χερσὶ χριστιανῶν· πλὴν τὸν τοῦ τάφου κόσμον καὶ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀδύτων ἅπαντα οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἐνοσφίσαντο, τοίχους μόνους ἀφέντες κενούς.

of the basilica stopped being used after 1430 and began to be filled up.<sup>87</sup> The last to mention the *myron* are Joos van Ghistele (1483?) and the Russian monk Isaiah, who visited Thessalonike in 1489, fifty-nine years after the conquest and four years before the basilica of St. Demetrios was converted into the Kasimiye Camii in 1493. Joos van Ghistele mentions that pilgrims collected *myron* in small glass vessels (“slaachclkins van glase”),<sup>88</sup> which means that the lead ampullae (*koutrouvia*) had ceased to be produced and to circulate after 1430. Isaiah, giving a short account of the celebration of St. Demetrios, attests that, after 1430, not only was the tomb of St. Demetrios restored, but the *myron* continued to exude not continuously but three times a year for the benefit of pilgrims.<sup>89</sup> A marble slab for burial use with a sculpted cross and a misspelled inscription, Ἀνεκενίσθη ὁ ἱερός τάφος διὰ Λέοντος τοῦ Ἑτεριώτου (The holy tomb was renovated by Leon-Heteriotes), dates to this period,<sup>90</sup> as does a written inscription in the south wing of the transept appealing for St. Demetrios’s help (Fig. 6).<sup>91</sup> It was then that the vaulted peristyle with eight reused columns was built, only 3 m from the west façade of the basilica (Fig. 7), to contain the marble early Christian phiale that filled with *myron*-cum-holy-water or holy water.<sup>92</sup> Travelers in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries explicitly state that the saint’s tomb still functioned as a *locus sanctus*, common to both Christians and Muslims, even after the basilica had been converted into a mosque.<sup>93</sup>

Where was the tomb of St. Demetrios at this time? In the northwest corner of the basilica there are two adjoining chambers (Fig. 1: 3 and Fig. 8), part of the preexisting Roman bath, which were preserved intact when the early Christian basilica was built, and were incorporated into it, according to Soteriou, initially as a baptistery and later as a sacristy.<sup>94</sup> Access is from the west end of the first north aisle. The first chamber is semicircular in plan and roofed with a semidome; the second has four sides and a low vault. Against the east wall, in front of the marble frame of a sealed doorway, which was converted into an arched recess when the church was restored after it had been destroyed by fire in 1917, stands a marble cenotaph, which is traditionally believed to be the tomb of St. Demetrios (Fig. 9).

The tomb of St. Demetrios is now a new four-sided marble structure with a pitched cover, the top and the west end of which are covered by two closure slabs of the eighth to

<sup>87</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 238. On p. 57, on the basis of Paul Lucas’s description of the basilica (1714), Soteriou states that the crypt was used until the beginning of the 18th century and that it began to fill up after this. It seems likely that Lucas’s account of the crypt is based on oral tradition.

<sup>88</sup> Th. Papazotos, “Μερικὲς πληροφορίες γὰρ τὴ Θεσσαλονικὴ ἀπὸ τὸν J. Van Ghistele (1483);” *Istoriogeographica* 5 (1995): 51–56.

<sup>89</sup> Th. Papazotos, “Περιγραφή τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου ἀπὸ τὸν ρώσο μοναχὸ Ἡσαΐα (1489);” *Istoriogeographica* 4 (1994): 191–92; Tambaki, Περιηγητές, no. 7.

<sup>90</sup> Papageorghiou, “Μνημεῖα,” pl. IX.3; Soteriou, Βασιλική, 18.

<sup>91</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 234: Ὁ Θε(ὸς) τοῦ ἀγῆ/ ου Δημητρή[ο]υ/ πλύθυνον τὸν / ὄρον τὸν Καναβ/δὸν ἦνα πάντε/ς μετὰ πάντων χ/ έρομεν ὑ έκ γέν/ ους ἡς τὴν δηακ/ ονήαν τοῦ Θε(ο)ῦ/ [Τημάται . . . ὁ Θε(ὸς).] See other pilgrims’ inscriptions in Papageorghiou, “Μνημεῖα,” 375–7.

<sup>92</sup> Papageorghiou, “Μνημεῖα,” 372, pl. XIII.4; Soteriou, Βασιλική, 69–70, fig. 16, dates the peristyle to the end of the Byzantine period, and G. Corbett (1949) dates it to the Turkish period (Cormack, “W. S. George,” 60, fig. 3). Inscriptions of this period in the narthex (Soteriou, Βασιλική, 27) attest repairs to the floor, probably connected with the installation of new plumbing.

<sup>93</sup> Tambaki, Περιηγητές, 94–96.

<sup>94</sup> Soteriou, Βασιλική, 40 and 134–35; A. Xyngopoulos, Ἡ βασιλικὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης (Thessalonike, 1946), 16. N. Moutsopoulos (*Byzantina* 18 (1995–1996): 316) has argued unconvincingly that the two chambers are connected with the tomb of St. Antony the Homologites (t843).

ninth century.<sup>95</sup> There is a cruciform aperture in the south side. The present structure is an adaptation of a similar, though humbler, tomb in the same place, which appears in a photograph and a drawing of the early twentieth century.<sup>96</sup> This tomb was a low cist-grave, topped with slabs (including the two reused closure Byzantine slabs), set at a slight north-west/southeast angle, and with a round aperture in the south side. The ground inside the tomb was hollowed out.

The existence of the tomb of St. Demetrios in these two chambers at the northwest corner of the basilica was not unknown to travelers in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, but it was not accessible to outsiders, being under the protection of a Dervish order.<sup>97</sup> Louis de Launay, who visited it in 1897 at the invitation of a Muslim clergyman, gives a detailed account of a ceremony of healing performed by the same clergyman for some Greek Christians and their families.<sup>98</sup> During the ceremony, the Muslim used oil from a lamp that burned over the tomb of St. Demetrios and earth from his tomb.

Further information about the cult of Thessalonike's patron saint in these two chambers is preserved by the Cypriot folk poet Christodoulos Andonopoulos, who described the basilica of St. Demetrios and the ceremonies performed at his tomb in a poem about Thessalonike written in 1913.<sup>99</sup> The cult was associated with the relics of St. Demetrios, which were inside a "coffin" (κιβώτιον) in such a way that "people could not see them, but could only touch them with their hand."<sup>100</sup> According to Christodoulos this "touching" consisted in: (1) the pilgrim's inserting his or her hand into the "coffin" through an aperture in one side (at the east end of the south side) and making contact with the relics; (2) the sensation of warmth that surrounded the pilgrim's hand while it was inside the "coffin"; (3) the effusion of a sweet fragrance, which was perceptible not only to the pilgrim but also to others nearby; and (4) the extracting of soil from the interior of the "coffin." The soil was placed in the oil lamp or else dissolved in water and drunk by both Christian and Muslim women who were about to give birth, to assure them of an easy delivery.

The soil, the warmth, and the fragrant odor associated with the relics of St. Demetrios are old elements of his early cult.<sup>101</sup> They are mentioned by Archbishop Eusebios of Thessalonike in his letter to Emperor Maurice (582–602), when the latter requested that some of the martyr's relics be sent to Constantinople.<sup>102</sup> Regarding the antiquity of the practice of the cult of St. Demetrios, as attested in Thessalonike at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is worth noting the similarities it shares with the cult of another *myroblytes* saint, Euphemia, in her church in Constantinople, as described by Constantine, bishop of Tios, eleven centuries earlier, in ca. 800.<sup>103</sup> There was an aperture in the upper part of the saint's

<sup>95</sup> Soteriou, *Βασιλική*, 173, pl. 50.

<sup>96</sup> Papageorghiou, "Μνημεία," pl. xvii.1; Cormack, "W. S. George," pl. 11.

<sup>97</sup> Tambaki, *Περιηγητές*, 94–96; Papageorghiou, "Μνημεία," 335 note 2.

<sup>98</sup> L. de Launay, *Chez les Grecs de Turquie* (Paris, 1897), 182–84.

<sup>99</sup> Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 335–43, commentary, 433–36. At this time, the basilica was no longer being used as a mosque, but had not yet been reconsecrated as a Christian church. Both Christians and Muslims had unrestricted access to the tomb.

<sup>100</sup> Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 338: Δὲν ἠμπορεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος γιὰ νὰ τὸ ἀτενίσαι / καὶ μόνο μὲ τὸ χέρι του δύναται νὰ τὸ ἐγγίσει.

<sup>101</sup> Bakirtzis, "Le culte," 64.

<sup>102</sup> *Miracula*, 1:5 §53: κύψαντες τὸν ἐν γῆ χούν πρὸ τοῦ φθάσαι τὸ πῦρ ὅσον οἰοί τε γεγόνασιν ἀνελέξαντο, τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν ὁσμὴν μετ' εὐωδίας ἀφάτου συνεφελκόμενον. Cf. note 28 above.

<sup>103</sup> F. Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcédoine* (Brussels, 1965), 85; Mentzos, *Προσκύνημα*, 115.



larnax, through which pilgrims could touch a small box containing her relics. The same practice is also known in the cults of the Bektashi and Kizilbashi saints: in the Seyyit Ali Sultan or Kizil Deli tekke in eastern Rhodope (western Thrace), which was built in 1402, a wooden coffin is displayed in the *turbe* containing a receptacle with, according to the oral tradition, a piece of cloth from the sacred cloak (*hirka*) of Kizil Deli, or, according to another interpretation, his dried blood.<sup>104</sup>

Soteriou suggested that St. Demetrios's tomb was transferred to this chamber after the church had been converted into a mosque, the Kasimiye Camii, in 1493.<sup>105</sup> This is pure hypothesis, based neither on texts nor on archaeological finds. It seems more likely that the Ottoman local authorities allowed an existing *locus sanctus*—which had been used by Christians and Muslims alike since 1430 or even 1387—to continue to function, rather than that they permitted the Christians to transfer to a storeroom in the northwest corner of the basilica the relics of Thessalonike's patron saint, which, as we have seen, were not in the basilica but had been thrown into a well or taken to Italy. I conclude that the saint's tomb is on the same site today as it was before 1493 and before 1430.

The chambers I have described could easily contain all the burial structures described in the Byzantine sources: the double marble tomb, the gold and silver ornamentation, the cisterns for the *myron*, and the anterooms (προτεμενίσματα). However, excavations inside them have been incomplete.<sup>106</sup> To the west of the chambers there is a large cistern with pipes that discharge both at the west end of the basilica and into the semicircular chamber (anteroom). To the east there is another chamber with hydraulic structures connected with a cistern to the north.<sup>107</sup> These adjacent structures would have played an important part in the production of the *myron*-cum-holy-water and its distribution to the pilgrims during the period 1430–93.

Investigations carried out recently at the entrance to the tomb uncovered frescoes of the Palaiologan period showing St. Demetrios on horseback and a standing St. Photeine at prayer (Fig. 10). The depiction of St. Demetrios on a horse by the entrance to the tomb conveys the meaning of a saint “who answers prayers quickly” (γοργοεπήκοος), and the miracle-working St. Photeine is helping those of the worshipping pilgrims who had lost their sight.<sup>108</sup> Another fresco was uncovered in the soffit of the entranceway with a decorative theme that dates to the eighth/ninth century. The fact that the entrance is decorated with frescoes from various periods means that the two chambers were in use for many centuries. Soteriou's hypothesis that they were used as a baptistery must be ruled out, because we now know that Thessalonike had only one baptistery, which was adjacent to the five-aisled basilica underneath Hagia Sophia.<sup>109</sup> I believe that the chambers in the northwest corner of the basilica were connected with the tomb of St. Demetrios and the phenomenon of the *myron* even before 1430, in the Byzantine period.

<sup>104</sup> S. Zeghines, *Ὁ μπεκτασισμός στη Δυτική Θράκη*, 2d ed. (Thessalonike, 1996), 185–88.

<sup>105</sup> Soteriou, *Βασιλική*, 18 and 40.

<sup>106</sup> Soteriou, *Βασιλική*, 134.

<sup>107</sup> *Ἀρχ. Δελτ.* 25 (1973–74): Chronika, 744 (P. Lazaridis). Post-Byzantine pottery was found in the fill in the cistern.

<sup>108</sup> A.-M. Talbot, “The Posthumous Miracles of St. Photeine,” *AB* 112 (1994): 85–104.

<sup>109</sup> M. Falla Castelfranchi, “Sulla primitiva chiesa episcopale di Tessalonica,” *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Archeologia e Storia Antica, Roma* 2 (1981): 107–25; E. Marke, “Ἡ Ἁγία Σοφία καὶ τὰ προσκτίσματα της μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ ἀρχαιολογικὰ δεδομένα,” *Thessalonikeion polis* 1 (1997): 54–61; and P. Assemakopoulou-Atzaka, “Τὰ προβλήματα τοῦ χώρου νότια ἀπὸ τὸ ναὸ τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη,” *ibid.*, 62–71.

If this theory is correct, then it raises the question: why were these chambers the only part of the Roman bath to survive and be incorporated into the early Christian basilica? Why did they contain the *myron*-exuding tomb of St. Demetrios?

The first book of the *Miracula* makes frequent reference to the healing of the sick. This is why I have, on another occasion, described how a hospital was set up in the late sixth and early seventh centuries somewhere in the north part of the basilica, perhaps in the north wing of the transept of the basilica.<sup>110</sup> The patients were healed not only by doctors, but above all by St. Demetrios, who would appear to them in a vision. These appearances attest that the place where the patients stayed in the basilica was a *locus sanctus*. But why was it a *locus sanctus*? In the *passio altera*, the eparch of Illyricum, Leontios, “immediately after he was laid upon the healing tomb regained his health,”<sup>111</sup> and in the discourse quoted by Archbishop Niketas that predates John, the sick Marianos laid his mattress beside the tomb, which was some distance from the ciborium with the icon of St. Demetrios.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the place where the patients resided and were healed was a *locus sanctus* because it was connected with the tomb of St. Demetrios, which was not visible in the period before the *myron* appeared.<sup>113</sup> Thus, since I am of the opinion that the tomb of St. Demetrios was in the northwest chambers in the period after the appearance of the *myron*, it seems to me that the hospital in the late sixth and early seventh centuries was not in the north wing of the transept, as I originally supposed, but in the northwest chambers. This is where the sick people came to stay and this is where the saint appeared. This is also where the ecclesiastical authorities dug evidently in secret for the tomb of St. Demetrios by order of the emperors. So, to answer my own question, the fact that these two chambers of the Roman bath were preserved as *memoria Demetrii* in the northwest corner of the basilica reflects a tradition that they are connected directly with the legend of St. Demetrios.<sup>114</sup>

## V

On the basis of the foregoing account, the history of the tomb of St. Demetrios may be summed up as follows.

1. Two chambers of the Roman bath, which were connected with the martyrdom of St. Demetrios, were incorporated into the northwest corner of the early Christian basilica of St. Demetrios.

2. A hexagonal marble ciborium was initially erected in the middle of the nave, and is depicted in the mosaic in the south aisle. Archbishop Niketas of Thessalonike (first half of the 12th century) quotes a description of it. The marble ciborium was replaced, probably in the reign of Justinian I, by a hexagonal silver-plated ciborium of wood, which was

<sup>110</sup> Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 368–71.

<sup>111</sup> English translation of the *passio altera* by Skedros, *St. Demetrios*, 153.

<sup>112</sup> Niketas, 335.36 and 336.16–18: *παρὰ τὴν θήκην τοῦ ἁγίου τὴν εὐνήν τῷ ἐδάφει σχεδιασάμενος and βαδίσας τε παραντίκα ποσὶν οἰκείους τῷ ἁγίῳ πρόσεισι κιβωρίῳ καὶ τῇ θείᾳ προσφύς εἰκόνι τοῦ μάρτυρος.*

<sup>113</sup> Another example is the tomb-martyrion of St. Isidore at Chios, where people possessed by demons were healed (Bakirtzis, *Θαύματα*, 378–79).

<sup>114</sup> At the beginning of the last century, Petros Papageorghiou, “Μνημεῖα,” 336, preserved a local tradition that the two chambers are connected with the martyrdom of St. Demetrios. The tradition languished after the Church of Thessalonike accepted the scientific opinions that resulted from the excavations and were set forth chiefly by George Soteriou. In his unpublished technical proposal (1990) for the renovation of the two chambers of the tomb of St. Demetrios, the architect Panos Theodoridis returned to the tradition preserved by Petros Papageorghiou.

depicted in the mosaics in the small north colonnade. It is described by Archbishop John of Thessalonike in the *Miracula* of St. Demetrios in connection with events dated to the early seventh century, after which there is no clear evidence of its existence.

3. St. Demetrios was believed to dwell in the ciborium, and, according to an unconfirmed oral tradition that was widespread among the people, his tomb lay beneath it. Excavations have found no underground burial structure on this site.

4. In the same period, St. Demetrios was wont to appear in the two chambers in the corner of the basilica, miraculously healing the sick people who lay there. There was no visible burial structure in this part of the basilica; but the Church of Thessalonike believed that the tomb of St. Demetrios was located under the floor of these chambers. This was never confirmed, however. The Church of Thessalonike always shrouded in secrecy the precise location of the saint's tomb, in the hope of protecting his relics from being divided up and taken to Constantinople. Even when there was no danger of this happening, the site of the tomb was not revealed (edict of Justinian II, 688/9).

5. During this period, a tangible object of veneration was the sweet-smelling earth from the spot where St. Demetrios would have been buried. It was presented to important people in reliquaries shaped like the ciborium, a replica of these being the eleventh-century Moscow reliquary.

6. The appearance of the *myron* in the cult of St. Demetrios in the mid-eleventh century or earlier attests the existence in the basilica of his intact relics, from which the *myron* emerged. The *myron*-exuding tomb of St. Demetrios appeared in the two chambers in the northwest corner of the basilica at this time. The larnax is replicated by the luxurious reliquaries of Halberstadt, the Great Lavra, and Vatopedi (11th/12th centuries). An eight-sided marble baldachin was over the tomb and the icon of St. Demetrios. The existence of a hexagonal marble ciborium with the larnax of St. Demetrios in the middle of the church in the Byzantine period is not confirmed either by the texts or by the archaeological finds.

7. In the Palaiologan era there was widespread suspicion that the *myron* was "concocted," probably because the saint's relics had been divided up and some of them taken to the West during the period of Latin rule (1204–24). The Church of Thessalonike explained the absence of the relics, or part of them, and protected them by saying that the saint's body had been cast into a well inside the basilica. It was from the well that the *myron*-cum-holy-water flowed, and emerged in the crypt.

8. After Thessalonike fell to the Turks in 1430, the crypt fell out of use, and until 1493 the *myron* emerged in the northwest chambers, where the saint's tomb was, and flowed outside the west end of the basilica, where it was collected by Christians and Muslims. After 1493, when the basilica was converted into the Kasimiye Camii, the tomb of St. Demetrios in the northwest chambers continued to be used as a place of veneration by Christians and Muslims alike, and the *myron* was replaced by the earth from his tomb and the oil from his lamp.