

Eugenia Russell

St Demetrius of Thessalonica

Cult and Devotion in the Middle Ages

6

Peter Lang

The cult of St Demetrius is of considerable age but it peaked with the emergence of his city, Thessalonica, as a prominent political and cultural centre in late Byzantium. This book examines the intensification of his popularity and veneration in the late Middle Ages and his impact on contemporary thought and ritual. The encomia written in the saint's honour are significant historical and literary monuments and in their suggestiveness and beauty they are on a level with many better-known works in medieval Greek. Indeed, the encomia have added historical interest because of the prominence of those who wrote them. The likes of Nicholas Kavalas, Gregory Palamas, Constantine Harmenopoulos and Symeon of Thessalonica were the elite of late Byzantium in intellect and personal influence, while Nikephoros Gregoras was perhaps the finest of Byzantine minds. With their clear links to individual authors, the encomia on St Demetrius present opportunities to the historian and the literary critic, which are fully explored in this book, the first to give them sustained scholarly attention.

Eugenia Russell gained a PhD in History from Royal Holloway, University of London, with a thesis entitled 'Encomia to St Demetrius in Late Byzantine Thessalonica'. This book is a revised version of this doctoral thesis. She is the editor of *Spirituality in Late Byzantium* (2009).



St Demetrius of Thessalonica

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Abbreviations

BZ = *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (Leipzig, 1892–)

CFHB = *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*

CSHB = *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*

CTPE = *Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη Παλαιολόγειος Εποχή: Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο, Πατριαρχικόν Ίδρυμα Πατερικών Μελετών, Ιερά Μονή Βλατάδων* (Thessalonica, 1989)

DOP = *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (Washington DC, 1941–)

EEBS = *Έπετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* (Athens, 1924–)

EMS = *Εταιρεία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών*

M = *Μακεδονικά* (Thessalonica, 1940–)

NE = *Νέος Έλληνομνήμων* (Athens, 1904–27)

PG = J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeco-Latina* (Paris, 1857–66), 161 vols

PLP = *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. Erich Trapp et al. 14 vols (Vienna, 1976–96)

PThS = *Πρακτικά Θεολογικού Συνεδρίου «Εἰς τιμὴν καὶ μνήμην τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ λογιωτάτου καὶ τοῖς ὅλοις ἀγιωτάτου ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νικολάου Καβάσιλα τοῦ καὶ Χαμαετοῦ»* (Thessalonica, 1984)

Introduction

Cult and Devotion in the City of Demetrius^{*}

Even within the shrunken Byzantine empire, Constantinople ceased to hold a pre-eminent position. Other Byzantine cities, particularly Mistra and Thessalonica, had become rival centres of commerce and government.

JONATHAN HARRIS, *Constantinople: Capital of Byzantium* (London and New York, 2007), p. 181.

The cult of St Demetrius is of considerable age but it peaked with the emergence of his city, Thessalonica, as a prominent political and cultural centre in late Byzantium. This book examines the intensification of his popularity and veneration in the late Middle Ages and his impact on contemporary thought and ritual. The encomia written in the saint's honour are significant historical and literary monuments and in their suggestiveness and beauty they are on a level with many better-known works in medieval Greek. Indeed, the encomia are of added historical interest because of the prominence of those who wrote them. The likes of Nicholas Kavasilas, Gregory Palamas, Constantine Harmenopoulos and Symeon of Thessalonica are the elite of late Byzantium in intellect and personal influence, while Nikephoros Gregoras is probably the finest Byzantine mind known to us to date. By contrast many of the finest other works of late medieval Greek literature are anonymous. This would include the

^{*} AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I hereby acknowledge my debt to my supervisor, Jonathan Harris. Any infelicities in this work, however, are my responsibility, not his.

Chronicle of Tocco, the *Chronicle of the Morea*, *Basil Digenes Akrites* and the lesser known but beautiful *Achilleid*. With their strong authorship, the encomia present additional opportunities to the historian and the literary critic. Yet the encomia to St Demetrius have not received focused scholarly attention until now: here they are examined in their entirety for the first time.

The adoration of St Demetrius in late Byzantine Thessalonica was, as I said, a reflection of the increased confidence and autonomy of the city. The prominence of the cult of the saint was a manifestation of a strong civic feeling, and its intensity increased as Thessalonica became more autonomous. This introduction puts the cult in its historical context. It flags up the importance of Thessalonica and the city's relationship with the imperial family of the Palaiologoi, the last dynasty of Byzantium, and introduces the reader to the legend of St Demetrius. Chapter One and Chapter Two are almost mirror images of one another. They analyse the multiple layers of the literary works of praise, otherwise called *laudes* or *encomia*, which the saint enjoyed in abundance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Both chapters are concerned with subtexts, one of classical and the other of Biblical works. The third chapter looks at the details about the festival of St Demetrius found in the *corpus* of the encomia. The stunning descriptions of the rituals and the lively language will delight the reader. The last chapter views the encomia as mines of information for contemporary issues in civic life. There is great variation in how outspoken authors were prepared to be in their critique of contemporary life through the encomia; these degrees in circumspection will concern us mainly in the fourth chapter. A stylistic treatment of two works of lamentation for the fall of Thessalonica is appended. The different ways in which the author of the lamentations expresses himself in the contrasting genres are explored using the same methodological approaches that have been employed in the study of the encomia.

There are more Greek encomia to St Demetrius than to any other saint and most of them were written in the period we examine. There are some stunning descriptions of St Demetrius in the sources. St Demetrius is young, strong, brave; he is beautiful. He leads and

inspires. He saves with his purity. He redeems, he mediates. He is a true icon for his people. St Demetrius was an extremely popular military saint in the Byzantine period from the seventh century onwards, both within the Byzantine empire and amongst the Slavs.¹ His significance and popularity were such that throughout the Byzantine Empire there was no need to refer to him by name. In Byzantine writings, both religious and secular, he was often talked about as the *Myrovlytos* or *Myrovlytes*, which means the myrrh giver. This refers to the miraculous myrrh that was supposed to exude from his tomb. He was also called *athlophoros*, prize-bearer or *Megalomartys*, the Great Martyr. In the same way, Thessalonica was often simply referred to as the city of Demetrius, and, in some ways, it still is.

As regards the historical St Demetrius, almost nothing can be known for sure. He is said to have been martyred in Thessalonica under the Emperor Maximian, but even that simple fact is controversial: there were two emperors with that name in the late third and early fourth centuries. Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus Herculus (c.250–310), usually known as Maximian, was co-emperor with the Roman Emperor Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus (284–305) known as Diocletian. Maximian was first made Caesar (285) and shortly after Augustus (286) of Diocletian. The other Maximian, Gaius Galerius Valerius Maximianus (c.250–311) was Caesar alongside Constantius Chlorus (c.250–306) under the two co-emperors just mentioned. Diocletian created those two Caesars in 293, further delegating his powers. Diocletian is therefore credited with the creation of the first Tetrarchy in the Roman Empire. To make the institution work, the two Augusti retired simultaneously in 305, allowing the two Caesars to take their place and appoint new Caesars.²

It is likely that it was the second Maximian, usually known as Galerius, who was the persecutor of St Demetrius. Both as Caesar and as Augustus, he spent much of his time in Thessalonica. His legacy to the city is two illustrious monuments, his Triumphal Arch, celebrating one of his victories, and the Rotunda, the latter being intended either as his tomb or as a temple to a god. In any case Galerius was never buried there. The Rotunda's origins are often forgotten because, in its capacity as a church dedicated to St George, it is one of the earliest

preserved Christian churches. Although it is often described as a basilica, it has a cylindrical architectural plan, akin to the Pantheon in Rome. A third monument, which was built on a grand scale, the palace of Galerius, does not survive but its remains have been revealed by archaeologists near the two other monuments. Galerius was known for his persecution of Christians, which he initiated while still a Caesar, and this, along with his presence in Thessalonica, makes him the most likely candidate.

In the encomia the two Maximians are often confused and merged. Certainly Maximian is the only name that appears for the emperor figure and not Galerius. Therefore in this study the name Maximian is preserved in keeping with the encomia. There are some instances where the confusion in the Byzantine authors becomes apparent when a variant of one of the names is used. Such an example can be found in Nicholas Kavasilas's third encomium where he calls the emperor 'Herculius', one of the names of the elder Maximian, who liked to call himself after Hercules.³ Whether Kavasilas used this form of the name for metrical reasons or whether he simply liked to allude to the name of Hercules, he signifies the general confusion surrounding the two emperors. Gregory Palamas, as well, calls the emperor by the name of Hercules, 'Maximian Herculius' in his case.⁴

Whichever emperor was responsible, it seems clear that St Demetrius was martyred sometime in the late third century. His cult was based on legends that emerged later and can be detected in Thessalonica from at least the sixth century. In the centuries that followed, legends, passions (*passiones*), *vitae*, miracle stories and panegyric speeches were produced about him. Of these, the most influential text in formulating popular conceptions of Demetrius's life were the *Miracula*, produced during the seventh century.⁵ There also survive three biographies, all dating from the ninth century onwards. These three works are by Photios, patriarch of Constantinople (858–867, 867–886), by the tenth-century scholar Symeon Metaphrastes and by an anonymous author. That by Metaphrastes is the longest and perhaps the most famous.⁶

It is from these works that the popular version of Demetrius's life was derived. According to this, Demetrius was a soldier in the Roman army who converted to Christianity and then started preaching

his new faith amongst the ranks. Maximian found out about this activity and summoned Demetrius into his presence. When Demetrius refused to recant, he was thrown into prison. Meanwhile, Nestor, a young soldier who had been converted by Demetrius, asked for his blessing in a forthcoming gladiatorial bout with Maximian's favourite, a man of exceptional strength called Lyaeus. Nestor is often called 'a second David' for taking on that unequal battle. Nestor won the ensuing fight and killed Lyaeus, in the name of Christ. In fury, Maximian ordered the execution of both Demetrius and Nestor. Some variants mention St Loupos, the servant of St Demetrius, who after his master's death performed healing miracles with Demetrius's ring and robe before being martyred himself. In iconography, sometimes Nestor and Loupos appear together⁷, although that is not the case in the literary versions.

It was in his persona of a soldier that Demetrius had become so popular by the tenth century, along with other military saints such as St George, St Theodore Tyron and St Theodore Stratelates. The opening of the first ballad of *Digenes Akrites* refers to these military saints, singling Demetrius out for praise:

(...) ἔχων συνεργοῦσαν τε Θεοῦ τὴν χάριν,
καὶ Θεοτόκου τῆς ἀκαταμαχήτου,
καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἅμα καὶ ἀρχαγγέλων,
τῶν ἀθλοφόρων καὶ μεγάλων μαρτύρων,
Θεοδώρων τε τῶν πανενδοξοτάτων,
τοῦ στρατηλάτου καὶ τοῦ τίρωνος ἅμα,
τοῦ πολυάθλου γενναίου Γεωργίου,
καὶ θαυματουργοῦ καὶ μάρτυρος τῶν μαρτύρων
ἐνδοξοτάτου Δημητρίου, προστάτου
τοῦ Βασιλείου καὶ καύχημα καὶ κλέος
τοῦ νικοποιοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὑπεναντίοις⁸
[with aid of the grace of God
and of the unconquerable Mother of God,
together with the angels and archangels,
and the great victorious martyrs,
the all glorious Theodores
both the general and the recruit,
the noble George of many labours,
and the wonder-working martyr of martyrs,
the most glorious Dimitrios, protector

of Basil and boast and fame
of him who achieved victory over the opposing (...)].⁹

The reader will have noticed how St Demetrius is singled out in this passage as the protector of the legendary Basil Digenes Akrites, and he is more lavishly praised than the other saints.

As a soldier, Demetrius was the perfect patron saint for Thessalonica in the difficult times that the city faced from the late sixth century on.¹⁰ He was credited with saving the city from the Avars and Slavs who overran the rest of the Balkans during the early seventh century, terrifying the attackers with his unexpected appearance.¹¹ When the Emperor Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) fought his way through to Thessalonica in 688 and made a triumphant entry to the city, one of his first actions was to grant the revenues of a salt lake to the church of St Demetrius in gratitude to the saint for his aid.¹² The saint was credited with the victory of Basil II over the rebel Bardas Phokas at Abydos in 989 and with raising the siege of Thessalonica during the revolt of Peter Deljan in around 1040.¹³ Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) allegedly dreamt that an icon of St Demetrius promised him victory over the Norman Bohemond at Larissa in 1083.¹⁴ In the autumn of 1207 the Czar of the Bulgarians, Kalojan (1170–1207) was reputedly stopped from taking the city through being slain by St Demetrius, even though it may well have been the leader of the Cumans, Manastras, who assassinated him.¹⁵ The saint also had the function of bringing cohesion. Jonathan Harris has suggested that a measure of the success of Michael VIII Palaiologos was that at his death in 1282 he was succeeded without bloodshed. His legacy of peace was further confirmed by the fact that his old rival to the throne, John Laskaris, was eventually buried at the monastery of St Demetrius in Constantinople. This was the favourite monastery of the Palaiologos family, who had adopted him as their patron saint.¹⁶ Not that the saint was always successful. Thessalonica was captured and sacked by the Arabs in 904 and by the Sicilian Normans in 1185. In these cases, the withdrawal of his protection was attributed to the sins of the Thessalonians and was the subject of anguished laments.¹⁷

Given St Demetrius's role as protector, it is hardly surprising that his veneration was given primary importance in Thessalonica in Byzantine times. His cult was centred on the great fifth-century basilica that was dedicated to him, which a Byzantine writer claimed was 'built over the spot where he accomplished his heroic feats in the contest for Heaven and received the prize of victory'.¹⁸ It housed his tomb, a separate silver-covered structure that stood in the centre of the transept, with lamps burning constantly.¹⁹ A sweet-smelling myrrh somehow supposedly came out of the tomb and was credited with miraculous healings.²⁰ This continued without interruption until the Ottoman occupation, attracting a constant flow of pilgrims seeking to be healed. The myrrh was thought to have apotropaic as well as healing properties and its nature intrigued the faithful, becoming a theological question. Charalambos Bakirtzis has explained that, to the Byzantine mind, '*myron* was *myron*, just as water was water and oil was oil'. In other words, although *myron* can be understood as a substance similar to oil, it was perceived as a clearly distinct essence. 'The oil from the lamp of St Demetrius' seems to have 'had therapeutic properties before the *myron* appeared'.²¹ The localisation of the saint has also been pointed out by Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino.²² Macrides sees 'separatist tendencies' in the cult of St Demetrius. This she depicts boldly as 'the latent tug of war between Thessalonica and Constantinople'. She also calls Thessalonica 'the only other city in a position to compete with it'. In ecclesiastical terms, she points out how 'it can be seen that St Demetrios' ability to produce a substance by the same name as the sacramental oil of unction could be used as a challenge to patriarchal monopoly'.²³

The veneration was at its most intense during Demetrius's feast period in October. Demetrius's feast day fell on 26 October and that of St Nestor the day after, but most of the month was given over to celebrations in Demetrius's honour.²⁴ New encomia were written every year to be used at the festival. The custom was that the first of two encomia would be delivered by a layman in the church of the Acheiropoietos, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St Demetrius, on the eve of the saint's day. The name Panagia Acheiropoietos (i.e. Our Lady who is not made by hands) comes from a miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary. Another encomium was pronounced by the archbishop

in the church of St Demetrius on the feast day itself.²⁵ A litany and a re-enactment of the saint's martyrdom used to take place on the same day. This festival was combined with the commercial fair of *Demetria*, which may have been named after St Demetrius, although the name of the ancient goddess Demeter, an agricultural deity, is also very close to the root of the word, and a legitimate contender. This event attracted merchants from all over the empire and beyond and is described in the twelfth-century satirical work, *Timarion*.²⁶ The presence of merchants in *Timarion* has the ring of truth, as it has been established that Thessalonica was a centre for the production of silk and metalwork in Byzantium.²⁷

The festival was such an integral part of city life that it kept going even under foreign rule. In 1425, during the period when the Venetians were holding Thessalonica, the citizens asked the Venetian officials to give two hundred hyperpyra in time of peace and one hundred in time of war towards the festival of St Demetrius in keeping with an old custom. This is in keeping with the Venetian practice of, at least in theory, respecting and promoting the continuation of local life and customs under their administration.²⁸

Demetrius's cult suffered some setback when Thessalonica was sacked by the Sicilian Normans back in 1185. His tomb was looted and the silver ornamentation was stripped off. The miraculous myrrh was allegedly gathered in pots and used for cooking and one of the feet was removed from the saint's body, until order was restored and the Norman commander forbade further looting. It was even claimed by the Bulgars that St Demetrius had abandoned his home and moved north to Trnovo, the capital of the newly created second Bulgarian empire.²⁹ During the period of Latin rule in Thessalonica (1204–1224), some of the relics of St Demetrius were divided up and taken to the West.³⁰ Nevertheless, by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the period covered in this book, the cult of St Demetrius was as strong as ever in Thessalonica, if not stronger. So strong was it that John XIV Kalekas, patriarch of Constantinople (1334–1347), complained in 1337–8 that worshippers would run past the church of Christ to crowd into that dedicated to St Demetrius.³¹

There were a number of reasons for this. One of them was undoubtedly the fact that the city achieved a quasi-independence

during the fourteenth century. The trend in late Byzantium was for different parts of the shrinking empire to be ruled separately by a member of the imperial family as an appanage. In his *History*, Nikephoros Gregoras tells us how the founder of the Palaiologan dynasty, Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–1282), had in mind the separation of Thessalonica and its hinterland from the rest of the empire, in favour of his son Constantine (1261–1306). What prevented the fruition of the plan was his death on a campaign in Thrace in 1282, as well as the bitter rivalry between Constantine and his brother, the new emperor Andronikos II (1282–1328). The intention for complete autonomy seems to be clear:

ἐβούλετο γὰρ καὶ μελέτην εἶχε τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ἐμφωλεύουσιν ἐκ πολλοῦ τὸ περὶ Θεσσαλονίκην τε καὶ Μακεδονίαν μέρος τῆς ὅλης ἡγεμονίας Ῥωμαίων ἀποτεμῶν ἰδίαν ἀρχήν, τινα περιποιήσασθαι τούτῳ καὶ βασιλείον αὐτοκρατορίαν. καὶ εἰ μὴ φθάσας ὁ θάνατος αὐτὸν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων πεποίηκε, τάχ' ἂν καὶ ἥλιος εἰς ἔργον προβάνα τὰ τῆς μελέτης ἐγνώριζεν· ἀλλ' οὐκ καὶ θεῶ πρός βουλήσεως, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐς πέρας ἐκεχωρήκει τὸ πρᾶγμα δυστυχίας μεστόν.³² [because he wanted and he had intent in his heart lurking there from a long time back, to cut from his own dominion and the sovereignty of the Romans the part around Thessalonica and the whole of Macedonia, in order to make that part a reigning kingdom. And were it not for death catching up with him, he would have made his plan happen, and it is as if the sun himself knew what was his intention; but it was not the will of God, as became apparent, for the matter to go ahead, and it was an affair brimming with sorrow].

In spite of this, for much of the fourteenth century, Thessalonica was ruled separately from Constantinople. In 1303 the empress Eirene (Yolanda of Montferrat), wife of Andronikos II, had taken up residence in Thessalonica and established her own court there.³³ In 1351, another empress, Anna (Johanna of Savoy), widow of Andronikos III Palaiologos (1328–1341) and mother of John V Palaiologos (1354–1391), took up residence in the city and stayed until her death in 1365.³⁴ She adopted the title *despoina* and her reign provided a much-needed period of stability to the troubled city and was well-remembered. She was praised by prominent figures of Thessalonica like Nicholas Kavasilas and Philotheos Kokkinos for her patronage, her good government and her steadfastness in her adopted

Orthodox faith. Kavasilas calls her *μεγίστη βασιλῖς*, greatest queen, and greets her as ‘the saviour of his native city’ after the ‘storm’ of the Zealot regime. Kokkinos calls her *θαυμαστή καὶ φιλόχριστος βασιλῖς*, wondrous and Christ-loving queen.³⁵ Anna is also mentioned in the *Synodikon*, alongside other Byzantine emperors.³⁶ An inscription with her name, as Anna Palaiologina, survives to this day in the old walls of the Byzantine part of the city. That was done to commemorate the construction of that part of the wall at her time.³⁷ The presence of a separate court at Thessalonica meant that there was a separate source of patronage; this helped bring about an intellectual flowering in the city, ensuring that it was no longer under Constantinople’s shadow.³⁸

The trend for Thessalonica’s quasi independence was accelerated when, some time in the 1360s, Adrianople fell to the Turks.³⁹ Henceforth Thessalonica was cut off from Constantinople by land and the link between the two cities could only be maintained by sea. The members of the imperial family who ruled there with the title of *despotes* (a Greek word meaning master, but not with the associations of the English word despot) were therefore able to follow a very independent policy. The most striking example is that of Manuel, second son of John V Palaiologos and the future Manuel II (1391–1425). In the winter of 1371–2, John V issued a chrysobull in favour of Manuel, giving him Thessalonica, together with Macedonia and, as an incentive, whatever else Manuel could grab from the Serbs and the Turks, as his appanage. On 25 September 1373, John went further and the Despot Manuel became co-emperor, despite being a younger son, at the age of 23.⁴⁰ In 1381, however, things took a new turn when Andronikos, John V’s elder son, was reinstated as an heir to the throne. We do not have precise information about Manuel’s reaction to this news but it would seem that in 1382, he decided to act on his own incentive and to form in Thessalonica what became disparagingly known amongst John V’s circle in Constantinople as ‘the new empire’.⁴¹

During his five-year rule there, Manuel carried out a policy of firm resistance to the Turkish pressure that was in contrast to the lukewarm stance of his father in Constantinople, who had accepted vassal status to the Ottoman sultan, Murad II (1362–1389). In the

words of John Barker, 'a more robust separatism' meant also a separate policy. Manuel had some military success as soon as he established himself in Thessalonica. That perhaps gave his supporters inflated hopes. In 1382, the important Eastern Macedonian city of Serres was back in Byzantine hands. The news of his bold resistance brought a stream of volunteers to Thessalonica to fight by his side. There is at least one more naval and one combined land and sea victory over the Turks reported in the sources. After that there were a series of defeats. Public opinion was split, and Manuel's resistance policy did not seem so popular. Manuel felt unwanted and left Thessalonica. He subsequently sought refuge under the Gattilusi of Lesbos. This decision seemed sensible, as the two families had marriage ties, and Manuel II was a brother-in-law to Francesco II Gattilusio.⁴²

In spite of this retreat, Manuel's rule had brought some advantages to Thessalonica. The city enjoyed some tax privileges and exemptions and some special commercial rights. This allowed and encouraged a certain amount of autonomy and self-government within the city, and strengthened the aristocracy.⁴³ In later years, other despots of Thessalonica enjoyed similar independence. His nephew, John VII, who ruled Thessalonica between 1403 and 1408, was not known as *despotes* but as 'Emperor of All Thessaly'.⁴⁴ Manuel's son Andronikos, who ruled between 1408 and 1423, issued his own decrees, *ὀρισμούς*, and ruled as an independent, western-style, medieval king.⁴⁵ Andronikos was very young when he was first nominated Despot of Thessalonica by his father in 1408, and until 1416 the ruler of Thessalonica was effectively Manuel's right hand man, Demetrius Laskaris Leontaris.⁴⁶ The scheme of regency, often used for the imperial throne, and often having caused much anguish to Byzantium, was now transferred to a periphery that was made conscious of its own independence, but still liked to continue styling itself after the prototype of its iconic capital. In this light, it was only to be expected that the prestige of St Demetrius was to be enhanced as the patron not just of a provincial city but of a centre of government in its own right.

A second factor that enhanced the standing of St Demetrius in the later Byzantine period was the fact that his cult was no longer

restricted to Thessalonica. Pilgrims could now, for example, venerate a phial of his myrrh in the monastery of St John Stoudios in Constantinople.⁴⁷ This extension of the cult was no doubt partly because it so happened that Demetrius was also the patron saint of the Palaiologos family, who ruled in Constantinople between 1261 and 1453. This point was made clear by the founder of the dynasty, Michael VIII, when he issued a typikon for the refounded monastery of St Demetrius in Constantinople in 1282 and described the *Myrovlytes* as the ancestral protector of his family.⁴⁸ Other members of the family have left evidence for their link with the saint. There survives an *enkolpion* or pendant belonging to Demetrius Palaiologos, Despot of Thessalonica (1322–c.1340) and son of Andronikos II and Eirene. It is inscribed with the words of the poet Manuel Philes (1294–1334) which read:

Τῷ δεσπότῃ τὰ στέρνα, Θετταλῶν πόλις·
 Δημήτριον γὰρ εἰς χρυσοῦν φέρει τάφον
 Ζωηφόρον βλύζοντα μυρίπνουν χύσιν.
 Ὁμώνυμος δ' οὖν ἔστι Παλαιολόγος.⁴⁹
 [The Despot's bosom is the city of the Thessalians,
 because it bears Demetrius there in a golden tomb.
 The tomb exudes life-giving *myron*.
 And this Palaiologos is a name-sake (of the martyr)].

The Palaiologoi were not the only Constantinopolitan family to look to St Demetrius as their patron. Another was the Apokaukoi. Alexios Apokaukos held the office of Megas Dux in the mid-fourteenth century. He was a close friend of Anna of Savoy, and had been a powerful opponent of John Kantakouzenos during the civil war of 1341–7. He also played an important role in Thessalonica during the Zealot uprising and his son John was governor of the city. Both men were murdered in 1345 but their family appears to have commissioned an icon of St Demetrius, which is now in the church of St Athanasios in Kastoria. The inscription describes the saint as both Demetrius and Apokaukos suggesting a very close link between the clan and their protector.⁵⁰ Demetrius also began to have a much higher profile throughout the empire. When a new cathedral, the church of the Mitropolis, was constructed in Mistra in the Peloponnese in 1291/2 it