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NOT ANOTHER CONSTANTINE. RETHINKING IMPERIAL SAINTHOOD THROUGH THE CASE OF JOHN III VATATZES

Abstract

It has been generally assumed that the Byzantine emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes – today venerated as a saint by the Orthodox Church – was formally canonized soon after his death in the second half of the thirteenth century. This paper aims to challenge this widely accepted notion by exploring the phenomenon of Byzantine imperial sainthood through the extraordinary case of Constantine I and the presence of emperors in the *Synaxarium* of Constantinople. By looking into accounts that offer literary representations of John III, the paper then moves towards a contextualization of the canonization of this Byzantine sovereign, with a particular focus on his ‘reappearances’ during important historical moments for the Greek communities.

Keywords: John III Vatatzes, Constantine the Great, Byzantine Imperial Sainthood, Constantinopolitan *Synaxarium*, Modern Greek Identity.

John III Doukas Vatatzes (1222-54) is the only Byzantine emperor – apart from Constantine I (306-37) – still venerated as a saint by the Orthodox Church. Not only does he have a church dedicated to him in Didymoteicho, but since 2010 he is also celebrated every November 4, during the *Vatatzia* festivals organized there by the local metropolitan. It has been largely assumed, probably as a result of John III’s reception today, that this Nicene emperor, who was venerated for his charity and philanthropy locally, also obtained his saintly recognition by the Church in the years immediately after his death. However, as I will demonstrate in this paper, the phenomenon of Vatatzes’ canonization was a complex process and, as such, it needs to be reconsidered.

A discussion on the saintly recognition of Vatatzes is important not merely because we have to clarify the status he held soon after his death,

but also because his case can throw more light on the question of Byzantine imperial sainthood in general.

In order to better understand the dynamics of Vatatzes' canonization, his long-lasting presence in political-social-historical issues, and also to clarify some aspects of his representations that have been hitherto misunderstood, I will briefly refer to the case of Constantine the Great and of his successors listed in the Constantinopolitan *Synaxarium*. Against this background I will reevaluate a few, rather neglected texts on Vatatzes and move towards the reconstruction of the important stages of Vatatzes' trajectory and his continuous reappearances, from the margins of the Byzantine Empire to the center of the modern Greek nationhood: from sovereign to heavenly protector, from patron saint to identity symbol, from patriotic manifesto to living politicized legend.¹

Constantine the Great: a special status for an extraordinary figure

May 22, 337: Constantine died not far away from the city of Nicomedia. Eusebius of Caesarea, the first Christian biographer, at the end of the prologue of his work on that emperor tells us that the ruler could be openly considered blessed for his deeds only after his death:

“τοῦ καιροῦ λοιπὸν ἐπιτρέποντος ἀκωλύτως παντοίαις φωναῖς τὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς μακάριον ἀνυμνεῖν, ὅτι μὴ τοῦτο πράττειν ἐξῆν πρὸ τούτου, τῷ μὴ μακαρίζειν ἄνδρα πρὸ τελευτῆς διὰ τὸ τῆς τοῦ βίου τροπῆς ἄδηλον παρηγγέλθαι”

*the occasion demands that I offer unrestrained praises in varied words of the truly Blessed One. It was not possible to do this in the past, for we are forbidden to call any man blessed before his death in view of the uncertainty of life's changes.*²

During Constantine's lifetime, various forms of veneration of the first Christian emperor had already been initiated, although traces of these phenomena subsequently disappeared – more or less intentionally – from ancient historiography. However, problems in the definition of Constantine's saintly status emerged suddenly after his death. In Rome, during the funeral held *in absentia*, the senatorial tradition bestowed deification on Constantine through the customary *relatio in numerum divorum*.³ In Constantinople, on the other hand, Christian liturgical practice

needed to develop a completely new ritual for a Roman sovereign who had been baptized. This innovative protocol fused together several different elements: a senatorial procession led by the successor Constantius II (337-61), the celebration of a Mass, and the burial in the Constantinopolitan Church of the Holy Apostles – built by Constantine himself likely as his own tomb. This aspect of the Eastern ceremony, especially, was intended as the emperor's co-optation among the Apostles, as points out the introduction of the epithet "ἰσαπὸστολος" (*equal to the Apostles*), or even as his identification with Christ. Such a situation bestowed on Constantine an organic blend of apotheosis and sanctification.⁴

The sanctification grew between the fourth and fifth centuries at the expense of apotheosis, a Roman institution that was naturally and gradually phased out. The events that marked the history of the Mediterranean during Late Antiquity, then, led Constantine's reception to a slow but inexorable divergence. In the West, the Church established ethical and religious rules which were no longer compatible with some aspects of Constantine as a historical figure;⁵ in the East, instead, his cult took root, albeit slowly and mainly for the reason to prevent the overflow of the secular power onto the spiritual one, even though the ecclesiastical hierarchy did not accept the cult fully and attempted to prevent its spread in favor of newer models.⁶

During the fifth century, there was a general rethinking of Constantine's figure and his role in history. From this period onward, Constantine becomes unequivocally *Saint Constantine*. However, we know only a little about the earliest forms of his veneration.⁷ If his feast date was immediately set to May 21, almost coinciding to that of his death as recorded in the *Synaxarium*,⁸ the physical location of his cult seems more uncertain: Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical History* indicates as the cult center the porphyry column that Constantine erected at the center of his Forum when he founded the city,⁹ while Theodoret reported a cult linked directly to the emperor's burial site.¹⁰ From these brief references, we can probably assume that, from its imperial origin, this cult developed in the capital of the Empire as that of a patron saint and spread throughout Byzantium in the beginning of the tenth century, when the liturgy of Constantinople spread in the provinces of the empire.

On closer inspection, the image of Constantine, which was imposed from the representation that Eusebius sketched out, is actually quite removed from the historical figure.¹¹ In fact, it is focused mainly on Christian themes and is inextricably linked to the figure of Helena, Constantine's mother: the emperor is presented as the defender of the true

faith against pagans and heretics; he is concerned with the founding of churches and basilicas in honor of God and with the collection of relics; moreover, he was responsible for the discovery of the Holy Cross and the convention of the Council of Nicaea.¹² Any sense of continuity with the Roman tradition recedes into the background, giving place to the idea that Constantine was the *first emperor*, as we can see in the *Typikon* of the Great Church.¹³ From history, we have now arrived to a legend.¹⁴

It is therefore not by chance that any renewal, actively desired or merely advertised by Byzantine emperors, was accompanied by the concept and title of “νέος Κωνσταντῖνος” (*new Constantine*). So it was with Heraclius (610-41), victor over the Persians and avenger of the abduction of the Holy Cross, as well as with Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261-82), who ripped the capital from the hands of the Latins in 1261 and inaugurated a new dynasty.¹⁵ The last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI (1449-53), also takes part in this tradition by the fact that his name in itself symbolizes the hope of the Empire’s resurrection, as it appears in the so-called legend of the “μαρμαρωμένος βασιλιάς” (*petrified emperor*).¹⁶

The name of Constantine the Great was, and it still is, widely spread in Greek onomastics; countless churches and places of worship are dedicated to him; his image is perfectly crystallized in the iconography; and many events and folklore festivals are associated with him, among which the *Anastenaria*, a traditional fire-walking ritual.¹⁷ All this led him to play a unifying role between the official and the popular spheres of medieval Greek civilization, with the result that this social phenomenon is perhaps one of the hallmarks of Byzantium throughout the course of its history.

On the base of these considerations, it seems fair – as K. Pitsakis already has pointed out – to correct R. Janin’s statement:

“Constantin, premier empereur chrétien, fut considéré comme saint par l’Eglise grecque, malgré toutes les réserves qui s’imposaient”.¹⁸

In fact, no misgivings about Constantine’s holiness seem to have ever existed.

Emperors in the Constantinopolitan *Synaxarium*

Constantine’s sainthood and cult remained an anomaly in Byzantium, except for the cases of several empresses – which are beyond of the scope

of this paper. His attributed holiness was not a hereditary element for his successors, who did not have the honor of true veneration, another characteristic which clearly distinguished them from their Western counterparts.

It should be remembered that, as it was in the early Church tradition, in Byzantium an official protocol of canonization never existed except, perhaps, in the very last years of the Empire.¹⁹ In fact, the concept of 'saint' and/or 'sainthood' was not a juridical category for the Byzantines: all Orthodox are considered equally as 'saints to be', and given that God perfectly knows his own saints, there need be no demarcation between the dead and the saints. The memory of some particular figures then is only intended to be exemplary and educational. In contrast to the impositions that the Papacy regulated in the tenth and eleventh centuries,²⁰ the Eastern Church was generally content with the recognition of personalities, whose cult was already acclaimed locally by smaller communities and around whom a set of liturgical texts was already built up, adding their names in the local Church *Synaxarium*, "the liturgical book that contains the collection of hagiographical notices arranged in accordance with the Byzantine civil calendar".²¹ In any case, it is worth noting that this latter was not only the container of a list of saints. The inclusion of events such as earthquakes and eclipses, which have nothing to do with religion and liturgy, points toward a different role than a sort of ratifying tool for sainthood: most likely, the celebration of the history of the Church and of human life through the Church, similarly to the one which J. Le Goff proposed as one of the basis of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* for the Western cultural tradition.²²

Nevertheless, almost every Byzantine emperor until the first iconoclasm – and the reasons of the following change in the tradition remain to be explained – has been included in the *Synaxarium* of Constantinople, regardless of their virtues or personal merits, on the day of their burial. Apart from the sovereigns who were manifestly guilty of heresy, usurped the throne, or exercised their legitimate power in a tyrannical manner, we find the names of the following emperors and empresses (listed here in chronological order):²³

- May 21: *Constantine* (324-37) and *Helena* (ca. 250-ca. 330);
- Nov. 9: *Theodosius I* (379-95);
- Sep. 14: *Aelia Flacilla* († 386; Theodosius I's first wife);
- Jul. 30: *Theodosius II* (408-50);
- Aug. 13: *Aelia Eudocia* (ca. 401-60; Theodosius II's wife);

- Feb. 17: *Marcian* (450-7) and *Pulcheria*;
- Sep. 10: *Pulcheria* (398/9-453);
- Jan. 27: *Aelia Marcia Euphemia* (Marcian’s daughter and Anthemius’ wife);
- Jan. 15: *Leo I* (457-74);
- Aug. 22: *Aelia Ariadne* (ca. 450-515; Zenon and Anastasius I’s wife);
- Aug. 2: *Justin I* (518-27);
- Nov. 14: *Justinian I* (527-65) and *Theodora* (ca. 500-48);
- Jul. 15: *Justin II* (565-78);
- Nov. 28: *Tiberius II Constantine* (578-82);
- Nov. 28: *Maurice* (582-602) and his children;
- Sep. 3: *Constantine IV* (668-85);
- Aug. 7: *Irene* (797-802) and *Pulcheria*;
- Feb. 11: *Theodora* (ca. 815-after 867; Theophilus’ wife);
- Dec. 16: *Theophano Martiniake* († 893; Leo VI’s first wife);
- Aug. 13: *Irene of Hungary* (1088-1134; John II Komnenos’ wife).

In this respect, it is important to add that the imperial couple Justinian-Theodora is also celebrated as founders in the monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai Peninsula, while Nikephoros II Phokas (963-9) and John I Tzimiskes (969-76), who are not included in the *Synaxarium*, are remembered for the same reasons, respectively, in the Great Lavra and the Iviron monasteries on Mount Athos.²⁴

We report here three of the entries from the liturgical book just to have a general idea of their style and content – so far from the form of an official recognition of sainthood:

- Theodosius I: “καὶ μνήμη τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοδοσίου τοῦ βασιλέως ἐν τοῖς Ἁγίοις Ἀποστόλοις”, and *remembrance of the emperor Theodosius the Great, in the Church of the Holy Apostles*;
- Justin I: “καὶ τοῦ ἐν εὐσεβεῖ τῇ μνήμῃ γενομένου βασιλέως Ἰουστινιανοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις Ἀποστόλοις”, and *[remembrance] of the emperor Justin of happy memory, in the Church of the Holy Apostles*;
- Constantine IV: “καὶ τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ νέου ἐν τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις” and *[remembrance] of Constantine the young, who is among the saints, in the Church of the Holy Apostles*.²⁵

Editing the *Synaxarium*, H. Delehaye has already questioned the value of the imperial mentions in the collection: he believed that these should be interpreted rather as “commemorations liturgicae an vero necrologicae” (*liturgical or funerary memories*), without any reference to sanctioned

holiness; he also remarked that, in a special commemoration of Justinian and Theodora in the codex Sinaiticus gr. 285's *Typikon*, the τροπάριον referring to the ruling couple was inserted directly and normally into the common liturgy for the dead. Moreover, to confirm this reconstruction, A. Luzzi records the scarcity of other liturgical literature, such as hymns and hagiographies, devoted to the Byzantine sovereigns.²⁶

The use of the term “ἅγιος” in reference to the emperors, thus, remains to be justified. Even if this appears equally *in vita* in the official titles and *in morte* in the introduction of the *synaxis*, it seems not to have connection with holiness. There would be, among others, two possible explanations for this. On one hand, in the first instance, the term “ἅγιος” (*saint*) not only provided the crowd's acclamation “Holy! Holy! Holy!” during the official coronation ceremony since the tenth century, but it may also have had a direct connection with the ritual of anointing, as of Old Testament kings;²⁷ on the other hand, in the second case, where the formula “ἐν ἁγίοις” often appears, there seems to be a direct reference to the office for the dead, when believers prayed that God place the soul of the deceased “μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων” (*among the saints*).²⁸

Finally, two failed attempts at sanctification demonstrate that imperial holiness did not exist in Byzantium or, at least, it was not an automatic attribute for the rulers. Firstly, the cult of Constantine, the eldest son of Basil I (867-86) who died prematurely, which was pursued by his father with the help of Patriarch Photios (858-67 and 877-86);²⁹ secondly, the establishment of a cult of Justinian I, during the reign of Alexius I Komnenos (1081-118) and the patriarchate of John IX Agapetus (1111-34).³⁰

The case of John III Vatatzes

In order to further discuss the phenomenon of John III Vatatzes as an emperor-saint of Byzantium, it is necessary to explore his canonization and the ways in which his worship took shape throughout the centuries. Let us begin by outlining the main steps of John III's afterlife, reevaluating some of the neglected literature on him.³¹

It is said by the chronicler George Akropolites that, perceiving the arrival of his own death, John III Vatatzes hastened toward his beloved imperial residence of Nymphaeum, a few tens of kilometres inland from the city of Smyrna.³² He died there on November 3, 1254, at the age of sixty-two, and his coffin was buried in the nearby monastery of Sosandra,

which the emperor himself had founded on the heights overlooking the city of Magnesia *ad Sipylum*.³³

Already in the second half of the thirteenth century, two different but complementary representations of Vatatzes' figure derived from his historical profile.³⁴ The first was created by and for court propaganda and aimed to overcome the complicated events that followed the prosperous years of John III. In fact, his son and successor Theodore II (1254-58) not only seemed to neglect the government affairs, preferring literature and culture, but also died suddenly after a brief four-year reign. Moreover, left in the hands of the young John IV (1258-61), the throne immediately attracted the attention of those who strived for power at all costs. Among those was the future emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, a member of the aristocracy and figurehead of the Nicene court: he acted immediately, during Theodore II's funeral itself, killing the guardian of the royal scion, George Mouzalon (1220-58), and obliging patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos (1255-60 and 1261-7) to crown him as co-emperor at the end of the same year.

Those faithful to the Laskarid dynasty raised their voices, especially when the new ruler decided to replace that patriarch with the most condescending Nikephoros³⁵ and ordered the blinding of John IV, who was at that point definitely out of power games. By propaganda, then, the "new Constantine"³⁶ – as we have seen – tried to gain the favor of his subjects, a support that neither the overwhelming victory at Pelagonia (1259) nor the recapture of the capital (1261) had granted him. The Palaiologos, who had already attempted to marry Vatatzes' young widow, Anna/Constance of Hohenstaufen, so as to legitimize his aspirations, worked to connect himself to the Laskarids in the court's literary products, depicting himself as the direct descendant and heir of the Nicene sovereign.³⁷ Hereafter, even the burial and the promotion of John IV's veneration in the Constantinopolitan former imperial monastery of St. Demetrius, near Kontoskalion, during Andronicus II's kingdom (1282-1328) seems to be part of Palaeologan long-lasting strategy to please their political opponents through the public recognition of the virtues of their own favorite.³⁸

At the same time, however, the exaltation of John III's philanthropy and mercy enveloped his figure in a mythical aura, making him a legendary character close to the figure of a saint.³⁹ In the reconquered Constantinople, for example, Nikephoros Blemmydes and George Akropolites referred to these extraordinary characteristics of his, albeit with mild tones and

completely different purposes. Encomiastic for Blemmydes, for whom the Nicene sovereign outclassed all his predecessors:

“Ἰωάννης οὗτος ἦν ὁ δεδοξασμένος ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς βασιλέας ὑπὸ Θεοῦ”
*it was John, the one that God glorified above many other emperors;*⁴⁰

polemic for Akropolites, who used Vatatzes’ image to criticize his weak progeny in Michael VIII’s eyes:

“τοιούτος γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς ὑπηκόους ἐφάνη καὶ οὕτως ἰσχυρῶς ἐχρήσατο, ὡς πάντας τὸν πατέρα μακαρίζειν καὶ βασιλεῖα”
*[Theodore II] was so bad to his subjects and he treated those under his control in such a way that they all called his father, the emperor, blessed.*⁴¹

More than this, the same kind of devotion inflamed by his legend gave birth to a deep worship in Lydia.⁴² It is easy to imagine that the veneration of John III, known probably already *in vita* with the nickname of “the Merciful”,⁴³ developed in a short time into liturgical celebrations on the occasion of his death anniversary and into devotional acts at his tomb. When the emperor’s coffin was transferred to Magnesia under the increasing threats of Ottoman campaigns, that city definitely became the center of Vatatzes’ veneration.

The first and only witness to the beginning of this local cult dates to the end of 1303. Magnesia was abandoned to its fate by Michael IX (1294/5-1320) when, during a siege, the brother of the *kastrophylax* Philanthropenos – anonymous for us –, deaf-mute from birth, received a revelation by which he was miraculously healed: the lamp that was frequently spotted at night wandering along the city walls was in fact the Nicene emperor. George Pachymeres reported:

“βλέπει οὖν ἐκεῖνος προσμένωνν οὐ λαμπάδα ἡμμένην, ἀλλ’ ἄνδρα βασιλικῶς ἐσταλμένον, τὰς μὲν αὐτῶν φυλακὰς οἷον ἐξουθενοῦντα αὐτὸν δὲ τὴν τῆς φυλακῆς ἐπιτροπὴν ἔχειν λέγοντα. [...] Προσπαίει δὲ πᾶσιν, ὅπερ καὶ ἀληθὲς ἦν, ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκείνου τοῦ ἐλεήμονος Ἰωάννου, καθὼς ἂν ὁ Λυδὸς εἴποι, ἐπιστάσια, ἐν ἧ’ παρὰ Θεοῦ φυλάττεσθαι ἐπιστεύοντο”

while waiting, the boy saw not only a lighted torch but also a regally dressed man, who regarded the guard as rather useless and said that the task of guarding was up to him. [...] The attention – a term that the Lydian might

have used – of the famous emperor John the Merciful, in whose protection they were entrusted by God, shocked everyone – and this was true indeed.⁴⁴

Vatatzes was considered then the divine protector of Hermus Valley, the patron saint of those defenseless subjects. However, this does not mean that in the meantime there was some kind of official recognition of his cult by the Church hierarchy; we do not have documents attesting his canonization during the Byzantine period.⁴⁵

Notwithstanding, in George of Pelagonia's *Life of the emperor St. John the Merciful*, which turned out to be a political pamphlet, a fierce critique of the contemporary ruling class, and a manifesto of the author's propositions for reform,⁴⁶ it is still possible to detect between the lines a substrate derived from the cult materials on John III, which were gathered over time in Magnesia and circulating throughout the Eastern provinces of the Empire. This appears in the recurring references to the religiosity of the sovereign, who was concerned not only about his own spirituality but also about the patrimony of the Church; it also emerges in the account of the miracle with which the Βίος ends: Vatatzes' body, thrown contemptuously from the walls of Magnesia by his enemies, healed the paraplegia of a naive Muslim boy who had touched it while searching for treasure, and finally led him to the Orthodox faith:

“τοῦ δὲ τιμίου σώματος θίξαντι – ἡγνόει δὲ ὅτι εἶη – εὐθύς ἦτε πάσχουσα χεὶρ ἐκινήθη τό τε πρόσωπον εἰς τὸ καθεστηκὸς μετηνέχθη καὶ ὀπούς εὐκίνητος ἦν. Ἄρτιος δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους ἐπανελθὼν τὸ συμβεβηκὸς διηγεῖται. Καὶ μαθὼν ὅτου εἶη τὸ σῶμα, τῆς ἐκείνου γίνεται πίστewς, πολλὴν ἀβελτηρίαν τῆς πατρῴας κατεγκωκῶς”

as he touched the venerable body, though ignorant of what it was, his afflicted hand moved immediately, his face returned to its proper form, and his foot became able to walk. Healed, he returned to his family and told them what had happened. And once he learned whose body it was, he converted to the ruler's religion, condemning the great folly of his fathers' beliefs.⁴⁷

A pious woman then rescued the emperor's body, around which formed the nucleus of a small place of worship. Two elements must be remarked upon: the consideration for the emperor's remains as a sort of relics already at this point and the presence of a little chapel dedicated exclusively to

John III, which survived until 1922 along the right aisle of Turkish Manisa St. Athanasius cathedral.⁴⁸

From the evidence offered so far, we can assume that the official recognition of John III's was a phenomenon which took place outside the time and spaces of Byzantium.⁴⁹ In order to determine the dynamics and purposes of this phenomenon it is important to explore the position of the Christian communities of Western Anatolia under Ottoman rule.

Between late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, problems in the Byzantine western provinces averted the emperors' attention away from Asia Minor, where the Ottoman armies advanced easily and consolidated their positions. According to Pachymeres' *History*, the consequent dangers in everyday life then pushed the native subjects who survived the slaughters to abandon their land:⁵⁰ grabbing the bare essentials, some fled to the West and to the Aegean islands facing the coast (Tenedos, Lesbos and, above all, Chios); others, outraged by the lack of protection from their rulers and inspired then by an anti-Constantinopolitan feeling, decided to voluntarily pass over to the enemy.⁵¹ The invasion of Tamerlane at the end of the century (1370-1405) was a further contribution to this migration.

Those Byzantines who remained in Lydia were firstly part of the Beylik of Saruhan, in which, however, they could live without major deprivation and participate in the urban revival that occurred in the Sixties and Seventies of fourteenth century;⁵² then they passed under the Ottoman Turks, who captured this area of Anatolia during the years of Mehmed I (1413-21). Notwithstanding, Magnesia continued to enjoy a certain wellbeing and privileged position in the region, and so did the few local Christians, who, having joined their metropolis to that of Ephesus, took a leading role towards their neighboring coreligionists in Smyrna (1469-70).⁵³

Together with those Greeks, John III's memory continued to survive after Byzantium. To this historical moment, a new starting point for their community in Asia Minor both on islands and in mainland, is linked the November 5 *akolouthia* dedicated to the martyrs St. Galaktion and St. Episteme and to St. John the emperor, copied over fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by an anonymous hand on the ff. 38v-47r of the Lesbiacus Leimonos 124 (*Menaion* for November).⁵⁴ In the thirty-five sections dedicated to the Nicene sovereign, in fact, the bond with his land appeared clearly by persistent references to the miraculous healings which took place at his tomb. The three fragments of the same liturgical hymns at f. 219v of the *British Library* Burney 54 (*Euchologion*) make this connection

even more obvious:⁵⁵ not only was this manuscript mainly penned by the metropolitan of Ephesus Sebastianos Argyropoulos (he left his subscription on May 19, 1573), but also the title associates clearly the text to the main center of Lydia.⁵⁶

More closely to the insular background is linked an anonymous post-Byzantine *Life of Vatatzes*, put together after June 29, 1659 and published without any indication regarding origin and provenance by another metropolitan of Ephesus, the erudite Agathangelos (1818-78). The narrative of this text, based on the same dossier of that of George of Pelagonia's Βίος, reserves a section – the final one – to a miracle story, which takes the cue from an icon of John III kept on the island of Tenedos.

During the entire seventeenth century, a new wave of migration started, but this time in the opposite direction: due mainly to an economic revival in the mainland, Greek populations from Thrace and the Aegean islands came back to western Anatolia and settled along its fertile valleys.⁵⁷ Magnesia was the perfect landing point for the newcomers and, thanks to a peculiar tax exemption, it soon became a densely populated commercial hub, primarily for the textile and tanning industries, then also for the emerging tobacco and cotton trade. Its growth was prevented only by the development of Smyrna as a colonial port, together with the increasing decline of activities in the inner region, generated by the arrival of merchants from abroad. Consequently, Greeks moved towards the coastline, where they specialized in the service industry: according to a 1640-1 Ottoman census, their community in the city was by far the most numerous among those of non-Muslims.⁵⁸

It was only in this context, when Patriarch Parthenios IV was in office (1657-62), that Vatatzes, whose figure was well established both in that territory and in the hearts of those Greeks, came to be canonized and entered the liturgical calendar of Constantinople. Unfortunately, the document relating to this decision has not been preserved and the only witness on this event is a brief mention by M. Gedeon.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, a further element supporting the strong relationship between Vatatzes and the Lydian region is the fact that, a century later, Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1749-1809) composed another *akolouthia* as well as the *Synaxarium* entry for the sanctified emperor: before moving to Mount Athos, he studied at the Evangelical School in Smyrna.

The reasons that determined the canonization of the Nicene ruler are of course varied and complex. From the point of view of the Magnesian community, in a minority and subordinate condition, canonization could

have contributed to creating a symbol with which to identify and in which to be recognized, from the foreigner but also from other neighboring groups of Christians: who in fact could combine love of country, economic success, military forcefulness – and this against the Turks too! – and religious devotion better than their local hero John Vatatzes? The pressure of the community on the Patriarchate to recognize an emblem, an identity symbol of cultural, ethnic and religious origins, might have also been catalyzed by the influence of the many Western representatives of the emerging European nations who, attracted there by both collective exotic imagination and fortune-making possibilities, had arrived in Smyrna with their backgrounds and revolutionary ideas, with their new political vocabulary and innovative worldviews.⁶⁰

But not simply this. Behind the patriarchal decision one can glimpse the logic of a purely political act, a resolute stance at a time of deep tensions between center and periphery within the Orthodox world. Christian elites far from the Bosphorus, who had acquired some economic power in trading and established a new range of values imbued by the Western European model,⁶¹ were pressing to have greater weight in decision-making and greater independence, while the Constantinopolitan patriarchate tried to keep the predominant role attributed to it by Gennadius Scholarius (1454-64).⁶² That this tension existed and involved directly the actors of Vatatzes' story is proved also by the fact that Parthenios IV, tied by strong interests to Asia Minor provinces, had to fight strongly to assert his authority and, in his attempt to ascend to the patriarchal throne for the fourth time, faced the opposition of Dionysius IV Muselimes, who in contrast had Constantinople as his main power-base. The canonization of Vatatzes could therefore be thought as a possible *trait d'union* between these two realities, a sort of peace-maker solution, in a double perspective: for the Constantinopolitan hierarchy, it offered an opportunity to reinforce that it was the only party to make decisions for the Orthodox world; for the community of Magnesia, instead, it could offer recognition for its distinctive characteristics through the official sanction of its 'patron saint'.⁶³

While moving towards a conclusion, it is worth recalling some aspects of the modern life of St. John Vatatzes which can clearly demonstrate the vitality and impact of this topic on the present and future research.

In fact, the Nicene emperor has become even more important to Greek identity and cultural memory since the second half of nineteenth century, when Greek historians exalted him as one of the major figures of their past and a vital junction in the survival of their roots, pivoting on the paternal

role already present in the Byzantine sources on him.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the exact reasons of this exaltation still need to be investigated, even if it is predictable why Vatatzes' martial successes – among the latter recorded for the Byzantine era – and his contribution in safeguarding the Greek world after its fragmentation in 1204 were reinterpreted in such patriotic manner.⁶⁵ The power and the modernity of John III's legacy, however, is clearly demonstrated by the attempt of K. Amantos (1874-1960), a member of the Academy of Athens, who proposed an idea to depict John III in the Athenian Parliament.⁶⁶ In addition to this, several are the general public booklets and now websites dedicated to the Nicene emperor and sensationally entitled "St. Vatatzes" or "Father of the Greeks".

Moreover, a final return of the Nicene emperor dates to the beginning of the twenty-first century when, moving from the patriotic figure we just defined, some Greek nationalistic and right-wing circles reinterpreted Vatatzes' legacy in order to create a new version of the aforementioned legend of the "petrified emperor": after so many centuries, then, Vatatzes was brought back to life by nationalists combining hagiographic literature and the story of his aforementioned posthumous appearance in Magnesia, together with various apocalyptic legends as those of Leo the Wise and Ps.-Methodius, "to which the superstition [...] gave credence" since ever.⁶⁷ According to them, the person destined to wake up and scare away the 'infidels', giving back freedom to the Greeks, was indeed John III, and not Constantine XI Palaiologos, who is majestically celebrated in this role by A. Kaldaras' and S. Spanoudakis' songs as well as by K. Palamas' and O. Elytis' literary works.

A new starting point...

It should be apparent, even from the few examples presented here, that Constantine the Great was the only certain case of an emperor-saint during the whole Byzantine millennium. His exclusive sanctity may be explained firstly with the mythical role attributed to him as a founding 'father'; secondly, it is likely that his saintly status and peerlessness may have been used by other authorities as a mechanism for marking the gap and controlling the imperial power of his successors. Moreover, the fact that other Byzantine sovereigns have their names accompanied by the epithet "ἅγιος" in their own titles and in the *Synaxarium's* entries does not allow us to consider them as emperor-saints *stricto sensu*.

In light of these considerations and by relying on the aforementioned evidence, then, we can claim that Vatatzes did not constitute an exception within the Byzantine tradition: his official sanctification and the final recognition as emperor-saint were a rather local and post-Byzantine phenomenon.

Ruler by adoption during the years of the Empire of Nicaea, bridge towards the dynasty of the Palaiologoi, and emperor-saint *sui generis* for the Orthodox Church, John III Doukas Vatatzes is among the most significant and meaningful figures of Byzantium. Moreover, his symbolic repertoire has played an important role in the formation of the Greek national identity and, as such, paves the way for a new wave of scholarship, which would open up a broader debate on Byzantine imperial sainthood.

NOTES

- 1 The present paper offers a general overview of some of the conclusions of my current Ph.D. research, focused both on the *Life of the Emperor St. John the Merciful* and on the life and works of George of Pelagonia (to the thesis I refer for any further detail). I would like to express my gratitude to Ch. Messis, K. Nikolovska, P. Odorico, S. Papaioannou and T. Shawcross for their encouragements, guidance and priceless suggestions. Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations are my own.
- 2 EUSEBIUS CAESARIENSIS, *Life of Constantine*, 1.11.2 (ed. WINKELMANN; translation by CAMERON and HALL, p. 72). This idea was already present in the Roman tradition, as evidenced in Tacitus' *Ann.* 15.74.3: "deum honor principi non ante habetur, quam agere inter homines desierit", *the emperor is not granted a deity epithet before he has ceased to live among mortals* (ed. HALM, p. 365 ll. 2-4); as well as in Tertullian's *Apol.* 34.4: "maledictum est ante apotheosin deum Caesarem nuncupare", *it is a execration giving the name of God to an emperor before his apotheosis* (ed. DEKKERS, p. 144 ll. 17-8). See also SANSTERRE 1972.
- 3 However, it should be noted that in the Roman tradition the *divi* are different in nature from the *dii*, as evidenced in a brief comment of Servius (*In Aen.* 5.45): "divum et deorum indifferenter plerumque ponit poeta, quamquam sit discretio, ut deos perpetuos dicamus, divos ex hominibus factos, quasi qui diem obierint: unde divos etiam imperatores vocamus", *the poet [i.e. Virgil] usually employs 'of the divi' [divum] and 'of the dii' [deorum] indifferently, although there should be a distinction in that we call the immortals dii, whereas divi are created from men, inasmuch as they have ended their days, which is why we likewise call emperors divi* (ed. STOCKER and TRAVIS, p. 483 ll. 5-8).
- 4 See BONAMENTE 2011.
- 5 And this was one of the reasons why the Byzantine emperor did not officially enter in the liturgical celebrations of the Church of Rome but kept on been venerated till nowadays as a saint in marginal areas; due to the immigration of Greek communities over the centuries starting from the Late Antiquity, the cult is present only locally in Sardinia, Calabria, and Sicily (see SPADA 2013). Pietro Natali, a Western hagiographer living in the fourteenth century, showed how this phenomenon was perceived as something peculiarly Eastern: "Constantinus Magnus imperator sanctissimus quamvis a pluribus Latinorum iustus et sanctus reputetur a Graecis tamen in sanctorum catalogo expressius nominator", *the holiest emperor Constantine the Great, even if he is considered by most of Latins as just and saint, is mentioned unequivocally by the Greeks in the group of saints* (p. 26).
- 6 Perhaps this is revealed in [a] the removal of the imperial sarcophagus from the Holy Apostles in 358-59 (transferred to St. Acacius church; the body of

- the emperor returned to its original resting place only in 370, when the new mausoleum linked to the church was completed) and [b] the recognition of Theodosius the Great, welcomed in the *sanctorum consortia*, as a new imperial prototype.
- 7 Note that the first occurrence of Constantine in liturgical celebrations dates back to the period between 417 and 439, and refers to the Jerusalem ritual (see ZANETTI 1992-3).
- 8 See LUZZI 1992-3. Considering that the foundation of Constantinople was celebrated on May 21, and that in the same period we find different religious festivities, K. Pitsakis rightly speaks of “le mois de mai constantinopolitain” (PITSAKIS 2011, p. 179). It is also important to note that, even today, May 21 is a day of great social importance for Greece.
- 9 See PHILOSTORGIUS, *Kirchengeschichte*, fr. 17 ed. WINKELMANN.
- 10 Theodoretus (*Kirchengeschichte*, 34.1-3 ed. PARMENTIER) associates in the same sentence the cult to Constantine’s “ἀνδριάς” (*statue*), which should be interpreted as the one in the Forum (see the representation of the column in the Peutinger map). On the column “of Constantine” wrote John Malalas (7, ed. THURN) and, in a similar way to the chronicler’s, Anna Komnene in her *Alexiad* (12.4.5, ed. REINSCH and KAMBYLIS). This last passage shows that, although this was the intent, the attempt to Christianize the statue on top of the column never succeeded. After the fall of the statue, it was replaced with a simple cross (see, for example, the famous map of Constantinople in Cristoforo Buondelmonti’s narrative). Certainly before the accession of Leo VI (886-912), at the base of the column a chapel was built (see MANGO 1980-1, p. 108). Several relics were kept there: their identification and number are remembered, although with some hyperboles, only by popular rumours and by *Patria* tradition. Constantine VII’s *Book of Ceremonies* illustrates the liturgy that took place in that chapel. See now OUSTERHOUT 2014.
- 11 As Eusebius already did in his biography, the death sentence pronounced against his first-born son Crispus in 326, the mysterious ‘suicide’ of his second wife Fausta, the murder of the Neoplatonist philosopher Sopater of Apamea, and the adhesion to the Arianism were purposely hidden and lost in Constantine’s propagandistic representations.
- 12 Some of the questions here mentioned are carefully treated, with ample bibliography, in DRIVERS 1992 and BARDILL 2012.
- 13 Here Constantine is namely “our first emperor” (ed. MATEOS, p. 296 l. 9); we find the same consideration in the hymnography (see GASSISI 1913).
- 14 “Le souvenir de Constantin, comme le fondateur de l’Empire chrétien, mais aussi comme le saint empereur par excellence, exemple de piété et de justice, protecteur de l’Eglise et de l’orthodoxie, a fait de lui le modèle du souverain chrétien orthodoxe” (PITSAKIS 2011, p. 183).
- 15 See the contributions collected in MAGDALINO 1994. On the case of Michael VIII refer to footnote 36.

- ¹⁶ For an overview the petrified emperor refer to NICOL 1992.
- ¹⁷ See KAKOURE 1965 and DANFORTH 1986. Graduate student at the *EHESS* (Paris), E. Nonveiller is currently working on this topic under the supervision of P. Odorico.
- ¹⁸ In JANIN 1969, p. 295; see also PITSAKIS 2011, p. 200.
- ¹⁹ See MACRIDES 1981, pp. 83-6 and PITSAKIS 2011, pp. 219-20.
- ²⁰ In the West, until the regulations imposed by Pope Gregory VII (1073-85), the title of ‘saint’ was generously given to kings and members of their families, especially as a reward for their Christian virtues and actions of evangelization (refer, for instance, to J. Le Goff’s study on Louis IX of France and to Francesco D’Angelo’s recent research on Olaf II of Norway). In the Western panorama a special case was represented by the cases of the ‘miracle worker kings’, for which see BLOCH 1924.
- ²¹ In LUZZI 2014, p. 197. To the establishment of a local cult on the death anniversary, the composition of a liturgical *dossier* (an hagiography, an *akolouthia* and the entry in the *Synaxarium*) we should add the important role played by relics and icons.
- ²² See LE GOFF 2011 and, in particular, pp. 11-2: “l’ouvrage de Jacques de Voragine est bien, comme l’a voulu son auteur, une somme, mais c’est une somme sur le temps. [...] Original est le rôle essentiel attribué aux saints, celui de marqueurs du temps. Au total, notre dominicain veut montrer comment seul le christianisme a su structurer et sacraliser le temps de la vie humaine pour amener l’humanité au salut”. See also CIOLFI 2018.
- ²³ In LUZZI 1996, pp. 47-51. An exception to this trend is represented by the praise of Constantine V (741-75) in the Neapolitan *milieux*, even if it finds an explanation in the adhesion of that city to the Byzantine iconoclasm (see ACCONCIA LONGO 2012).
- ²⁴ On the strange dynamics which determined the sanctification of the latter ‘couple’ see PATLAGEAN 1989.
- ²⁵ Respectively, ed. DELEHAYE: pp. 205, 866 and 12.
- ²⁶ On the references quoted in this paragraph see LUZZI 1996, pp. 48-9.
- ²⁷ Refer to DAGRON 1996, p. 166.
- ²⁸ This ritual was in use also in the West; in Latin, the corresponding formula is “cum sanctis tuis in aeternum”, *with your saints forever*. See once again PITSAKIS 2011, p. 219.
- ²⁹ See Nicetas David Paphlagon’s *Vita Ignatii* 94: “καὶ εὐθύς μὲν τότε τῷ Βασιλείῳ τέθηκε Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ τριπόθητος καὶ πρωτότοκος υἱός, ὃν καὶ ἅγιον ὁ τολμητίας οὗτος εἰς τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς χάριν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ χειροτονῶν μοναστηρίοις τε καὶ ναοῖς ἀνθρωπαρεσκία τιμῶν οὐκ ἠύλαβεῖτο”, *straightaway Constantinus, Basil’s much-longed-for and firstborn son, died, and that reckless Photius did not fear either to consecrate him as a saint on his own initiative in order to win his father’s favor or to honor him with monasteries and shrines in*

- order to be sycophantic* (ed. and trans. SMITHIES and DUFFY, p. 130-31 ll. 5-9). Consider also FLUSIN 2001.
- 30 See Xanthopoulos' *Ecclesiastical history* 17.31 (ed. MIGNE, CXLVII, col. 301 A-B). The emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-9) was in a way also granted a saintly status in the middle Byzantine period. To the best of my knowledge, his case (on which Lynn Jones from Florida State University is currently working) does not change the argument of my paper: the strictly political use of this imperial cult and the limited diffusion of this phenomenon both in time – about 150 years – and in space – the region of Cappadocia, where he originated from – are perfectly in line with Vatatzes' case.
- 31 The texts considered in this study are George of Pelagonia's *Βίος τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου βασιλέως τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος* (BHG 933; ed. HEISENBERG), the anonymous post-Byzantine *Βίος τοῦ ἁγίου βασιλέως Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βατάτση τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος τοῦ ἐν Μαγνησίᾳ* (ed. AGATHANGELOS), and Nikodemos the Hagiorite's *Μνήμη τοῦ ἁγίου, ἐνδόξου, θεοσοσέπτου βασιλέως Ἰωάννου Βατάτση τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος, τοῦ ἐν Μαγνησίᾳ*, whose new critical editions lie at the heart of my current research. See also CIOLFI 2017.
- 32 *History* 52: “μόγισ γοῦν ἀνέπνευσεν, ἠλλοιωμένος τὸ χρῶμα. Καὶ ἔσπευσε καταλαβεῖν τὸ Νύμφαιον πρὸ τῆς βαΐοφόρου κυριακῆς”, *he breathed with difficulty and regained consciousness, but his complexion had changed. He sought then to reach Nymphaion and to arrive before Palm Sunday* (ed. HEISENBERG and WIRTH, I, p. 102 ll. 7-9; trans. MACRIDES, p. 270).
- 33 A new, convincing identification of the monastery's ruins is in MITSIOU 2011.
- 34 The different literary representations of Vatatzes are analyzed in CIOLFI 2014.
- 35 Despite many attempts, Michael VIII was not able to suppress that discontent. The so-called 'Arsenian schism' between Arsenites and Josephists (from the name of the patriarch who gave absolution to the ruler for his crimes) lasted until 1315, when patriarch Nephon I proposed a definitive reconciliation; as it has been pointed out, it was perceived “as part of the political opposition to the upstart Palaiologan dynasty by Laskarid supporters” (TALBOT 1991).
- 36 See MACRIDES 1980. The new emperor was concerned also by the architectural renovation of the reconquered capital, as pointed out in TALBOT 1993.
- 37 Refer to CIOLFI 2014, pp. 280-5.
- 38 The grave was visited and kissed by the Russian traveler Stephen of Novgorod in 1349: he mentioned it in his diaries as that of “holy Emperor Laskariasaf” (18, ed. MAJESKA, pp. 38-39). As I. Ševčenko opined, that name could preserve the monastic name, Joasaph, chosen by John IV when becoming monk (MAJESKA 1984, p. 267).
- 39 The most recent contribution in this area is an article by PΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ 2004-5: she only briefly locates the canonization of Vatatzes in the post-Byzantine period (p. 30) focusing on the sovereign's Orthodoxy (p. 27). Both CONSTANTELOS 1972 and MACRIDES 1981, pp. 69-71 reported the early development of Vatatzes' cult and its connection to Constantinople. Notwithstanding, I

- believe that connection to the Capital is more relevant for the case of John IV (MACRIDES 1981, pp. 71-3 and – more extensively – SHAWCROSS 2008).
- 40 *Autobiographia* 1.12 (ed. and trans. MUNITIZ; respectively, p. 8 ll. 8-9 and p. 49).
- 41 *History* 52 (ed. HEISENBERG and WIRTH, I, p. 105 ll. 12-14; trans. MACRIDES, p. 271).
- 42 Strong ties existed between John III and that region and its inhabitants, and in particular: his ancestors had demonstrated there their military abilities during the Komnenian military campaigns and, since then, the Thrakesian theme had been the main political support for that aristocratic family from Adrianople; for that strategic area Vatatzes had such interests and a personal inclination that he moved his court from Nicaea to the winter palace of Nymphaeum as well as promoting the activities of Magnesia’s mint, to which he also transferred the imperial treasury.
- 43 Two notes written by one of the anonymous readers in the margins of *Akropolites’ History*, transmitted in the fourteenth-century manuscript Vat. gr. 166, demonstrated the success – and probably the wide diffusion – of this nickname. These are: at *History* 19, “† Ἰω(άνν)ου τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος :” (f. 50v, external margin); at *History* 21, “† ἀρχ(ῆ) Ἰω(άννου) τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος” (f. 51v, external margin).
- 44 *History* 11.15 (ed. FAILLER, IV, p. 441 ll. 4-6 and 11-3).
- 45 In fact, the *Eortologion* of Constantinople does not include the emperor’s name in his feast day (see GEDEON 1899, pp. 184-5).
- 46 Although modern scholars tend to interpret the *Βίος τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου βασιλέως τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος*, composed by George of Pelagonia in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, as one of the key-elements for ratifying the cult of Vatatzes, this work is not a hagiography at all. This *Βίος* only served to present Vatatzes as a reference model of excellence for George’s political goal (see CIOLFI 2013 and 2015). Beyond its aesthetic and literary value, the importance of the *Life* resides also in the fact that it has survived in the autograph author’s draft, as I have demonstrated through the comparison of its script with another note by George, whose writing was certified also by the attentive paleographical eye of John Chortasmenos (1370-1437): the version by George of Pelagonia’s hand is in Vat. gr. 579, ff. 229r-250v; the note used for the paleographical comparison is in the Aristotle Ambr. gr. 512 (f. Iv), already pointed out by PRATO 1981.
- 47 *Life of St. John* 43 (ed. HEISENBERG, p. 232 l. 36 – p. 233 l. 3).
- 48 The only reference I was able to find is in VATIDOU 1956, p. 39; see also CONSTANTELOS 1992, pp. 64-5.
- 49 As it has already been implied by G. Dagron. Even if arguing that Vatatzes was almost assimilated to a saint, the French scholar softens his claim, pointing out that “son éloge ressemble à un panégyrique impérial, que sa *Vie* fut écrite au XVIII^e siècle, que son office, composé par Nicodème

- l'Hagiorite, est plus récente encore, et qu'il s'agit d'un empereur de Nicée, non de Constantinople" (DAGRON 1996, p. 163). As D. Constantelos pointed out (1972, pp. 94-5), there were some obstacles – immoral behavior and disobedience towards the Church hierarchy – which could have prevented an official sanction of the cult.
- 50 *History* 10.18: “καὶ ὁ λαὸς ὁ μὲν κατεσφάπτετο, ὁ δ' ἀπανίστατο φθάνων, καὶ οἱ μὲν πρὸς νήσους τὰς ἐγγιζούσας, οἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν δύσιν διαπεραιούμενοι, διεσώζοντο”, *some people were butchered, some other fled earlier: they saved themselves, a group moving to the opposite islands the other to West* (ed. A. FAILLER, IV, p. 345 ll. 11-2).
- 51 See in particular ZACHARIDOU 1987, pp. 228-9.
- 52 See LINDNER 2009, pp. 110-1.
- 53 For instance, sultan Murad II decided to retire himself in Magnesia, after having yielded the scepter to his son Mehmed II in 1444; moreover, the role of the city as traditional training center for Ottoman princes granted its inhabitants the presence of royal retinue and exemption from some taxes. For the condition of the Christians see PΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ-KERAMEUS 1885.
- 54 The edition of this text has been announced to be a part of the forthcoming study by C. Dendrinis and A. Spanos, *An Unpublished Akolouthia on the Emperor John III Vatatzes*; the hymnographic dossier on the emperor has been recently published in DIMITRAKOPOULOS 2016. Here I restrict myself in dating the codex on the base of both paleographic and watermarks comparisons.
- 55 See D. POLEMIS 1983. The *apopytikion* (except for the last two verses which, out of the prosody, seems to be a posterior addition) and one *oikos* are identical to those of the Lesbos manuscript (here, respectively, on ff. 40r and 44rv); the other *oikos* seems instead to represent another version of the same *akolouthia* (probably due to the composition preferences of the compiler).
- 56 Given that the same title refers to John III as to “the new Merciful”, we can suppose an effort to distinguish the saint from other homonymous characters (“the Merciful” was in fact an honorific epithet associated also with other Byzantine saints; see I. POLEMIS 1973, pp. 31-3), with the particular effort to make him a counterpart of a ‘hero’ of the city of Nicaea, St. John the Merciful the Younger (for this saint refer to I. POLEMIS 1973).
- 57 Mainly from Chios, conquered by Ottomans in 1566. There lived 406 Greek families and about 7000 Greek villagers (see *Tapu-Tahrir Defterleri* in Turkish Prime Ministry’s Archives, 363).
- 58 See GOFFMAN 1990, p. 85.
- 59 See GEDEON 1890, p. 464.
- 60 See GOFFMAN 1990, p. 91.
- 61 Refer to CLOGG 1981.
- 62 All the question is treated in MASTERS 2006.
- 63 At the same time, Vatatzes’ canonization could have had also a role to unite Orthodoxy, increasing its power and influence in the so-called ‘*millet wars*’:

this was a positive strategy after all, if we consider that “by the mid-eighteenth century [...] the guardians of ‘tradition’ against the innovation of Catholicism and the traditions of local autonomy that had emerged in the absence of a centralized Mother Church” reported the final success (MASTERS 2006, p. 280). For a similar case study, dealing with a different context – historical and cultural –, see REY 2008.

⁶⁴ According to George Akropolites, John III acted as a “father” to his people (*Epitaph* 21; ed. HEISENBERG and WIRTH, II, p. 28 ll. 22-6), while from Pachymeres’ point of view he could be rightly praised as the “father of the Romaioi” (*History* 1.23; ed. FAILLER, I, p. 99 l. 5).

⁶⁵ Those were the traditional features Vatatzes was carrying with him since his lifetime. See, for example, Theodore II’s *Enkomion* 14: “ἀλλ’ ὁ γε τοῦ Χριστωνύμου λαοῦ βασιλεὺς, ὑπὸ τῆς Λατινικῆς καὶ Περσικῆς καὶ Βουλγαρικῆς καὶ Σκυθικῆς καὶ ἐτέρας πολυαρχίας ἐθνικῆς καὶ τυραννικῆς τὴν Αὐσονίδα γῆν μερισθεῖσαν μυριαχῶς, εἰς ἓν ταύτην συνήγαγε, καὶ τοὺς ἄρπαγας ἐμασίγησε καὶ τὸ λάχος τούτου ἐφύλαξε, καὶ δώρατί τε καὶ φασγάνῳ καὶ εὐβουλίᾳ καὶ ἀγχινοῖᾳ τὸν ἀρχαῖον ὄρον ἡμῶν ἀνήγειρε καὶ ἀνῶρθωσε, καὶ τρόπαιον ἀρετῶν ἀνεστήσατο”, *the emperor of Christians made united Ausonia, which the domination of the Latins, of the Persians, of the Bulgarians, of the Scythians and of other nations, hostile and usurpers, had divided into many parts; he lashed looters, safeguarded the possessions and, by the spear and the sword, by wisdom and sharpness, restored and re-established our ancient border, raising a trophy of virtue for himself* (ed. TARTAGLIA, p. 69 l. 608 – p. 70 l. 614).

⁶⁶ Native of Chios and interested in the Greek-Turkish relations in the Aegean and Asia Minor, K. Amantos discovered a post-byzantine manuscript of George of Pelagonia’s *Life of St. John*, the Sinait. gr. 2015, and also studied the origin and composition of Vatatzes’ family.

⁶⁷ See MILIARAKIS 1898, pp. 416-7.

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