



## Summary :

John III Doukas Vatatzes is one of the most important rulers in the history of the Middle Ages. He is considered the greatest emperor of Nicaea. During his reign (1222-1254), the empire doubled its territory, established its leading role in the Balkans and Asia Minor and the way for the recapture of Constantinople was paved. His successful external policy contributed to the economic and demographic growth and brought about a period of prosperity and social cohesion. He was especially loved by the people, and was canonised as a saint after his death.

## Date and Place of Birth

1192, Didymoteicho

## Date and Place of Death

November 3rd 1254, Nymphaeum

## Main Role

Emperor

## 1. Biography

John III Doukas Vatatzes was born in 1192 in Didymoteicho. His father, Basil Doukas Vatatzes, had held the office of **domestikos** of the East. His mother Angelina was daughter of Isaac, the son of Constantine Angelos and of Theodora Komnene, the daughter of Alexius I Komnenos. The Vatatzes were a great military family of Thrace; they had representatives in the senate and were related to other eminent families, like the Doukes, the Angeloi and the Laskarids.<sup>1</sup> Following the capture of Constantinople in 1204, John Doukas Vatatzes went to [Nymphaeum](#), which [Theodore I Laskaris](#) (1207/8-1222) had chosen as the seat of the [Byzantine Empire of Nicaea](#). Thanks to the intercession of an uncle of his who was a priest in the palace and an associate of the emperor, John Vatatzes entered in the emperor's service. The emperor appreciated his talents and his moral fibre, and conferred upon him the title of **protovestiarios**. In 1212, the emperor wedded him to his first-born daughter Irene, and as he had no other adult heirs, he designated Vatatzes as his successor. In January 1222, after Theodore's death, John Vatatzes was crowned emperor by the patriarch Manuel I Charitopoulos. His wife, the cultured Irene, gave birth to only one son, the heir [Theodore](#) (II Lascaris), in 1222; she died in 1241.<sup>2</sup> In 1244 Vatatzes married again, to the daughter of the German emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, Constance II.<sup>3</sup> In 1253, following a campaign against the ruler of Epirus, Michael II, the emperor's health, (he suffered from epilepsy) deteriorated. He died on November 3rd 1254 in Nymphaeum and was buried in the monastery of Christ Savior (of Sosandra) close to [Magnesia](#), in the wider area of [Smyrna](#).<sup>4</sup>

## 2. External policy

As regards his external policy, John III Vatatzes generally continued his predecessor's work, the main aim being the recapture of Constantinople and the restoration of the Byzantine Empire. His main rivals were the Despotate of Epirus, the Bulgarian tsar Ivan Asen II, the Latin Empire of Constantinople, the [Sultanate of Rum](#) and the [Empire of Trebizond](#). His ascension to the throne signalled the end of Nicaea's political cooperation with the Latins, a policy pursued by his predecessor, Theodore I Lascaris. He faced the rebellion of Theodore's brothers, [Alexios and Isaac Laskaris](#), who attempted to depose him, supported by the Latins of Constantinople. This rebellion against him turned out in advantage of the emperor and his dominion. In the context of the military operations conducted between 1222 and 1225 he managed to almost completely oust the Latins from Asia Minor. In 1224, in a battle given in [Poimanenon](#), the Latins were defeated, while the pretenders to the throne were arrested. In the peace treaty that ensued, the Latins were left with only the outskirts of [Nicomedia](#) and the coastline opposite Constantinople, while all the other areas of Asia Minor passed to the Empire of Nicaea. At the same time, Vatatzes constructed a strong fleet which, from its base at Olkos of Hellespont, launched naval operations capturing the islands Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Ikaria; later on (1232-1233), Vatatzes forced



the ruler of Rhodes, Leo Gabalas, to recognise the emperor's sovereign rights over the island.<sup>5</sup> After the battle of Poimannenon the emperor, who resided in Lampsakos for a time in order to remain close to the theatre of operations, turned his attention to the European lands. His troops captured several coastal cities and entered Adrianople, following the request of its inhabitants. But the forces of Theodore Doukas Angelos – who had been crowned emperor in Thessalonica in 1225 – soon arrived, and the troops of Nicaea were forced to withdraw. Vatatzes then turned to the East, and after a short campaign and negotiations with the Sultanate of Rum he managed to secure his eastern borders.

### 2.1. Relations between Nicaea and Epirus

The **despotes** of Epirus, Theodore Doukas Angelos, was Vatatzes' greatest adversary. Aiming to recapture Constantinople, he quickly managed to expand his dominion through a series of successful campaigns. His plans, however, clashed with those of the tsar of the Bulgarians, Ivan Asen II (1218-1241). Having cancelled the alliance he had signed with Asen against John Vatatzes, Theodore Angelos declared war on the Bulgarian ruler. In the battle that took place in the spring of 1230 close to Klokotnitsa on the river Evros, Theodore Angelos was decisively defeated and his territories in Thrace and Macedonia fell to the Bulgarians. The western Greece Despotate finally gave up its claim to the throne of Constantinople, and it was now under the rule of Manuel, brother of Theodore Angelos. Manuel was succeeded by Theodore's son, John Angelos; in 1242 John III Vatatzes forced him to recognise the suzerainty of the Empire of Nicaea and limit himself to the title of despotes. In around 1246, following the death of the Bulgarian tsar Kaliman, successor to Ivan Asen, John Vatatzes expanded his dominion in the Balkan Peninsula; after capturing the cities of Serres, Meleniko, Velbuzd, (modern Kyustendil), Skopje, Veleza, Pelagonia and Prosakos, he expanded his domain in Thrace up to the sources of the river Evros and in Macedonia up to the Axios (Vardar) river. Finally he turned west against Demetrios Doukas Angelos, and in December of 1246 he captured Thessalonica, forcing Demetrios to submit. Then, in around 1247-1248, the forces of Nicaea campaigned in Thrace, capturing Tzouroulos and Vizye. Following the battle of Klokotnitsa, Epirus was split from the Empire of Thessalonica, and was restored as an independent principality under the illegitimate son of Michael I Angelos, Michael II Doukas. Initially Vatatzes sought to develop amicable relations with Michael II, and entered into an alliance with him, which was confirmed in 1249 with the marriage of his niece Maria to Michael's son, Nicephoros. In 1251, however, Michael II cancelled the alliance and moved aggressively against the Nicaean possessions in Macedonia, aiming to capture Thessalonica. Early in 1252 Vatatzes campaigned in western Macedonia. Michael II was forced to capitulate and sign a peace treaty in Larissa. The ruler of Epirus handed over Veleza and Prilapo to the emperor of Nicaea, receiving the honorary title of despotes in return.

### 2.2. Relations with Bulgaria

Initially Ivan Asen II and John Vatatzes were on opposite sides, each seeking to capture Constantinople for his own sake. The political developments in the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the ascension of John de Brienne (1231-1237) to the imperial throne created ideal conditions for rapprochement between the Nicaean state and the Bulgarian one. In the winter of 1233 Vatatzes was attacked by the Latin forces of John de Brienne, but he successfully repelled this assault. Ivan Asen appeared on his side as the inciter of an anti-Latin alliance of Orthodox rulers, to which Manuel of Thessalonica also acceded. In the context of the negotiations, the political and ecclesiastical leadership of Nicaea accepted the founding of a Bulgarian patriarchate, as long as it recognised the sovereign authority of the Nicaean patriarchate. In spring of 1235 the alliance was signed in Kallipolis, which was soon after sealed with the marriage of John Vatatzes' son and heir, Theodore, to the daughter of Ivan Asen, Helen. The allies immediately commenced hostilities against the Latins and besieged Constantinople by land and sea. The Latin Empire was restricted to a small strip of land around Constantinople. The siege, however, was unsuccessful. In 1236 the allies attempted to capture the capital once again. During the siege, however, Asen, fearful of the rise of Nicaea, cancelled the alliance and demanded that his daughter, Helen, should return to him. He then sided with the Latins and the Cumans of Macedonia and, circa 1237, he commenced hostilities against Vatatzes, besieging Tzouroulos, a strategic stronghold. During the siege Ivan Asen changed his mind and, remorseful, he broke off the siege; he sent his daughter Helen back to Nicaea and signed a peace treaty with Vatatzes. In 1241 the Bulgarian ruler passed away. John III Vatatzes, rid of all his dangerous enemies, renewed the pact with the underage heir of Ivan Asen, Kaliman Asen I (1241-1246).

### 2.3. Relations with Frederick II

John Vatatzes' main diplomatic concern was the rapprochement with the German emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen and an alliance



with him.<sup>6</sup> Both rulers were united in their struggle against the Latins. Frederick supported the Byzantine efforts to capture Constantinople and in 1236 he cancelled the crusade pope Gregory IX was organizing against Vatatzes, on account of John III's hostilities against the Latins. John Vatatzes in turn sided with Frederick in the latter's feud with the pope. Later the two rulers signed an alliance, while in 1244 Vatatzes took as his spouse Constance, the 12-year-old illegitimate daughter of the German emperor, who subsequently took on the name Anna. This alliance, however, brought no significant gain to the Empire of Nicaea, even though it did help establish its presence in the international diplomatic scene. The emperor of Nicaea maintained diplomatic relations with the German dynasty even after the death of Frederick, during the reign of Conrad IV (1250-1254).

#### 2.4. Relations with the Vatican

Nicaea's relations with the Vatican can be divided in two phases. During the first phase, Gregory IX (1227-1241) was the Pope in Rome, while [Germanos II Anaplous](#) was the Patriarch in Nicaea (1222-1240). In the second phase, the protagonists were the Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) and the Patriarch Manuel II (1244-1255). The Papal Church sought to subordinate the Eastern Church, while John Vatatzes' main goal was the recapture of Constantinople. Both sides were willing to make some concessions in order to accomplish their aims. The first contacts took place in Nicaea in 1232. In 1234, delegates of the two churches met first at Nicaea and then at Nymphaeum. They negotiated the issues related to the union of the Churches. Dogmatic issues were also discussed in depth. The Orthodox clerics, [Nikephoros Blemmydes](#) being their main representative, rejected the Latin teaching on the purgatorial fire, while regarding the heavily disputed [filioque](#) clause, they suggested the expression «from the Father through the Son» instead. Finally the talks came to a dead end, for the Pope did not agree to the condition John Vatatzes set, i.e. that no reinforcement was to be sent to the Latins of Constantinople. In 1236, on the occasion of the hostilities of the alliance of the Byzantines and the Bulgarians against the Latins of Constantinople, nicaean relations with the Vatican deteriorated. In 1241, however, the Latin emperor Baldwin II de Courtenay and John Vatatzes signed a peace treaty. In 1243 contacts with the Roman Catholic Church began again on a new basis. The new pope Innocent IV was very energetic and appeared keen on accepting the terms Nicaea had set in order to achieve the union between the Churches. At the same time the emperor of Nicaea seemed to have accepted the idea of subordinating the Church to the Papal Curia in order to achieve his goal, the recapture of Constantinople. During this period, the rapprochement was greater than ever before. Political developments, however, and the patriarch's disagreement on dogmatic issues delayed the negotiations. The total enfeeblement of the Latin Empire and the establishment of John Vatatzes' domination led the Nicaean ruler to reject the papal proposal. The negotiations finally ceased after the almost simultaneous deaths of John Vatatzes, Innocent IV and patriarch Manuel II.

#### 2.5. Relations with the Sultanate of Rum

The relations of Nicaea with the Sultanate of Rum during the reign of John Vatatzes were peaceful, based on the respect of the border set circa 1230. In 1242 the [Mongols](#) invaded Asia Minor and threatened to destroy the Empire of Trebizond and the Sultanate. This caused great upheaval in the region and was the cause for a rapprochement in the shape of an alliance between Nicaea and the Sultanate. John Vatatzes feared that the likely fall of Iconium would leave his state directly exposed to Mongol raids, so he broke off his campaign in Thrace and Macedonia and hastened back to Nicaea. In 1243 he met with the sultan of Rum Kaikorsu II (Kayhusrev) (1237-1245) in Tripolis on the Maiandros River, and they signed an alliance. The Seljuks were threatened by the Mongol raids. In 1244 they were defeated and became tributaries; however, the Mongols left Asia Minor unexpectedly. Despite the fact that Nicaea was forced to pay tribute, these developments benefited John Vatatzes. The Sultanate of Rum, because of the destruction wreaked upon it, could not be considered a serious threat anymore, while it faced grave food shortage, and was forced to import its necessities from Nicaea at quite high prices.

### 3. Internal policy

At the start of his reign, John Vatatzes had to face autonomist movements and insurrections in his eastern and western provinces, like the [rebellion of Mavrozomes](#) and the conspiracy of the brothers [Andronikos and Isaac Nestongos](#),<sup>7</sup> and he took measures to ensure his strict control over the court aristocracy and the provincial governors. His internal policy was very successful. The emperor paid close attention to social and, mainly, economic issues. He also reorganized the army, took steps to ensure the harmonious coexistence of the State with the Church and supported a cultural blossoming.



### 3.1. Social structures and economy

His successful expansive policy brought the annexation of new regions to the empire. In all likelihood the governors of the territories that were incorporated into the imperial administrative system enjoyed wide authorities. Vatatzes showed special care in restricting abuses by the officials, and he ensured the proper administration of justice. His policy of appointing people of non-aristocratic descent in administrative posts was ground-breaking, causing much resentment among members of the aristocracy. It is also noteworthy that he heavily relied on the support of the military aristocracy. The success of his internal policy, however, was mainly the result of his economic and agrarian measures. His actions in this field aimed at achieving economic self-sufficiency and the improvement of domestic production, as well as at diminishing the import of foreign products, especially western luxury goods.<sup>8</sup> In his social policy, he took steps to improve the living standards of rural and city people. He conducted a census and bestowed on each subject of the empire a plot of land. Towards the end of his administration, he also requisitioned movable and immovable property belonging to great land-owners and the nobility, thus causing their disgruntlement. According to the sources he led a very frugal life,<sup>9</sup> and took additional measures to curtail excessive spending of private wealth; moreover, in order to firmly establish social justice in his state, he took measures against the exploitation of the poor. He issued a **novel** by which he abolished the system of misappropriation, which practiced the toparchs until then. These measures strengthened the empire's economy and the state was financially much stronger than in the Comnenian era.

### 3.2. Vatatzes' attitude towards the Church

In the context of his wider social policy, John Vatatzes also saw after the smoother function of the Church. In 1228 he issued a novel with which he forbade the interference of political authorities into ecclesiastical inheritance. He also made generous donations to ecclesiastical institutions and saw to the rebuilding of the existing temples and the construction of new ones, like the monastery of Sosandra in Magnesia and the monastery of Lemvos in Smyrna.

### 3.3. Army

John Vatatzes made special effort to build up the state's army, the core of which continued to be made up of mercenaries, mainly Latins organized into the 'Latinikon'. The concession of middle-size **pronoiai** to military men contributed to the forming of a stronger army, while the construction of fortresses in borderland, as well as the repairs on the fortifications of many cities (e.g. of Smyrna) contributed to the improvement of Nicaea's defensive capability. In order to achieve the better manning of the army, the emperor allowed the settlement of foreign people, mainly Cumans, on the border regions of Thrace, Macedonia and **Phrygia**, in exchange for their military services. The Cuman mercenaries, which were usually referred to as 'Scythians' by the Byzantines, formed the so-called 'Skythikon'. Already from the first years of his reign, John Vatatzes gave precedence to the reorganisation of the navy. The role of the fleet proved decisive in the efforts to annex the Aegean islands, most important of which was Rhodes, but also in the support of Nicaea's land campaigns in Macedonia, and especially in Thessalonica. The **mezas doukas** remained in charge of the navy, while the **mezas domestikos** was in charge of the army.

### 3.4. Sciences and Arts

John Vatatzes, notwithstanding his constant and intense military and diplomatic engagements, saw to the intellectual needs of the empire. He founded libraries in the urban centres and fostered the **sciences** and the arts, and learning in general. He was greatly interested in the collection and copying of manuscripts. The foremost representative of the educational movement of the 13th century, the scholar, writer and teacher Nikephoros Blemmydes, lived during his reign. Among Blemmydes' students were Vatatzes' heir, the learned Theodore II Laskaris, as well as the historian and statesman **George Akropolites**. The sources abound with references to the emperor's great concern for the development of his state's intellectual life.<sup>10</sup> He promoted the creation of centres of learning, especially of secular studies, while higher educational institutions were organized.

## 4. Canonization



His sensitivity for the lower social strata and his beneficial policies earned John Vatatzes the respect and love of the people. According to a popular tradition, few years after his death he was canonized as a saint. Georgios Acropolites mentions that the people saw to the construction of a temple in his honour in Nymphaeum, and that his cult as a saint quickly spread to the people of western Asia Minor. The cult of the saintly emperor survived till the modern years, mainly in the metropolis of Ephesus. His biography was composed, and many miracles were attributed to him. The church never formally recognized John Vatatzes as a saint; however, in the menologia we have a reference to the commemoration of "John Doukas Vatatzes" on the 4th of November.

#### 4.1. Vita

The *Vita* of John Vatatzes was probably composed rather early, although there are no indications as to its precise date of composition, its author and the place it was written.<sup>11</sup> In the 14th century, the bishop of Pelagonia George wrote the Life of Saint John the Merciful in the form of a *synaxarion*.<sup>12</sup> The biographer relied on oral tradition and reports the events of the 13th century with many inaccuracies. Vatatzes and Lascaris are often mixed-up. Vatatzes's *Vita* is rather concise and refers to his alleged miracles, which are said to have occurred during the translation of his relics in Magnesia. Nicodemus the Athonite (1749-1809), who composed an *akolouthia* in honour of the emperor-saint commissioned by the metropolitan of Ephesus, probably relied on this text.<sup>13</sup>

#### 5. Evaluation

The complete agreement of the contemporary sources on the appraisal of Vatatzes and his work by is impressive. Poets (e.g. Nikolaos Eirenikos), historians and prose writers (e.g. Nikephoros Gregoras, Georgios Akropolites) stress the emperor's rare qualities, extolling his virtue and his simple lifestyle. Indeed, during his reign the Empire of Nicaea doubled its territory, became the most powerful player in the international political scene, while in the interior the state experienced a golden age, becoming more prosperous and cultured. Although he did not manage to fulfil his ultimate goal, the recapture of Constantinople (this was accomplished seven years after his death by Michael VIII Palaiologos) Vatatzes was indubitably the one who effected all the necessary preconditions for the recovery of the Constantinople throne and the restoration of the Byzantine Empire.

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1. The name 'Vatatzes' or 'Vatases' was probably an appellative in the vernacular, plausibly deriving from «βῆτος» (meaning «bush», «shrub»). The tsitakism observed in his name («Vatatzes»/ «Vatases» instead of «Vatakes») suggests that he was of Thracian descent; his family, however, originated from Adrianople and Didymoteicho. John III's grandfather, Constantine Vatatzes, was *stratopedarches* during the reign of Manuel Comnenos. Many members of the Vatatzes lineage are mentioned in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Through the union of distant relatives grew the family branch of the Diplovatatzes, see Polemis, D., *The Doukai: a contribution to Byzantine prosopography* (London 1968), pp. 107-108, no. 72.

2. Polemis dates the death of the erudite empress Irene to 1239. See Polemis, D., *The Doukai: a contribution to Byzantine prosopography* (London 1968), p. 108.

3. On the occasion of the emperor's second wedding, the court poet Nicolaos Eirenikos composed an *Epithalamion*. See Gardner, A., *The Lascarids of Nicaea, the story of an Empire in exile* (London 1912), pp. 169, 308.

4. On John's III death, allegedly on November 4, see Polemis, D., *The Doukai: a contribution to Byzantine prosopography* (London 1968), p. 108.

5. The Nicaean suzerainty over Rhodes was bound to impede the Genoese aspirations, who in 1248 conquered the island. The Byzantine fleet was sent against them; in charge of the naval campaign was the *pigernes* John Kantakouzenos. See Σαββίδης, Α., "Η γενουατική κατάληψη της Ρόδου το 1248-1250 μ.Χ.", *Παρνασσός* 32 (1990), pp. 183-199.

6. Frederick II Hohenstaufen, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (1212-1250). His external policy aimed mainly at the entrenchment and expansion of German rule over Italy. His aspirations were against the interests of the Papal Curia and caused his feud with the pope.

7. The brothers Andronicos and Isaac Nestongos, cousins of John III, conspired with other aristocrats against him, a conspiracy





which was quickly uncovered and thwarted, while the emperor was away on a campaign against the Latins in Lampsacus. The conspirators were put to trial in the city of Achyraous and received rather mild sentences. Andronicus Nestoggos was imprisoned in Magnesia, but he managed to escape and sought refuge in the Sultanate of Rum. Georgios Akropolites in his *Chronike Syggraphē* offers many details on the conspiracy. See Georgii Acropolitae, *Annales*, ed. A. Heisenberg (1903, corr. P. Wirth, in *BSGRT, Stutgardiae* 1978), pp. 37-38.

8. The general success of the measures for the protection of domestic production and economy can be in part attributed to the fact that the Sultanate of Rum, ruined by the Mongol raids, was forced to import its necessities from Nicaea, at rather high prices.

9. Nicephoros Gregoras mentions the crown of eggs, the so-called «ὠάτον», given by the emperor to his spouse Irene, a rather characteristic case: this diadem was bought with money gathered from the selling of eggs from the imperial farm. «ὡς ὁ λίγου χρόνου πρὸς τῶν συναχθέντων ἐνταῦθεν χρημάτων στέφανον κατασκευασθῆναι τῇ βασιλίδι, λίθοις καὶ μαργάραις λίαν πολυτελέσι διηρηθισμένον, ὅν καὶ ὠάτον ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπονόμασε, διὰ τὸ ἐκ τῶν ὠῶν πράσεως κατασκευάσθαι αὐτὸν». See Nicephori Gregora, *Historia Romana*, ed. L. Schopen – I. Bekker (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonn 1829), 1, 43, 14.

10. Illuminating information for John III Vatatzes as a patron of the letters is given in the *Encomium on John Vatatzes* by his son Theodore II Laskaris, as well as in the *Epitaph* composed by George Akropolites.

11. It is worth noting that the *Vita* of John Vatatzes is often confused with that of John the Merciful (7<sup>th</sup> century).

12. His *Vita* is preserved in the *Sammelcodex Vatic. gr. 579*, 229r-250v, a manuscript dated to the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century.

13. On John Vatatzes as a saint, information is contained in codex Burney (British Museum) 54 (XVI s.), 219v, dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It preserves a *troparion*, a *kontakion* and an *oikos* (=stanza), all of them being probably fragments from an *akolouthia* in honour of «the glorious among the Apostles saint king John the younger Merciful, the Vatatzes of Magnesia». See Polemis, D., "Remains of an Acolouthia for the John Doukas Vatazes", in Mango, C. – Pritsak, O. (eds.), *Okeanos, Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students* (Harvard Ukrainian Studies VII, 1983), p. 543.

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Glossary :

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|  | <b>akolouthia</b><br>A liturgical rite composed in honour of a feast or a saint, to be used in the office of that particular feast or of that saint's day.   |
|  | <b>despotes</b><br>Title introduced in the 12th century. In administrative hierarchy, the office of despotes was under the emperor and the co-emperor. From the 14 <sup>th</sup> century onwards, the title was given to the governors of the Byzantine Peloponnese.   |
|  | <b>domestikos ton scholon</b><br>Commander of the regiment of <i>scholae</i> . The first officer with this title appears in 767/8. In the 10th C the domesticos became very powerful among the army of the <i>themata</i> ; in mid-10th C the office was divided in two, <i>domestikoi ton scholon</i> of the East and those of the West, commanders in chief of the eastern and the western provinces' army respectively.   |
|  | <b>filioque</b><br><i>Filioque</i> means "and [from] the son" in Latin, and it refers to the procession of the Holy Spirit. It was the diversive difference between the Roman and the Eastern Church and triggered, among other things, the Great Schism (1054): the Roman Church had added it to the Nicene Creed, but the Eastern Church never accepted the addition.  |
|  | <b>mezas domestikos</b><br>Supreme military commander of the imperial army. High-ranking title which was generally given to close relatives of the emperor.  |
|  | <b>mezas doukas</b><br>The commander of the Byzantine fleet (from 1092 onwards). In the Late Byzantine period, the title of the mezas doukas was assigned to the highest officials of the imperial administration/army.  |
|  | <b>novel (novella)</b><br>Term meaning ad verbum "new decree" and used since around the 4th century in order to denote the provisions of the emperors as separate from the organized codes. They were written mainly in Greek and used extensively in the Middle Byzantine Era. Since the days of Komnenoi and after, they were replaced by other more specialized terms and they are very rare in the Late Byzantine era  |
|  | <b>pronoia</b><br>("care", "forethought") An institution that goes back to the 11th century. It refers to estates granted to a prominent military official or to the Church; it also designates in general the right of an individual of areligious foundation to receive directly from citizens of farmers whatever dues they would normally be obliged to pay to the state. The holder of a <i>pronoia</i> was called <i>pronoiaros</i> . The <i>pronoiai</i> could not be inherited by the family of military officials after their death, while when a donation was made to the Church, the pronoia was considered full and permanent. |
|  | <b>protovestiaros</b><br>(and protovestiarites) Honoric title given to high-ranking officials and future emperors during this period. The protovestiaros was originally responsible for the imperial wardrobe, but in the 9th-11th centuries the holders of the title could command an army or conduct negotiations with foreign states.   |
|  | <b>synaxarion</b>  |





A liturgical text containing a short account of the saint's life and acts meant to be read at orthros (the morning liturgy) on the day of the saint's celebration.

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## Quotations

### Synodikon from Cyprus

«Ιωάννου τοῦ ἐν εὐσεβῇ τῇ μνήμῃ γενομένου αἰοδίδιμου βασιλέως ἡμῶν τοῦ Δοῦκα, αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη»,

in Cappuyns, N., "Le Synodicon de Chypre de XIIe siècle", *Byzantion* 10 (1935), σελ. 491.

### From codex Burney 54

«ἀνάκτων ὑπέρτατε καὶ πενομένων τροφεῦ,  
Ἰωάννη αἰοίδιμε, εἴλκυσας σὺ πρὸς πίστιν



τῶν βαρβάρων τὰ πλήθη.»

#### Troparion

«Κάτω βασιλεὺς ὦν τὸ πρὶν στεφηφόρε, Ἄνω βασιλεὺς νῦν ἐδείχθης· ὦ κλέους!».

#### Megalynarion

«Τῶν πτωχῶν ὁ ἄγρυπνος ὀφθαλμός, Ἐλεημοσύνης,  
ὁ εὐρυτος ποταμός,  
τὸ πενήτων σέβας, ἀπόρων τὸ ἀυχμῶδες,  
ὑμνεῖσθω Ἰωάννης, ὁ συμπαθέστατος».

### Chronological Table

1192: Birth of John III Vatatzes in Didymoteicho

after 1204: Vatatzes enters the service of the emperor of Nicaea. He becomes protovestiarios

1212: Marriage to emperor Theodore I Laskaris' daughter, Irene

1222: He is named emperor. Birth of his heir, Theodore II. Rebellion of the Lascarids (brothers of Theodore Laskaris, pretenders to the throne)

1224-1225: Internal unrest. Conspiracy of the Nestongoi brothers and other nobles. Strict measures are taken to suppress rebellions

1224: Battle of Poimananon. The Laskarid pretenders to the throne are arrested. A peace treaty is signed with the Latins of Constantinople. The territory of the Nicaean Empire expands. Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Ikaria are annexed

1225: Theodore Doukas enters Thessalonica and is crowned emperor

April 1230: Battle of Klokochnitsa. Theodore Doukas is defeated by the Bulgarian tsar Ivan II Asen

1232: Negotiations at Nicaea with delegates of the Pope for the union of the two Churches

1232-1233: Rhodes submits to the Empire of Nicaea

Winter of 1233: The assault of the Latin Emperor of Constantinople John de Brienne is repulsed

1234: Negotiations, initially at Nicaea (January) and subsequently at Nymphaeum (March) with the delegates of the Pope concerning the union of the Churches

Spring of 1235: Nicaea and the Bulgarians sign an alliance at Kallipolis. The son of John Vatatzes, Theodore II Laskaris, marries the daughter of Ivan Asen, Helen. The head of the Bulgarian Church is recognised as a Patriarch

1235: John Vatatzes and Ivan Asen campaign as allies against the Latins in an effort to capture Constantinople

1236: Second campaign of the two allies against the Latins. Ivan Asen defects

1237: A coalition of the forces of the Bulgarians, the Cumans and the Latins attacks the Empire of Nicaea. Ivan Asen gives up his military operations and requests a peace treaty with John Vatatzes



1241: Ivan Asen dies. A peace treaty is signed between the Latin emperor Baldwin de Courtenay and John Vatatzes. Empress Irene dies

1242: John Vatatzes campaigns against Thessalonica. John Doukas Angelos recognizes the suzerainty of Nicaea and relinquishes the title of emperor. The Mongols raid the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum

1243: The Sultan of Rum, Kaikosru II, and John Vatatzes, sign an agreement in Tripolis of the Maeander in order to face the Mongol horde

1244: Marriage with the daughter of the German emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, Constance. Death of the despotes John Doukas; he is succeeded by his brother Demetrios Doukas, following John Vatatzes' consent

1246: Campaign against Demetrios Doukas Angelos. A large part of Macedonia, extending from the river Axios (Vardar) to the river Evros, is annexed to the Empire of Nicaea. John Vatatzes enters Thessalonica and Demetrios submits to his rule

1247-1248: Campaign in Thrace, capture of Tzouroulos and Vizye

1248: Rhodes falls to the Genoese. John Kantakouzenos is dispatched to recapture the island

1249: Negotiations between Epirus and Nicaea. The niece of John Vatatzes, Maria, is betrothed to Nicephoros, son of the *despotes* of Epirus, Michael II Doukas

1251: Michael II Doukas moves aggressively against the Nicaean possessions in Macedonia and attempts to seize Thessalonica

early 1252: John Vatatzes campaigns in western Macedonia. Michael Doukas capitulates and signs a cease-fire in Larissa

late 1253: John Vatatzes returns to Asia Minor

November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1254: Death of John III Vatatzes