

## HISTORICAL THINKING IN THE *LIFE OF SAINT THEOKTISTE OF LESBOS*\*

by

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ABSTRACT: In this paper I investigate the strategy which has been employed by the author of the *Life of Saint Theoktiste of Lesbos*, a 10<sup>th</sup> century hagiographical text, to make his work historically credible, by using an analytical model based on Krzysztof POMIAN's theory of medieval historiography.

Roman hagiography after the Dark Age of the Eastern Roman Empire<sup>1</sup> (650–800) experienced a new period of prosperity<sup>2</sup>. Among many exceptional

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<sup>1</sup> In Byzantine studies, as the very name suggests, the tendency (introduced by Hieronymus WOLF in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) has been to name the inhabitants of the medieval superpower with its capital city in Constantinople *Byzantines* and their culture *Byzantine*. Even though Byzantinists are generally aware that the custom is wholly artificial (the adjective “Byzantine” in the medieval period related to the inhabitants of the capital only, nor was there anything like the “Byzantine Empire”), there are only a few scholars who decided to swim upstream against that comfortable tradition which lets us distinguish the medieval Roman Empire from the “true one” that existed throughout antiquity. I find that not only without foundation, but also pernicious. If we talk about the Romans and the Roman state in the Royal, Republican, Principate and Dominate periods – and it cannot be forgotten that the periods differ in many ways from one another – there is no reason to forge alternative terminology just to highlight something that is only another phase of Roman history. Such a concept only blurs the image through suggesting an alleged lack of continuity and bringing a great number of negative consequences (one of them being the marginalisation of so-called *Byzantium* in the mainstream history of Europe). For the very same reason I will not discuss in this article the *Greeks* nor the *Greek state*, for, as A. KALDELLIS has convincingly proved, Hellenism for the major part of “Byzantine” existence did not have any state, ethnic or national meaning (see KALDELLIS 2011). Therefore, I can only call the Romans by their name – *Romans*, and their state can be named *Eastern Roman* only to be distinguished from the state organisms created in Latin Europe that usurped the law to be the legal continuation of the Roman Empire (like the so-called *Sanctum Imperium Romanum*).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the hagiographical writing of the ninth and tenth centuries see EFTHYMIADIS 2011. According to this scholar, there were three new considerations which gave the