

## “THERE WILL BE BLOOD”: ART AND PROPAGANDA IN NICETAS CHONIATES’ *HISTORIA*\*

ABSTRACT: The topic of this essay is the lost fresco of the church of *Forty Martyrs* in Constantinople. According to Nicetas Choniates’ *Historia* this fresco depicted a man holding a sickle around the neck of a young noble man. Interpreting the scene, we find a connection to the archetypical representation of the arrest of Jesus on the Mount of Olives where apostle Peter cut off the ear of the servant Malchos with his knife. Probably the Emperor Andronicos I Komnenos wanted to propagandize his image as the dynamic protector of justice and truth.

KEY WORDS: Nicetas Choniates, Andronicos I Komnenos, Alexios I Komnenos, Forty Martyrs church.

RESUMEN: El objeto de este trabajo es el fresco, perdido, de la iglesia de los Cuarenta Mártires de Constantinopla. Según la *Historia* de Nicetas Coniates, este fresco representaba a un hombre blandiendo una hoz alrededor del cuello de un joven noble. Si interpretamos la escena, hallamos una conexión con la representación arquetípica de la detención de Jesús en el Monte de los Olivos, cuando el apóstol Pedro cortó con su espada la oreja al siervo Malco. Probablemente el emperador Andrónico I Comneno quiso hacer propaganda de su persona como protector de la justicia y la verdad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Nicetas Coniates, Andrónico I Comneno, Alejo I Comneno, iglesia de los Cuarenta Mártires.

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Nicetas Choniates was born ca. AD 1155 in the town of Chonai in Asia Minor. His family was wealthy and at the age of nine he was sent to Constantinople for higher education. Gradually he managed to climb up the state's hierarchy. Despite the prestigious ranks and the high offices that he held from time to time, it seems that Choniates did not play –strangely enough– an important role in the crucial and rapid developments that were taking place across the Empire at the time. After the fall of the Queen City, in 1204, during the Fourth Crusade, the aristocrat of old managed to establish himself in the Court of Theodore I Laskaris, still keeping himself in the background of the political developments. Byzantinists consider his death to have taken place at about 1215/1216<sup>1</sup>.

Choniates' literary work is rich. Among his writings the most renowned one is his *Historia* named *Χρονική Διήγησις*. Its language is sophisticated and it is definitely a piece of work of great historical importance. This *Historia* is divided into twenty-one chapters and each one of them is a separate book. It narrates the facts of the period between 1118 and 1206. According to H. Hunger, «Nicetas Choniates historical work provides us with valuable information about important developments in the areas of politics, Byzantine diplomacy, systems of transmission of information, about the advanced techniques of machinations and many other interesting aspects of cultural and socio-historical details from the daily life of the Byzantines»<sup>2</sup>. We may underline the scholarly narrative style of Choniates' *Historia* and the efforts of its author to stay close to what actually happened, researching every parameter and especially what had caused those events to take place. The *Historia* has also an anthropocentric dimension. This becomes obvious when Choniates tries to analyze the internal world of some of *Historia*'s main characters and also their external characteristics. Thus, the *Historia* has a realistic perspective that takes under serious consideration human passions, weaknesses and fears. On the other hand it also acknowledges the glorious and magnificent dimension of the human psyche<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See indicatively: H. HUNGER, *Η βυζαντινή λογοτεχνία*, v. 2, Athens 1992, pp. 265-281; A. KAZHDAN-S. FRANKLIN, *Studies on Byzantine literature of the eleventh centuries*, Cambridge, s.a., pp. 256-257.

<sup>2</sup> HUNGER, *Λογοτεχνία*, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. KAZHDAN, «Der Körper in Geschichtswerk des Niketas Choniates», in: *Fest und Alltag in Byzanz*, München: H. G. Beck, 1990 [pp. 91-105], p.105: «Choniates spricht im übertragenen Sinn von der Hand Gottes, aber meistens sind somatische Wörter in ein physisches Milieu gestellt (zum Beispiel als Elemente der Eucharistie). Der Leib erscheint am häufigsten in einem Kontext der Vernichtung und Krankheit; er ist leidend –durch Krieg oder Heimtücke, Zuchtigung

Examining Nicetas Choniates as a person, research came to the conclusion that he believed in superstitions<sup>4</sup>. In addition, according to H.-G. Beck, the historiographer believed that magic rituals were in a sense correct<sup>5</sup>. He was a very educated man but it was almost impossible to escape from the dominated mentalities of the medieval society where Choniates himself belonged. All these, of course, were reflected in his historical work as the outcome of a time full of insecurities and anxieties about the future. There can be no doubt that ignorance and insecurity are closely connected to the emotion of fear. From this point of view Choniates' work «can be seen as a sort of index of institutional health»<sup>6</sup>. Interpreting this socio-psychoanalytic theory I would say that the health of institutions is based on the psychological balance and, consequently, on the health of the members of the society who protect the structure and coherence of their state. In other words, the health of institutions depends on the emotion of fear. While the Byzantine government faces difficulties to exercise effectively power and authority and minimize the widespread fear, society confronts despair. It is indicative that the Byzantines expressed extreme racism against foreigners and especially the Venetians, using raw violence and pitiless persecutions<sup>7</sup>. According to Mannoni fear reflects the degree of capability of a government to control the negative effects of that fear<sup>8</sup>.

Fear has innumerable sources in the human soul and humans express fear in many different ways. Monarchs and officials vested with any kind of authority were plagued by the fear that the danger of losing their privileged

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und Folter, Verwundung und Krankheit. Ja, Choniates interessiert sich für den Körper, samt dem Unterleib und dessen "unanständiger" Tätigkeit und doch ist seine somatische Welt keineswegs eine Welt der Freude. Nach Choniates ist der leidende Leib ein wichtiges Element der Weltordnung oder, besser gesagt, der "Weltunordnung".

<sup>4</sup> C. MANGO, «Antique statuary and the Byzantine beholder», *DOP* 17 (1963) [53-76], p. 68: «Nicetas displays a wealth of mythological allusions, quotes freely from Homer. A statue of Helen, her body humid even in bronze, her lips parted as if about to speak, moves him to his most rhapsodic flourishes. Her charms did not avail against the insensitive barbarians; it was in revenge of the burning of Troy that the descendants of Aeneas, i.e. the Venetians, delivered her to the flames. Although permeated with antique reminiscences, Nicetas' response to the statues is not antiquarian; it is rather allegorical, in places superstitious».

<sup>5</sup> H. G. BECK, *H βυζαντινή χλιετία*, Athens 1990, p. 367.

<sup>6</sup> W. G. NAPHY-P. ROBERTS, «Introduction», in: W. G. NAPHY-P. ROBERTS (EDS.), *Fear in early modern society*, Manchester-New York 1997 [1-8], p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. J.-L. VAN DIETEN, Berlin-N. York 1975 [CFHB 9], 250.24-251.36; P. MAGDALINO, «The phenomenon of Manuel I Komnenos», *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13 (1988) [171-199], p. 196.

<sup>8</sup> P. MANNONI, *La peur*, Paris 1982, p. 113.

status was provoking. A tyrannical style of rule shows a great fear on the part of the monarch. This kind of ruling used to create a general hysteria among the subjects<sup>9</sup>. We can trace such an absolute domination of terror during the reign of the Emperor Andronicos I Komnenos (1183-1185). Andronicos used three tools in order to spread fear to those who formed the opposition and expressed doubt to the legitimacy of his authority: death, death and death. Reading Choniates' *Historia* you realize that Andronicos' reign was a sequence of over-imaginative punishments and executions. Firstly, he tried to exterminate his most dangerous enemies, such as the daughter and the son-in-law of the former Emperor and his brother, Manuel I Komnenos. Maria Porphyrogeneta and her husband were poisoned while many of their supporters faced imprisonment and various other forms of extermination such as phenomenal executions. However, the success to the throne was not yet open. The legal successor of Manuel was Ioannes, the underaged son of the former emperor. Despite the fact that Ioannes was just twelve years old, he had the legal right to claim the crown of his father in the future. Thus, Andronicos cleared his political path from any possible obstacles by killing the young prince<sup>10</sup>. We have to note that his uncle was his guardian. The unfortunate child was just a victim of Andronicos' ambition. The fear of losing the throne led Andronicos to bloodbaths and other atrocities<sup>11</sup>. Choniates quotes: «during this period people were punished for insignificant reasons»<sup>12</sup>. Reactions against Andronicos' policy used to strengthen him instead of weakening him and led him into turning Byzantium into an Empire of terror.

Choniates testifies that the evil character of the Emperor unfolded completely in various cases. For example, when he set Nikaia under his control he took revenge by cruelly punishing the former rebels<sup>13</sup>. His ways were especially repulsive. Intimidation could help him maintain law and order. The fear factor was of primary importance since it could prevent anyone who doubted his authority from taking action against him. Besides, Andronicos focused basically on how to set the aristocracy under his control.

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<sup>9</sup> P. G. MAXWELL-STUART, «The fear of the king is death: James VI and the witches of East Lothian», in: W. G. NAPHY-P. ROBERTS (EDS.), *Fear in early modern society*, Manchester-New York 1997 [209-225], p. 222: «If kings are afraid, the rest of the body politic suffers too».

<sup>10</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 273.8-274.29.

<sup>11</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 259.24-260.50.

<sup>12</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 280.37-38: καὶ κατ' ἐκεῖνας τὰς ἡμέρας σχάσας τὸ κολάζειν ἐπὶ βραχύ...

<sup>13</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 282.83-283-12, 286.92-4.

The procession of the head of Theodore Kantakouzenos, a distinguished member of the local ruling class who had opposed him, on a spear, in Constantinople, shows that the monarch wanted to spread fear among the inhabitants of the capital<sup>14</sup>. This was an act of propaganda since the Emperor sent a loud message declaring his indubitable domination to those who might have been planning any revolutionary action against him.

Choniates sketches the dark portrait of this Emperor underlying the use of intimidation by Andronicos. A lost fresco from the church of *Forty Martyrs* is indicative. The church was situated in the central road of Constantinople named *Mese*. This exterior wall-painting depicted a man holding a sickle around the neck of a young noble man: *καὶ δρέπανον περικαμπῆς κατέχοντα τῆ χειρὶ, βριθὸν καὶ μέγα καὶ στιβαρόν, συμμάρπτον τῷ ἐπικλινεῖ σχήματι καὶ σαγηνεῦον ἐντὸς ἀγαλματίαν μειρακίσκον ἕως φάρυγγος καὶ ὤμων προφαινόμενον*, Choniates states<sup>15</sup>. The passers-by who saw this fresco on the external arch of the *Forty Martyrs* church were trembling from fear since everybody knew the characteristics of the man with the sickle; the man had the face of Andronicos. The inhabitants of Constantinople were obviously impressed by such a provocative fresco and the mob of the capital used to mock the emperor by calling him “the man with the sickle”<sup>16</sup>. However, the theory of Patricia Karlin-Hayter that this scene is an allegory of the murder of the young prince Ioannes is not very persuasive<sup>17</sup>. Why such a scene in a church?

The figure of the young man symbolizes a certain group of people that the Emperor wished to send a strict warning. As we have seen, state's terrorism imposed by Andronicos' regime was based on a propaganda that kept on reminding the possibility of death to those who had in mind to oppose the Emperor or better to those who didn't follow his will. The case of the functionaries is the most evident one. Andronicos started an ambitious reform in the area of administration and bureaucracy. Over the 12<sup>th</sup> century the total of functionaries and especially tax-collectors exercised their duties

<sup>14</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 284.28-12.

<sup>15</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 332.27-30.

<sup>16</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 351.72.

<sup>17</sup> P. KARLIN-HAYTER, «Le portrait d'Andronic Ier Comnène et les *Oracula Leonis Sapientis*», *Byzantinische Forschungen* 12 (1987) [103-116], p. 116: «Rappeler à tous les crimes de l'homme don't il les avait délivrés parut non moins nécessaire. Parmi d'autres moyens d'influencer l'opinion, on songea à mettre en circulation, sans dire où il avait été élaboré, un petit manuel d'oracles: ils étaient connus et vénérables; on pouvait leur faire confiance; et si, parmi les autres, s'en étaient glissés deux ou trois qu'on ne reconnaissait pas, la présence des autres les authentifiait. Deux concernaient Andronic: impossible de se tromper: tous connaissaient le Porteur de faucille depuis le jour où lui-même s'était fait représenter à la porte des Quarante-Martyrs.»

in such a cruel way that made the provincial population hate the Byzantine government<sup>18</sup>. Lions for lambs! Arbitrary power and injustice were the two basic characteristics that were responsible for the alienation of the province from the metropolis. The group of functionaries was a deeply corrupted class that decisively harmed the Empire. In one of his speeches, Choniates informs us that the emperor instructed the functionaries: «you will either cease to be unjust or cease to exist»<sup>19</sup>. The warning is clear. Nicetas Choniates was also a tax-collector during this period. He belonged to a certain group of functionaries that faced the wrath of Andronicos. This probably left a psychological trauma on Choniates. Despite his efforts to be objective, the historiographer is clearly biased and he exaggerates in order to destroy any positive aspect of the emperor's work. Even these measures that Andronicos took for the relief of the people have been presented in Choniates' *Historia* as another manifestation of his tyrannical rule. His fear played a fundamental role in the construction of a certain perception for the image of the emperor. Psychoanalysis is an interpretive tool that Catia Galatariotou has recently introduced. This parameter, of course, crucially reduces the validity of the information given by historiographers. According to her, «a text is not only an external, concrete; it is also, in the psychoanalytic sense of the term, an «object» of mind. As such it exists both in a state of being, as a given product of the mind; and becoming, upon being a read, a potentially highly evocative «internal object»<sup>20</sup>. Years later, when Choniates was writing his *Historia*, he relived the terror he felt by the threat of death. Perhaps, it was this reason that made Choniates provide us with inaccurate or even misleading information about the reign of Andronicos. Perhaps, this trauma led him to the missinterpretation of the fresco of the *Forty Martyrs* church. He was probably seeing himself as the figure that was under the threat of a blade, considering the figure of young man as an allegory of the functionaries who had fallen into the emperor's disfavour. However, it seems that this was a wrong impression. The fresco was included in an ecclesiastical iconography

<sup>18</sup> J. HERRIN, «Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas und Peloponnesos, 1180-1205», *DOP* 29 (1975) 253-286; A. KAZHDAN, «The peasantry», in: G. CAVALLO (ED.), *The Byzantines*, Chicago-London 1997; V. NERATZI-VARMAZI, «The identity of the Byzantine province in the 12<sup>th</sup> century», *Επετηρίδα του Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών Κύπρου* 23 (1997) 9-14.

<sup>19</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et epistulae*, ed. J.-L. VAN DIETEN, Berlin-N. York [CFHB 3], 1972, IX, n. 5: ἤκουσαι τῆ βασιλείᾳ <μου> ἀδικεῖν σε τὰ πολλά, ἢ γούν τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἕασον ἢ τὸ ζῆν. Τὸ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν σε καὶ ζῆν οὐτε τῷ Θεῷ ἀρεστόν, οὐτ' ἐμοὶ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ ἀνεκτόν.

<sup>20</sup> C. GALATARIOU, «Emotions, thoughts and texts: a psychoanalytic perspective», *Proceedings of the 21<sup>st</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies (London 21-26 August 2006)*, v. 2, London 2006 [167-168], p. 167.

and it could not have been related, at least not directly, to the emperor's public administration policy. In the churches there were almost always images and scenes related to faith and ecclesiastical affairs<sup>21</sup>. For example, we know that the external wall-paintings of Saint Demetrios' church at Thessalonica were depictions of Saint Demetrios' miracles<sup>22</sup>. Some indicative cases of exterior wall-paintings can be seen in the church of Mavriotissa at Kastoria (1259-1264). There, Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologos (1258-1282) and probably his ancestor, Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118), were depicted above Saint Demetrios and Georgios<sup>23</sup>. There can be no doubt that the emperors would like to present themselves as soldiers of Good, continuators of Demetrios and Georgios, a parallel or an allegory of the warrior Saints<sup>24</sup>.

Generally, the whole action of the Komnenian dynasty was presented from imperial propaganda as a battle between Good and Evil. From Alexios I to Ioannis II and from Manuel I to Andronicos, the emperors fought against the powers of Satan. Alexios I started an unprecedented persecution against the Bogomils, dualist heretics and scholars who were teaching just Plato, such as Ioannis Italos. The Emperor burned in ritual fire at the Hippodrome (*Stadium*) of Constantinople many men. He tortured and imprisoned an innumerable crowd in order to implement a policy of general cleansing of those who doubted his regime. Byzantine literature presented the repression and the bloodshed as a work inspired by God himself<sup>25</sup>. Anna Komnena

<sup>21</sup> P. LEMERLE, «Psychologie de l'art byzantin», *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, troisième série, 1 (Paris 1952) [49-58], p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> P. LEMERLE, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Demetrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, vols. I-II, Paris 1979-1981, ch. 194, 179.17-22.

<sup>23</sup> T. PAPANASTORAKIS, «Ένα εικαστικό εγκώμιο του Μιχαήλ Η' Παλαιολόγου: οι εξωτερικές τοιχογραφίες στο καθολικό της Μονής της Μαυριώτισσας στην Καστοριά», *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 15 (1989-1990) 221-240 (with further bibliography on *Mavriotissa*).

<sup>24</sup> T. PAPANASTORAKIS, «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών», *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 20 (1998) 213-228.

<sup>25</sup> A. DEMOSTHENOUS, *Η βυζαντινή «Ιερά Εξέταση» και η Κύπρος*, Thessalonica (forthcoming); M. ANGOLD, *Church and society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*, Cambridge 1995; R. BROWNING, «Church, state and learning in twelfth-century Byzantium», in: *Friends of Dr. William's Library, Thirty-fourth lecture (1980)*, London 1981, 5-24; R. BROWNING, «Enlightenment and repression in Byzantium in the twelfth centuries», *Past and Present* 69 (1975) 3-23; L. CLUCAS, *The trial of John Italos and the crisis of intellectual values in Byzantium in the eleventh century*, Munich 1981; P. MAGDALINO, *The empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180*, Cambridge 1993; «The reform edict of 1107», in: M. MULLETT-D. SMYTHE (EDS.), *Alexios I Komnenos. Papers*, Belfast 1996, pp. 199-218; «Enlightenment and Repression in twelfth-century Byzantium. The evidence of the canonists», in: N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ (ED.), *Το Βυζάντιο κατά το 12<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα*, Athens 1991, pp. 357-373.

presented her father and Emperor as the thirteenth apostle (καὶ ἔγωγε τοῦτον τρισκαιδέκατον ἂν ἀπόστολον ὀνομάσαιμι)<sup>26</sup> while Ioannes Zonaras describing Basil, the leader of Bogomils, states that he had the outfit of a virtuous monk while he was the very personification of Satan (σχῆμα μὲν περικείμενος μοναχοῦ, αὐτὸν δ' ἐκείνον ἐνδεδυμένος τὸν σατανᾶν)<sup>27</sup>.

Comparing the policy of Alexios I with that of his successors Ioannis, Manuel and Andronicos, it is easy to see that there are no substantial differences at least in the style of management and the measures that all four followed in order to establish their power and authority. As many byzantinists noticed, their initials summarize the main axis of their policy. If one puts together the initials of the names: Alexios, Ioannis, Manuel and Andronicos, one after the other, with the chronological order of their reign, the Greek word AIMA is formed, which means 'blood'. However, the first three had the historiographers on their side to support them and present their atrocities as victories over Evil<sup>28</sup>. On the contrary, Andronicos was presented as a demon because he touched upon the interests of some powerful scholars and the court men who twisted his work. The fresco in *Forty Martyrs* church may be connected to the victory of the emperor against the heretics, who according to Zonaras may have had innocent faces. Iconography, during the Komnenian era, adopted new forms, like that of Melismos, in order to confirm the conclusions of the numerous ecclesiastical synods that took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>29</sup>. It was not only the Church that was under attack, but it was the whole Byzantine political system that was ready to collapse under the pressure of the heretic teachings that undermined the political and social *status quo* and certainly the Emperor himself<sup>30</sup>.

We can say with certainty that Andronicos wanted to intimidate and spread panic in order to achieve obedience and discipline from his subjects,

<sup>26</sup> Anne Comnene, *Alexiade*, ed. B. Leib, vols. 1-3, Paris 1937-1945, v. 3, 120.6-21; B. SKOULATOS, *Les personnages byzantins de l'Alexiade. Analyse prosopographique et synthèse*, Louvain 1980, p. 41; D. GRESS-WRIGHT, «Bogomilism in Constantinople», *Byzantion* 47 (1977) [163-185], p. 169.

<sup>27</sup> Ioannis Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*, vols. 1-6, ed. L. Dindorf, Leipzig 1868-1875, v. 4, 243.19-22.

<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the imperial propaganda underlined the profil of the Komnenoi as friends and Saints-soldiers of God. See I. KALAVREZOU, «Imperial relations with the Church in the Art of the Komnenians», in: N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ (ED.), *Το Βυζάντιο κατά τον 12<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα. Κανονικό δίκαιο, κράτος και κοινωνία*, thens 1991, pp. 25-36.

<sup>29</sup> Ch. CONSTANTINIDES, *Ο Μελισμός. Οι σλλειτουργούντες ιεράρχες μπροστά στην Αγ. Τράπεζα με τα Τίμια Δώρα ή τον Ευχαριστηριακό Χριστό* (unp. PhD), Athens 1991.

<sup>30</sup> DEMOSTHENOUS, *Ιερά Εξέταση*.

but the scene on the wall of the *Forty Martyrs* church was most probably related to the anti-heretic propaganda of the Emperor. Andronicos was not a pious monarch, but in every opportunity he wanted to declare his mighty nature. Heretics were enemies of the State and he was ready to crush them. The iconography of the fresco might be a unicum, however, the concept of the scene is rather common in the monumental art of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The representative of the Good, the Emperor, uses symbols of violence such as a sword or a spear to defeat Evil, that might even be represented by noble figures. This can be proved by the depictions of Emperor Alexios I at the church of Virgin *Kosmosoteira* at Ferres where the Emperor and his sons Ioannis, Isaakios and Andronicos were depicted as military Saints<sup>31</sup>. Emperor Alexios was depicted holding a shield and a spear wearing the armour of Saint Theodore prepared to kill the “enemy”. Furthermore, in the church of Santa Maria Assunta in a 12<sup>th</sup> century mosaic decoration, the Antichrist is depicted as a noble young man, «ἀγαλματίας μειρακίσκος», a figure beautiful in every way<sup>32</sup>. The use of violence for the defense of Faith is considered suitable in the ecclesiastical iconography. An archetypical representation is that of the arrest of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, where apostle Peter cut off the ear of the servant Malchos with his knife. Malchos was one of the Jews who came to arrest Christ. The mosaics of the *Katholicon* of *Nea Mone* at Chios, dated in the middle 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the ones of Saint Marcus of Venice, dated between 1180 and 1190, are indicative<sup>33</sup>. This archetype scheme consists of three main parts; firstly Peter, the defender of faith, secondly, the “knife”, the instrument of violence that constitutes a necessity for the protection of Good, and lastly Malchos, one of the enemies of Christ with a kind face that refers to the all-time effort of Satan to deceive human kind, using a cunning camouflage<sup>34</sup>.

We can presume that Andronicos wanted to appear as a warrior Saint just as Alexios I had done before him. He wanted to propagandize his image as the dynamic protector of justice and truth. Nicetas Choniates, however,

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<sup>31</sup> See the theory of Ch. BAKIRTZIS, «Warrior Saints or Portraits of Members of the Family of Alexios I Komnenos?», in: J. HERRIN-M. MULLETT-C. OTTEN-FROUX (EDS.), *Mosaic, Festschrift for A. H. S. Megaw*, London 2001, pp. 85-87; A. SAVVIDES, *Ιστορία του Βυζαντίου (1025-1461)*, v. III, Athens 2004, p. 229.

<sup>32</sup> N. CHATZIDAKIS, *Βυζαντινά ψηφιδωτά*, Athens 1994, pp. 165, 250. About the representation of children in Byzantium see also C. HENNESY, *Images of Children in Byzantium*, Hampshire 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. CHATZIDAKIS, *Ψηφιδωτά*, pp. 95, 240-241, 154-155, 248.

<sup>34</sup> Th. PROVATAKIS, *Ο διάβολος εις την βυζαντινήν τέχνην*, Thessalonica 1980, pp. 47-125.

twisted the emperor's intentions while he says nothing about the context of the background of the painting in the *Forty Martyrs* church. He was afraid that the target of the threat was himself and his colleagues. Perhaps his guilty conscience increased the fear that the austere Emperor and his disciplinary measures created. In the well-known movie *There will be blood*, Daniel Day Lewis said: «The power is in the blood!». Andronicos' message to the public was the same. Αἷμα (AIMA) for blood and for the Komnenian dynasty as well.

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