

Byzantine History in Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas¹

Maja Nikolić

Abstract: Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas (c. 1540–1608), famous Cretan panel and a miniature painter, composed between 1590 and 1592, the most important illustrated Greek manuscript of its era, present, according to the artist’s interpretation, the key historical events and personalities of the Greek history up to his own times. In narrating them, it appears that Klontzas adopted the new political-ideological concept, emerged immediately after the Fall and inspired by Gennadios Scholarios, the first patriarch of Constantinople under the Ottomans, and his intellectual circle, which called for the acceptance of a new political circumstances – the disappearance of Byzantium and the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Constantinople, Leo the Wise, Constantine the Great, Empress Helena, Constantine XI, Helena Dragaš, Gennadios Scholarios

George Klontzas (c. 1540–1608), a famous Cretan scholar, writer, icon, panel and miniature painter, is one of the most significant and productive Greek artists of his era who managed to give a personal artistic imprint to his works created between Cretan academic style and Italian mannerisms without departing from the basic elements of the Byzantine artistic tradition.² The Byzantine foundations of the

¹ I want to express my special gratitude to Dr Mirka Palioura (Benaki Museum, Athens) and Dr Eugenia Drakopoulou (The Institute of Historical Research, National Research Foundation, Athens) for their kind support and assistance in preparing the present paper. Μεγάλο ευχαριστώ!

The research presented in this paper is funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

² On George Klontzas see M. Chatzedakes, E. Drakopoulou, *Έλληνες Ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση (1450–1830)*, vol. 2, Athens, 1997, p. 83-97.

Cretan art are visible in the artistic monuments since the early 15th century, when the artists from Constantinople began to settle in Crete, which continued even after the fall of the Byzantine capital in 1453. The island of Crete, a Venetian territory since 1210, inherited the role of the main cultural centre of Hellenism after the Fall. The political, economic and social status of its population improved greatly in the 15th century which resulted in a significant production of high quality artefacts, mainly frescoes, icons and miniatures. Crete, especially the town of Candia, exported icons, illuminated manuscripts and wooden sculptures not only to the prominent Orthodox episcopal and monastic foundations in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also to the West.³

Among other works of art, George Klontzas composed his well-known *Μικρογραφία* between 1590 and 1592. It belongs to the Codex CL VII No. 22 (1466), today preserved at the Marciana Library in Venice. It contains 410 miniatures painted on 204 sheets of paper and it is the most important illustrated Greek manuscript of its era. In it Klontzas presented an illustrated world's chronicle following the important historical events up to his times. Although we do not possess firm evidence that the work was not commissioned or produced for money in any way, it is believed that Klontzas composed it for his own satisfaction and in order to teach his contemporaries and posterity.⁴

Influenced, as it has already been stressed, by the Byzantine artistic tradition, it is very significant that Klontzas chose the form of miniature, very developed in the Byzantine art, to express his own views of the history which he identified himself with.⁵ This is even more surprising given the fact that the production of miniature was very limited in the Greek Orthodox world, particularly on the island of Crete under the Frankokratia, during the 16th and 17th centuries.⁶

Majority of those miniatures illustrate the visions and prophecies of Daniel, Leo the Wise and Methodius of Patara. Many of them portray the most important events and personalities of the history of Christianity. However, there are many that represent important historical events and personalities. To illustrate these, Klontzas

³ P. L. Vocotopoulos, "Renaissance Influence on Post Byzantine Panel Painting in Crete", *Восточнохристианское искусство* 6, 2016, p. 177; E. Drakopoulou, "Τρεις ημέρες ενός μαθητευόμενου ζωγράφου στο Χάνδακα", in A. Chaniotes (ed.), *Έργα και ημέρες στην Κρήτη, Από την προϊστορία στο Μεσοπόλεμο*, Athens, 2000, p. 335.

⁴ A. Paliouras, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας (c. 1540–1608) και οι Μικρογραφίες του κωδικός αυτού (μετά πινάκων VI+410+ιβ')*, Athens, 1977, p. 65. Paliouras' doctoral dissertation is still the most important study on George Klontzas' Micrography. Apart from the research on the artistic features of the work, Micrography was lately the subject of a study of some important historical events in a wider context (M. Williams, *After Lepanto: visualizing time, history, and prophecy in the Chronographia of Georgios Klontzas*, M.A. University of Notre Dame, 2008).

⁵ On Byzantine illumination see R. S. Nelson in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, Oxford – New York, 1991, p. 306-308.

⁶ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 194.

used various, dominantly Western narrative sources, depicting some of the authors and recording their names. Apart from Jacobus da Voragine,⁷ Klontzas presents also pope Pius II (1458–1464),⁸ Raffaello Maffei (Volaterranus), Nicholas Secundinus and Francesco Filelfo,⁹ Marcus Antonius Coccius Sabellicus, Paolo Giovio and Pliny the Elder,¹⁰ Sextus Pomponius¹¹ as well as Ottone the Archbishop of Milan (1277–1295), the first of the Visconti family.¹² Although it is believed that Klontzas' only reason for depicting these Western scholars lay in his rich imagination,¹³ it is possible that the artist actually used information they offered to narrate his illustrated world chronicle. However, it was not only the Western authors that Klontzas used in creating his Micrography. It appears that he was aware of some Byzantine and Post-Byzantine texts which this paper aims to show.

Apart from many miniatures that illustrate the history of Christianity in general, Klontzas, however, depicted numerous that represent important historical events and personalities from the Byzantine history.¹⁴

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93, fig. 75. Jacobus de Voragine was the Archbishop of Genoa (1292–1298) and the author of the famous *Golden Legend*, a collection of saints' lives, accounts of the events in the lives of Christ and Virgin Mary, and of information about the holy days and seasons. The entire work was arranged as readings for the church year (*Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*, 2 vol., trans. by W. G. Ryan, Princeton, 1993–1995).

⁸ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 101, fig. 111. On pope Pius II see E. O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II (1458–1464) and the Crisis of the Fifteenth-Century Papacy*, Toronto, 2015.

⁹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 102, fig. 112. Raffaello Maffei (1451–1522) was an Italian humanist, historian and theologian. He was the student of George of Trebizond and translator of Homer's *Odyssey*, the *Economists* of Xenophon and *De Bello Persico et Vandalico* of Procopius, H. Ashley Hall, *Philip Melanchthon and the Cappadocians. A reception of Greek patristic sources in the sixteenth century*, Göttingen, 2014, p. 248. For Nicholas Secundinus see J. Monfasani, "A philosophical text of Andronicus Callistus misattributed to Nicholas Secundinus", in J. Monfasani (ed.), *Byzantine Scholars in Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and other Emigres*, Aldershot, 1995, no. XIII; P. D. Mastrodimitris, *Νικόλαος Σεκουνδίνος (1401–1464). Βίος και Έργον: Συμβολή εις την Μελέτην των Ἑλλήνων Λογίων τῆς Διασποράς*, Athens, 1970. For Francesco Filelfo see D. Robin, *Filelfo in Milan: Writings 1451–1477*, Princeton, 1991.

¹⁰ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 102, fig. 113, 115. Marcus Antonius Coccius Sabellicus was a scholar and an historian from Venice. He is known for his universal history, *Enneades sive Rhapsodia historiarum*. See F. Gilbert, *Biondo, Sabellico, and the beginnings of Venetian official historiography*, Toronto, 1971. On Paolo Giovio see T. C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio: The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Princeton, 1995. On Pliny the Elder see T. Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia*, Oxford, 2004.

¹¹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 102, fig. 114, 115. On Sextus Pomponius see *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. by G. Wissowa et al., Stuttgart, 1952, vol. 42, p. 2416–2420.

¹² A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 102, fig. 116. On Ottone Visconti see A. Dunlop, *Painted Palaces. The Rise of Secular Art in Early Renaissance Italy*, Pennsylvania, 2009, p. 168–177.

¹³ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 198.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59–60.

Klontzas begins his visual narrative with miniatures that illustrate the themes of the Old Testament¹⁵ and the scenes from the New Testament.¹⁶ In this way, the artist places the whole of the history he represents, including the Greek and the Byzantine, within the Christian frames, emphasizing above all his entire religious and political message, which, at the time in which he creates, contains a clear anti-Ottoman notion. Immediately after the New Testament scenes, Klontzas turns his attention to Alexander the Great.¹⁷ And it is at this point that Klontzas introduces the motives related to the Byzantine history into his visual narrative for the first time. So he depicts a miniature of the Thracian king Byzas who, according to the legend, was the founder of the first city on the site of the latter Byzantine capital of Constantinople. The miniature also shows Byzas' general Germanic whom the legendary Thracian king sends to Ethiopia to ask King Fole for the hand of his daughter Housith (Χουσήθ), Alexander the Great's mother, who returned to her father after her son's death. In the upper section of the next miniature the meeting of Byzas, Fole and Housith is presented, while in the lower part the artist depicts the birth of Byzas and Housith's daughter Byzantia (Βυζαντία), named after the city. Finally, in the last miniature linking the foundation of Byzantium with Alexander the Great, Byzantia is depicted with her husband Romulus, the founder of Rome, and their three sons – Romulus, Urban and Claudius. Romulus then ruled Rome after his father's death, Urban ruled the city of Bizas (Βίζαν τὴν πόλιν), and Claudius ruled Alexandria.¹⁸

What drives one's attention immediately is the fact that George Klontzas disrupts the chronological principle of the events he illustrates. It is not, therefore, his intention to inform when and how something happened, but to state his political-ideological view.

From the miniatures narrating the story of king Byzas, it is quite clear that Klontzas sees the Byzantine history he represents as the continuity of the Greek history. In this way, not only does he link the history of Constantinople to the Greek history, but he also sees the Byzantine Empire as an heir to Alexander the Great's world empire. Besides, in his work Klontzas represents the events within the general chronological frame of the four world empires, Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian and Roman, thus following the periodization of the Prophet Daniel.¹⁹ On the other hand, by telling the story of the marriage between Byzantia and Romulus, the unbreakable bond between the Old and New Rome, Klontzas shows, at the same time, that he is fully aware of the Roman foundations of the Byzantine state, whose citizens

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78-87, 160-167, fig. 1-48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88-89; 167-177, fig. 50-57.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90, fig. 58-59, 61.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91-92, fig. 62-66.

¹⁹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 209.

called themselves Romans or Ῥωμαίοι until the very fall of the Empire. The name of Byzas' and Housith's daughter, Byzantia, is also very indicative. Although the term 'Byzantine' was used during the 15th century by some Byzantines who, since they emigrated to the West, actually sought to show that they originated from Byzantium, ie. Byzantine capital of Constantinople, it was not until the mid-sixteenth century that Hieronymus Wolf attached this name to the historical phenomenon we now call Byzantium.²⁰ The new term was apparently also known to Klontzas. Finally, the whole narrative of the city of Bizas (Βίζαν τὴν πόλιν) shows that, according to George Klontzas, Constantinople not only had a central place in the Byzantine history, but, as the artist will show, it will also play a key role in the future events connected with the Immortal Emperor.

Another feature of the historical narrative of Klontzas' Micrography is the transparent emphasis on the historical conflict between Christianity and Islam which was more than intense in his time. In the context of the Byzantine history, Klontzas introduces the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in the section of Micrography narrating on Muhammad, with a famous representation of his Exaltation of the Holy Cross. In the next miniature, Heraclius is depicted on a horse, with bareheaded Muhammad standing in front of him. The inscription tells us that Heraclius assigned to Muhammad land to settle at his request.²¹ Thereafter, the narration on Muhammad's life continues. One of the following miniatures informs us that Muhammad gathered an army and headed for Persia. However, he was defeated and disgraced in the 22nd year of the reign of Heraclius and his son Constantine in Constantinople, i.e. in 632 AD.²²

Although the aforementioned presentations are not entirely historically incorrect,²³ the image of the Emperor Heraclius, whose appearance is visually reminiscent of the preserved portraits of the emperor on the two bronze medals from the early 15th century,²⁴ was used as a model of the first Byzantine ruler to lead the

²⁰ D. R. Reinsch, "Hieronymus Wolf as Editor and Translator of Byzantine Texts", in P. Marciniak and D. C. Smythe (eds.), *The Reception of Byzantium in European Culture since 1500*, Aldershot, 2016, p. 43-53.

²¹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 93, 95, 211-212, fig. 74, 84. Emperor Heraclius is also depicted on a miniature no. 186, *ibid.*, p. 116.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 96, fig. 91.

²³ Although poorly documented, the Muslim tradition suggests that Muhammad did send deputies to several contemporary rulers, including Heraclius, to embrace Islam. Muhammad's first attack on Byzantium ended in a terrible defeat at the battle of Mu'tah, south of the Dead Sea in 629. This was an attempt of the Byzantines to occupy these areas and of the Arabs to penetrate more north into Byzantine territory. In the Byzantine sources, Muhammad has been mentioned since about 634-5, see W. E. Kaegi in *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1422.

²⁴ S. K. Scher, *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance*, New York, 1994, p. 34-37, 65. One is kept in Cabinet des Médailles at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, and the other in British Museum.

Crusade. It is how William of Tyre designates him in the twelfth century.²⁵ This trend is then followed by Piero della Francesca's famous fresco in Arezzo – The Exaltation of the Holy Cross. In the light of the dramatic events regarding the fall of Constantinople and Muslim threat to Europe in general, the notion of a victorious Cross as a symbol of reborn Christianity bore new meanings gaining a special dimension after 1571, ie. the great Christian triumph over the Ottomans at Lepanto.²⁶ Moreover, Klontzas' frequent insisting on the return of the Muslim invaders back to Asia recalls one to remember the other great clash of civilizations, those of Europe and Asia, a notion very popular among the intellectuals of the 15th century both in Byzantium and in the West.²⁷

Klontzas' main idea, the anti-Ottoman scream and the call for the Christians to strike triumphal blow to the Muslims, is also visible in his depiction of the siege of the Byzantine capital in 626. However, the artist informs us that it was the Arabs and the Persians who besieged Constantinople in the time of Muhammad himself, although it was actually the Avars.²⁸ However, it is obvious that Klontzas was not totally unaware of the historical facts regarding the siege of 626, since, in the verses on the miniature which depict it, he uses the term Khagan (Χαγάνος), a common title for the leader of the Avars. This only confirms that the artist primarily wanted to emphasize once again the role of the Byzantine Empire in fighting the Muslim invaders. The city is saved by the Blessed Virgin whose icon is worn by the citizens along the walls of Constantinople. At the same time, “the embodied Breath of God” destroyed the enemy's fleet. Below the miniature we find the inscription “When Muhammad besieged the megalopolis of Constantinople”, as well as the verses:

The multitude of Muhammad's tribe
 With the Persians devastate Constantinople,
 They gathered and besieged it,
 Because Chosroes wanted to destroy even the churches.
 People of Constantinople reaching out towards God
 Asked Him for alliance
 With Sergius the holy patriarch,
 Having His Mother as Representative.

²⁵ William, *Archbishop of Tyre, Chronicon I, I-2*, ed. by R. B. C. Huygens, Turnhout, 1986, p. 105-107.

²⁶ E. Drakopoulou, “In hoc signo vinces between 1453–1571: the iconography of an encounter between art and history”, in *Huuu u Buzanmuja XII*, Niš, 2014, p. 388-389.

²⁷ *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, ed. by D. R. Reinsch, Berlin – New York, 1983, p. 77, 170; *Laonici Chalcocandylae Historiarum Demonstrationes*, II, ed. by E. Darkó, Budapest, 1922, p. 166-167; M. Philippides, W. K. Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, Aldershot, 2011, p. 193-214.

²⁸ On the siege of 626 see W. E. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 132–140; G. B. Tsiaples, “Το αλίμψηστο της ιστορικής μνήμης: Η πρόσληψη της αβαροπερσικής πολιορκίας της Κωνσταντινούπολης (626) στις σύγχρονες και μεταγενέστερες ρητορικές και αγιολογικές πηγές”, *Byzantiaka* 32, 2015, p. 79-97.

Khagan said: “Tomorrow I will destroy you
And all that which you call the icons
From which you require alliance with God.
But the Immaculate has
Destroyed everything
Showing everyone Her power
And encouraged the faithful to glorify Her.

Then, as Klontzas narrates, Muhammad was defeated and pushed back to Asia. However, within the walls of Constantinople, the clergy, the army and the people continued to carry the icon of the Blessed Virgin seeking salvation, while outside the ramparts the Khagan still threatened. Then follow the verses of the famous Akathistos Hymn praising the Blessed Virgin.²⁹

In the context of one of the main ideas of this work of art, which is an anti-Muslim appeal, Klontzas uses the narrative of the siege of Constantinople in 626 and alters it through the perspective of the historical reality of his own time. At the same time, this allows the artist to move his narrative to another important topic which he, as a renowned icon-painter of his time, was personally very interested in – the veneration of the icons. Surprisingly, Klontzas does not begin his narrative on iconoclastic controversy, which challenged one of the most transparent forms of Byzantine piety during the 8th and 9th centuries, with the most passionate champions of this policy, Leo III or Constantine V, but with the emperor Theophilos.³⁰

At the beginning of the narration on Theophilos, the first miniature depicts the emperor’s bad behaviour towards the emissary of the Jerusalem Council. Below the title “The Reign of Theophilos”, the verses follow:

Shortly after Theophilos began to rule Constantinople, in an unlawful manner,
Showing himself as new Balthasar,
Damaging all the sacred icons,
Having learnt of all these things, the assembly of the Fathers
Convoked the Holy Synod in Jerusalem and sent
The noble and sacred advice to the Emperor to worship the sacred icons,
And, since he was not faithful to these dogmas,
God took away from him the Empire
And then utterly destroyed it.³¹

²⁹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 97–98, fig. 98–100. On Akathistos Hymn on Blessed Virgin see E. M. Jeffreys, R. S. Nelson in *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 44.

³⁰ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 98, 179, fig. 101. On iconoclastic controversy see L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: a history*, Cambridge, 2001.

³¹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 99, fig. 101.

The next miniature presents the Holy Synod of Jerusalem, followed by the text which informs us that it was held in April 836.³² Then the following miniature depicts a certain monk going in an unknown direction after the destruction of the town of Amorion by the Arabs in 838, the fatherland of the Amorian dynasty.³³ As a consequence, according to the artist, the Saracens, i.e. the Arabs, conquered Constantinople during the reign of Theophilos.³⁴ Finally, the narrative on Theophilos closes with the miniature depicting the Arabs conquering Crete.³⁵

Mixing historical reality and imagination, it appears that Klontzas represents precisely Theophilos for two purposes – to condemn the emperor’s iconoclasm and to narrate the fall of the artist’s homeland, Crete, to the Arabs, which, according to his point of view, was a direct consequence of the iconoclastic policy. Emperor Theophilos (829–842) was the second Byzantine ruler of the Amorian dynasty. Modern historiography sees him as a “fiery lover of justice and a strict guardian of civil laws”,³⁶ a ruler devoted to learning, an emperor whose fiscal policy enriched the state treasury which, again, enabled the further development of Constantinople.³⁷

It is a historical fact that Theophilos was an iconoclastic emperor of the so-called Second iconoclasm.³⁸ Nevertheless, no historical source mentions the Council of Jerusalem during his reign. It is possible that the artist had in mind another Council of Jerusalem, the one which was believed to have occurred in April 1443, when the three Eastern Patriarchs, those of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch, rejected the Union of Florence.³⁹ Nevertheless, J. Gill argued that the Council was actually never held, believing that the letters which mention it were apocryphal.⁴⁰ On the other hand, it does not seem persuasive that Klontzas narrates about the Council of 1443, since

³² *Ibid.*, p. 99, fig. 102.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 99, fig. 103. A. Paliouras, however, for some unknown reason, thinks that the artist with the word ἐπόρησαν actually meant ἐπολιόρησαν (*ibid.*, p. 100).

³⁴ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 100, fig. 104. However, we do not possess any historical information that the Arabs reached Byzantine capital during Theophilos’ rule. It was during the reign of Iconoclast Leo III that the Arabs were besieging Constantinople for a whole year (717–718), R. Guillard, “L’expédition de Maslama contre Constantinople (717–718)”, in R. Guillard (ed.), *Études byzantines*, Paris, 1959, p. 111-129.

³⁵ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 100, fig. 106.

³⁶ *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, ed. by M. Featherstone et J. Signes-Codoñer, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 53, Berlin, 2015, p. 124.

³⁷ On Theophilos see P. A. Hollingsworth in *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 2066; J. Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm*, Aldershot, 2014.

³⁸ L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the iconoclast Era*, p. 392-411.

³⁹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 179-180. For the letters informing of the Council of Jerusalem, see G. Hofmann, *Orientalium documenta minora*, Rome, 1953, no. 45, p. 68-72.

⁴⁰ J. Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays*, Oxford, 1964, p. 213-221.

he was a supporter of the Union of Florence. Namely, several miniatures show that the artist was a great supporter of the union of the Eastern and Western Churches, which was precisely one of the leading ideas of Micrography. Aware or not, again, of the historical chronology of the events, in one of them Klontzas represents the Pope and the Venetian Doge on both sides of the model of Constantinople. The inscription above says: “The Pope and the Prince ruled Constantinople for 58 years”.⁴¹ The next one presents two themes. On the left is Michael VIII Palaiologos, who recaptured Constantinople from the Latins and on the right is the Ferrara–Florence Council. Above, we find the inscription: “Emperor Michael, the first of the Palaiologoi, who took Constantinople from the hands of the Latins in 1262”. The inscription below says: “The Eighth Council that took place in Florence”.⁴² Here Klontzas undoubtedly demonstrates his apparent affection for the Roman-Catholic Church by mentioning the Ferrara–Florence Council as one of the Ecumenical Councils of the Christian Church.⁴³ Klontzas also depicts frequently the Popes of Rome. However, this is not surprising, given the fact that he lived in the territory under the Venetian rule. The artist also paid his due respect to and showed personal affection for Venice in a miniature of Serenissima with the inscription: “The most Christian and the most honorable city of the Venetians and the most beautiful of all (παρὰ πάσας)”.⁴⁴

Since, as was mentioned in the beginning, a large number of miniatures illustrate the prophecies of Leo the Wise, it is logical that Klontzas introduces in his narrative the presentation of the emperors Basil I and his son Leo VI sitting on a double imperial throne. Basil presents his son Leo with a book, and below we find the inscription: “Basil, in Christ the Lord Emperor of the Romans, (Βασίλειος ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ βασιλεὺς ρωμαίων) to his beloved son and co-emperor”.⁴⁵ The following miniature presents the Emperor Leo VI in his library writing prophetic verses. Next to him is Methodius, the Archbishop of Patara, who writes their interpretations. The inscription above says: “The wisest Leo, Emperor of Constantinople” and below “Verses of Leo, Emperor of Constantinople. The riddles written by the most pious Emperor Leo the Wise and interpreted by the most pious Methodius, Archbishop of Patara”.⁴⁶

⁴¹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 100, fig. 107.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 100, fig. 108.

⁴³ The Orthodox Church acknowledges the first Seven Ecumenical Councils, see A. Kazhdan in *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 540-541. The Ferrara-Florence Council (1438–1439) is also mentioned in the so-called Oracular interpretations of Pseudo-Gennadios Scholarios, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graecolatina*, ed. by J. P. Migne, vol. 160, Paris, 1866, col. 769.

⁴⁴ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 124, fig. 227.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113, fig. 171. In the inscription Klontzas designates Basil I with the official imperial title of Byzantine emperors.

⁴⁶ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 113, 213-215, fig. 172.

These two miniatures refer to the most popular oracle collection in Byzantium, the so-called *Oracles of Leo the Wise*.⁴⁷ It is believed that these oracles derived from the most famous prophetic text of the Middle Ages, the so-called Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, written before 692 and attributed to the Church Father Methodius of Patara. Soon after, this text was translated into both Greek and Latin. As it was noted by Liudprand of Cremona in the 10th century, the Greeks and the Arabs call them *The Visions of Daniel*, whereas, in the West, they are known as the Sibylline Books.⁴⁸

It appears that, as Klontzas moves closer towards the end of the Byzantine history, he paints his miniatures in a historically more accurate manner. Apart from that, one gets the impression that he was particularly fond of the Palaiologan dynasty. Therefore, Klontzas firstly depicts the Emperor Theodore II Laskaris of Nicaea (1254–1258) and his son and successor, Michael Palaiologos.⁴⁹ This shows that the artist saw Michael VIII as Theodore's legitimate successor, not as a usurper. As it is well-known, Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–1282) first became the co-emperor of John IV, son and heir of Theodore II Laskaris, in 1259 and in 1261 he blinded the boy, thus becoming the sole Emperor. The next miniature presents Michael VIII Palaiologos sitting on the throne, and the following depicts Michael's son, the Emperor Theodore, although he died before his father. As is well known, Michael VIII Palaiologos was succeeded by his second son Andronikos II (1282–1328).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ The content and the authorship of these oracles is not easy to establish, because they vary from one manuscript to another and since the same text could be attributed to the Emperor Leo, to Methodius of Patara and to the Prophet Daniel. But whereas Cyril Mango, like George Klontzas, believed that the author of these oracles could be identified as the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI the Wise (C. Mango, "The Legend of Leo the Wise", *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 6, 1960, p. 59, 90-93), P. Magdalino, on the basis of one manuscript which mentions Leo the Philosopher, recently argued that, by that time, the author of these oracles had already become an imaginary prophet, P. Magdalino, "Une prophétie inédite des environs de l'an 965 attribuée à Léon le Philosophe (MS Karakallou 14, f.253^r-254^r)", *Travaux et Mémoires* 14, 2002, p. 391-402. On Leo the Philosopher see *ODB*, II, p. 217 (by P. Lemerle). See also most recent studies: *The Oracles of the most Wise Emperor Leo and the Tale of the True Emperor*, ed. by W. G. Brokaar et al., Amsterdam, 2002; J. Vereecken, L. Hadermann-Misguich, *Les oracles de Léon le Sage illustrés par Georges Klontzas. La version Barozzi dans le codex Bute*, Venice, 2000; N. Kastrinakes, *Εικονογραφημένοι χρησμοί του Λέωντος του Σοφού. Από τη βυζαντινή εποχή στην πρώτη έτυπη έδοση (1596)*, 2 vols., Rethymno, 2018 (unpublished doctoral dissertation).

⁴⁸ *Liudprandi Cremonensis opera omnia*, ed. by P. Chiesa, Turnhout, 1998, p. 204-205; On Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius see P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, 1985; P. Magdalino, "Prophecies on the Fall of Constantinople", in A. Laiou (ed.), *URBS CAPTA. The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences*, Paris, 2005, p. 41-53; idem, "Occult Science and Imperial Power in Byzantine History and Historiography (9th-12th Centuries)", in P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds.), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, Geneva, 2006, p. 119-162.

⁴⁹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 114, fig. 173.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114, fig. 174 and 175. Michael VIII's son Theodore was never an emperor. On Michael VIII Palaiologos see M. Николић and Б. Павловић, "Слика Михаила VIII у делима историчара епохе

Klontzas dedicated one miniature to yet another Emperor of Constantinople (βασιλεὺς τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως), probably John V Palaiologos (1341–1391), who sends a mission to Murad I asking for help, as it is stated in the inscription above it. In the next miniature we see 15 000 soldiers sent by the Ottoman ruler.⁵¹ It is largely accepted in the modern historiography that Byzantium became the vassal of the Ottomans as a consequence of the Battle of Maritsa in 1371. It was the Ottoman triumph over the Serbian army led by King Vukašin and despotēs Jovan Uglješa Mrnjavčević.⁵² But the only source suggesting that this vassalage was actually an alliance between John V Palaiologos and Murad I is the narrative of Laonikos Chalkokondyles.⁵³ This so-called historian of the “Fall” of the Byzantine Empire into the hands of the Ottomans was the author who was writing for an elite circle of Byzantine émigrés and other intellectuals familiar with classical Greek in the West.⁵⁴ Chalkokondyles’ narrative was both very popular (there are at least 30 manuscripts of the work from the 15th and 16th centuries) and influential among various historians writing both in Greek and Latin (such as Theodore Spandounes, Pseudo-Phrantzes, Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans and Francesco Sansovino).⁵⁵ It is indicative that Klontzas, like Chalkokondyles, refers to Murad I as βασιλεὺς, as he does for all the Ottoman rulers, which was, as is familiar, a Byzantine imperial title.⁵⁶ It is possible, therefore, that Klontzas was familiar with the historical work of Chalkokondyles or with one of its derivative narratives. The following miniature erroneously shows that Murad I also conquered Achaia in the Peloponnese.⁵⁷ But Klontzas is historically precise when he states that Murad I took Adrianople.⁵⁸

The next Byzantine Emperor depicted in Micrography was Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425). The miniature shows him on the horse, traveling to the

Палеолога”, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 54, 2017, p. 143-181.

⁵¹ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 106, fig. 135 and 136.

⁵² On the Maritsa battle and the vassal status of Byzantium see Г. Острогорски, “Византија, вазална држава Турског Царства”, in *Сабрана дела III*, Belgrade, 1970, p. 377.389; J. Stanojevich Allen in *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1298-1299.

⁵³ *Chalc.* I, p. 34.

⁵⁴ On Chalkokondyles’ audience see A. Akışık-Karakullukçu, “A question of audience: Laonikos Chalkokondyles’ Hellenism”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 112/1, 2019, p. 1-30; M. Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune in Oikoumene. Byzantine Historiography on the Fall of Constantinople in 1453”, *Balkanica* 47, 2016, p. 119-133.

⁵⁵ М. Николић, “Псеудо-Сфранцис о српским земљама”, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 43, 2006, p. 127-139.

⁵⁶ H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, I, München, 1978, p. 486; J. Harris, “Laonikos Chalkokondyles and the Rise of the Ottoman Turks”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 27, 2003, p. 158.

⁵⁷ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 106, fig. 138.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106, fig. 139.

West in order to find help for his Empire, while Bayezid I was laying siege of Constantinople.⁵⁹ The siege of Constantinople by Yildirim is also presented in another miniature with the inscription “The second siege of Polis (=Constantinople)”.⁶⁰ As is well known, Yildirim’s siege of the Byzantine capital lasted from 1394 to 1402. The sources, however, testify that it became especially hard after the Ottoman triumph at the Battle of Nikopolis in 1396.⁶¹ Perhaps this is what our artist tried to present, erroneously portraying two sieges of Constantinople. The Ottomans finally ended the siege of the Byzantine capital and set off for Asia Minor, where the famous battle of Angora took place in 1402.⁶²

Showing an impressive historical accuracy, Klontzas dedicated several miniatures which narrate in detail about the events connected to the famous defeat of the Christians at the battle of Varna in 1444 by Murad II. Having first presented the defeat of the Ottomans in 1443 during the so-called Long War (1443–1444), also mentioning the fall of Serbia in 1439, Klontzas inserts in the narrative a miniature depicting the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1425–1448), Pope Eugenius IV, Doge Francesco Foscari and Philip the Good, the Duke of Burgundy.⁶³ Then the artist illustrates the Varna battle itself, which was followed by the Ottoman conquest of the Peloponnese and the siege of the city of Corinth, as a direct consequence of the failure of the Varna crusade.⁶⁴ In the narrative which follows, Klontzas depicted the siege of Constantinople by Murad II in 1422, which he correctly placed during the reign of Manuel II Palaiologos.⁶⁵ Namely, in the left upper corner of the miniature depicting the siege, we see the image of this Emperor and his name written in the inscription above. The following miniature shows Murad II ending the siege, having achieved nothing.⁶⁶

Before introducing the narrative of the events prior to and after 1453, Klontzas presented the famous vision of the Holy Cross by Constantine the Great before his clash with Maxentius in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 on the river Tiber.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108, fig. 146.

⁶⁰ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλώντζας*, p. 108, fig. 148. Klontzas, however, once again later depicts Bayezid’s siege of the Byzantine capital, *ibid.*, p.121, fig. 208.

⁶¹ For the battle of Nikopolis see A. M. Talbot in *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1486. On Bayezid’s siege of Constantinople see N. Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins. Politics and Society in the Late Empire*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 149-183.

⁶² A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλώντζας*, p. 108-109, fig. 147, 149, 150. On Angora battle see M. Николић, *Византијски писци о Србији (1402–1439)*, Belgrade, 2010, p. 37-46.

⁶³ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλώντζας*, p. 111-112, fig. 159-165.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112, fig. 166-167. On Varna Crusade see *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45*, ed. by C. Imber, Aldershot, 2006.

⁶⁵ On Murad’s II siege of Constantinople see И. Ђурић, *Сумрак Византије. Време Јована VIII Палеолога, 1392–1448*, Belgrade, 1984, p. 236-239.

⁶⁶ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλώντζας*, p. 113, fig. 169-170.

Once again, by mistake or consciously pointing to the importance of this river in the historic moment of its own time, Klontzas erroneously designates it as the Danube.⁶⁷

Finally, George Klontzas ends the presentation of the Byzantine history in a somewhat peculiar way. Before the miniature which depicts the siege and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, with the inscription “*Ἀσκειμος ἢ ἐκδίκησις ἄστη*”,⁶⁸ the artist devoted several miniatures to the strange coincidence of the names of the first and the last Byzantine Emperors and their mothers. In one of them, on the left, he depicts Constantine the Great and his mother Helena, sitting on the throne, with a large Cross between them. On the right, Constantine XI Palaiologos and his mother Helena are presented. On the left, we read the inscription “† The Cross of Christ, Constantine–Helena”, and on the right, only “†Constantine–Helena”. Above and below them stands Constantinople, and underneath, the inscription: “† In the beginning Constantine and his mother Helena. After the Fall Constantine and Helena”. Constantine the Great and his mother Helena are featured in formal imperial attire and imperial crowns. While Constantine the Great and his mother hold the sceptre standing upright, Constantine Palaiologos and his mother Helena Dragaš point their sceptre downwards, which apparently symbolizes the fall of Constantinople and the Empire.⁶⁹ However, what is particularly striking is the fact that one of the miniatures depicts the death of Helena Dragaš. Specifically, her body is laid down in a vaulted chamber, in a palace or a church, it cannot be said. To her left, we see two clergymen who perform the service, one of them holding a candle. Above their heads is an angel flying and carrying the soul of the deceased. Above that stands the inscription “†The Death of the Empress Helena of the Last Constantine. On the next miniature, at the top, there is the inscription: “†And the Empress of the Last Constantine left her life before the conquest of Constantinople”. Below there is another inscription: “†Her son Emperor Constantine was killed during the conquest of Constantinople”.⁷⁰ Then Klontzas continues his presentation of the Byzantine history with a miniature of the first and the last Patriarch of Constantinople who bore the same name – Metrophanes. Explaining it, Klontzas depicts Patriarch Gregory Mamas, who enters Rome where he later dies, riding a horse.⁷¹ Interesting enough, this is exactly how the end of the Byzantine history was seen by George Scholarios. In 1472 he composed a text of chronologically structured notes which, as a whole, aim to show that everything that happened to the Byzantine capital in 1453 was God’s Will. Scholarios begins this

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115, fig. 179. See also E. Drakopoulou, “*In hoc signo vinces*”, p. 395-397.

⁶⁸ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 117, fig. 191.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115, fig. 180, 218. On the miniature of Constantinople and the Last Emperor see also E. Drakopoulou, “Représentations de Constantinople après la Chute: Prolongements idéologiques”, *The Historical Review* 1, 2004, p. 95-96.

⁷⁰ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 116, fig. 182, 183, 218.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116, fig. 184-185.

narrative by asserting that the Christian Empire of Rome began with the Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena, and ended with the Emperor Constantine, son of Helena, who died some time before the fall of Constantinople. Scholarios then stresses that the first Patriarch of Constantinople in the time of Constantine the Great was Metrophanes, just as was the last one, who died in Constantinople. Scholarios apparently did not acknowledge Gregory III Mamas as patriarch, stressing that he went (ἀπῆλθεν) to Rome, where he later died.⁷² The assumption that Klontzas was acquainted with the writings of the first Patriarch of Constantinople under the Ottomans is grounded on the aforementioned coincidence, but also on the fact that Scholarios was the author of one of the five surviving monodies written on the occasion of Helena Dragaš's death.⁷³

Perhaps these miniatures could also be explained as an adoption of a political-ideological concept and perception of the Byzantine history formulated by Scholarios in his writings relating to the Fall of 1453. He preached to the Greeks of Constantinople in 1454 that the Byzantines themselves, i.e. their sins, were responsible for the misfortune that struck them. Therefore, the faithful should turn to God and accept their punishment – the deprivation of their heritage here on Earth, in order not to cause any harm to what is to come, because their fatherland should now be eternal, and that is, indeed, worthy of all the sufferings.⁷⁴ It seems that even after his death, Scholarios' teachings continued his mission of shaping and preserving the Greek national ethos during the Turkokratia.

The last events of the Byzantine history presented in George Klontzas' Micrography are those connected with the conquest of the remaining Byzantine territories by Mehmed II. Namely, one miniature depicts the Ottoman conquest of Morea, Euboea, Mytilene and Leros.⁷⁵ The rest of the Micrography illustrates the artist's contemporary events – the conflicts between the Ottomans and the Western powers, primarily Venice, with, of course, an emphasis on the history of his native Crete.⁷⁶ It closes with miniatures which depict the narrative of the Immortal Emperor,

⁷² *Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios, IV*, ed. by L. Petit, H. A. Sideridès, M. Jugie, Paris, 1935, p. 504, 511.

⁷³ On Helena Dragaš Palaiologina see M. Николић, *Јелена Драгаши Палеологина, последња царица Ромеја*, Belgrade, 2018, especially p. 174-221. It is, however, important to stress that the aforementioned narrative has nothing to do with so-called Oracular Interpretation attributed to Gennadios Scholarios, a work of anonymous author, written in 1463–1464, PG, vol. 160, col. 767-774; G. J. G. Turner, "Oracular Interpretation attributed to Gennadios Scholarios", *Ελληνικά* 21, 1968, p. 40-47. The only similarity between this anonymous text and Klontzas' Micrography is that both mention the Ferrara-Florence Council as the Eighth Ecumenical Council, see note 43.

⁷⁴ *Scholarios, Œuvres complètes, IV*, p. 211-231, 352-355; M.-H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400-vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparation de l'empire byzantine*, Paris, 2008, p. 124-133.

⁷⁵ A. Paliouras, *Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, p. 118, fig. 194.

⁷⁶ On Klontzas' miniatures oracles relating to Crete see V. Laourdas, "Κρητικά Παλαιογραφικά 10. Ο

a Greek one, who will destroy the Ishmaelites and then travel to Jerusalem where he shall place his crown on the top of the Holy Cross and hand over his Empire to God, the Father.⁷⁷

We know, as it was stressed at the beginning, that the only bond between the Greeks in Constantinople and those under the Venetian rule after 1453 was primarily an artistic one. However, it seems that through this connection, an intellectual was nurtured as well, basically through the writings of the most educated Greeks who were contemporaries of the Fall. And that is precisely the basis for the assumption that there existed another, as it seems the most important, strong ideological link, which was to pass on the memory of the Greek history, to the future generations of Greeks, so they can learn from it and keep the memory of their past preserved. Perceived in this way, it appears that the Micrography of George Klontzas represents one beautiful example of these bonds.

Μαρκιανός κώδιξ τοῦ Γεωργίου Κλόντζα καὶ οἱ περὶ Κρήτης χρησιμοί”, *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 5, 1951, p. 231-245.

⁷⁷ On the narrative of the Immortal Emperor, apart from classical study of D. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor, The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*, Cambridge, 1992, see also Ch. Bonura, “When did the Legend of the Last Emperor originate? A new Look at the Textual Relationship between the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius and the Tiburtine Sibyl”, *Viator* 47, no. 3, 2016, p. 47-100; A. Kraft, “The Last Roman Emperor *Τοπος* in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition”, *Byzantion* 82, 2012, p. 213-257.