Niketas Choniates

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Niketas or **Nicetas Choniates** (Νικήτας Χωνιάτης, ca. 1155 to 1215 or 1216), sometimes called **Acominatus**, was a Byzantine Greek historian like his brother Michael, whom he accompanied from their birthplace Chonae to Constantinople.

Niketas Choniates, from a medieval manuscript.

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Life

Niketas Acominatus was born to wealthy parents sometime around or after 1150 in the city of Chonae in the Byzantine province of Phrygia. Niketas, the Bishop of Chonae, baptized and named the infant. Later he was called "Choniates" after his birthplace. When he was nine, his father dispatched him with his brother Michael to Constantinople to receive an education. Niketas' older brother greatly influenced him during the early stages of his life.

He initially took up politics as a career and held several appointments under the Angelus emperors (amongst them that of Grand Logothete or chancellor) and was governor of the *theme* of Philippopolis at a critical period. After the capture of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, he fled to Nicaea, where he settled at the court of the Nicaean emperor Theodoras Lascaris, and devoted himself to literature. He died c. 1215-16. His chief work is his *History*, in twenty-one books, of the period from 1118 to 1207.

In spite of its florid and rhetorical style, it is of considerable value as a record (on the whole impartial) of events of which he was either an eyewitness or had heard of first hand (though he should be balanced with the other Greek historian for this time, John Kinnamos). Its most interesting portion is the description of the capture of Constantinople, which should be read with Geoffroi de Villehardouin's and Paolo Rannusio's works on the same subject. The little treatise *On the Statues destroyed by the Latins* (perhaps altered by a later writer) is of special interest to the archaeologist. His dogmatic work (*Thesaurus Orthodoxae Fidei*), although it is extant in a complete form in manuscripts, has only been published in part. It is one of the chief authorities for the heresies and heretical writers of the 12th century.

Nicetas in fiction

Umberto Eco's novel *Baudolino* (Milan: Bompiani, 2000. English translation by William Weaver, New York: Harcourt 2002, ISBN 0-15-100690-3) is set partly at Constantinople during the Crusader conquest. The imaginary hero, Baudolino, saves Niketas during the sacking of Constantinople, and then proceeds to confide his life story to him.

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- *This article incorporates text from the* Encyclopædia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, a publication now in the public domain.*
- *History of Niketas Choniates*, Hieronymus Wolf, 1557

External links

- Greek Opera Omnia by Migne Patrologia Graeca with analytical indexes (http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/30_20_1150-1217-_Nicetas_Acominatus_(Choniatis).html)
- Original Greek text of Choniates' History (http://www.phys.uoa.gr/~nektar/history/tributes/byzantine_historians/nicetas_choniates_historia.htm)

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