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Anna Komnene: A Woman of Power Without a Crown

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¹ Barrett, Tracy. *Anna of Byzantium*. (New York: Delacorte, 1999), cover.

Anna Komnene: A Woman of Power without a Crown

“Time...sweeps up and carries away with it everything that has seen the light of day and plunges it into utter darkness...”² Anna Komnene’s opening statement to her book, *The Alexiad*, paints a very vivid picture for her readers. This motivation inspired Anna to write *The Alexiad*, a historical narrative about her father and her life growing up in Constantinople. Although it was written later in life, it reflects her earlier years filled with political turmoil, foreign invasions and increasing conflicts with Western Europe. She compliments her father’s accomplishments and adds in her own thoughts which not only reflect her intelligence but also her increasing power during her father’s reign as the first born child. Surrounded by influential and powerful women such as Maria of Alania, her grandmother, Anna Dalassene and her mother, Irene Doukaina, it is no surprise that Anna grew up not only as a strong and independent woman but as an influential player in Byzantine politics regardless of her gender. She set her goal high: to rule Byzantium with her husband, Nicephoros Bryennios. But like Anna stated in her book, nothing lasts forever and it did not for her and her hopes for the Byzantine throne. Even though she failed politically, she still remains one of the most influential females during the 12th century especially within the Byzantine Empire. Anna Komnene is an influential person in the historical narrative because not only did she break gender traditions with her influence and power in politics but also wrote one of the most influential books about the First Crusade through a Byzantine perspective.

The Byzantine world around the time of Anna Komnene was fraught with political turmoil, foreign invasions and a complicated relationship with Western Europe. Before she was born and even while she was growing up, her father, Emperor Alexios I, had a difficult time

² Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*. (New York: Penguin, 2009), 3.

trying to hold onto an empire, which was not only politically and economically fragmented on the inside but also had to deal with the threat of foreign invasions and increasing pressure from Western Europe. Anna Komnene noted in her historical narrative, *The Alexiad*, that even though she was not a witness to many of her father's struggles and battles, she recognizes the importance of writing down all of these events in order to state her father's credibility as emperor as well as her own position within the Byzantine court both politically and as an author.³ Anna begins her narrative by describing Alexios' quest for the throne. Later, she notes the connection between her father's quest and her own quest to get something i.e. the throne which they both claim is rightfully theirs.⁴ The only difference between the two is that Alexios succeeded while Anna failed.

First of all, Alexios was not heir to the Byzantine throne. He along with his mother, relatives and Empress Maria of Alania conspired against the current emperor, Nikephoros III.⁵ Even though Maria was Nikephoros' wife, he intended to leave the throne to a close relative rather than their son, Constantine Doukas.⁶ Therefore, Maria gave her support to the coup and met with the Komnene brothers as well as adopted Alexios making him and her son adoptive brothers and sealing the alliance between them.

While the Komnene brothers escaped the city and the notice of the emperor to get support for the coup, their mother, Anna Dalassene, bought them time to escape, raise an army and lure the emperor into a false sense of security that there really was not a potential coup. She did this by fleeing to Hagias Sophia and creating a scene in which she claimed not only that the emperor

³ Hill, Barbara. *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025-1204: power, patronage and ideology*. (New York: Pearson Education:1999), 70-71.

⁴ Browning, Robert. *The Byzantine Empire*. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1992), 204.

⁵ Venning, Timothy, *A Chronology of the Byzantine Empire*. (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 412.

⁶ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 413.

was going to kill her and her family but also she needed to pray to the Virgin Mary.⁷ In order to be sure of her safety, she requested a sign of protection from him so that they could leave the church unharmed. At first, she was not allowed to enter the sanctuary and was stopped by the envoys and she became angry. "It's absurd that when I have reached its gates I should be prevented from going in and praying to Our Lady, the Immaculate Mother of God, to intercede for me with God and the emperor's soul"⁸. The emperor sent embassies to her but it was not good enough and it was not until the emperor gave her the cross of protection that she was forced to leave. "Unless my hands are cut off, I will not leave this holy place except on one condition: that I receive the emperor's cross as guarantee of safety"⁹. Soon she was given the sign of protection by the emperor and left Hagias Sophia. However, by the time that this was all settled, both of her sons, Alexios and Isaac, were able to escape the city, raise an army and come back and overthrow the emperor on April 1st 1081.¹⁰ Alexios then became emperor and in order to preserve the political alliances set up before the coup, he not only named Maria's son, his adopted brother, co-emperor, but also married Irene Doukas, the granddaughter of John Doukas which earned him political support from one of the most powerful elite families in Byzantium.¹¹ He also later betrothed Constantine to his first born daughter, Anna Komnene and planned to have them be heirs to the Byzantine throne.

Another threat to Byzantium and Alexios was the numerous foreign invasions and threats that occurred all over the empire, most notably the Normans, the Venetians and later the Seljuk Turks. The Normans posed a huge threat to the Byzantines not only because they were known for their warrior strength and heritage but also because of their ruthless leaders such as by Robert

⁷ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 412-413.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁰ Dalven, Rae. *Anna Comnena*. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 56-57.

¹¹ Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. *Anna Komnene and Her Times*. (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 10-11.

Guiscard and his son, Bohemund. Both of them fought considerably against Alexios and took various holdings of the Byzantine Empire such as Dyrrhachium and Corfu while also laying siege to Larissa in Thessaly.¹² Throughout all these wars, Alexios not only had a difficult time raising armies to fight these invaders but also suffering defeats and lack of support not only from the empire but also from the rest of Europe. As the Normans came down the Italian peninsula to Sicily, which was a Byzantine holding, it seemed inevitable that the Byzantines would have to fight them. Alexios, who was not prepared at all for war against them tried to offer a treaty or peace settlement between himself and Robert. Anna Komnene, in *The Alexiad*, tells about how peace was supposed to be reached but it was unattainable and unrealistic for the Byzantines. “He was demanding quite impossible terms, which were also harmful to the empire...”¹³ However, Anna continues to discern the real meaning behind the Normans call for peace. In her opinion, it was a way for the Normans to fight the Byzantines like they wanted while blaming the start of the war on the Byzantine Emperor.¹⁴ Therefore, the Byzantines went to war and Alexios in the beginning suffered many defeats as he lost territory to the Normans. Eventually, the tides turned and Alexios was not only able to defeat the Normans in Sicily but bribed the German King, Henry IV, with 360,000 gold pieces and asked him to attack Northern Italy which forced the Normans to retreat to protect their homeland.¹⁵ Even though Henry’s alliance helped with the foreign invasions, it represented the last time that the Byzantines had any significant control over the Italian peninsula. The Norman threat eventually ended for a while with the death of Robert Guiscard and the empire was able to recover their territories in Thrace and Corfu.

¹² Angold, Michael. *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204 : a Political History*. (London: Longman: 1997), 12.

¹³ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 18.

¹⁴ Browning, Robert. *The Byzantine Empire*, 159.

¹⁵ Dalven, Rae. *Anna Comnena*, 125.

The Venetians were also a threat to the Byzantines and battled with them for dominance in trade in the Mediterranean. Although the Venetians did not attack the Byzantines outright like the Normans did, they made the Byzantine Empire give them not only some control of the trade routes of the Mediterranean but also tax-free concessions to trade in major Byzantine ports.¹⁶ This was in exchange for the Venetians help against Guiscard and the Normans. According to Anna, Alexios asked the Venetians to: “[first] protect the town and secondly to engage in sustained combat with Robert’s navy”¹⁷ But the agreement was terminated in late February 1082 when a Venetian opened the gates to the city of Dyrrhachium to Guiscard, therefore directly causing a siege of the city and defeat of the Byzantines there.¹⁸ It is important to note however that the trade routes and control that the Byzantines gave to the Venetians before they terminated the agreement remained intact even after this betrayal. This was one of the turning points of the Byzantine Empire that would have not only drastic economic affects but also political ones. This is especially true in the beginning of the 13th century when the Venetians would sack the Constantinople and create a new government in the city.¹⁹

A far more dangerous threat to the empire lay in the East with the rise of the Seljuk Turks who had been gaining substantial territory and influence in the Middle East. By the beginning of Alexios’ reign, they had pushed into Asia Minor and were threatening Byzantine settlements along the coast. This not only threatened the security of the empire but also the economic system which was based on controlling the trade through the Mediterranean. They now pushed the boundaries of the empire and were threatening to invade. In a plea to save the empire, Alexios appealed to the Pope, Urban II for help in warding off the Turks. Alexios asked for money and

¹⁶ Angold, Michael. *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204 : a Political History*, 168-169.

¹⁷ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 111.

¹⁸ Angold, Michael. *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204 : a Political History*, 169-170.

¹⁹ Shepard, Jonathan. *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire. 500-1492*. (Cambridge UK: Cambridge, 2008), 678-679.

some mercenaries to fight the Turks but what he got instead was the beginning of a mass crusade not to just defeat the Turks but to take back the Holy Land, Jerusalem.²⁰ Nothing like it had ever been seen in neither Europe nor Byzantium. It was called the First Crusade and created a new step for Christian faith and piety in Western Europe. Scores of crusaders from Europe claimed to see the light of Christ and flooded into the Byzantine Empire on their way to the Holy Land. The majority of them reached Constantinople around the year 1096. There they lingered at the capital where Anna Komnene, a mere 14, recalls watching them outside the city gates.

...Officers appointed for this particular task were ordered to provide victuals on the journey—the pilgrims must have no excuse for complaint for any reason whatever.

Meanwhile they were eagerly pressing on the capital. One might have compared them in number to the stars of heaven or the grains of sand poured out over the shore; as they hurried towards Constantinople...²¹

Here, readers of *The Alexiad* begin to understand Anna's political view of foreigners mingled with her own bias against their language and even war machines as she watches them come to the capital like stray puppies. "The words fail me, partly though me inability to make the barbaric sounds...in any case, why should I try to list the names of so enormous a multitude, when even their contemporaries became indifferent at the sight of them?"²² It is at this moment that part of Anna's political identity is formed as she continues later in life to lobby against foreign influence especially that of Western Europe. It also demonstrates her bias as a writer not only because her description of the languages of the Western Europeans as barbaric but her

²⁰ Shepard, Jonathan. *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*. 500-1492, 625.

²¹ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 290.

²² *Ibid.*, 290.

immediate rejection of anything from Western Europe. These biases color her telling of the events as well as her personal reactions to them.²³

Alexios was quick to push out these unwanted groups of crusaders away from his capital city and empire to various regions in the Middle East such as Asia Minor or even directing them to the Holy Land. Along the way, Alexios extracted oaths of allegiance as well as the promise of giving any territory captured to the Byzantine Empire, in exchange, Alexios provided food and supplies to the Crusaders.²⁴ This agreement, however, did not last very long especially when the Crusaders captured Antioch from the Byzantines and in 1099 Jerusalem from the Muslims in which they governed themselves ignoring the agreement that the territory should be brought back to the Byzantine Empire. It was under these conditions that the First Crusade officially ended however the tension between the Byzantine Empire and Western Europe increased. The Byzantines began to distrust their fellow Christians after seeing their behavior not only against their Christian brethren i.e. the Byzantines but also towards each other (crusaders versus crusaders).

Overall, Anna's explanation of her father's deeds demonstrates her own political achievements which would occur later. She shows that her father and the women surrounding him directly impacted her to become a politically savvy and influential force within the Byzantine Court as she was growing up. It was a major part of her historical narrative and it not only gave her a sense of credibility as an author but also set the scene for her growing up politically literate and involved in the Byzantine Empire. It also demonstrated the power that women had in political schemes. One example is from Anna's grandmother, Anna Dalassene,

²³ Connor, Carolyn. *Women of Byzantium*. (New Haven: Yale University, 2004), 249.

²⁴ Dalven, Rae. *Anna Comnena*, 108-109.

who not only played an important part with the planning of the coup but also used her political influence to manipulate the emperor and secure her son, Alexios, on the Byzantine Throne.²⁵

Moving forward to the biography of Anna Komnene, she was born on December 2nd, 1083 in Constantinople, the first of what would be nine children.²⁶ Her siblings included from oldest to youngest: Maria Komnene, John II Komnenos, Andronikos Komnenos, Isaac Komnenos, Eudokia Komnene, Theodora Komnene, Manuel Komnenos and Zoe Komnene.²⁷ She was born in the purple chamber of the palace, the porphyrogenita, a symbol of imperial status, which was often sought after by foreign monarchs through their marriages to Byzantine princesses. Anna is very proud of her status, which causes her to remark about it in *The Alexiad* stating that she was “born and bred in purple”²⁸. She continues to tell her story and demonstrates her feminist ideas by mentioning the dedication of her mother, Irene, the strength of the women surrounding her as she grows up and the affection both her parents had for her.

On several occasion I have heard my mother tell how, two days before the emperor’s return to the palace, she was seized with the pains of childbirth and making the sign of the cross over her womb, said, ‘Wait a while, little one, till your father’s arrival’...her own command was obeyed—which very clearly signified even in her womb the love that I was destined to have for my parents in the future...²⁹

Anna makes it very clear of her affection for both her parents as well as her respect for them and their wishes. Even as she grew up, she was obedient and patient and endured what she calls “numerous struggles and labors” on their behalf not to mention the dangers as well.³⁰ Anna

²⁵ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 127-128.

²⁶ Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, 3.

²⁷ Dalven, Rae. *Anna Comnena*, 67-69.

²⁸ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

seems proud not only of her affection for her parents but also of her royal status. This in turn becomes a jumping off point in which she can begin to develop some ethos within her historical narrative. These personal stories about her life and her parents, not to mention being a direct descendent of her subjects, Alexios I and Irene, allows her the type of credibility that is not often seen in earlier literature of this period.

Anna Komnene grew up comfortably surrounded by wealth, status and a strong and supporting family. She was betrothed early to Constantine Doukas, the son of Maria of Alania, and was brought up by her future mother-in-law, which was a common custom within the Byzantine Empire.³¹ It was here that Anna was not only able to develop a sense of affection for Constantine but also was influenced by one of the most powerful woman within the Byzantine Empire, Maria of Alania. Anna mentions in *The Alexiad*, her affection for Constantine as a young child and how innocent and undefiled he was. “Constantine was Nature’s handiwork, a triumph, as it were, of God’s handiwork...when I remember this man after so many years, I am overcome by tears”³². It seems that she was infatuated with his beauty and innocence not unlike some of the old Greek myths but it is not clear whether or not she really loved it beyond his physical appearance. By the mid-1090s, however, the engagement between the two of them was dissolved and Constantine died shortly after.³³ During her engagement with Constantine, Anna really had a good relationship with her fiancée’s mother, Maria. Anna mentions in her narrative that: “she was fond of me and shared all her secrets with me...it was her love for her child that kept her then for a little while in the palace”³⁴ She describes Maria not only as a guardian but also as her best friend, someone who told secrets to her and influenced her opinion and identity

³¹ Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*. (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 232.

³² Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 35.

³³ Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 233.

³⁴ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 80-81.

as Maria took care of her while she was growing up. This set the perfect conditions for Anna's strong will as a female. Seeing Maria, a woman who has survived the political coup of the Byzantine court while still looking after her child, demonstrated to Anna that females are not only about the maternal aspects but also about getting involved in other matters. In other words, Maria taught Anna a balance of two worlds; a man's world (political) and a woman's world (maternal).

Education was perhaps one of the most important or in fact, the most important thing to Anna and it represented a major stepping-stone for her historical narrative, *The Alexiad*, which she would write later on in her life. In the beginning of *The Alexiad*, Anna puts her educational background on display by claiming her fluency a multitude of different disciplines:

I, Anna, daughter of Emperor Alexios...not without some acquaintance with literature-having devoted the most earnest study to the Greek language...being not unpractised in rhetoric and having read thoroughly the works of Aristotle and the dialogues of Plato, and having fortified by mind with the *tetrakus* of sciences...

She uses this as a way to declare respect and gratefulness to her parents who allowed her such an education but also as a definition of who she is. Many contemporaries of Anna claimed that her education was a defining aspect in her identity. According to medieval scholar, Niketas Choniates, Anna "was ardently devoted to philosophy, the queen of all sciences, and was educated in every field"³⁵. This became a defining characteristic within her historical narrative as much of the text is based on Homer's epic poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey.³⁶ As Anna gets older, she uses her education as a means of spreading her influence politically in the affairs of the Byzantine Empire and its dealings.

³⁵ Niketas Choniates. *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*. (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 5-6.

³⁶ Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, 67-68.

At the age of 14, Anna married Nicephoros Bryennios, the son of an influential nobleman. Anna would later claim, in her historical narrative, that the marriage was for political reasons only and not for love, however she grew to respect and like Nicephoros.³⁷ Her statement about the political union is reiterated by the fact that her husband and her children are hardly mentioned in the text, *The Alexiad*.³⁸ It seems almost odd that a semi-autobiographical work would be missing a major aspect of her life. Perhaps she considered it unimportant to mention it or that because she deemed the marriage a political union rather than one of love she does not feel like it fits in with the rest of her narrative. In other words, her narrative deals with her identity as a person. Her feelings, emotions and thoughts were poured into this narrative and it seems that a political union would be incompatible to that particular thematic aspect of her narrative.

In any case, Nicephoros belonged to an important elite Byzantine family and he grew up to be renowned statesmen, general and historian.³⁹ He was the one who originally started writing about what was happening in Byzantium and it was from him that Anna got the idea to write *The Alexiad*.⁴⁰ Even though Nicephoros never finished his work and Anna did, both of their narratives represent the mindset and feelings of the Byzantine elite during the late 11th and early 12th century. Though their union was political, it was successful for forty years and created four children: Alexios Komnenos, John Doukas, Irene Doukaina, and Maria Bryennaina Komnene.⁴¹

As the first born, Anna was assumed as the heir apparent to the Byzantine throne unless a son was born after. Therefore, Anna grew up learning about the responsibility that she might have as empress along with her finance at that time, Constantine. Anna then began to feel like

³⁷ Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 234.

³⁸ Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, 97-98.

³⁹ Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, 233-234.

⁴⁰ Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, 97.

⁴¹ Bryennios, Nicephoros. *Materials for a History Corpus Scriptorum*. (*Historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn: 1836), 42.

she was entitled to the throne by being the first born regardless of her brother John who was born four years after her.⁴² As Alexios' health began to decline, Anna and her younger brother, John, had a strained relationship as they both wanted the Byzantine throne. According to Niketas Choniates, Alexios delegated his son, John, as his heir whereas Irene "threw her full influence on the side of [Anna]" and tried to convince Alexios to name Anna and her husband, Nicephoros Bryennios, as the heirs to the throne.⁴³ Alexios, who struggled with rheumatism, got to the point where he could not manage the empire and therefore delegated the responsibilities to his wife who in turn directed all affairs to Anna's husband instead of John.⁴⁴ However, after Alexios died, John was still proclaimed emperor. Anna felt like she was cheated out of the throne and soon after began trying to gather military forces to depose John. Her mother helped her with her plans but her husband would not. Nicephoros liked John and felt that he had no right to dispose of the true heir and put himself on the throne.⁴⁵ Anna later attributed his refusal to help as cowardice and claimed: "that nature had mistaken the two sexes and had endowed Bryennios [Bryennios] with the soul of a woman"⁴⁶ Due to her husband's refusal to help, Anna did not succeed with her plans to depose John and have her and her husband rule the Byzantine Empire. Even though Anna ultimately did not acquire the throne, she still strongly participated and influenced politics in the Byzantine world.

After her husband died in the year 1137, Anna was banished to a monastery founded by her mother, Irene, in Constantinople where she spent the rest of her life.⁴⁷ While exiled there,

Anna wrote one of the most influential and interesting books in the history, *The Alexiad*, a

⁴² Browning, Robert. *The Byzantine Empire*, 165.

⁴³ Niketas Choniates. *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, 5-6.

⁴⁴ Shepard, Jonathan. *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire 500-1492*, 629-630.

⁴⁵ Bryennios, Nicephoras. *Materials for a History Corpus Scriptorum*, 45.

⁴⁶ Susan C. Jarratt and Ellen Quandahl, *To recall him...will be a subject of lamentation: Anna Commene as a rhetorical historiographer*. (*A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 2000), 305-308.

⁴⁷ Harvey, Alan. *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire, 900-1200*. (Cambridge England: Cambridge, 1989), 50).

historical narrative on her father's reign, her early life and the most notably the Byzantine perspective of the First Crusade. This narrative not only gives the readers an idea of the various events which occurred during Alexios' and Anna's lifetime but also an insight into Anna's personality and identity as an author. It becomes clear quickly how proud Anna is of this narrative especially in the way she mirrored and mimics certain elements of Homer's epic poems: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁴⁸ Anna chooses to relate her father's reign in terms of complicated military history just like Homer's epic poems. An example of this can be seen in a passage where Anna talks about how Robert Guiscard, the Norman, has sided with the pretend Byzantine Emperor, Michael. Anna continues to compare him (Robert) with Patroclus from Homer's *Iliad*:

Having found Michael he had a Patroclus-like excuse and that spark of ambition, hitherto lying hidden beneath the ashes, blazed up into a mighty conflagration. In a terrifying fashion he armed himself to do battle with the Roman Empire⁴⁹

Compare it to the actual text of Homer's tale about Patroclus. Note the similar language and vocabulary in describing the battle scene. Anna is careful to mirror this warlike scene so that her readers will be able to understand the connection between Robert and Patroclus.

Patroclus whipped the terror in all their hearts
When he killed the chief who topped them all in battle
He rode them off the ships, he quenched the leaping fire,
Leaving Protesilaus' hulk half-burnt but upright still
And the Trojans scattered back with high, shrill cries⁵⁰

The main point between these two texts is that they both deal with the epic-ness of both battles: the Normans vs. the Byzantines and the Greeks vs. the Trojans. It then gives the readers a sense of the importance of the battle that Anna is writing about. Just like the Trojan War was epic so

⁴⁸ Connor, Carolyn. *Women of Byzantium*, 245.

⁴⁹ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 99.

⁵⁰ Connor, Carolyn. *Women of Byzantium*, 247.

shall the Byzantine-Norman Wars be. It reconnects back to Anna's first point at the beginning of *The Alexiad*, her goal, which is to make sure that her father's reign and his struggles are not forgotten but remain there forever. "I desire...to give an account of my father's deeds, which do not deserve to be consigned to silence nor to be swept away on the flood of Time..."⁵¹ Anna's ultimate goal for her father's deeds is what every character in Homer's epics wanted: eternal glory and everlasting fame.

Anna Komnene will remain an influential person in history, especially in the Byzantine Empire, based on her power in politics and her writings as an author. Even though she did not reach her ultimate goal of ruling the empire alongside her husband, she still demonstrated that she can be influential politically without holding an official position. Through her lessons with various influential women in Byzantium such as her mother and Maria, she was taught that it did not matter if she was a female, she could still enter the man's world.⁵² She immortalized her growth as well as her father's deeds in the historical narrative, *The Alexiad* and in some ways created a new version of Homer's style in relationship to his epic poems.⁵³ Overall, Anna Komnene was a strong person who was influential regardless of her gender during a time of political and foreign turmoil in the Byzantine Empire.

⁵¹ Komnene, Anna. *The Alexiad*, 3.

⁵² Hill, Barbara. *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025-1204: power, patronage and ideology*, 92-93.

⁵³ Dalven, Rae. *Anna Comnena*, 87-88.

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