

University of Canterbury

BLAST FROM BYZANTIUM: THE ALEXIAD
ON CRUSADER-BYZANTINE RELATIONS
DURING THE FIRST CRUSADE

Hist480
Honours Dissertation

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Abstract

In order to rest and regroup the pilgrim masses of the First Crusade collected in the city of Constantinople, modern day Istanbul. Thousands answered the call for help from the Byzantine Emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, far more than he anticipated. These crusaders were culturally different from the Byzantines, in need of provisions, fanatical followers of the Latin Church and well armed. This tense situation was made more troubled as Bohemond of Taranto, who had waged a war against Alexios a decade prior, arrived leading a major contingent of the expedition. The complexity of the relationship between these uneasy-allies has been the topic of much debate amongst historians. This historiographical discourse has been intensified by the dearth of written sources from Byzantine eyewitnesses, the only significant source being *The Alexiad*, by Anna Komnene. Until recently the majority of historians studying the period treated *The Alexiad* as an unreliable account. Considered by many to be littered with chronological errors and tainted by the musings of an exceptionally opinionated author. Viewpoints like these are rooted in a culture of distrust surrounding *The Alexiad* and perhaps a conscious movement by commentators to distance themselves from the pro-Hellenic writings of Steven Runciman. This dissertation is an effort to establish the cultural and political context within which Anna Komnene was writing and how her perspectives were entirely representative of contemporary Byzantine thought. As such, *The Alexiad* can be seen to be a highly valuable resource in studying the Crusade.

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Introduction

This dissertation is an examination of *The Alexiad*, with particular attention to what this source can offer in terms of an insight into Byzantine perspectives on the First Crusade (AD 1096-1099). *The Alexiad* is a biography of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, written by his daughter Anna Komnene while residing in a convent in the mid twelfth century, no later than 1153. As such the account of the Crusade is just one section of a multi-faceted work. Therefore a constant factor when studying the account of the Crusade is placing it within the context of the book's narrative. *The Alexiad* is significant as it is the only account of the Crusade by a Byzantine who was alive during the expedition. As Jonathan Harris states, there is a debate amongst historians over Byzantine-Crusader relations during the First Crusade because, as he succinctly puts it, 'there is no contemporary Byzantine source of information on these events'.¹ The only near contemporary Hellenic commentators are Anna Komnene and John Zonaras. The latter summarised the Crusade in one paragraph in his voluminous work *Epitome Historiarum*. In order to ascertain the Byzantine reaction to the First Crusade, study of *The Alexiad* is a necessity. However, such study has languished given many historians scepticism of *The Alexiad's* credibility. As such, there is a great need to add weight to the recently growing literature intent on rehabilitating Anna's work.

The doubts that many historians have of *The Alexiad's* credibility shall be addressed. An extensive culture of distrust has built up within the historiography surrounding Anna's account. In his seminal work *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon summarised *The Alexiad*, stating: 'an elaborate affection for rhetoric and science betrays on every page the vanity of a female author'.² Such disdain and misogynistic views have persisted since Gibbon. In the absence of comparable sources, *The Alexiad* has come under

¹ Jonathan Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 60.

² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Volume 5*, J. B. Bury (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 226.

scrutiny from historians like Jonathan Riley-Smith, with regard to its accuracy,³ or James Howard-Johnson, who was doubtful that a female author might be capable of writing the work.⁴ Any doubts as to Anna's capability of writing *The Alexiad* due to her gender are easily extinguished as they say more about the androcentric nature of the commentators. By close comparison to other contemporary Western sources on the First Crusade, *The Alexiad* is not especially dissimilar in either methodology or accuracy. However, one common factor that explains many historians' reluctance to rely on *The Alexiad* is that Anna was approximately thirteen when the crusaders arrived in Constantinople. This approach however, pre-supposes that Anna considered her work to be an 'eye-witness' account.

In order to approach this topic adequately this dissertation is divided into three distinct chapters. The first chapter will determine whether it is possible to interpret Anna's account as that of an eyewitness or credible historian. This key historiographical component will be accomplished by comparing *The Alexiad* to two highly respected eyewitness accounts of the First Crusade: the *Gesta Francorum* and the *Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres*. The same historians who distrust *The Alexiad*, like Thomas Asbridge, frequently use these two Western accounts without concern. However, *The Alexiad* shall be proven to be an equal source to these two, not least because of its phenomenal use of secondary sources. The second chapter will investigate the factors that influenced *The Alexiad's* presentation of the crusaders as people. Anna compiled her work roughly fifty years after the Crusade. Though prejudiced against the crusaders due to prior Byzantine-Norman conflicts and writing with the hindsight afforded by the eventual breakdown of Crusader-Byzantine relations, Anna's account echoes the likely contemporary Byzantine viewpoint. This is important to clarify

³ Jonathan Riley-Smith, 'Expedition Over Well-Trod Paths', *The Tablet*, 2012, in Peter Frankopan, 'Understanding the Greek Sources for the First Crusade', In Marcus Bull and Damien Kempf (ed.), *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2014, p. 41.

⁴ James Howard-Johnson, 'Anna Komnene and the Alexiad', in Margret Mullet and Dion Smythe (ed.), *Alexios I Komnenos: I Papers, Belfast Byzantine Text and Translations*, Holywood, Priory Press, 1996, pp. 260-302.

as Anna's opinionated comments have frequently attracted criticism. The final chapter will discuss how Anna presents the Byzantine view of the nature of the First Crusade and its objectives. Due to the aforementioned scarcity of written evidence from the period, *The Alexiad* will be examined for links with contemporary Byzantine cultural predilections. This will show *The Alexiad* to be highly opinionated but equally representative of contemporary Byzantine society and a highly valuable insight into Crusader-Byzantine relations.

Chapter 1

Historiography & Anna Komnene.

It is possible to treat Anna Komnene as a credible historian when compared to her contemporaries. With regard to the First Crusade, however, *The Alexiad* cannot be considered an eyewitness account. At the time of the crusaders' arrival in Constantinople Anna was thirteen. She was certainly old enough to remember a hundred thousand people descending on the city. However, she probably began writing *The Alexiad* in her sixties, so her personal testimony would be of questionable accuracy. Anna was aware of the drawbacks of relying on her own memories; she very rarely used first person personal pronouns. Instead she relied on veterans who were adults at the time in question or archival documents as source material. This accumulation of a myriad of sources makes her a far more accomplished historian than she is often given credit for. Though her account occasionally leans in favour of Alexios, her father, she does not use necessarily pro-Byzantine sources. Anna employed a high degree of analysis of her sources as well as relying on people from a variety of backgrounds for testimony. There is some historiographical debate on the authorship of *The Alexiad* and whether the majority of the work should be attributed to a male writer. This approach is based on the gender stereotyping of the commentators and demeans Anna's commendable efforts. Such criticisms and the culture of distrust surrounding *The Alexiad* from which they are born have discouraged wider historiographical schools, particularly feminist ones, from viewing *The Alexiad* as a valuable document on the medieval female voice.

Anna is present in her writing but *The Alexiad* is not a direct eyewitness account of the First Crusade. One of the rare occasions that Anna asserts she witnessed an event, the public trial of Michael Anemas, she was an adult at the time and possibly influenced the proceedings. She recollects: 'I myself, wishing to

save the man from such a fate called [for clemency] more than once'.⁵ She does not make a similarly self-affirming statement with regard to the Crusade. However, her presence is felt as she uses beautifully expressive imagery, particularly when describing the sight of the crusaders arriving in Constantinople. She recalls how they appeared, 'full of enthusiasm... outnumbering the sand on the seashore or the stars of heaven'.⁶ It is possible Anna is describing a memory she had of the event; it would be odd if she had no recollection of it. She also wrote a similarly evocative description of Bohemond, one of the Crusade's main leaders. She used phrases such as: 'his laugh sounded like a threat to others', and he breathed 'freely through his nostrils that were broad'.⁷ Bohemond's appearance is described in more detail than any other character. Angeliki Laiou points out; this may be a 'literary ploy'.⁸ This is because Anna finishes her description with: 'only one man, the emperor, could defeat an adversary of such character'.⁹ Laiou's point is apt, though it does not detract from the strong possibility that Anna may have seen Bohemond. However, when compared to Fulcher of Chartres' chronicle, *The Alexiad* cannot be called an eyewitness account. Fulcher maintained that he wrote 'what is worth remembering and what I saw with my own eyes'.¹⁰ Even Pro-Hellenic historians such as Steven Runciman, use *The Alexiad's* account of the crusaders' expedition after their departure from Constantinople only in conjunction with eyewitness accounts like Fulcher's.¹¹ However, Runciman's and especially Thomas Asbridge's preference for Latin 'eyewitness' accounts like Fulcher's or the *Gesta Francorum* may be misguided.¹² Peter Ainsworth explains: twelfth Century Latin chroniclers did not conceive of the need to distinguish between their personal

⁵ Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter, with an introduction and notes by Peter Frankopan, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1969, bk. XII, p. 348.

⁶ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 275.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 383-384.

⁸ Angeliki Laiou, 'Why Anna Komnene', in Thalia Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 2000, p. 9.

⁹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XIII, p. 384.

¹⁰ Fulcher of Chartres, 'The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres, Book I (1095-1100)', in Edward Peters (ed.), *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2nd edn. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998, bk. I, p. 48.

¹¹ Steven Runciman. *A History of the Crusades: 1 The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1951, pp. 175-194

¹² Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, London, The Free Press, 2004.

experiences and those of their collective group.¹³ Chroniclers from this period would occasionally use first person personal pronouns when describing the actions of contingents separate from their own. They would have done this in part to bolster the authority of their work. Anna however, made a clearer distinction between events she was present at and those she was absent from. This adds to *The Alexiad's* credibility by not claiming to be an eyewitness statement.

The chronology of *The Alexiad* is sometimes disjointed, which has called its credibility into account. Edward Gibbon described Anna Komnene as, 'forgotten by, and forgetful of, the world'.¹⁴ Historians like Gibbon or more recently, John France, considered Anna's inconsistencies to be due to her elderly mind and 'distance from events'.¹⁵ However, these irregularities may be a lucid literary style. *The Alexiad* describes Raymond of Toulouse's participation in the attack on Ankyra in 1101 and his subsequent defeat by August. It then says Raymond came back to Constantinople to be received by Alexios before leaving to re-join his army where, 'later he met with a fatal illness', and died.¹⁶ However, Raymond did not die until 1105.¹⁷ *The Alexiad* then resumes the sequence of events in 1099. Leonora Neville remarked that supposed mistakes like this are in fact 'departures from normative style'.¹⁸ In this instance Anna was experimenting with traditional chronology by unequivocally removing Raymond from the narrative, as he was deemed irrelevant to the remainder of *The Alexiad*. This is not unusual as Fulcher used a similar style when writing on the trial of Peter Bartholomew; he anticipated the event 'in order to finish the episode of the [Holy] lance'.¹⁹ Implying Anna's '[purposely] skewed order of events', was malicious or forgetful as Ruth Macrides does, is a somewhat narrow-minded

¹³ Peter Ainsworth, 'Contemporary and 'Eyewitness' History', in Deborah Mauskopf Delivannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 251.

¹⁴ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 226.

¹⁵ John France, 'Anna Komnene, The Alexiad and the First Crusade', *Reading Medieval Studies*, vol. 10, 1984, p. 20.

¹⁶ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XI, p. 320.

¹⁷ Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 518, n. 33.

¹⁸ Leonora Neville, 'Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's Alexiad', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2013, p. 193.

¹⁹ Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 76, n. 3.

analysis.²⁰ However, *The Alexiad* does contain some genuine mistakes. Anna states that following the crusaders' capture of Jerusalem their next significant engagement was against a Muslim force at Ramleh.²¹ It was the battle of Ascalon in 1099, which secured the crusaders' conquests not Ramleh in 1102. As Peter Frankopan explains, in this case Anna seems to have confused the two clashes.²² Regardless of the reasoning behind the occasionally disjointed continuity of *The Alexiad*, this orientation and structure makes Anna appear a poor historian to a modern reader.

The most contentious issue over *The Alexiad*'s credibility is its omission of any reference to Alexios' call for military aid, which initiated the First Crusade. John France described this silence as 'discreet suppression'.²³ Anna stated that Alexios, 'heard a rumour that countless Frankish armies were approaching'.²⁴ However, Fulcher quotes Pope Urban II's speech at the Council of Clermont in 1095: 'your brothers living in the Orient... need your aid for which they have called out many times'.²⁵ This being a reference to Alexios' call for aid in January and March of 1095 to Urban II and the Council of Piacenza respectively.²⁶ Frankopan points out that Anna describes 'considerable logistical arrangements' being put in place by Alexios to accommodate an influx of people prior to the crusaders' arrival.²⁷ Anna also notes that one of the crusades' leaders, Hugh of Vermandois, sent a letter ahead of his arrival to ask to be received with a 'magnificent reception'.²⁸ This indicates that Alexios was aware of the crusaders' approach for a long time. Frankopan has said in multiple works that rather than being surprised by the crusaders arrival, *The Alexiad* may be reflecting Alexios'

²⁰ Ruth Macrides, 'The Pen and the Sword: Who Wrote the Alexiad?', in Thalia Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 2000, p. 74.

²¹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XI, p. 316.

²² Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 517, n. 21.

²³ France, 'Anna Comnena, The Alexiad and the First Crusade', p. 21.

²⁴ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 274.

²⁵ Fulcher of Chartres, 'The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres', bk. I, p. 52.

²⁶ Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 52, n. 1.

²⁷ Peter Frankopan, 'Understanding the Greek Sources for the First Crusade', in Marcus Bull and Damien Kempf (ed.), *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2014, p. 49.

²⁸ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 279.

astonishment at the number of non-combatants amongst them.²⁹ This is because he had requested warriors and likely envisaged a larger though similarly experienced force to the 500 knights he had received from the Count of Flanders in 1090.³⁰ Anna was probably trying to protect Alexios' reputation by implying he knew nothing of the crusaders' advance due to the prolonged problems they caused later. Macrides says that Anna's account of the Crusade was: 'written to defend Alexios' handling of it'.³¹ This is a sweeping generalisation, though; it is true of Anna's account of this event. Yet this is a rare instance of Anna giving a partial account of events.

Though *The Alexiad* is a biography of Anna's father, it does not display exorbitant favouritism. Anna was entirely aware that her emotions would have an impact on her account and she actively tried to prevent this. When initially describing her former fiancé, Constantine Doukas, she says, 'when I recall this young man my soul is sorely troubled and my thoughts become confused', so she concedes to leave his description to a later point.³² Neville explains that, for Anna: 'lamentation transgresses the rules of historiography'.³³ Anna therefore applied caution throughout her work, as she was aware that her emotional connection to the characters could leave her open to criticism. With regard to Alexios, she is very firm in saying: 'if I should discover some action of his not commendable, I will not spare him because he is my father', and she goes on to say that not to do so would be an 'injustice to the truth'.³⁴ With the importance of truth being such a focal theme in *The Alexiad*, it is unlikely that Anna would consciously and repeatedly distort facts. There are moments where Anna does paint Alexios in a favourable light, such as the example above of neglecting to mention his invitation to the crusaders. However, she does not frequently show this kind of preferential treatment. On the contrary, she methodically notes when

²⁹ Frankopan, 'Understanding the Greek Sources for the First Crusade', p. 49 & Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 513, n. 14.

³⁰ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. VII, p. 202.

³¹ Macrides, 'The Pen and the Sword', p. 74.

³² Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. I, p. 35.

³³ Neville, 'Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*', p. 213.

³⁴ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. I, p. 49.

she disapproved of her father's actions. At one point Anna describes Alexios arrogantly riding out to kill a lone Cuman horseman who was taunting Byzantine troops: 'on this occasion he showed himself more of a soldier than a general'.³⁵ Her point here was that he was sometimes a poor leader and reckless. Anna cast a similarly negative opinion of the Komnenain 'native-born soldiers', who in 1081 entered Constantinople and ransacked their own capital city, 'shamelessly following the example of the barbarians'.³⁶ This shows that despite its Komnenain affiliation *The Alexiad* is not a limited history, rather it is capable of producing an objective reflection on events. Frankopan summarises the point: the biggest misconception about *The Alexiad* is that it is a 'paean to the deeds of Emperor Alexios, providing an unashamedly rosy picture'.³⁷

The Alexiad's use of source material is exemplary and distinguishes it as a highly credible historical account. Frankopan described *The Alexiad* as built on an 'astonishing tapestry of sources'.³⁸ Anna relied on much archival evidence as well as the oral testimony of eyewitnesses from numerous countries. When describing the movements of Robert Guiscard she says, 'the Latin who gave me this information was with him, an envoy'.³⁹ As is apparent from this account, she did not solely rely on Byzantine eyewitnesses. She also approached her sources with extreme caution. This is clear when she describes Leo Kydoniates halting Empress Eudokia's attempts to woo Nikephoros Botaneiates. Anna says with regard to this: 'I am not at liberty to report in detail what he said, because I have a natural abhorrence to slander'.⁴⁰ Anna only reported what she could verify, not rumours and on numerous occasions quoted her sources word for word. An excellent example of this is her reproduction of the Treaty of Devol, which forced Bohemond to capitulate to Alexios in 1108.⁴¹ This is the only surviving account of the treaty's demands which, Frankopan notes, predominantly uses western

³⁵ Ibid., bk. X, p. 271.

³⁶ Ibid., bk. II, p. 74.

³⁷ Frankopan, 'Understanding the Greek Sources for the First Crusade', p. 43.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

³⁹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. III, p. 108.

⁴⁰ Ibid., bk. III, p. 83.

⁴¹ Ibid., bk. XIII, pp. 385-396.

legal terminology and names an abundance of western witnesses. He states that this is a significant indicator of the treaty's 'context and intended audience'.⁴² Therefore it is highly likely it is an exact reproduction of the text. Anna's use of secondary sources is far more credible than contemporary chronicles of the Crusade like the *Gesta Francorum*, which allegedly quotes a letter by the Muslim leader Kerbogha as saying: 'I swear to you by Mohammed and by all the names of our gods',⁴³ a phrasing that betrays the anonymous author's misapprehension that Muslims are polytheistic.

There is historiographical debate over who wrote the bulk of *The Alexiad*, which belittles Anna's capabilities. James Howard-Johnson states that over half of *The Alexiad* is devoted to covering military campaigns and that this drives us 'toward the inescapable conclusion that a highly placed army officer contributed to Anna's text'.⁴⁴ Howard-Johnson stipulates that Anna's husband Nikephoros Bryennios authored all the coverage of military affairs. Given that this would constitute over fifty per cent of the book, his claim characterises Anna as a compiler of other people's work and it attacks her competence as a historian. His main reason for this is that Anna's known interests according to George Tornikes were: classical Greek, philosophy, rhetoric, medicine, theology and the *quadrivium* of sciences.⁴⁵ However, if a biographer only wrote on what interested them, then their work would be a poor representation of the person's life they were retelling. Given that Alexios' reign was dominated by warfare, his biography had to be similarly themed. Neville highlights that Anna's account is the 'only Greek text written by a woman of her era' and yet modern commentators often impose 'assumptions about what female history writing would be like'.⁴⁶ Arguments like that of Howard-Johnson's display a very androcentric view of society. It assumes that because of Anna's gender, she

⁴² Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 525, n. 34.

⁴³ The Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum: The Deeds of the Franks and the other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, Rosalind Hill (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962, bk. IX, p. 52.

⁴⁴ Howard-Johnson, 'Anna Komnene and the Alexiad', p. 273 & p. 275.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

⁴⁶ Neville, 'Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's Alexiad', pp. 194-195.

would have no interest in war or be capable of making educated insights when describing it. However, these are the hallmarks of a good historian, which Anna certainly was given her extensive scrutiny of sources. As Macrides put it, Anna was: 'bound more to her family, her times, and her genre than to her sex'.⁴⁷

Feminist historians have not shown much interest in investigating *The Alexiad*. It is possible they and other historiographical schools have been discouraged by the culture of distrust surrounding Anna's work within the discourse of Crusade historians writing in the latter half of the twentieth century. Though there has been a recent rise in Crusade historians' respect for *The Alexiad*, particularly in the works of Frankopan and Neville, this has coincided with the decline in feminist historians' interest in privileged women. Michelle Sidler characterised the second wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s as: 'bourgeois white feminism'.⁴⁸ Speaking as a modern third wave feminist, Sidler and her contemporaries wish to distance themselves from this and instead view sources with a heightened awareness that they should be representative of women of all classes and ethnicities. Given Anna's elitist position as a princess of a Hellenic royal family, modern feminists may not consider *The Alexiad* worth probing. Alternatively this neglect may be perpetuated by the lack of discussion of the female experience within *The Alexiad* itself. Diether Reinsch points out that beauty was of paramount importance to Byzantine women and yet within *The Alexiad*: 'we are told nothing about [Anna's] appearance'.⁴⁹ Reinsch also notes that Anna never mentions her children and this was a deliberate attempt by Anna to separate her 'intellectual person' from 'that [female] realm'.⁵⁰ This is a unique glimpse into Byzantine female values and what Anna believed was necessary professionalism within her work. Since male authors dominated Byzantine literature it may not have occurred to Anna that female experiences were relevant to history writing. This highlights Anna's commitment to writing

⁴⁷ Macrides, 'The Pen and the Sword', p. 75.

⁴⁸ Michelle Sidler, 'Living in McJobdom: Third Wave Feminism and Class Inequality', in Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (ed.), *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota press, 2003, p. 27.

⁴⁹ Diether Reinsch, 'Women's Literature in Byzantium?: The Case of Anna Komnene', in Thalia Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 2000, p. 97.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

The Alexiad in a way her society considered impartial. Though not representative of a wide demographic of women, *The Alexiad* is a valuable source for twelfth century female perspectives of masculinity. This could be an important route for feminist historians to examine as Barbara Greenfield noted: in order to understand current gender stereotypes, 'we must begin by attempting to understand... the nature of our [masculine] cultural myths'.⁵¹

The Alexiad cannot be called an eyewitness account due fundamentally to Anna never having intended it to be one. Anna adorns the narration of events and characters with occasional hints that she has seen them. This is done as a supplementary piece of information to what she presents as facts gathered from other sources. To a modern reader, Anna's rhetoric makes *The Alexiad* seem disjointed at times. This has exacerbated perceptions that she should not be credited with the work. Neville said it was ironic that this style of rhetoric designed to 'gain our trust has done so much to make Anna seem disingenuous'.⁵² This combined with Anna's occasional mistakes has prompted some historians to discredit her unfairly. Her infrequent mistakes are entirely understandable as they often concern matters that would have been of little interest to her or Alexios, such as misidentifying which routes the crusaders took to Constantinople.⁵³ Though her work is not a great representation of women from her period, Anna's desire to separate female issues from the account shows her commitment to appearing objective to Byzantine readers. *The Alexiad* offers a remarkably impartial reflection on Alexios' reign and shows Anna to be a very proficient historian. However, one obvious criticism of Anna's writing not yet covered is her blatant bias against the crusaders as individuals.

⁵¹ Barbara Greenfield, 'The Archetypal Masculine: Its Manifestation in Myth, and its Significance for Women', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 1983, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 33.

⁵² Neville, 'Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*', p. 218.

⁵³ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, pp. 275-296.

Chapter 2

The Alexiad on the crusaders.

There were a number of factors that shaped *The Alexiad's* presentation of the crusaders but two stand out as the most significant. The first factor was the Norman-Byzantine warfare of the 1080s, which pitted Alexios against Robert Guiscard and Bohemond. Given Bohemond's future role in leading the crusaders this prior engagement caused Anna to interpret all his and more broadly, crusader intentions as dishonest. Historians do not frequently dispute the importance of this factor, as Bohemond is introduced early on in Anna's narrative as a villain. Secondly, Anna's hindsight greatly influenced her depiction of the crusaders. She wrote *The Alexiad* between 1143-1153 and as such saw the decline of Crusader-Byzantine relations and the uncompleted oaths taken by the Crusade's leaders as being pre-conceived by the Latins. Anna had an elevated sense of entitlement given her imperial connection and firmly believed the Crusade's leaders should have been subservient to the Komnenoi. This contributed to her outlook that the crusaders were inferior. However, historians like Leonora Neville argue that Anna's account was simply lamentation over the outcome of the events rather than an alteration of facts.⁵⁴ Interestingly, hindsight also influenced *The Alexiad's* presentation of some crusaders, particularly Raymond of Toulouse, in a positive manner though this by no means reflected well on all the crusaders.

Norman-Byzantine warfare early in Alexios' reign left an indelible mark on Anna's perspective of the crusaders. Her opinion of Bohemond in particular overshadowed if not governed her wider perspective. Between 1081-1085 Robert Guiscard and his son Bohemond led a campaign against Alexios, which although ultimately unsuccessful, delivered an especially humiliating blow at Dyrrakhion. As Frankopan put it, they massacred the Byzantine elite and opened

⁵⁴ Neville, 'Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*', pp. 192-218.

up, 'the key point on the Empire's western flank'.⁵⁵ *The Alexiad* explains Robert's reasoning for this attack: he was ultimately 'aiming to become Roman Emperor'.⁵⁶ Bohemond's connection to this goal and his subsequent role as a leader of the crusaders ten years later colours Anna's interpretation, which presumes that he was leading the crusaders with the intention of toppling Alexios. Anna states that the common people were genuine in their undertaking but, 'more villainous characters, in particular Bohemond and his like had an ulterior motive, for they hoped on their journey to seize the imperial capitol, looking upon its capture as a natural consequence of the expedition'.⁵⁷ This does seem to be a paranoid representation of Bohemond and his followers. The anonymous writer of the *Gesta Francorum*, most likely a knight amongst those followers, states that Bohemond organised a council of his men during their journey into Byzantine territory, 'to warn them all to be courteous and refrain from plundering that land'.⁵⁸ To Anna the past war with Bohemond was, however, still fresh in her mind. She attributes Alexios' initial decline to personally join the crusaders to the Byzantine army being 'hopelessly outnumbered by the enormous host of the Franks; he [Alexios] knew from long experience, too, how untrustworthy the Latins were'.⁵⁹ The past conflict made Anna highly sceptical of many of the crusader leaders and she therefore depicted the Crusade itself as having some anti-Byzantine motive. *The Alexiad* also used the terms Frank, Kelt, Latin and Norman interchangeably to describe the crusaders without regard to the provenance of those mentioned.⁶⁰ As Anna used these frequently incorrect, blanket terms, she clearly did not see a difference between the expeditions parties. Therefore her resentment of the Sicilian-Normans was projected on to all the contingents of the Crusade.

The Byzantine victory over the Sicilian-Normans in 1085 motivated Anna to mock the crusaders' military capabilities, characterising them as hotheaded and easily outwitted. Emily Albu highlights that the Byzantine society Anna lived

⁵⁵ Frankopan, 'Understanding the Greek Sources for the First Crusade', p. 44.

⁵⁶ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. I, p. 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, bk. X, p. 277.

⁵⁸ The Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, bk. I, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XI, p. 300.

⁶⁰ Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 481, n. 5.

in had a deep admiration for those who gained military victory through deception rather than force.⁶¹ *The Alexiad* describes an occasion where Alexios and his brother-in-law, Nikephoros Melissenos examined enemy fortifications and the enemy sneered at Nikephoros' attire calling him 'the abbot... although inwardly he felt the insults, he made light of it and devoted all his attention to the task at hand'.⁶² This contrasts with a later anecdote on the Norman-Byzantine war where Byzantine troops mocked Bohmond's beard. Anna says: 'unable to bear the insult Bohemond led the attack on them in person', allowing the Byzantines to sink his ship.⁶³ Anna used these anecdotes, the latter of which is most likely, according to the modern editor just, 'poetic licence', to stress Byzantine cunning and Norman stupidity.⁶⁴ The stereotyping within *The Alexiad*, of the Sicilian-Normans in particular, directly manipulated Anna's presentation of the crusaders negatively. This is evident where she states that the crusaders refused, 'to cultivate a disciplined art of war... if their foes chance to lay ambushes with soldier-like skill and if they meet them in a systematic manner, all boldness vanishes'.⁶⁵ This statement is highly indicative of her prejudices as the crusaders were invited by Alexios to help fight the Seljuk Turks and were respected warriors.

Anna's obsession with social class and lineage played a key role in her presentation of the crusaders. Laiou states that people's 'social antecedents' were of paramount concern to Anna, which was typical of Byzantine writers from the tenth century onward.⁶⁶ If a person featured in *The Alexiad's* narrative had few famous ancestors or did not come from a noble family, Anna was quick to attribute this to a list of their flaws. Similarly if a character was descended from an illustrious family she often digresses and gives a description of their ancestors' deeds. Ironically in the case of the crusaders she rebukes some people

⁶¹ Emily Albu, 'Bohemond and the Rooster: Byzantines, Normans and the artful ruse', in Thalia Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 2000, p. 158.

⁶² Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. II, p. 71.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, bk. IV, p. 112.

⁶⁴ Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 496, n. 6.

⁶⁵ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XI, p. 313.

⁶⁶ Laiou, 'Why Anna Komnene', p. 7 & p. 11.

even when they were nobles, portraying them as egotistical. *The Alexiad* introduces Hugh of Vermandois in this way: ‘a certain Hugh, brother of the king of France, with all the pride of Nauatos in his noble birth’.⁶⁷ Nauatos, according to the modern editor was a man whose pride and ‘its exhibition must have been clearer to Anna and her readers than they are now’.⁶⁸ Anna is frequently eager to draw the reader’s attention to her family’s use of purple in their clothing, the insignia of their imperial stature. She makes the scene of Alexios’ death for instance, all the more sombre by saying her mother, Irene Doukaina, ‘threw away her purple-dyed shoes and asked for ordinary black sandals’.⁶⁹ The implication being that members of the Komnenian family always wore the diadems of their position and anything other was a disruption of the natural order. This partly explains Anna’s disregard for those without aristocratic families and her dislike of those who presumed they were equal to her father. Asbridge remarked that the Byzantines considered their realm, ‘the very epicentre of civilisation, their emperor the most powerful man on earth’.⁷⁰ As such *The Alexiad* treats Western culture as the antithesis of this. While describing the arrival of the crusaders, Anna says she prefers not to name all their leaders due to her, ‘inability to make unpronounceable barbaric sounds’.⁷¹ This statement is intentionally pejorative given she had already named numerous crusaders. Anna considered these people beneath her and therefore made such a remark to be amusing. This is abundantly clear when she claims Alexios questioned an unnamed rude crusader: ‘He sent for the arrogant, impudent fellow and asked who he was, where he came from and what his ancestry was’.⁷² Anna does not present these questions as a direct quote from Alexios. Rather they are the tone with which she treats all the crusaders: upstarts with no business consorting on the same level with the emperor.

Hindsight played a crucial part in sculpting *The Alexiad*’s depiction of the crusaders, as it was written over forty years after the First Crusade. Anna stated

⁶⁷ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 279.

⁶⁸ Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 505, n. 57.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, bk. XV, p. 471.

⁷⁰ Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, p. 96.

⁷¹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 290.

⁷² *Ibid.*, bk. X, p. 291.

she collected most of her evidence during ‘the reign of the third emperor after my father’,⁷³ this being after the accession of Manuel I Komnenos in 1143.⁷⁴ She therefore had decades to formulate an opinion of the crusaders based on the ultimate conclusion of the expedition. The most prominent theme *The Alexiad* recounts concerning the crusaders involves their failure to fulfil their oaths to Alexios. The book is peppered with references to the unreliability of barbarians (any non-Byzantine) prior to the narrative reaching the Crusade. When commenting on Alexios’ relations with the Scythians, Anna notes the ‘truth is, all barbarians are usually fickle and by nature are unable to keep their pledges’.⁷⁵ Throughout *The Alexiad*, Anna constantly reminds the reader that lying is an unforgivable transgression. She does this partly to bolster her own authority as a historical writer but mainly to heighten the reader’s sensitivity to liars in the narrative. Therefore Anna displays the influences of hindsight when describing the crusaders: ‘their greed for money, for example, which always led them, it seemed, to break their own agreements without scruple’.⁷⁶ Unlike an eyewitness writing at the time, Anna was aware of the outcome of the Crusade and judged the crusaders by this outcome.

Hindsight also influenced the depiction of some crusaders in a positive manner. In the case of Raymond, Count of Toulouse the *Gesta Francorum* notes initial hostilities between him and Alexios. It states that Raymond had to be corralled into swearing the oath of fealty to Alexios. After some brief contention, ‘Bohemond said that if Count Raymond did any injustice to the emperor, or refused to swear fealty to him, he himself would take the emperor’s part’.⁷⁷ Although both Fulcher of Chartres and Raymond of Aguilers corroborate these hostilities, *The Alexiad* neglects to mention any such animosity.⁷⁸ Rather it says Alexios revered Raymond, ‘because of the count’s superior intellect, his

⁷³ Ibid., bk. XIV, p. 421.

⁷⁴ Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 528, n. 24.

⁷⁵ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. VII, p. 200.

⁷⁶ Ibid., bk. X, p. 275.

⁷⁷ The Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, bk. II, p. 13.

⁷⁸ Fulcher of Chartres, ‘The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres’, bk. I, p. 62. & Peters, *The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres*, p. 62, n. 1.

untarnished reputation and the purity of his life. He knew moreover how greatly St Gilles [Raymond] valued the truth'.⁷⁹ Runciman explains that: 'later events prejudiced [*The Alexiad*] in Raymond's favour'.⁸⁰ The later actions Runciman alludes to were Raymond's loyalty to Alexios in spite of other crusaders violence against the Byzantines. Raymond also refused to take any land that was claimed as rightfully Byzantine by Alexios, unlike Bohemond.⁸¹ Laiou summarised *The Alexiad's* compilation of events: 'ultimate loyalty to Alexios erases in his daughter's mind earlier hostile activities'.⁸²

As can be seen *The Alexiad's* depiction of the crusaders was highly affected by the actions of individuals. Anna understood that the common people who participated in the Crusade had good intentions, though men with highly questionable ambitions led them. However, her scepticism of the Crusade's leaders eclipsed what sympathies she had for the laypeople and came to dominate the narrative. Her gibes at the Latins' heritage and ancestry say more about her prejudices than it does about the demographics of those who participated in the expedition. The most prominent and recurring theme in *The Alexiad* is its antipathy toward Bohemond and the Sicilian-Normans. Anna felt no need to properly distinguish between the origins of the crusaders; as a consequence, her disdain for the Sicilian-Normans was reflected in her presentation of all the participants in the Crusade, based on their shared 'Latin' culture. Though Anna held particular admiration for Raymond of Toulouse this does not appear to be an exception to the rule as this favour was also influenced by hindsight. *The Alexiad* presented the crusaders as disingenuous and volatile and this view was clearly formed through reflection on its leaders' eventual behaviour. Such views were further propelled by the nature in which the Crusade was carried out. However, this perspective would have been the likely contemporary Byzantine reaction.

⁷⁹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 295.

⁸⁰ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 164.

⁸¹ Laiou, 'Why Anna Komnene', p. 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Chapter 3

Byzantine views represented in *The Alexiad*.

Anna Komnene's account provides a bleak outlook on the crusaders' objectives and the manner in which they carried them out. Counter to how the crusaders interpreted their actions, Anna thought the primary goal of the Crusade was to attain wealth. Contemporary Byzantines were never as direct as Anna in their scepticism concerning the Crusade however, there does appear to have been a collective suspicion of the crusaders' motives. Anna's interpretations are difficult to contextualise within Byzantine thinking during the Crusade as she is the only contemporary of the period to have written a full account of the expedition in Byzantine literature. In spite of this, her view that the Crusade was hyper-violent and conducted in an unorthodox manner combining religion and violence does fit within Byzantine cultural thinking at the time.

The Alexiad does not agree with the contemporary Latin chroniclers' concepts that the capture of Jerusalem was the main objective of the Crusade. The Anonymous writer of the *Gesta Francorum* recounts that upon capturing Jerusalem, the crusaders were overjoyed for they had finally 'fulfilled their vows'.⁸³ Nicholas Paul said that the crusaders saw this moment as: 'the triumph of Christianity over the world'.⁸⁴ The Anonymous shared this feeling but he also noted that when they entered the city their first action was: 'seizing gold and silver, horses and mules, and houses full of all sorts of goods'.⁸⁵ The Crusade clearly had some materialistic incentives, though the Anonymous may not have viewed it like this. Giles Constable notes that it is possible to view the Crusade as: 'inspired by greed and religious fanaticism', however, 'many scholars today

⁸³ The Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, bk. X, p. 92.

⁸⁴ Nicholas L. Paul, 'Trial and Triumph at the Gates of Jerusalem', in Marcus Bull and Damien Kemof (ed.), *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2014, p. 91.

⁸⁵ The Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, bk. X, p. 92.

reject this judgment and emphasize the defensive character of the crusades'.⁸⁶ This is true of Jonathan Riley-Smith, who states that the Crusade was centred on the response to the pope's call to: 'liberate Jerusalem', as though Christianity itself were endangered.⁸⁷ This is not how Anna viewed the crusaders' goals. *The Alexiad* tersely concludes its account of the sacking of Jerusalem by saying: 'after one lunar month it fell'.⁸⁸ There is no mention of the significance of Jerusalem's capture to the crusaders, or of this being the final goal achieved. Penelope Buckley says that *The Alexiad's* tendency to dismiss the crusaders' capture of Jerusalem was because Anna felt it unimportant.⁸⁹ Runciman, who was highly partial to *The Alexiad's* account, did say that: 'the goal had been reached', when the crusaders' took Jerusalem.⁹⁰ However, Runciman also states that Alexios, 'like all Byzantines', felt: 'the welfare of Christendom depended on the welfare of the historic Christian Empire [Byzantium]'.⁹¹ Anna's account reflects Byzantine culture in refusing to empathise with the crusaders' capture Jerusalem: it did not fit with the Byzantine concept of what was important to Christianity.

Anna interpreted the Crusade's main goal as being the acquisition of wealth and power. She states that the Latins were incited to liberate Jerusalem by Peter the Hermit, who had suffered at the hands of the Muslims and was: 'unable to admit defeat'.⁹² Peter is described as having, 'worked out a clever scheme', whereby he preached that a 'divine voice', was guiding him when he advocated the Crusade in Europe, so he could return to Jerusalem in relative safety.⁹³ For Anna, the whole Crusade was initially based on deception. Anna then states that Bohemond left his homeland, 'in theory to worship at the Holy

⁸⁶ Giles Constable, 'The Historiography of the Crusades', in Angeliki Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (ed.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Washington, Dunbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders: 1095-1131*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 189.

⁸⁸ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XI, p. 315.

⁸⁹ Penelope Buckley, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene: Artistic Strategy in the Making of a Myth*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 195.

⁹⁰ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 289.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁹² Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 275.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, bk. X, p. 275.

Sepulchre, but he had really done so in order to win power for himself'.⁹⁴ *The Alexiad's* interpretation of Bohemond and his following possibly influenced Runciman. He stated that the Crusade was intended: 'not to be a war of mere conquest', however, 'Bohemond, now thwarted in his ambitions in Italy... realised the possibilities that the Crusade would open out for him'.⁹⁵ *The Alexiad* also states that the entire Latin race was: 'unusually greedy for wealth', and that pursuit of this was an 'inevitable consequence', of their expedition.⁹⁶ This challenges Riley-Smith's interpretation that the Crusade was overwhelmingly undertaken as: 'an act of penance'.⁹⁷ Given Anna's indifference to the capture of Jerusalem, her sentiments about Bohemond seem to also have applied to the whole Crusading movement. As Buckley put it: 'she [Anna] sees the thrust of the West eastward as compromised by very unspiritual interests'.⁹⁸ *The Alexiad* declares that the pursuit of Jerusalem was a façade and the Crusade's leaders kept up the pretence in order to plunder freely.

There are hints that contemporary Byzantines shared Anna's opinions within the limited written sources available. However, the evidence is too ambiguous to offer a definitive interpretation. There is a reasonably extensive surviving collection of letters between the diocese of Monte Casino and Alexios during the Crusade. Herbert Bloch does not note any reference to poor crusader-Byzantine relations in these documents.⁹⁹ However in one letter to the abbot of Monte Casino, Alexios did say that with Byzantine help, the crusaders were advancing successfully and this arrangement would continue: 'as long as good purpose leads them on'.¹⁰⁰ It is possible that Alexios was insinuating he knew there were ulterior motives to the Crusade or it may be an innocuous comment.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. X, p. 294.

⁹⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 109 & p. 112.

⁹⁶ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 278 & p. 275.

⁹⁷ Jonathan Shepard, 'Jonathan Riley-Smith: The First Crusaders 1095-1131', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1998, p. 333.

⁹⁸ Buckley, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene*, p. 196.

⁹⁹ Herbert Bloch, 'Monte Cassino, Byzantium, and the West in the Earlier Middle Ages', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 3, 1946, pp. 222-223.

¹⁰⁰ Alexios I Komnenos, 'The Letter of Emperor Alexios I to the Abbot of Monte Cassino', in Edward Peters (ed.), *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2nd edn. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998 p. 186.

Alexios' comments neither negate nor corroborate Anna's account of Byzantine impressions of the Crusade, however, these are diplomatic documents and are therefore unlikely to chastise Latins.

Writing sometime around 1161 John Zonaras composed a history of the Byzantine Empire up to Alexios' death. He covered the First Crusade in one concise paragraph something that, perhaps, highlighted his perception of how unimportant to Byzantine history it was.¹⁰¹ Ruth Macrides states that for Zonaras, the Crusade was simply a movement 'which captured cities, one of which-Nicaea- was given over to the emperor for money'.¹⁰² This explanation by Zonaras is a, 'demonstrable error', as Jonathan Harris put it.¹⁰³ This is because Nicaea was surrendered exclusively to the Byzantine contingent, who in a bid to sooth their relations with the crusaders, gifted them some money.¹⁰⁴ Although Zonaras' summary of the Crusade is inaccurate it does offer some indication that for the Byzantines, the crusaders' desire for money was the most memorable characteristic of their expedition. Yet Theophylact of Ochrida, a Byzantine archbishop in what is now modern Bulgaria implied the opposite. While the crusaders were marching through, en route to Constantinople, he stated that people within his diocese had come to, 'bear the burden with patience'.¹⁰⁵ It is possible this infers that though troublesome, the crusaders were known to be bringing some benefit to the Byzantines that was worth waiting for. However, Runciman notes that Theophylact was, 'notoriously broad-minded towards the West'.¹⁰⁶ He may have been downplaying the complaints or suspicions of his diocese. He did at one point characterise the Bulgarian people as: 'bewailing and making a big fuss'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Macrides, 'The Pen and the Sword', p. 74.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁰³ Jonathan Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, 2nd edn. London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 61.

¹⁰⁴ Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, pp. 130-131.

¹⁰⁵ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁷ Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1250*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 287.

The nature of the Crusade is portrayed as unnecessarily and fanatically violent in *The Alexiad*. The Byzantines had always considered violence and religion to be entirely separate. The Crusade's intertwining of these two spheres was an alien concept to Byzantine society. John Haldon says that it was a society where: 'war was condemned, peace extolled, and fighting was to be avoided at all costs'.¹⁰⁸ Anna states that when Marianos, the son of the *doux* of the Byzantine fleet, tried to negotiate with some crusaders: 'a certain Latin priest... shot several times [at him]'.¹⁰⁹ Anna's shock at the concept of a priest engaging in violence caused her to quip: 'this barbarian race is no less devoted to religion than to war'.¹¹⁰ Haldon notes that many Byzantine veterans would enter monasteries in retirement so as to 'work toward the remission of their sins'.¹¹¹ This was due to a heightened sense within their culture that violence was a regrettable act. Similarly, Anna notes that much of her evidence came from, 'old soldiers... who fell on hard times and exchanged the turmoil of the outer world for the peaceful life of monks'.¹¹² Many of her sources therefore reflected the Byzantine culture of abhorring unnecessary or excessive violence. As Harris put it: 'However tendentious *The Alexiad* may be... it can nevertheless be seen as a reliable guide to outlook and attitudes'.¹¹³

Anna's account of violence during the Crusade contrasts starkly with her descriptions of warfare earlier in Alexios' reign. When describing Alexios' war with the Scythians she describes the fighting as a 'gallant struggle' and the two sides as 'fighting bravely'.¹¹⁴ However, when narrating the crusaders' attack on Nicaea she states that they: 'acted with horrible cruelty... babies were hacked to pieces... old people were subjected to every kind of torture'.¹¹⁵ It is possible to interpret this contrast as an intentional device to discredit the crusaders.

¹⁰⁸ John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565-1204*, Abingdon, Routledge, 1999, p. 275.

¹⁰⁹ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 283.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, bk. X, p. 283.

¹¹¹ Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, p. 275.

¹¹² Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. XIV, p. 422.

¹¹³ Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. VII, p. 194.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, bk. X, p. 277.

However, the crusaders' own accounts corroborate such extreme violence and lack of sympathy. Fulcher of Chartres remarked that after the crusaders defeated Kerbogha and captured the women in the Turkish camp: 'the Franks did nothing evil to them except pierce their bellies with their lances'.¹¹⁶ To the crusaders, violence was nothing to condemn if it was done to a non-Christian. It was this eagerness to commit such acts that Anna loathed. While criticising the aforementioned priest, Anna's comments regarding him echo the tone with which she regarded all the crusaders: 'He will communicate the sacred body and blood while at the same time gazing on bloodshed and become himself a man of blood'.¹¹⁷ The Anonymous' account of the sacking of Jerusalem essentially mirrors Anna's summary of the Crusade's nature. He says that after worshipping at the Sepulchre they: 'went cautiously up to the Temple roof and attacked the Saracens, both men and women, cutting off their heads'.¹¹⁸ Though Anna's account appears hyperbolic in its description of the crusaders' actions, it does not seem to be an inaccurate representation both of what the crusaders agree happened and of the likely Byzantine reaction.

Anna's perspectives reflect a person in tune with the zeitgeist of Byzantium. Her macabre portrayal of the Crusade is entirely justified when compared to the eyewitness accounts of its participants. The disparity between Byzantine and Western culture with regard to religious warfare becomes very apparent when Anna's commentary on the crusade is compared with her account of the conflicts early in Alexios' reign. It is likely that contemporary Byzantines shared her disgust at the expedition's nature. Anna closely examined the Crusade because it was profoundly important to her father's reign. However, this does not mean that the Crusade was considered of the utmost importance to Byzantine history as Zonaras' account implies. Rather, Bohemond's acquisition of Antioch and subsequent war with Byzantium in 1107 would have resonated with Byzantine memory. This explains the lack of recognition of the significance of

¹¹⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, 'The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres', bk. I, p. 80.

¹¹⁷ Komnene, *Alexiad*, bk. X, p. 283.

¹¹⁸ The Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, bk. X, p. 92.

Jerusalem's capture to the crusaders in both Anna's and Zonaras' account. However, there is very little debate amongst Western historians over Zonaras' brevity when describing the Crusade. This gap in the historiography over Byzantine perspectives makes it harder still to contextualise Anna's account.

Conclusion

Though Anna presented the crusaders in a highly unfavourable light, this seems to have been a likely representation of what the general Byzantine populous would also have felt. The conflict with the Sicilian-Normans a decade before the Crusade would have made the Byzantines highly suspicious of the crusaders. Though Anna allowed hindsight to influence her presentation of individuals, with the exception of her silence on Alexios' call for military aid from the West, she did not allow her prejudices to distort her account of events. The value of her presentation is bolstered by the plethora of archival sources and wide array of oral testimonies she relied on. As her contemporary Theophylact of Ochrida described her: '[she surpassed] all in her *phronesis* (intelligence)... nor is she lacking *sophrosyne* (sound-mindedness)'.¹¹⁹

Anna's presentation of the nature of the crusaders and their campaign does not stray far from what Latin eyewitnesses reported. What separates her account from her Latin contemporaries however, is her disdain for the crusaders actions. It is likely that her radically different perspective has contributed to a culture of scepticism surrounding her work within academics circles. It has been shown that Anna's flamboyant rhetoric, her age at the time of writing, her gender and the work's subject being her father have formed the basis for historians' distrust of her account. These reservations highlight many historians' inability to view *The Alexiad* within the context of twelfth century Byzantine (or Western) literature and culture. The lack of translations of John Zonaras' work into English demonstrates the disinterest of Western historians in Byzantine literature on the First Crusade. Many modern commentators are quick to acknowledge the lack of Byzantine accounts of the Crusade however; very few have raised the question as to why that is. This seems to be an avenue of potential historical investigation that is in great need of exploration. This disinterest of Western historians in

¹¹⁹ Margret Mullet, 'The Imperial Vocabulary of Alexios I Komnenos', in Margret Mullet and Dion Smythe (ed.), *Alexios I Komnenos: I Papers, Belfast Byzantine Text and Translations*, Priory Press, Holywood, 1996, p. 365.

Byzantine literature also raises questions as to whether current approaches toward *The Alexiad* have a secure grounding in objective academic research.

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