



Summary :

Anna Anachoutlou, the eldest daughter of Alexios II Grand Komnenos, despite of her being a nun, took political action by mounting resistance in Lazica against Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341). Taking advantage of the attacks launched by the Türkmens of Amida, she ascended to the throne of Trebizond. In 1342 she was strangled by the usurper to the throne, John, subsequently John III Grand Komnenos (1342-1344).

Other Names

Anna Azachoutlou, Anna Grand Komnene

Date and Place of Birth

late 13th c. - first quarter of 14th c., Trebizond

Date and Place of Death

September 3, 1342, in Trebizond

Main Role

Empress

1. Biography

1.1. Descent

Anna Anachoutlou was born into the family of the Grand Komnenoi, being the eldest daughter of [Alexios II Grand Komnenos](#) (1297-1330) and Djiadjak, the daughter of the Laz sovereign Azachoutlou. She was the sister of Michael Anachoutlou and half-sister of [Eudokia Grand Komnene](#), George Achpougas and the subsequent emperors [Andronikos III](#) (1330-1332) and [Basil](#) (1332-1340) Grand Komnenoi. Anna first appears as a nun, possibly in the monastery of St. Euthymios in Jerusalem.¹ At some point before 1340 she gave up her monastic vows and returned to [Trebizond](#).

1.2. Political Activity

Anna Anachoutlou was actively involved in the political matters of the [Empire of Trebizond](#) when she created a pocket of resistance in the region of Lazica in the [Pontos](#) against the Empress [Eirene Palaiologina](#) (1340-1341). In 1341, taking advantage of the attacks launched by the [Türkmens](#) of Amida² against the Empire of Trebizond, as well as the inability of Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) to deal with the impending collapse of the state, Anna laid claims to the throne of Trebizond as a descendant of the Grand Komnenoi.

Significant role in the ascension of Anna also played the [civil conflicts](#) that afflicted the empire after the murder of [Manuel II Grand Komnenos](#) (1332) and mainly after the ascension of Basil's (1332-1340) first wife, Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341), to the throne. The factions of the trapezuntine aristocracy were chiefly represented by the [Scholarios family](#) (related to the Constantinopolitan tradition) and the native [Amytzantarios family](#), both eager at the time to become more powerful.

2. The Reign

2.1. Anna's Policy

Anna's resistance to the central administration, in combination with the public rage against Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) over the arson of Trebizond during the last attack of the Türkmens of Amida on July 4, 1341, made Eirene abdicate her throne. So, on July 17, 1341, Anna entered Trebizond triumphantly, followed by Laz warriors of the Georgian King George V (1314-1346) as well as by trapezuntine Laz of the [bandon](#) of Greater Lazia, and ascended to the throne. She was crowned empress, supported, on the one



hand, by the Amytzentarios family and, on the other, by the Laz, the Tzan³ and, in general, the people of the provinces of the Empire of Trebizond.

The supporters of Anna Anachoutlou expected that she would deal energetically with the external enemies of the empire and, on the other hand, that the central administration would be favourable to the native population as regards internal affairs. Indeed, in August 1342 Anna repelled successfully the new Türkmen raid, amid serious political disorder. But her economic and internal policy disappointed her supporters.

2.2. The Opposition to Anna

The conflicts between the aristocratic families of Trebizond marked the reign of Anna, who was continuously under the threat of being deposed by the Scholarios family, as well as other aristocratic circles related to Constantinople. The attempts of the Scholarios family were supported by [Constantinople](#), which was disappointed with the fall of Eirene Palaiologina and the ascent of Anna, the [Venetians](#) and the [Genoese](#). On the other hand, Anna was initially supported by the Amytzentarios family.

On July 30, 1341, [Michael Grand Komnenos](#), the subsequent emperor (1344-1349), aided by the Byzantine Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (1341/1347-1355), sailed from Constantinople to Trebizond with three battle ships and the company of [Niketas Scholares](#) and Gregory Meizomatis in order to marry the former empress Eirene and assume the authority of the empire.⁴ At first the dignitaries and the [metropolitan Akakios](#) accepted him with all solemnity as an emperor. However, the people revolted against him and the Laz soldiers of Anna Anachoutlou set his ships to fire and burnt members of his entourage. On August 7, 1341, Michael was arrested and sent off initially to Oinaion and then to Limnia. A few days later, on August 10, Eirene was forced to get to Constantinople on a "Frankish" ship according to the sources, possibly from Marseilles.

Anna's victory against the Türkmen of Amida, which took place in that period, did not discourage her opponents, the supporters of Constantinople, who insisted on her dethronement. On the other hand, it was in that period that the Amytzentarios family stopped being her apparent allies.

3. The Deposition

After the unsuccessful attempt of Michael Grand Komnenos to ascend to the throne, Niketas Scholarios, [Constantine Doranites](#), the brothers Gregory and Michael Meizomatis and others, fled on a Venetian ship to Constantinople, where they met John Grand Komnenos, Michael's son, and offered him the throne of the Empire of Trebizond. John, subsequent [John III](#) (1342-1344), sailed with three Genoese ships and two of his own, leading the new campaign of trapezuntine aristocracy against Anna. In the same period (late August - early September 1342), the Scholarios family in Trebizond managed to depose the empress. Anna Anachoutlou was strangled on September 3, 1342.

4. Succession

John Grand Komnenos arrived at Trebizond on September 4, 1342, and was crowned emperor in the [church of Theotokos Chrysokephalos](#) on the same day. The ascension of John III to the throne was followed by persecutions against members of the aristocracy. The Scholarios family, who had supported him from the start, took advantage of the power they held after his ascension to the throne and turned against their rival Amytzentarios family, who had joined Anna Anachoutlou. They also murdered notable descendants of this lineage and massacred Anna's followers in the provinces.

1. Miller, W., *Trebizond. The Last Greek Empire* (London 1926), p. 49.



2. On the Türkmén of Amida and their appellation, see Zachariadou, E.A., "Trebizond and the Turks (1352-1402)", *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 35 (1979), p. 333-358, esp. p. 340-341.
3. On the historical background of the Laz and the Tzan, see Bryer, A., "Some notes on the Laz and the Tzan (1) (2)", in Bryer, A., *People and Settlement in Anatolia and the Caucasus, 800-1900* (VR, London 1988), pp. 161-168 (=1), 174-195 (=2). They were native inhabitants of the northeastern Pontos, descending from the Colchians and the Macrones. They used to meddle in the political affairs of the Empire of Trebizond.
4. In 1341, Michael Grand Komnenos started from Constantinople as the future husband of Eirene Palaiologina, according to the diplomatic plan of John VI Kantakouzenos. Before he reached Trebizond, the revolt instigated by Anna Anachoutlou, which ended in the forced resignation of Eirene and the ascension of Anna to the throne, had already broken out. See Χρύσανθος, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος (Chrysanthos of Trebizond), "Η Εκκλησία της Τραπεζούντος" *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 4-5, (1933), pp. 241-242.

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<http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus/Panaret/frametext.htm>

Glossary :

bandon

Byzantine military and administrative term. It originally meant flags, the banners of military units. It then indicated a part of the tourma and a small military unit (50-100 people in case of mountain troops and 200-400 in case of infantry). Gradually the term carried an administrative meaning as well, indicating a division of the theme. In the Empire of Trebizond it indicated the administrative territory.

Sources

Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), «Μιχαήλ του Παναρέτου περί των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 22 (1958), pp. 66-7.

Παπαδόπουλος-Κεραμεύς, Α. (ed.), *Ανάλεκτα Ιεροσολυμιτικής Σταχυολογίας* I - II, (St Petesburg 1894), vol. I, pp. 255-257, vol. II, p. 245.

Quotations

The deposition of Anna Anachoutlou in Michael Panaretos' chronicle

Τῷ αὐτῷ μηνὶ ἴ' καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ ἔτει ἐστάθη ἡ Παλαιολογίνα κυρὰ Εἰρήνη μετὰ Φράγκικον κάτεργον εἰς τὴν Πόλιν. Μηνὶ Σεπτεμβρίῳ ἴ' ἔφυγεν ὁ Σχολάρις κύρ Νικήτας καὶ ὁ Μειζομάτης κύρ Γρηγόριος, ὁ Δωρανίτης κύρ Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννης καὶ ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ Μειζομάτη Μιχαήλ καὶ ἕτεροι ἐκ τοῦ μέρους αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπῆλθον μετὰ Βενέτικον κάτεργον εἰς τὴν Πόλιν· οἵτινες καὶ χρονίσαντες τὰ περὶ τὸν Αὐγουστον μῆνα ἰζ' ἤλθον μετὰ Κομνηνὸν κύρ depositu Ἰωάννην, τοῦ κύρ Μιχαήλ τὸν υἱόν, ἔχοντες δύο κάτεργα τῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τρία Γενοῦτικά, καὶ παρέλαβον τὴν Τραπεζοῦντα μηνὶ Σεπτεμβρίῳ δ', ἡμέρα δ', ἔτους ρωνα'. Καὶ ἐστέφθη τῷ αὐτῷ μηνὶ Σεπτεμβρίῳ εἰς τὰ θ' εἰς τὴν Χρυσοκέφαλον ἐν τῷ ἄμβωνι· ὅτε καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐλεύσει αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν αἱ χώραι συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ γέγονε διωγμὸς βαρὺς καὶ ἀρπαγὴ πολλή. Τότε ἐσκοτώθησαν καὶ οἱ γέγονε διωγμὸς βαρὺς καὶ ἀρπαγὴ πολλή. Τότε ἐσκοτώθησαν καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες οἱ Ἀμυτζαντάριοι, καὶ ἡ τοῦ κύρ Γεωργίου μήτηρ, ἡ Σαργαλή, παρεδόθη τῇ πνιγμονῇ καὶ σὺν αὐτῇ ἀπεπνίγη καὶ ἡ Ἀναχουτλοῦ, βασιλεύουσα ἔτος α' καὶ μῆνα α' καὶ ἡμέρας η'.

Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), «Μιχαήλ του Παναρέτου περί των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 22 (1958), p. 67.

Chronological Table

Late 13th c. - first quarter of 14th c.: Anna Anachoutlou, the daughter of Alexios II Grand Komnenos (1297-1330), is born in Trebizond.

Before July 4, 1341: Anna becomes a nun in Jerusalem (Monastery of St. Euthymios). In 1340 she goes to the Pontos and mounts resistance against Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) in Lazia.

Spring - summer 1341: The Türkmens of Amida attack Lazia.

July 4, 1341: The Türkmens of Amida attack, invade, plunder and burn Trebizond before they withdraw. Empress Eirene Palaiologina is forced to resign.

July 17, 1341: Anna Anachoutlou (Grand Komnene) is crowned empress, supported by the people of the provinces and the Amytzentarios family.

July 30, 1341: Michael Grand Komnenos arrives in Trebizond as usurper.

August 7, 1341: Michael Grand Komnenos is arrested by the Laz warriors of Anna Anachoutlou.

August 10, 1341: The exiled Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) is compelled to travel to Constantinople.



After August 10, 1341: Aristocrats of Trebizond travel to Constantinople, where they join John Grand Komnenos against Anna Anachoutlou.

Summer 1342: John, subsequent John III Grand Komnenos (1342-1344), sails from Constantinople to Trebizond as the usurper to the throne of Anna Anachoutlou.

August 1342: Anna Anachoutlou defeats the Türkmén of Amida in Lazia.

Late August - early September 1342: Anna Anachoutlou is deposed by the Scholarios family and their allies.

September 3, 1342: Anna Anachoutlou (Grand Komnene) is strangled.

September 4, 1342: John Grand Komnenos arrives in Trebizond and is crowned as John III (1342-1344) in the church of Theotokos Chrysokephalos.

After September 4, 1342: Political ascent of the Scholarios family, persecutions against the Amytzentarios family, massacres of followers of Anna Anachoutlou.

Auxiliary Catalogs

The Grand Comnenoi (Emperors of Trebizond)

Alexios I (1204 -1222)

Andronikos I (Gidon) (1222 - 1235)

John I (Axouchos) (1235 -1238)

Manuel I (1238 -1263)

Andronikos II (1263 -1266)

George (Planos) (1266 - 1280)

John II (1280 -1285)

Theodora (1285)

John II (again 1285 - 1297)

Alexios II (1297 -1230)

Andronikos III (1330 -1332)

Manuel II (1332)

Basil (1332 -1340)

Eirene (1340 - 1341)

Anna (Anachoutlou) (1341-1342)



John III (1342 -1344)

Michael (1344 -1349)

Alexios III (1349 - 1390)

Manuel III (1390 -1417)

Alexios IV (1417 - 1429)

John IV (1429 - 1458)

Alexios V(1458)

David (1458-1461)