

Download Hypatia Of Alexandria Mathematician And Martyr

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries of our era, Hypatia of Alexandria was the world's greatest living mathematician and astronomer. A strikingly beautiful woman and a devoted celibate, she lived in a city as turbulent and troubled as Baghdad or Beirut is today.

Deakin covers much of the same territory as Maria Dzielska's "Hypatia of Alexandria", but being a mathematician, also comments on her mathematical contributions, which were significant. The problem for both authors is that there just isn't that much to go on.

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For Hypatia of Alexandria was indeed, at the time she was killed by Christian fanatics, the world's foremost mathematician and astronomer and also a leading Neoplatonic philosopher.

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Briefly, Hypatia was a woman mathematician and philosopher, a Pagan in then largely Christian Alexandria, born in the fourth century of our era and killed by a group of Christians in 415 or 416. She was the major mathematician of her era as her father, Theon of Alexandria, had been before her.

(1) She was the daughter of Theon of Alexandria. (2) She was trained as a mathematician by her father and eventually replaced him as the leading mathematician of Alexandria and, indeed as the pre-eminent mathematician of her time. (3) She was the last major mathematician of the Alexandrian tradition.

Deakin does compare 4th century Alexandria to current trouble spots such as Baghdad and Malaysia, but then reverts to the "pagan martyr" approach. Since we do not have access to any of Hypatia's mathematics or philosophy, the chapters on her work have to be mostly context and conjecture.

In Hypatia of Alexandria, Deakin does an excellent job of creating a complete picture of this remarkable mathematician for whom the historical records are scarce and incomplete. I read this book with an eye toward using it in one of my classes, Women and Science, and came away ready to make it required reading for my students.

Michael A. B. Deakin: Hypatia of Alexandria. Mathematician and Martyr. Mathematician and Martyr. Prometheus Books, Amherst (New York) 2007, ISBN 978-1-59102-520-7 .

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