

= Nikephoros Xiphias =

Nikephoros Xiphias (Greek : ?????????? ?????? , fl. ca . 1000 ? 1028) was a Byzantine military commander during the reign of Emperor Basil II . He played a distinguished role in the Byzantine conquest of Bulgaria , and was instrumental in the decisive Byzantine victory at the Battle of Kleidion in 1014 . In 1022 he led an unsuccessful rebellion against Basil II , and was disgraced , tonsured and exiled . He is last mentioned in 1028 , when he was recalled from exile and retired to a monastery .

= = Origin = =

Nikephoros Xiphias was born probably some time around or before 980 , and was most likely the son of Alexios Xiphias , who served as the Catepan of Italy in 1006 ? 08 . Few members of the Xiphiai are otherwise known and the family 's origin is unclear , but they most likely hailed from Asia Minor , like many other prestigious families of the military aristocracy of the period .

= = Wars against Bulgaria = =

Nikephoros appears for the first time in Emperor Basil II 's Bulgarian wars , in 999 / 1000 , 1000 / 1 or 1002 , depending on the source . At the time he was a protospatharios , and along with the patrikios Theodorokanos , he commanded a campaign deep into Bulgarian lands . Setting out from Mosynopolis , the two generals crossed the Balkan Mountains and captured the old Bulgarian capitals of Pliska and Great Preslav , along with Little Preslav . They then plundered the Dobruja , left behind garrisons and returned to their base . It is unclear whether he was already the military governor (strategos) of Philippopolis at the time , or was appointed to it after the successful conclusion of the campaign , as John Skylitzes reports , when Theodorokanos , who is known to have previously held the post , retired due to his advanced age .

Xiphias is next mentioned in the Battle of Kleidion in 1014 , when Basil II was attempting to force the pass known as Kleidion or Kiava Longos , which the Bulgarians under their ruler Samuil had strongly fortified . Xiphias , still strategos of Philippopolis , suggested to the Emperor to bypass the Bulgarian positions and strike them from the rear . After Basil agreed , Xiphias led a picked infantry detachment over Mount Belasica , and on 29 July 1014 , led his troops on a charge on the unsuspecting Bulgarians , who panicked and broke before the unexpected attack . For this feat , which resulted in one of the most decisive victories in the long Bulgarian war , he was rewarded with promotion to the rank of patrikios . In early 1015 , Xiphias , along with Constantine Diogenes , subdued the region of Moglena , which had rebelled against imperial rule . Towards the end of the same year he campaigned from Mosynopolis to the region of Triaditza (Sofia) , razing its environs and capturing the fort of Boyana . Finally , in the last year of the Bulgarian war , in 1018 , starting from Kastoria he subdued the remaining Bulgarian strongholds in the region of Servia .

= = Conspiracy and exile = =

In 1021 / 22 , however , Xiphias , now posted at Caesarea as strategos of the Anatolic Theme , fell out with Basil II because he was not allowed to accompany the Emperor on his campaign against the Kingdom of Georgia . Xiphias allied himself against the Emperor with the magnate Nikephoros Phokas Barytrachelos , whose father had risen in revolt in the early years of Basil II 's reign . The two men planned to kill Basil , and that one of them should take his place ; who it would be remained undecided , but it was mainly Phokas ' name and followers that lent the conspiracy weight . The conspiracy was apparently also known and supported by King George I of Georgia , who thus hoped to force Basil to abandon his invasion . When the emperor learned of the plot , however , he did not turn back , but instead sent letters to the two rebel leaders separately , aiming to sow distrust between them . Basil 's ploy bore fruit very soon , for on 15 August 1022 , Xiphias assassinated Phokas . The latter 's supporters dispersed , and the nascent rebellion collapsed . Xiphias was then

forced to surrender to the Emperor 's envoy , Theophylact Dalassenos , who became the new strategos of the Anatolics .

Brought to Constantinople , Xiphias was tonsured and banished to Antigone , one of the Princes Islands . Following his return to the capital after his Georgian expedition , Basil II had most of his co - @ conspirators imprisoned and their estates confiscated . The patrikios Pherses the Iberian was executed , while two imperial chamberlains were also killed : one by Basil 's own hand , and the other , who had tried to poison the Emperor , was thrown to the beasts .

According to the contemporary historian Yahya of Antioch , the conspirators of 1022 were released by Constantine VIII after Basil 's death in 1025 , but Xiphias remained in exile until 1028 , when the new emperor , Romanos III , released him . Xiphias , however , was by now too old and weary , and soon retired to the Stoudios Monastery . Nothing further is known of him .