

= Battle of Anzen =

The Battle of Anzen or Dazimon was fought on 22 July 838 at Anzen or Dazimon ( now Dazmana , Turkey ) between the Byzantine Empire and the forces of the Abbasid Caliphate . The Abbasids had launched a huge expedition with two separate armies in retaliation for the Byzantine emperor Theophilos 's successes the previous year , and aimed to sack Amorion , one of Byzantium 's largest cities . Theophilos with his army confronted the smaller Muslim army , under the Iranian vassal prince Afshin , at Dazimon .

The numerically superior Byzantine army was initially successful , but when Theophilos resolved to lead an attack in person , his absence from his usual post caused panic among the Byzantine troops , who feared that he had been killed . Coupled with a fierce counterattack by Afshin 's Turkish horse @-@ archers , the Byzantine army broke and fled . Theophilos and his guard were besieged for a while in a hill , before making good their escape . The defeat opened the way for the brutal sack of Amorion a few weeks later , one of the most serious blows Byzantium suffered in the centuries @-@ long Arab ? Byzantine Wars .

= = Background = =

In 829 , as the young Theophilos ( reigned 829 ? 842 ) ascended the Byzantine throne , the Arab ? Byzantine wars had continued on and off for almost two centuries . An ambitious man and a convinced iconoclast , Theophilos sought to bolster his regime and gain support for his religious policies by military success against the Abbasid Caliphate , Byzantium 's major antagonist . Throughout the 830s , Theophilos launched a series of campaigns against the Caliphate . These were only moderately successful , but sufficient for the imperial propaganda to portray Theophilos in the traditional Roman manner as a " victorious emperor " . In 837 , Theophilos personally led a major campaign to the region of the upper Euphrates , sacking the cities of Arsamosata and Sozopetra ? which some sources claim as Abbasid Caliph al @-@ Mu 'tasim ( r . 833 ? 842 ) own birthplace ? and forcing the city of Melitene to pay tribute and deliver hostages in return for being spared .

In response , al @-@ Mu 'tasim decided to launch a major punitive expedition against Byzantium , aiming to capture the two major Byzantine cities of central Anatolia , Ancyra and Amorion . The latter was probably the largest city in Anatolia at the time , as well as the birthplace of the reigning Amorion dynasty and consequently of particular symbolic importance ; according to the chronicles , al @-@ Mu 'tasim 's soldiers painted the word " Amorion " on their shields and banners . A vast army was gathered at Tarsus ( 80 @,@ 000 men according to Treadgold ) , which was then divided into two main forces . The northern force , under the Iranian vassal prince of Usrushana Afshin , would invade the Armeniac theme from the region of Melitene , joining up with the forces of the city 's emir , Omar al @-@ Aqta . The southern , main force , under the Caliph himself , would pass the Cilician Gates into Cappadocia and head to Ancyra . After the city was taken , the Arab armies would join and march to Amorion . Afshin 's force included , according to John Skylitzes , the entire army of the vassal Armenian princes , and numbered an estimated 20 @,@ 000 ( Haldon ) to 30 @,@ 000 men ( Treadgold ) , among whom were some 10 @,@ 000 Turkish horse @-@ archers .

On the Byzantine side , Theophilos became soon aware of the Caliph 's intentions , and set out from Constantinople in early June . His army included the men from the Anatolian and possibly also the European themes , the elite tagmata regiments , as well as a contingent of Persian and Kurdish Khurramites . Under their leader Nasr ( converted to Christianity and baptized as Theophobos ) , these people had fled religious persecution in the Caliphate , deserted to the Empire in the previous years , and formed the so @-@ called " Persian tourma " . Setting up camp at Dorylaion , the Emperor divided his forces : a strong corps was sent to reinforce the garrison of Amorion , while he himself set out with the remainder ( circa 25 @,@ 000 according to Haldon and 40 @,@ 000 according to Treadgold ) to interpose himself between the Cilician Gates and Ancyra .

= = Battle = =

In mid @-@ June , Afshin crossed the Anti @-@ Taurus Mountains and encamped at the fort of Dazimon ( Greek : ??????? , modern Dazmana ) , between Amaseia and Tokat , a strategically important location which served as a concentration point ( aplekton ) for the Byzantines too . A few days later , on 19 June , the vanguard of the main Abbasid army also invaded Byzantine territory , followed two days after by the Caliph with the main body . Theophilos was informed of these movements in mid @-@ July . Afshin 's force was smaller , but also threatened to cut off his supply lines . Consequently , the Emperor left a small covering force against the Caliph 's army and marched east to confront Afshin . On 21 July , the imperial army came into view of the Arab force , and encamped on a hill in the plain of Dazimonitis south of the fort of Dazimon , named Anzen ( Greek : ????? ) .

Although Theophilos 's principal commanders , Theophobos and the Domestic of the Schools Manuel , both advised for a surprise night attack , the Emperor sided with the opinion of the other officers and resolved to wait and launch his attack on the next day . The Byzantine army attacked at dawn , and initially made good progress : they drove back one wing of the opposite army , inflicting 3 @,@ 000 casualties on the Arabs . Near noon , Theophilos resolved to reinforce the other wing , and detached 2 @,@ 000 Byzantines and the Kurdish contingent to do so , abandoning his post and passing behind his own army 's lines . At this point , however , Afshin launched his Turkish horse @-@ archers in a ferocious counter @-@ attack which stymied the Byzantine advance and allowed the Arab forces to regroup . The Byzantine troops then noticed the emperor 's absence , and , thinking he had been killed , began to waver . This soon turned into a disorderly retreat ; some men fled as far as Constantinople , bringing with them the rumour that the Emperor had been killed . Some units , however , were apparently able to retreat in good order and assemble at a place called Chiliokomon .

Theophilos found himself isolated with his tagmata and the Kurds on the hill of Anzen . The Arabs proceeded to surround the hill , but the Byzantines were saved by a sudden rain , which loosened the strings of the Turkish bows , rendering them useless . Afshin then sent for catapults to be brought up to batter the Byzantine position . At the same time , Theophilos 's officers , afraid of treachery by the Kurdish troops , persuaded him to withdraw . Breaking through the Arab lines and suffering many wounds in the process ( the sources variously credit Manuel , who was severely wounded and possibly died soon after , and Theophobos for saving the Emperor ) , Theophilos and his small escort managed to reach safety at Chiliokomon , where he gradually re @-@ assembled the remnants of his army .

= = Aftermath = =

In the aftermath of this defeat , and with rumours circulating in Constantinople of his death , Theophilos 's position was precarious . He abandoned the campaign and withdrew to Dorylaion , whence he soon departed for the imperial capital . Ancyra itself was left abandoned , and plundered by the Arab army on 27 July . Then the united Abbasid army marched unopposed to Amorion , which fell after a siege of two weeks . Out of its entire population of some 70 @,@ 000 , only about half survived the brutal sack , to be sold as slaves . The fall of the city was one of the heaviest blows Byzantium suffered in the entire 9th century , both in material and symbolic terms . Fortunately for the Empire , news of a rebellion in the Caliphate forced al @-@ Mu 'tasim to withdraw soon after .

At the same time , Theophilos had to deal with a revolt by Theophobos and his Kurds . When rumours of Theophilos 's death reached the capital , the name of Theophobos , who was related to the Emperor by marriage and apparently an iconodule , was put forward by some as the new emperor . On returning to the city , Theophilos recalled his general , but the latter , fearful of being punished , fled with his loyal Kurds to Sinope , where he was proclaimed emperor . In the event , however , Theophobos was persuaded to surrender peacefully in the next year , while the " Persian " corps was disbanded and its men dispersed throughout the themes .

Tragic though they were for the Byzantines at the time , the defeat at Anzen and the subsequent sack of Amorion were militarily of no long @-@ term importance to the Empire , since the Abbasids

failed to follow up on their success . They did , however , play a crucial role in discrediting iconoclasm , which had always relied on military success to maintain its validity . Shortly after Theophilos 's sudden death in 842 , the veneration of icons was restored as part of the Triumph of Orthodoxy throughout the Empire . The Battle of Anzen is also notable for illustrating the difficulties faced by the Byzantine military of the time against horse @-@ archers , a remarkable change from the army of the 6th ? 7th centuries , when such skills formed a core part of Byzantine tactical doctrine . It is also remarkable for being the first confrontation of the middle Byzantine army with the Turkic nomads from Central Asia , whose descendants , the Seljuq Turks , would emerge as Byzantium 's major antagonists from the mid @-@ 11th century on .