

= Bardas =

Bardas (Greek : ?????? ; died 21 April 866) was a Byzantine noble and high @-@ ranking minister . As the brother of Empress Theodora , he rose to high office under Theophilos (r . 829 ? 842) . Although sidelined after Theophilos 's death by Theodora and Theoktistos , in 855 he engineered Theoktistos 's murder and became the de facto regent for his nephew , Michael III (r . 842 ? 867) . Rising to the rank of Caesar , he was the effective ruler of the Byzantine Empire for ten years , a period which saw military success , renewed diplomatic and missionary activity , and an intellectual revival that heralded the Macedonian Renaissance . He was assassinated in 866 at the instigation of Michael III 's new favourite , Basil the Macedonian , who a year later would usurp the throne for himself and install his own dynasty on the Byzantine throne .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Bardas was born to the droungarios Marinos and Theoktiste , and was the elder brother of Empress Theodora , the wife of Emperor Theophilos , and of Petronas . Three other sisters , Maria , Sophia , and Irene , are recorded by Theophanes Continuatus . The family was of Armenian origin and had settled in Paphlagonia . Some modern genealogists , including Cyril Toumanoff and Nicholas Adontz , have suggested a link of Bardas ' family with the Armenian noble clan of the Mamikonian . According to Nina Garsoïan in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium , however , " [a] ttractive though it is , this thesis cannot be proven for want of sources . "

In 837 , Theophilos raised him to the rank of patrikios and sent him together with the general Theophobos in a campaign against the Abasgians , but the Byzantines were defeated . With the death of Theophilos , the young Michael III (r . 842 ? 867) ascended the throne . As he was only two years old , a regency council was set up headed by Theodora . Bardas and his brother Petronas , as well as their relative Sergios Niketiates , were also members , but it was the logothete Theoktistos who quickly established himself as Theodora 's chief advisor . Bardas still played an active role in the early days of the regency , encouraging Theodora to abandon Iconoclasm for good and taking part in the investigations that led to the deposition of the pro @-@ iconoclast patriarch John the Grammarian and the restoration of the veneration of icons in 843 . In 844 , however , Theoktistos blamed Bardas for the desertions that led to the Byzantine defeat in the Battle of Mauropotamos against the Abbasids , even though the logothete himself led the Byzantine army , and had him exiled from Constantinople .

Following Bardas 's exile and the death of Sergios , Theoktistos ruled supreme alongside Theodora for a decade . In 855 , Michael III turned fifteen and thus came nominally of age . His mother and Theoktistos arranged a bride show and selected Eudokia Dekapolitissa as his bride , disregarding Michael 's attachment to his mistress , Eudokia Ingerina . Bardas used Michael 's resentment for the high @-@ handed manner in which he was treated and began to turn him against the regency . With Michael 's backing , Bardas was allowed to return to the capital , and on 20 November 855 , Theoktistos was murdered . This was possibly done at the emperor 's behest , for Bardas is said to have favoured a more " elegant " removal of his rival .

= = = Ascendancy and fall = = =

With the death of Theoktistos , the regency was at an end ; in early 856 , Michael proclaimed his assumption of full imperial power , and in 857 Theodora was forced to retire to the Gastria Monastery . Nevertheless , as Michael was more interested in his pleasures and his continuing affair with Eudokia Ingerina , Bardas now became the de facto regent of the Empire . By ca . 858 he was promoted to the highest state offices (magistros and chartoularios tou kanikleiou) , followed by his promotion to kouropalates ? according to Symeon Logothetes , this happened after a failed

assassination attempt masterminded by Theodora ? and finally , on 22 (or 26) April 862 , to Caesar . Petronas also emerged from obscurity at the same time , becoming strategos of the Thracian Theme and leading a series of successful raids against the Arabs .

Although later sources are critical of his character , describing him as vain , avaricious and power @-@ hungry , his capabilities as an administrator are widely acknowledged . Thus Bardas founded the Magnaura School with seats for philosophy , grammar , astronomy and mathematics , supported scholars like Leo the Mathematician and promoted the missionary activities of Cyril and Methodius to Greater Moravia . He also scored a number of successes against the Arabs in the East , culminating in the decisive Battle of Lalakaon in 863 , and enforced the Christianization of Bulgaria by Byzantine missionaries . The Patria of Constantinople praise him also for his building activity , but aside from a church dedicated to Saint Demetrius outside the city itself , most of the buildings attributed to him were probably the work of Basil I the Macedonian (r . 867 ? 886) .

In 858 , Bardas deposed patriarch Ignatios and appointed Photios , well @-@ educated but a layman , in his stead . Later chronicles report that Ignatios had excluded Bardas from communion because he maintained an incestuous relationship with one of his daughters @-@ in @-@ law , but the real reason for Ignatios 's deposition was probably the patriarch 's staunch refusal to tonsure Empress Theodora against her will , as demanded by Bardas . The irregular elevation of Photios , however , riled with Pope Nicholas I , who refused to recognize it . Coupled with competition between Rome and Constantinople over their missionary activities in and jurisdiction over Moravia and Bulgaria , relations with the papacy remained tense .

Despite his great authority , Bardas 's control over his nephew was not absolute : after he managed to persuade him to dismiss his old chamberlain (parakoimomenos) , Damian , Michael appointed to the post not one of Bardas 's own protégés , but his favourite companion , the ruthlessly ambitious Basil the Macedonian . Bardas 's own position was further weakened in early 866 , when Michael learned that Eudokia Ingerina was pregnant to the future Leo VI : hitherto Bardas stood to succeed to the throne if anything should happen to the emperor , but now Michael had a direct heir . Instead of divorcing his wife and marrying his long @-@ time mistress , however , Michael married off Ingerina to Basil instead , who divorced his own wife first . In spring of the same year , Bardas began assembling a large @-@ scale expedition against the Saracen stronghold of Crete . Accompanied by Michael , Basil and the court , Bardas made for Miletus , where the army was assembling . There , on 21 April 866 , he was murdered by Basil , ostensibly for plotting against the emperor .

The campaign was abandoned while Michael and Basil returned to Constantinople , where Michael adopted his friend and made him co @-@ emperor . In September 867 , Basil had Michael III assassinated as well , ending the Amorian Dynasty and inaugurating the Macedonian period of Byzantine history .

= = = Family = = =

Bardas was married twice . From his unknown first wife , who must have died before 855 , he had a son named Antigonos , a daughter named Irene , an unnamed son and another daughter who married the logothete Symbatios (although she may be identical with Irene) . Some time around 855 , Bardas married for a second time , but divorced this wife , by the name of Theodosia , in 862 . Of Bardas 's sons , Antigonos was appointed Domestic of the Schools while still a boy and still held the post at the time of his father 's murder , while little is known about the other son , except that in 858 he was given the hand of his father 's mistress , whom Bardas had discarded in order to marry Theodosia , and was appointed monostrategos (" single @-@ general ") of the Empire 's European themes . Bardas 's second daughter was married to the patrikios and logothete Symbatios . Symbatios participated in the plot to assassinate Bardas , hoping to succeed him . He rose in revolt when Basil became co @-@ emperor , but was defeated , mutilated , and exiled .