

= Bardanes Tourkos =

Bardanes , nicknamed Tourkos , " the Turk " (Greek : ????????? ? ???????? , fl . 795 ? 803) , was a Byzantine general of Armenian origin who launched an unsuccessful rebellion against Emperor Nikephoros I (r . 802 ? 811) in 803 . Although a major supporter of Byzantine empress Irene of Athens (r . 797 ? 802) , soon after her overthrow he was appointed by Nikephoros as commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the Anatolian armies . From this position , he launched a revolt in July 803 , probably in opposition to Nikephoros 's economic and religious policies . His troops marched towards Constantinople , but failed to win popular support . At this point , some of his major supporters deserted him and , reluctant to engage the loyalist forces in battle , Bardanes gave up and chose to surrender himself . He retired as a monk to a monastery he had founded . There he was blinded , possibly on Nikephoros 's orders .

= = Origin and early career = =

Nothing is known of the early life of Bardanes . He is usually regarded by modern scholars as an Armenian on account of his first name (a Hellenized form of Vardan) , whilst his sobriquet " Tourkos " , which was bestowed upon him , probably disparagingly , only after his revolt , could suggest a Khazar origin .

Bardanes is probably identical with the patrikios Bardanios who appears in the Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor in the mid @-@ 790s . In 795 , he was Domestic of the Schools (commander of the Scholai guards) , and was dispatched to arrest the monk Plato of Sakkoudion for his public opposition to the second marriage of Emperor Constantine VI (r . 780 ? 797) to Plato 's niece Theodote . In 797 , as strategos (military governor) of the Thracesian Theme , this same Bardanios supported the Empress @-@ mother Irene of Athens when she usurped the throne from her son . On Easter Monday , 1 April 799 , he is recorded as one of the four patrikioi (along with Niketas Triphyllios , Sisinnios Triphyllios and Constantine Boilas) who led the horses of the Empress 's carriage on a unique triumphal procession from the palace to the Church of the Holy Apostles .

Irene herself was overthrown and exiled by the logothetes tou genikou (finance minister) Nikephoros on 31 October 802 . At the time , Bardanes was still patrikios and strategos of the Thracesians , but was soon transferred to command the powerful Anatolic Theme . In the next year , probably in preparation for a campaign against the Arabs following Nikephoros 's refusal to continue the annual payment of tribute to the Abbasid Caliphate , the Emperor apparently appointed Bardanes to the post of monostrategos (" single @-@ general " , in effect commander @-@ in @-@ chief) of the Empire 's five Anatolian land themes , only conferred in exceptional cases . However , this appointment is by no means certain ; he is mentioned as monostrategos only by later sources , while near @-@ contemporary ones mention him only as strategos of the Anatolics . It is possible that later sources misinterpreted his title to mean " general of all the East (Anatole) " .

= = Revolt = =

In July 803 , an Abbasid army under al @-@ Qasim , a son of the Caliph Harun al @-@ Rashid (r . 786 ? 809) , began advancing towards the Byzantine frontier . As Nikephoros had broken his foot in early May , it fell to Bardanes to lead the Byzantine army against the Arabs . He therefore ordered the thematic armies of Anatolia assembled in the Anatolic Theme . In mid @-@ July 803 (the date is variously interpreted by modern scholars as 16 , 18 or 19 July) , Bardanes was proclaimed emperor by the assembled troops of the Anatolic , Opsician , Thracesian and Bucellarian themes . Crucially , the Armeniac Theme , either because of its traditional rivalry with the Anatolics , or because it had not yet joined up with the rest of the army , did not join the uprising . It has also been hypothesized that Bardanes may have participated in the suppression of the Armeniacs ' revolt in 793 , leaving a memory of hostility towards him amongst its troops . Among the Byzantine chronicles that report on Bardanes 's revolt , the 10th @-@ century Theophanes Continuatus and the 13th

@-@ century Synopsis Chronike indicate that the troops were motivated chiefly by economic concerns . Nikephoros had initiated a strict budgetary policy to shore up the Empire 's finances . The Emperor had revoked the exemption on inheritance tax for the soldiers , and had apparently left them unpaid for some time as well . Bardanes , on the other hand , had a good reputation in this regard , fairly dividing the booty won from the campaigns against the Arabs amongst the soldiers .

For the motives of Bardanes himself , the situation is less clear . According to the Byzantine chroniclers , he accepted the acclamation only reluctantly , after vainly entreating the soldiers to allow him to leave . According to another story however , before his revolt , Bardanes , accompanied by his three principal associates , Thomas the Slav , Leo the Armenian and Michael the Amorian visited a holy man at Philomelion to learn of the prospects for the uprising . The monk correctly prophesied that his rebellion would fail , that Thomas too would begin a revolt , and that Leo and Michael would reign as emperors . Although possibly a later invention , this story may suggest that Bardanes planned his revolt beforehand . Aside from any personal ambition , Bardanes was also a member of the landed aristocracy and a devoted iconophile who supported Empress Irene 's regime . He has therefore also been seen as the representative of the opposition by the traditional elites to Nikephoros 's policies , both in the confessional area , where the Emperor maintained a carefully neutral stance towards both iconoclasts and iconophiles , and in the socio @-@ financial sphere , where new taxes on landed property and the expropriation of ecclesiastical estates hurt their interests . Historian Warren Treadgold further suggested that the revolt was a reaction against Nikephoros 's usurpation and aimed , at least ostensibly , at the restoration of Irene . Her death , however , at Lesbos on 8 August deprived the rebels of any claim to legitimacy .

The revolt probably took place at Amorion , the capital of the Anatolic Theme . From there , the rebel army , comprising almost half of the Empire 's available military forces , marched north and west , following the military road to Nicomedia and then to Chrysopolis , the town that lay across the Bosphorus from the imperial capital , Constantinople . There , Bardanes encamped for eight days , awaiting a possible uprising against Nikephoros inside the capital in response to his own rebellion . Since this did not materialize , and the populace proved not overtly enthusiastic , he withdrew to the great army base at Malagina . There , two of his associates , Michael the Amorian and Leo the Armenian , abandoned him , and were richly rewarded by Nikephoros for their defection : Michael became Count of the Tent to the Emperor , and Leo was appointed commander of the Foederati regiment .

This desertion further discouraged Bardanes , and , reluctant to face the loyalist army in battle , he opted for a negotiated surrender through the mediation of Joseph , the hegumenos of the Kathara monastery who had officiated at Constantine VI 's second marriage . Bardanes received a letter signed by the Patriarch Tarasios and several leading senators which guaranteed that neither he nor his subordinates would be punished if they surrendered . As a further guarantee of good faith , Nikephoros sent his own gold cross along with the letter . Satisfied by these assurances , on 8 September Bardanes left his army and , through Nicaea , sought refuge in the monastery of Herakleios at Cius . From there , he embarked on a ship that took him to the island of Prote . Taking the monastic name Sabbas , Bardanes then entered a monastery that he had founded there in the past .

= = Aftermath of the revolt = =

After Bardanes 's retirement , Nikephoros formally dismissed him and confiscated much of his property . The other thematic generals who took part in the revolt were also dismissed from their posts , the metropolitan bishops of Sardis , Amorion and Nicomedia were punished for their support of the uprising by exile to the small island of Pantelleria off Sicily , while the soldiers of the Anatolian armies were left unpaid for a year .

In December 803 (Treadgold puts it in 804) , however , a group of " Lycaonian " (possibly Paulician) soldiers disembarked at Prote and blinded Bardanes . This was a highly symbolic act : blinding was the usual punishment usually meted out to heretics and rebels , or to deposed emperors and other political rivals to prevent them from becoming a threat . It is very likely that this

was done at the behest of the Emperor himself , although in a later public statement before the Senate , Nikephoros swore that he had nothing to do with it . Most scholars believe in Nikephoros 's direct involvement , but Treadgold holds it likelier that the soldiers acted on their own , since Bardanes was no longer a credible threat to the Emperor . In the event , despite pressure from the Patriarch and the Senate to punish the perpetrators , and his own pledge to do so , Nikephoros let them go .

Bardanes 's revolt temporarily weakened Byzantium , especially in its capability to deal with the Arab threat to the East , but Qasim 's invasion was of limited scope , and his father 's far larger intervention shortly after also resulted in no major military confrontations : Harun withdrew after a truce was concluded in exchange for a modest sum . Thus the revolt did not seriously affect the army or most of Anatolia . Nevertheless , it is indicative of the soldiers ' dissatisfaction with Nikephoros , which would surface again in subsequent years and prove a constant source of trouble throughout his reign .

= = Family = =

Bardanes was married to a woman named Domnika , with whom he had several children . Thekla , the wife of Michael the Amorian , is usually identified with one of them , as Theophanes Continuatus and Genesius record that Bardanes married two of his daughters to Michael the Amorian and another of his aides . Warren Treadgold identifies the second daughter with a woman named or nicknamed Barka , whom he regards as the first wife of Leo the Armenian and whom Leo divorced shortly after his accession in 813 in order to marry Theodosia . She would then be the real mother of Leo 's firstborn son , Symbatios / Constantine . Theodosia , however , is the only clearly attested wife of Leo , and there is no evidence for a divorce and remarriage . Leo is also named the " cousin " of Bardanes , but it is unclear whether this is literal or in the meaning of " brother in law " . If the former is the case , the familial relationship alone would bar any such marriage . In addition , the tale is very likely simply a later invention , inspired by the marriage of Thekla to Michael the Amorian . A son by the name of Bryennios or Bryenes is known , who held a high official post in 813 . An unnamed , unmarried daughter is recorded , as well as several other unnamed younger children , in 803 ; along with Domnika , they were left a part of Bardanes 's fortune , part of which was donated to the poor , and the rest used to found a small monastery in Constantinople , where they retired .