

= Nikephoros Phokas Barytrachelos =

Nikephoros Phokas (Greek : ????????? ?????) , surnamed Barytrachelos (????????????? , " heavy @-@ neck " ; Armenian : Հարձեղ [a] viz , Georgian : ზარეზი Ts 'arvezi , " wry @-@ neck ") , was a Byzantine aristocrat and magnate , the last major member of the Phokas family to try and claim the imperial throne . He was a son of the general Bardas Phokas the Younger and great @-@ nephew of Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas , and played an active role in his father 's failed rebellion against Basil II in 987 ? 989 . After the death of his father , he sought and received Basil 's pardon . Nothing further is known of him until 1022 when , along with the general Nikephoros Xiphias , he launched another rebellion . The revolt gathered widespread support , but mistrust between the two leaders led to Phokas ' assassination by Xiphias on 15 August 1022 . The rebellion collapsed quickly after that .

= = Life = =

Nikephoros Phokas Barytrachelos was a son of the general Bardas Phokas the Younger , and had one older brother , Leo . In spring 970 , following the murder of Barytrachelos ' great @-@ uncle Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas by John I Tzimiskes , his father tried to raise a rebellion against the new regime in the family 's base at Cappadocia . Tzimiskes dispatched his lieutenant Bardas Skleros against Bardas Phokas . Skleros was able to lure away many of Phokas ' supporters , until he was forced to surrender . Although not explicitly mentioned in the sources , Nikephoros probably shared his father 's fortune , being exiled to the Aegean island of Chios with the rest of his family .

= = = Role in the revolts of Bardas Phokas and Bardas Skleros = = =

In 978 , after Tzimiskes ' death and the rise of Basil II to the throne , Bardas Phokas was recalled to lead the imperial forces against his old rival Bardas Skleros , who had rebelled and seized much of Asia Minor . After early reverses , the loyalist forces under Phokas proved victorious in spring 979 , forcing Skleros to flee to Byzantium 's eastern Muslim neighbours , finding refuge in the Buyid court at Baghdad . In 987 , however , Bardas Skleros was released from Baghdad and tried to raise another revolt . He contacted Bardas Phokas for a common undertaking against Basil II , but Phokas deceived and imprisoned Skleros , before finally launching his own uprising by proclaiming himself emperor in August / September 987 . It is here that Nikephoros is named for the first time in the sources : his father sent him to David III of Tao to secure military aid , and to confront the loyalist general Gregory Taronites , who had landed in the Phokades ' rear at Trebizond and had raised an army of Armenians in the eastern provinces . Nikephoros secured 1 @, @ 000 Georgian soldiers from David and defeated Taronites , but soon after that news reached him of the death of his father at the Battle of Abydos on 13 April 989 . Bardas Phokas ' demise led to the immediate collapse of the rebellion : the Georgians returned to their country , and Nikephoros ' troops dispersed to their homes . Nikephoros fled to the fortress of Tyropoion , where his mother resided and where the imprisoned Bardas Skleros was held . Along with his brother Leo , Nikephoros now supported Skleros ' candidacy as emperor , but the latter , old and weary , preferred to give up the struggle and submit to the emperor in exchange for leniency . Like Bardas Skleros , Nikephoros received a pardon , and was allowed to retain his privileges . Leo on the other hand tried to resist from his base at Antioch , but the city 's inhabitants surrendered him to Basil .

= = = Rebellion with Nikephoros Xiphias and death = = =

Nothing is heard of Nikephoros Phokas Barytrachelos until the summer of 1022 , when he conspired with the general Nikephoros Xiphias against Basil II , who since spring had been engaged in a campaign against the Georgian king George I. The two conspirators aimed to overthrow Basil and have one of them replace him , but the issue of who would have precedence was unresolved , and would lead to the rebellion 's quick downfall . Although Xiphias held the prestigious post of

strategos of the Anatolic Theme and Phokas held no office but the title of patrikios , according to the report of the contemporary Christian Arab historian Yahya of Antioch , great numbers of aristocrats flocked to him due to his family 's influence , provoking Xiphias ' envy .

The rebellion of the two men was particularly threatening to the emperor , as it took control over Cappadocia and threatened to cut off his rear and leave him stranded between two enemies . Indeed , the conspirators are said to have been in contact with George I for that purpose . Basil first withdrew to the safety of the fortress of Mazdat , and according to John Skylitzes sent an envoy to the rebel leaders aiming to sow distrust between them , while according to Yahya the emperor appointed as the new governor of the Anatolic Theme Theophylact Dalassenos and sent him to suppress the revolt . Whether the envoy accomplished his task is unknown , but on 15 August 1022 , Xiphias arranged a meeting with Phokas , where the latter was murdered by one of Xiphias ' servants . Armenian sources however report , rather dubiously , that Phokas was killed by the former king of Vaspurakan , Senekerim @-@ Hovhannes , or his son David , or one of their followers . The severed head was sent to Basil , who mounted it on a stake and put it on public display at Mazdat .

Following the death of Phokas , the rebellion collapsed , and Xiphias was arrested and forced to become a monk . Released from the threat to his rear , Basil II swiftly and decisively defeated George I , and imposed his terms on him . The other supporters of the uprising were imprisoned and released in 1025 , after the death of Basil II and the succession of his younger brother , Constantine VIII . In 1026 , however , Constantine VIII accused the last surviving member of the once great family , Bardas Phokas (possibly a son or nephew of Nikephoros Barytrachelos) , of plotting against the throne , and had him blinded .