

= Manuel the Armenian =

Manuel the Armenian was a prominent Byzantine general of Armenian origin , active from circa 810 until his death . After reaching the highest military ranks , a palace conspiracy forced him to seek refuge in the Abbasid court in 829 . He returned to Byzantine service the next year , receiving the position of Domestic of the Schools from Emperor Theophilos , who had married his niece Theodora . Manuel remained in the post throughout Theophilos 's reign , and reportedly saved the emperor 's life in the Battle of Anzen in 838 . According to one report , he died on 27 July 838 of wounds received during the battle , but other sources record his survival past this date , ascribing him a major role in the regency that governed the empire after Theophilos 's death , and report that he died some time around 860 .

= = Biography = =

Manuel was of Armenian origin , and the brother of Marinos , the father of the future Byzantine empress Theodora . Manuel first appears in the reign of Michael I Rangabe (ruled 811 ? 813) , when he held the post of protostrator (head of the imperial stables) . At the time , he must still have been young , probably in his twenties . Although he urged Michael to confront Leo the Armenian , following Michael 's deposition by Leo (r . 813 ? 820) , Manuel was promoted to the rank of patrikios and entrusted with the post of strategos of the Armeniac or the Anatolic Theme . The latter post was the most senior of the Byzantine Empire 's thematic governors , and Leo himself had held the office prior to his accession . According to historians John B. Bury and Warren Treadgold , in early 819 and for about a year , Leo seems to have appointed Manuel to the exceptional post of monostrategos (" single @-@ general ") of the five land themes of Asia Minor , but this unusual concentration of command authority was apparently directed towards the more effective suppression of iconophile resistance against Leo 's reinstatement of Iconoclasm rather than for military purposes . This appointment is , however , most likely a misreading of the primary source , according to the editors of the *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* . According to the history of Michael the Syrian , at about the same time Manuel was responsible for the negotiations with the Khurramite refugees and their leader , Nasr , who became baptized as Theophobos in Byzantine service ; however , Michael 's chronology of this episode is confused and of doubtful accuracy .

Manuel 's career under Leo 's successor , Michael II the Amorian (r . 820 ? 829) , is unclear , as he is not mentioned in the sources during this period . Certainly at the time of the outbreak of the great rebellion of Thomas the Slav , the strategos of the Armeniacs was Olbianos , while the Anatolics joined the rebellion . Manuel himself , however , evidently remained loyal to Michael , and it was probably the latter who raised him to the rank of magistros . The editors of the *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* suggest that Manuel may have been recalled by Michael to Constantinople , especially if the marriage of Michael 's son and heir Theophilos (r . 829 ? 842) and Manuel 's niece Theodora took place around 821 , as suggested by E.W. Brooks , and not around 830 , as suggested by Treadgold .

= = Escape to the Caliphate = =

In 829 , either some time before (according to Theophanes Continuatus , followed by E.W. Brooks and the *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* and others) or shortly after (according to Symeon Logothetes , accepted by Treadgold , the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* and others) the death of Michael and the accession of Theophilos , Manuel defected to the Abbasids as a result of machinations at court : the logothetes tou dromou (foreign minister) Myron had accused him to the new emperor of plotting to seize the throne . Using the carriages of the imperial post , he crossed Asia Minor in haste and offered his services to Caliph al @-@ Ma 'mun (r . 813 ? 833) , on condition that he would not be forced to convert to Islam . According to the 13th @-@ century historian Vardan Areveltsi , so great was Ma 'mun 's joy at this defection that he gave Manuel a daily salary of 1 @,@ 306 silver dirhams , and continually presented him with gifts .

Theophilos , in turn , was hesitant to believe the accusations , and was eventually convinced by the protovestiaros (chamberlain) Leo Chamodrakon and the synkellos John the Grammarian of his general 's innocence . He therefore resolved to get Manuel to return , and sent John the Grammarian to Baghdad on a diplomatic mission in the winter of 829 / 830 , ostensibly in order to announce his accession . John was indeed able to see Manuel in private and offered him the Emperor 's pardon , which Manuel seemed to accept , although for the time being , Manuel remained publicly loyal to his Abbasid allegiance .

In the summer of 830 , Manuel participated in an Abbasid expedition against the Khurramite rebels of Babak Khorramdin in Adharbayjan , alongside a contingent of Byzantine captives . The campaign was nominally led by Ma 'mun 's own son , al- ' Abbas , but it is likely , according to Treadgold , that the more experienced Manuel was the actual commander , as Arabic and Syriac sources record that he commanded an " army of Arabs and Persians " . After winning a few modest successes , the army turned back south . Manuel , who by then had apparently won the confidence of his Arab minders , suggested that he and ' Abbas take a part of the army and raid over the Pass of Hadath into Byzantine Cappadocia . Once across the mountains , he and the other Byzantine captives neutralized ' Abbas and his escort , took their arms and escaped . ' Abbas and his companions were left behind unmolested , and allowed to return to Abbasid territory .

= = = Domestic of the Schools = = =

Theophilos welcomed Manuel with open arms , and named him Domestic of the Schools , commander of the elite tagma of the Scholae and de facto commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the entire army . Manuel would remain Theophilos 's leading general for the remainder of his reign . Furthermore , as the uncle of Theophilos 's wife , the Empress Theodora , his position at court was now unassailable , as shown by the fact that the Emperor later served as godfather for Manuel 's children . The Syriac sources even report that Theophilos made Manuel governor of the " inner regions " of the Empire .

In 831 , Manuel accompanied Theophilos in an expedition against a raid by the Cilician Arabs . The Byzantines caught up with the Arabs near the fort of Charsianon , and inflicted a heavy defeat upon them , killing 1 @,@ 600 and taking some seven thousand prisoner . Manuel is also recorded as accompanying Theophilos on his great expedition in 837 against the Arab cities of northern Mesopotamia , which led to the sack of Zapetra and Arsamosata . This campaign , however , and the atrocities committed by the Byzantines ' former Khurramite troops after the fall of Zapetra , provoked a large @-@ scale retaliatory campaign by Caliph al @-@ Mu 'tasim (r . 833 ? 842) . Manuel again accompanied the Emperor as his senior general , along with Nasr / Theophobos as commander of a large corps composed of former Khurramite refugees . Manuel participated in the disastrous Battle of Anzen on 22 July 838 , where Theophilos confronted the army of general al @-@ Afshin . During that battle , the imperial army broke and fled , and Theophilos with his retinue were surrounded by the Arabs on a hill with some 2 @,@ 000 Khurramites . When some of the latter reportedly began planning to surrender the Emperor to the Arabs , Manuel seized the Emperor 's horse by the bridle and forcibly led him away . With a few other officers , he managed to break through the Arab lines , and brought Theophilos to safety in the nearby village of Chiliokomon . During the battle , he received heavy wounds , and according to the chronicle of Symeon Logothetes , he died of them five days later , on 27 July 838 . He was buried in his palace in Constantinople , which lay near the Cistern of Aspar and which became a monastery named after him , now traditionally identified with the Kefeli Mosque .

= = = Possible life after 838 = = =

The chronicles of Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus (and following them Skylitzes and Zonaras) , however , report that he survived his wounds , allegedly being miraculously cured after renouncing iconoclasm at the behest of some monks . The same sources report that after Theophilos 's death , he was appointed a member of the regency council for the infant new emperor

Michael III (r . 842 ? 867) along with Theoktistos and Bardas , and to have refused the position of Emperor when the populace acclaimed him thus at the Hippodrome . The same writers report that he played an important role in the restoration of the icons , and that he became a protomagistros before falling out with Theoktistos , being accused of lèse @-@ majesté , and retiring from public life to his estates . According to the same sources , in the late 850s , he saved the Emperor 's life in another battle at Anzen and died shortly after . Traditional scholarship has largely accepted this account , but some modern historians have expressed doubts as to its veracity . The Belgian Byzantinist Henri Grégoire was the first to highlight its incompatibility with the narrative of Symeon Logothetes , speculating that it was a later invention , possibly carried out by the monks of the Monastery of Manuel , who venerated him as a saint and tried to mitigate his iconoclast past . Warren Treadgold , who considers Symeon Logothetes more reliable , also dismissed the reports of Manuel 's post @-@ 838 survival as invented .

Other modern scholars continue to support the possibility of his continued life after 838 , especially given the existence of a seal , dated to the mid @-@ 9th century , which names " Manuel patrikios , imperial protospatharios , magistros , and bagulos of the Emperor " , which seems to confirm both his survival into at least the early years of Michael III 's reign , and his reported role as a member of the regency . Even so , the stories about his activities , and in particular his role in the restoration of the icons and the alleged second battle at Anzen (which is clearly inspired by the events of 838) , are regarded as almost certainly fictitious . However , it may be that the story of his death after Theoktistos 's downfall is reliable , which would probably place it sometime between 855 and 863 .