

= Nikephoros (Caesar) =

Nikephoros (Greek : ?????????) , also Latinized as Nicephorus or Nicephoros , was the second son of Byzantine emperor Constantine V (reigned 741 ? 775) and Caesar of the Byzantine Empire . He was engaged in a plot against his half @-@ brother , Leo IV (r . 775 ? 780) , which cost Nikephoros his title , and was the focal point of numerous usurpation plots during the subsequent reigns of his nephew , Constantine VI (r . 780 ? 797) , and of Constantine 's mother , Irene of Athens (r . 797 ? 802) . He was therefore blinded and exiled to a monastery for most of his life , probably dying in the island of Aphousia sometime after 812 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and first conspiracies = = =

Nikephoros was born in the late 750s (circa 756 / 758) to Emperor Constantine V and his third wife Eudokia . Nikephoros was Constantine 's third son overall , following the future Leo IV , who was born 750 to Constantine 's first wife Irene of Khazaria , and Christopher , who was born in circa 755 to Eudokia . Either Christopher or Nikephoros were possibly twin brothers to Eudokia 's and Constantine 's only daughter , Anthousa . On April 1 , 769 , Eudokia was crowned as Augusta , and on the same occasion Christopher and Nikephoros were crowned and raised to the rank of Caesar , while their younger brother Niketas was made Nobilissimus . Nikephoros had two other younger brothers , Anthimos and Eudokimos , who were also named Nobilissimi at later dates .

When Constantine V died in 775 , his eldest son Leo IV ascended the Byzantine throne . Soon , Leo caused a rift with his half @-@ brothers , when he confiscated a large amount of gold reserved for their use and distributed it to the army and the citizens of Constantinople as a donative . Then , in spring 776 , a conspiracy headed by Nikephoros and involving a number of middle @-@ ranking courtiers was discovered . Nikephoros himself was stripped of his rank , but otherwise not harmed , while the other plotters were tonsured as monks and exiled to Cherson in the Crimea .

When Leo IV died in October 780 , his sole heir was the young Constantine VI , his son by the Empress Irene of Athens . Due to Constantine 's being underage , a regency was instituted under Irene , but this was not well received among leading officials . Not only was rule by a woman alien to the military @-@ dominated establishment of the time , but Irene was also a confirmed iconophile , an adherent of the veneration of holy images . This was regarded as heresy by the state @-@ sponsored doctrine of Iconoclasm , which was especially popular with the army and the officials loyal to Constantine V 's memory . A number of them , including the Postal Logothete (foreign minister) Gregory , the former strategos (governor) of the Anatolic Theme Bardas and Constantine , the commander of the Excubitors guard regiment , consequently favoured the rise of Nikephoros to the imperial throne . Barely a month and a half after Leo 's death , the plot was discovered . Irene had the conspirators exiled , and Nikephoros and his younger brothers were ordained as priests , removing them from the line of succession . To confirm this before the people , on Christmas Day 780 , Nikephoros and his brothers were forced to perform the communion service in the Hagia Sophia .

Nikephoros and his brothers disappear from the sources until 792 , when the return of Irene to power (after having been ousted in a military revolt in 790) , coupled with the disastrous defeat of Constantine VI at Marcellae against the Bulgars , caused widespread discontent among the troops . Some of the imperial guard regiments , the tagmata , proclaimed Nikephoros as emperor , but Constantine reacted swiftly : he arrested his uncles , and while Nikephoros was blinded , the others had their tongues slit . They were then imprisoned at a monastery in Therapia .

= = = After 792 = = =

Nikephoros is no longer mentioned by name after 792 ; instead , the brothers are mentioned

collectively . It is therefore questionable whether he is to be included in subsequent events , although traditionally (including in reference works like the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium) it is held that he did share in his brothers ' fate and died after 812 .

After Empress Irene deposed her son in 797 , the brothers were visited at the monastery by some of their supporters and persuaded to seek refuge in the Hagia Sophia . If it had been hoped that Constantinople 's populace would be moved to proclaim one of them emperor , their hopes were dashed . No uprising in their support materialized , and Irene 's trusted eunuch advisor Aetios managed to extricate the brothers and send them to exile in Athens . There , they were again the subject of a conspiracy : in March 799 , a certain Akameros , " archon of the Slavs in Belzetia " in southern Thessaly , together with local troops from the theme of Hellas (to which Athens belonged) , planned to proclaim one of them emperor . The plot was foiled , but the brothers were again moved to Panormos in the Marmara Sea , and Nikephoros 's brothers were blinded as well .

The brothers are mentioned for the last time in 812 , when a group of disgruntled soldiers tried to proclaim the brothers emperors in the aftermath of the fall of Debelum to the Bulgars . Emperor Michael I Rangabe (r . 811 ? 813) , however , promptly dismissed the soldiers involved and moved the brothers to the island of Aphousia , where they died sometime later .