

= Battle of Pegae =

The Battle of Pegae (Bulgarian : ????? ???) was fought between 11 and 18 March 921 in the outskirts of Constantinople between the forces of the Bulgarian Empire and the Byzantine Empire during the Byzantine ? Bulgarian war of 913 ? 927 . The battle took place in a locality called Pegae (i.e. " the spring ") , named after the nearby Church of St. Mary of the Spring . The Byzantine lines collapsed at the very first Bulgarian attack and their commanders fled the battlefield . In the subsequent rout most Byzantine soldiers were killed by the sword , drowned or were captured .

In 922 the Bulgarians continued their successful campaigns in Byzantine Thrace , capturing a number of towns and fortresses , including Adrianople , Thrace 's the most important city , and Bizye . In June 922 they engaged and defeated yet another Byzantine army at Constantinople , confirming the Bulgarian domination of the Balkans . However , Constantinople itself remained outside their reach , because Bulgaria lacked the naval power to launch a successful siege . The attempts of the Bulgarian emperor Simeon I to negotiate a joint Bulgarian ? Arab assault on the city with the Fatimids were uncovered by the Byzantine and countered .

The primary sources for the battle are Theophanes Continuatus , Leo the Grammarian 's Chronicle , the continuation of George Hamartolos ' Chronicle and John Skylitzes ' Synopsis of Histories .

= = Origins of the conflict = =

Although the Byzantine ? Bulgarian conflict that began in 913 was provoked by the Byzantines , it was the Bulgarian monarch Simeon I (r . 893 ? 927) who was seeking pretext to wage war and fulfil his ambitions to claim an imperial title for himself and to assume the throne of Constantinople . Unable to confront the Bulgarians , the Byzantines reluctantly recognized Simeon I as Emperor of Bulgaria (in Bulgarian , Tsar) as early as July 913 but the decision was revoked after a palace coup in Constantinople in 914 . Three years later , in 917 , the main Byzantine forces were routed in the Battle of Achelous and the Bulgarians took the military initiative . In the four year that followed they launched a number of successful campaigns , reaching the walls of Constantinople and the Isthmus of Corinth .

Simeon I planned to secure his position in Constantinople through a marriage between his daughter and the infant Emperor Constantine VII (r . 913 ? 959) , thus becoming basileopator (father @-@ in @-@ law) and guardian of Constantine VII . However , in 919 Admiral Romanos Lekapenos married his daughter to Constantine VII and in 920 proclaimed himself senior emperor , ruining Simeon I 's ambitions to ascend the throne by diplomatic means . Until his death , the Bulgarian monarch never recognized the legitimacy of Romanos ' accession to the throne . Thus , in the beginning of 921 Simeon I did not reply to a proposal of the Ecumenical Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos to betroth one of his daughters or sons to a progeny of Romanos I and sent his army into Byzantine Thrace , reaching Katasyrtai in the outskirts of Constantinople . Romanos I retaliated with a campaign under Pothos Argyros , who reached the town of Aquae Calidae , near modern Burgas , but part of his army was ambushed and destroyed by the Bulgarians .

= = The battle = =

The Byzantine campaign to Aquae Calidae and the threat in a letter by Nicholas Mystikos that numerous Byzantine troops were preparing to invade Bulgaria caused Simeon I to act quickly . He ordered a large army under kavhan (i.e. first minister) Theodore Sigritsa to head for Constantinople while Simeon I himself prepared another host to besiege the capital of the Theme of Thrace , Adrianople . Theodore Sigritsa marched swiftly through the Strandzha Mountains and reached the locality Pegae (i.e. " the spring ") at the outskirts of Constantinople in the beginning of March 921 .

Romanos I was concerned that the Bulgarians would burn the palaces in Pegae and sent " sufficient troops " under the Domestic of the Schools Pothos Argyros , his brother Leo Argyros , the admiral Alexios Mosele and John the Rhaiktor . The Byzantine army was composed of troops of the

tagmata , the Hetaireia (i.e. the imperial guard) and the navy .

The two armies clashed at Pegae in the fifth week of the Great Lent , between 11 and 18 March 921 . The Byzantine commanders formed their battle lines in the lowlands near the springs , while the Bulgarians occupied the higher ground . The Bulgarians charged with dreadful battle cry . Their initial blow was irresistible and the Byzantine lines broke . John the Rhaiktor immediately fled and a certain Photinus , son of Platipodos , was killed along with many others while trying to protect him . John the Rhaiktor barely escaped aboard of a dromon . Alexios Mosele , who fled in full armour , drowned with his protomandator while attempting to board a ship . The brothers Pothos and Leo Argyros managed to find shelter in a nearby fortress . In the subsequent rout most of the Byzantine soldiers were killed by the sword , drowned or were captured by the Bulgarians . After the battle the Bulgarians burned the palaces in Pegae and looted the area north of the Golden Horn waterway on the opposite shore of the walls of Constantinople .

= = Aftermath = =

While the Bulgarian army operated successfully in the vicinity of Constantinople , Simeon I was preparing another major campaign in Thrace . Before leaving the capital , Preslav , Simeon I sent a letter to Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos in which he rebuffed the proposal for a dynastic marriage with the family of Romanos I. He insisted that peace was only possible on condition that Romanos I renounce the Byzantine throne in favour of himself . The Bulgarian monarch denied the accusations of Mystikos that he was responsible for the terrible war and instead blamed the eunuchs of Empress Zoe Karbonopsina , who had rebuffed his proposal to betroth his daughter to Constantine VII in 914 and had attacked Bulgaria in 917 .

At the head of his army , Simeon I marched from Preslav through the Balkan Mountains and the valley of the river Tundzha and besieged Adrianople . While the bulk of the Bulgarian forces were concentrated in Thrace , the Byzantines bribed the Serbian prince Pavle Branovi? , who was a Bulgarian protégé , to switch sides . The Bulgarians answered with a successful intervention in Serbia , easily gained control of the country and placed in power another Bulgarian candidate , Zaharija Pribisavljevi? . The conflict in Serbia distracted the Bulgarian military operations against the Byzantine Empire for the rest of 921 .

In 922 the Bulgarians renewed their offensive in Thrace to divert the Byzantines from the clandestine negotiations with the Fatimid Caliphate to form a Bulgarian ? Arab alliance for a joint assault of Constantinople . Simeon I remained at the siege of Adrianople while another army was sent to the Byzantine capital . In June 922 the Bulgarians engaged and defeated yet another Byzantine army . A few weeks later Adrianople surrendered . In the meantime , the Byzantines captured the ship with the Bulgarian and Fatimid envoys on its way back to Bulgaria . Romanos I thus learned about the negotiations and outbid the Bulgarians .