

= Constantine Doukas ( usurper ) =

Constantine Doukas ( or Doux ) ( Greek : ?????????????? ?????? / ????? ) ( died 913 ) was a prominent Byzantine general . In 904 , he stopped the influential eunuch court official Samonas from defecting to the Arabs . In return , Samonas manipulated his father , Andronikos Doukas , into rebelling and fleeing to the Abbasid court in 906 / 7 . Constantine followed his father to Baghdad , but soon escaped and returned to Byzantium , where he was restored by Leo VI the Wise to favour and entrusted with high military offices . Upon the death of the Emperor Alexander , Constantine with the support of several aristocrats unsuccessfully tried to usurp the throne from the young Constantine VII , but was killed in a clash with supporters of the legitimate emperor .

= = Life = =

= = = Early life and career = = =

Constantine Doukas was the son of Andronikos Doukas , a prominent general under Emperor Leo VI the Wise ( reigned 886 ? 912 ) and the first prominent member of the Doukas family . Constantine first appears in the sources in 904 , during the attempted flight of the Arab @-@ born eunuch Samonas , one of the emperor 's most trusted aides , to Syria . Constantine captured Samonas at the Monastery of the Holy Cross at Siricha , near the river Halys , and escorted him back to Constantinople , where an enquiry into the matter was held before the Senate . Leo , who was still attached to his servant , enjoined Constantine to maintain that Samonas had in fact been making a pilgrimage to the shrine of Siricha , and not the Arab frontier . When the senators however asked Constantine to verify the truth of this claim by swearing on " God and the emperor 's head " , he refused to hide the truth . Samonas was punished by house arrest , and although he was pardoned by Leo after only four months and restored to his offices , he had conceived a deep enmity towards the Doukai .

This grudge came to the fore in 906 , when Samonas tricked Andronikos into refusing to participate in an imperial expedition . Afraid that he would be punished for his disobedience , Andronikos with his family and retainers fled to the fortress of Kabala , near Iconium , and thence across the border into exile in the Abbasid Caliphate . Constantine and his father ended up in Baghdad , the Abbasid capital . Leo sent a secret message to the Doukai , offering a full pardon if they returned , but again through the machinations of Samonas , the letter fell into the hands of Caliph al @-@ Muktafi ( r . 902 ? 908 ) , who had Andronikos confined to house arrest and forced to convert to Islam along with those who had followed him . He died there in ca . 910 . Constantine however managed to escape Baghdad , and was warmly welcomed back by Leo in a ceremony in the throne room of the Chrysotriklinos . The date of his return to Byzantium is unclear , but must be placed between ca . 908 and ca . 911 . Despite his father 's revolt , the Doukai remained very popular due to their military successes , and prophecies apparently circulated that predicted Constantine 's rise to the throne . As a result , according to Theophanes Continuatus , Leo warned the young man from trying to become emperor , but this is probably a later interpolation in view of Constantine Doukas ' eventual fate . In reality , Leo seems to have trusted him , for he showered him with gifts and appointed him to senior military positions : initially he was named ? apparently in succession to Eustathios Argyros ? strategos of the Charsianon theme , but by 913 he had risen to the post of Domestic of the Schools ( commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the army ) . From both positions he fought victoriously against the Arabs .

= = = Attempted usurpation = = =

Leo VI died in May 912 and was succeeded by his brother Alexander ( r . 912 ? 913 ) , who reigned for little over a year before dying in June 913 . Leo 's empress , Zoe Karbonopsina , and his son and titular co @-@ emperor , Constantine VII ( r . 913 ? 959 ) , were sidelined during the reign of

Alexander , who also restored Zoe 's old adversary , Nicholas Mystikos , as Patriarch of Constantinople . Thus , at the death of Alexander ( 6 June 913 ) , with Constantine VII not even eight years old , a power struggle ensued between Zoe and Patriarch Nicholas , who headed the regency council . It was at this point that Constantine Doukas launched a rebellion aiming for the throne . The Life of Euthymius hagiography , a source hostile to Patriarch Nicholas , reports that the Patriarch was also involved , although the other Byzantine sources include this as a widespread rumour rather than a fact . According to these sources , unaware that he would be appointed regent ( Alexander named him to the regency council on his deathbed ) , fearful of losing his pre @-@ eminent position , and anxious about the military threat posed by the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon , which required a more experienced hand at the helm of the state , the Patriarch summoned Doukas to assume the throne .

Doukas , enjoying wide support among both the aristocrats and the populace , accepted the summons and headed to Constantinople with a few trusted friends . Barely three days after Alexander 's death , he entered the capital in secret during the night through a postern on the sea walls , and hid in the house of his father @-@ in @-@ law , Gregoras Iberitzes , where he was soon joined by high @-@ ranking courtiers such as the patrikios Constantine Helladikos . Already before dawn on the following morning , Constantine and his supporters , bearing torches , marched to the Hippodrome , joined along the way by a great multitude of people . Constantine was duly proclaimed emperor before the people at the Hippodrome , and headed in triumph towards the Chalke Gate of the imperial palace . After crossing the iron gate of the Chalke , however , at the hall of the Exkoubitoi , he was opposed by the soldiers of the Hetaireia guard and armed oarsmen of the imperial fleet , assembled by the magistros John Eladas , a member of the regency council . A clash followed , in which many were killed , including Constantine 's son Gregory , his nephew Michael and his friend Kourtikes . Disheartened , Constantine turned and tried to flee , but his horse slipped and fell . Constantine was killed by an arrow ; according to the Life of Euthymius cursing the Patriarch Nicholas as he died . His head was cut off and presented to Constantine VII .

The Life of Basil the Younger on the other hand reports a slightly different version , according to which the summons to Doukas were undertaken by the entire regency council , which proposed to Doukas to assume the governance of the state while Constantine VII would be limited to his ceremonial duties . According to this source , the proposal met with refusal from Doukas , and the regents had to send a second letter with their own enkolpia to persuade him otherwise . By the time he entered Constantinople , however , the regents had changed their minds and barricaded the palace against him . After his proclamation at the Hippodrome , Doukas resolved to besiege the palace , but finally tried to enter through the Chalke , while ordering his followers not to draw their swords so as to avoid bloodshed . There he was ambushed by archers placed by the regents , and killed along with a number of his followers .

Numerous supporters of the usurper ? 800 according to the Life of Euthymius , over 3 @,@ 000 according to the Life of Basil the Younger ? were harshly punished ; some were blinded and exiled , while others ? including those who had sought sanctuary in the Hagia Sophia ? were tonsured and confined to monasteries , while many of the common folk were affixed to stakes on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus .

Constantine Doukas ' wife was shorn and exiled to her husband 's estate in Paphlagonia and his younger son Stephen was castrated . Along with the deaths of Constantine 's son and nephew , this meant the extinction of this branch of the Doukas family : the relation of the later bearers of the Doukas name with Andronikos and Constantine is unclear .

= = Legacy = =

Despite his failure at seizing the throne , Constantine Doukas ' popularity meant that his memory was preserved both among the people and the aristocracy of Asia Minor : in the 930s , Basil the Copper Hand assumed his identity and led a peasant revolt , while among the aristocracy he was glorified as a hero . Elements of Constantine 's life eventually found their way into the epic poem Digenes Akrites .

