

= Constantine Lekapenos =

Constantine Lekapenos or Lecapenus (Greek : ?????????????????????) was the third son of the Byzantine emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (r . 920 ? 944) , and co @-@ emperor from 924 to 945 . With his elder brother Stephen , he deposed Romanos I in December 944 , but was overthrown and exiled by the legitimate emperor Constantine VII (r . 913 ? 959) a few weeks later . Constantine was exiled to the island of Samothrace , where he was killed while attempting to escape sometime between 946 and 948 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Family = = =

Constantine was one of the youngest sons of Romanos I and his wife Theodora . Theophanes Continuatus mentions him as the youngest son of the imperial couple , while the 11th @-@ century chronicler George Kedrenos mentions him as the third of four known sons . His older brothers were Christopher Lekapenos (co @-@ emperor 921 ? 931) and Stephen Lekapenos (co @-@ emperor 924 @-@ 945) . It is unclear if Theophylact (Patriarch of Constantinople in 933 ? 956) was his younger brother or slightly older than he was . His sisters included Helena , who married Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r . 913 ? 959) , and Agatha , who married Romanos Argyros . He probably also had at least two unnamed sisters , known only because of their marriages to the magistroi Romanos Mosele and Romanos Saronites .

= = = Reign = = =

Romanos Lekapenos had risen to power in 919 , when he had managed to appoint himself regent over the young Constantine VII and marry his daughter Helena to him . Within a year , he successively rose from basileopator to Caesar , and was eventually crowned senior emperor on 17 December 920 . To consolidate his hold on power , and with a view of supplanting the ruling Macedonian dynasty with his own family , he raised his eldest son Christopher to co @-@ emperor in May 921 , while Stephen and Constantine were proclaimed co @-@ emperors on 25 December 924 .

Following Christopher 's early death in 931 , and given Constantine VII 's de facto sidelining , Stephen and Constantine assumed an increased prominence , although formally they still ranked after their brother @-@ in @-@ law in the college of emperors . In 939 , Constantine married his first wife Helena , a daughter of the patrikios Adrian , an Armenian .

Symeon Magister records the death of Helena on 14 January 940 , and on 2 February of the same year , Constantine married his second wife , Theophano Mamas . Constantine had a son , named Romanos , but it is not recorded by which of his two wives . This Romanos was castrated in 945 , after the Lekapenoi lost power , to prevent him from claiming the Byzantine throne . He nevertheless pursued a career in the court , eventually reaching the rank of patrikios and the post of Eparch of Constantinople .

Stephen and Constantine Lekapenos came to the fore in 943 , when they opposed a dynastic marriage for their nephew , Romanos II . Their father wanted to have his eldest surviving grandson married to Euphrosyne , a daughter of his successful general John Kourkouas . Although such a union would effectively cement the loyalty of the army , it would also strengthen the position of the legitimate Macedonian line , represented by Romanos II and his father Constantine VII , over the imperial claims of Romanos 's own sons . Predictably , Stephen and Constantine opposed this decision , and prevailed upon their father , who was by this time ill and old , to dismiss Kourkouas in the autumn of 944 . Romanos II instead married Bertha , an illegitimate daughter of Hugh of Arles , King of Italy , who changed her name to Eudokia after her marriage .

With Romanos I approaching the end of his life , the matter of his succession became urgent . In

943 , Romanos drafted a will which would leave Constantine VII as the senior emperor following his death . This greatly upset his two sons , who feared that their brother @-@ in @-@ law would have them deposed and force them to take monastic vows . Motivated , in the opinion of Steven Runciman , partially by self @-@ preservation and partially from genuine ambition , they started planning to seize power through a coup d 'état , with Stephen apparently the ringleader and Constantine a rather reluctant partner .

Their fellow conspirators included Marianos Argyros , the protospatharios Basil Peteinos , Manuel Kourtikes , the strategos Diogenes , Clado , and Philip . Kedrenos , however , considers Peteinos to have served as an agent of Constantine VII among the conspirators . On 20 December 944 , the conspirators set their plans in motion . The two brothers smuggled their supporters in the Great Palace of Constantinople during the midday break in palace activities . They then led their men into the chamber of Romanos I , where they easily captured the " ill old man " . They were able to transport him to the nearest harbour and from there to Prote , one of the Princes ' Islands and a popular place of exile . There , Romanos agreed to take monastic vows and retire from the throne .

Having managed to quietly depose their father , the brothers now had to deal with Constantine VII . Unfortunately for them , rumours soon spread around Constantinople , to the effect that , following Romanos 's deposition , Constantine VII 's life was in danger . Before long , crowds gathered before the palace , demanding to see their emperor in person . The contemporary Lombard historian Liutprand of Cremona notes that the ambassadors and envoys from Amalfi , Gaeta , Rome , and Provence present in the capital also supported Constantine VII . Stephen and his brother had to succumb to the inevitable , recognizing their brother @-@ in @-@ law as the senior emperor .

The new triumvirate lasted for about 40 days . The three emperors soon appointed new leaders for the military services . Bardas Phokas the Elder was appointed as the new Domestic of the Schools , and Constantine Gongyles as head of the Byzantine navy . Stephen and his brother managed to reward their fellow conspirators . Peteinos became patrikios and Great Hetaeriarch , Argyros was appointed Count of the Stable , Kourtikes a patrikios and droungarios of the Watch .

On 26 January 945 , however , at the urging of their sister , the Augusta Helena , another coup removed the two Lekapenoi from power under the accusation that they attempted to poison Constantine VII , and restored the sole imperial authority to the latter .

= = = Exile and death = = =

Initially , the two brothers were sent to Prote . The Byzantine chroniclers have their father welcoming them by quoting a passage from the Book of Isaiah , specifically Chapter 1 @.@ 2 : " Hear , O heavens , and give ear , O earth ; for Jehovah hath spoken : I have nourished and brought up children , and they have rebelled against me . " Liutprand of Cremona , however , gives a slightly different account , having Romanos I receive his sons with bitter sarcasm , thanking them for not neglecting him and begging them to excuse the monks for their ignorance on how to properly receive emperors .

Constantine was soon transported to Tenedos , and then to Samothrace . He was ultimately killed while attempting to escape the island . The exact date is unknown , but since Theophanes Continuatus claims that the exiled Romanos I saw a nightmare featuring his son 's descent to Hell at the time of Constantine 's death , it can be placed between 946 and Romanos 's own death in 948 .