

THE REIGN OF THE BYZANTINE EMPEROR

NICEPHORUS I (802-811)

PAVLOS NIAVIS

Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

1984



*DEDICATION*

*To my wife Evi*

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work is my own. Also that no material or results included in the thesis have been published elsewhere, before the submission of the thesis.

*P. NIAVIS*

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to provide a thorough examination of the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus I (802-811) and to evaluate its historical significance. To this end the author turns his attention first to the situation which Nicephorus inherited at the time of his accession to the throne. He then examines the major aspects of this Emperor's reign: his domestic, religious and foreign policies. The main emphasis is upon his domestic policies, because it is the argument of this thesis that Nicephorus was one of the few Byzantine emperors who attempted a concerted reform of the administration. To support this it is necessary to assess the causes, the value and the results of the Emperor's measures. Nicephorus' attitude towards, and relations with other major powers of the time are not neglected. They form an important chapter, because under Nicephorus I the Byzantine Empire found itself hemmed in by the Franks of Charlemagne, the Caliphate and the Bulgars. Nicephorus' reactions showed him to be a competent statesman, though the end results were far from satisfactory. The Emperor's views on religious affairs inevitably attracts the author's attention too. Their importance lies in his confrontation with the leader of the monastic party Theodore of Stoudios. Nicephorus pursued a policy of moderation, which was misunderstood at the time. It provided a long term solution to the Empire's religious difficulties, but in the short term, probably intensified division. The events and measures which characterized Nicephorus I's reign, are not examined in any chronological order, but according to the field of imperial interest they served.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been an established practice among these writers, academics and authors of every kind of book to take a backward glance and gratefully acknowledge their indebtedness to whomsoever it is due. How could I abstain from this pleasant duty, when I would never have done this work without the financial, moral and academic assistance of the institutions and the persons mentioned below?

First of all, I would like to thank the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) and the Ministry of Education of Greece, the first because with a three year scholarship provided the financial backing of the greater part of my studies, and without whose assistance my studies abroad would have been totally out of the question, and the second because I was granted an equally long leave of absence from my job as a secondary school teacher in Greece.

Among individuals I would like to express my gratitude to Professor A. Kambylis and to Dr. S.G. Henrich, both of the university of Hamburg, for their valuable suggestions and the library facilities with which they provided me while I was working in West Germany. However, the scholar to whom I am indebted more than to anyone else, is Dr. M. Angold, the patient and tolerant supervisor of this work, who tried as hard as he could to save me from the blunders of ignorance and the occasional misunderstanding. But any weak points to be found in this thesis are my own responsibility and not to be laid at the door of those to whom I owe so much.

Finally many thanks should be said to my wife Evi, because she patiently endured my long periods of absence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Abbreviations	viii
THE STATE OF THE QUESTION	2
CHAPTER I: THE SOURCES	11
A: NARRATIVE SOURCES	12
1. Greek	12
2. Latin	33
3. Arabic	35
4. Syriac	40
B: SAINTS' LIVES	42
C: LETTERS OF THEODORE OF STOUDIOS	46
D: OTHER SOURCES	53
CHAPTER II: BYZANTIUM IN 802	58
CHAPTER III: DOMESTIC POLICIES	94
A: ADMINISTRATION	95
1. Changes in the Government	95
2. Towards Innovations	102
B: THE ARMY	104
1. Military Unrest	104
2. Reform of the System of Military Recruitment	112
C: PROVINCES	118
D: RECONQUEST OF GREECE	123

E: ECONOMY-FINANCE	137
1. The Preliminaries	137
2. Restoration of Fiscal Order	139
3. State Control of Shipping	153
4. General Assessment	158
 CHAPTER IV: RELIGIOUS POLICIES	 163
A: ICONOCLASM - HERESY	164
B: NICEPHORUS AND THE PATRIARCH	168
1. Nicephorus and Tarasius	168
2. The Two Nicephori	173
C: THE EMPEROR AND THE STUDITES	195
D: GENERAL ASSESSMENT	215
 CHAPTER V: FOREIGN POLICIES	 218
A: NICEPHORUS AND THE WEST	219
1. The Preliminaries	219
2. Nicephorus and the Papacy	223
3. Reality Above Tradition	228
4. Charlemagne Strengthens his Bargaining Position	237
5. Towards Peace and Recognition of Charlemagne's Imperial Title	242
6. General Assessment	245
B: BYZANTIUM AND THE ARABS	247
1. The Sources	247
2. The Historical Background of the Conflicts	248
3. Byzantium's Eastern Borders in 802	254
4. The Conflicts	261
5. General Assessment	282
C: BYZANTIUM AND THE BULGARS	287
General Assessment	321
 THE PORTRAITS OF NICEPHORUS	 323
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 336

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- |     |                            |   |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 1.  | <u>A.A.S.S.</u>            | Acta Sanctorum  |
| 2.  | <u>A.B.</u>                | Analecta Bollandiana  |
| 3.  | A.D.                       | Annus Domini  |
| 4.  | A.H.                       | Annus Hagra   |
| 5.  | A.M.                       | Annus Mundi   |
| 6.  | <u>B.C.H.</u>              | Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique   |
| 7.  | <u>B.N.G.J.</u>            | Byzantinisch-neuegriechische Jahrbücher   |
| 8.  | <u>B.S.</u>                | Byzantine Studies   |
| 9.  | <u>Byz.</u>                | Byzantion   |
| 10. | <u>B.Z.</u>                | Byzantinische Zeitschrift   |
| 11. | <u>C.F.H.B.</u>            | Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae   |
| 12. | <u>C.M.H.</u>              | Cambridge Mediaeval History   |
| 13. | C.P.                       | Constantinople  |
| 14. | <u>C.S.H.B.</u>            | Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae  |
| 15. | <u>D.O.P.</u>              | Dumbarton Oaks Papers   |
| 16. | <u>DTh.C.</u>              | Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique  |
| 17. | <u>E.E.B.S.</u>            | Epetéris Etairias Byzantinôn Spoudôn  |
| 18. | <u>E.H.R.</u>              | English Historical Review   |
| 19. | <u>E.O.</u>                | Echos d'Orient  |
| 20. | <u>G.R.B.S.</u>            | Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies   |
| 21. | J.B. Bury<br><u>E.R.E.</u> | J.B. Bury, <u>A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (802-867)</u> , London 1912. |
| 22. | <u>J.H.S.</u>              | Journal of Hellenic Studies   |
| 23. | <u>M.G.H.</u>              | Monumenta Germaniae Historica   |
| 24. | <u>M.R.I.S.</u>            | Muratori, L.A., Rerum Italicarum Scriptores   |
| 25. | ms                         | manuscript  |
| 26. | <u>O.Ch.P.</u>             | Orientalia Christiana Periodica   |
| 27. | <u>P.G.</u>                | J.P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Patres Graeci   |



28. R.E. Real Enzyklopädie der Classischen  
Altertums-wissenschaft
29. R.E.B. Revue des Etudes Byzantines
30. R.H. Revue Historique
31. S.R. Sbornik Radova
32. St. Runciman St. Runciman, A History of the First  
The First Bulgarian Empire, London 1930
33. T.M. Travaux et Mémoires
34. V.V. Vizantijskij Vremennik

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

## THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

The reign of Nicephorus I (802-811) ended in disaster and humiliation. He was killed in battle against the Bulgars. Not since the death of Valens in 378 had a Byzantine emperor fallen in battle. Yet Nicephorus deserves the attention of modern historians. This is not only because his fiscal and economic policies were one of the foundations upon which the Byzantine recovery from the middle of the ninth century was built, but also because he confronted two of the most urgent problems ever facing a Byzantine emperor: how to come to terms with the newly-created western Empire and how to deal with the challenge of the monastic party under the formidable leadership of Theodore of Stoudios. They provided a test of the very character of the Byzantine Empire.

Surprisingly, there is no concerted treatment of Nicephorus' reign, even if some aspects have attracted the attention of modern historians. In his A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (802-67) J.B. Bury devotes only forty pages to the reign of Nicephorus I. Valuable as they are, this paucity of treatment stands in marked contrast to P. Speck's more than generous approach in his recent book on the reign of Constantine VI (780-797).<sup>1</sup> In it he devotes no less than 419 pages of text and 411 pages of notes to a reign, which is by any standards much less important than that of Nicephorus I. Speck's approach is

---

1. P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI, (München 1978).

chronological. His book is an elaborate commentary on the relevant pages of the Chronographia of Theophanes. Perhaps Constantine VI's reign is peculiarly susceptible to this approach, since so much of what we can know about his reign has to do with his pathetic struggle for power. Nicephorus' reign demands a different approach, because its interest lies in problems faced and policies elaborated. We have therefore adopted a more analytical approach. Our survey of the historical literature bearing on the 'State of the Question' will therefore be divided up according to various topics.

To begin with, Nicephorus' economic and fiscal policies have been the field on which a series of works are mainly focused. Already at the end of last century (1895) the French scholar R. Monnier discussed the measures taken by Nicephorus in detail, but only from the point of view of the Ἐπιβολή.<sup>1</sup> Monnier examined Nicephorus' so-called 'vexations' more or less separately, or in small groups, according to their importance for the purpose of the article. More than forty years later (1938) G.I. Bratianu dedicated considerable space in his book<sup>2</sup> to an exhaustive examination of these measures, with the 'vexations' again tackled one by one. Not long afterwards appeared an

- 
1. R. Monnier 'Etudes de droit byzantin (B: 1' Ἐπιβολή depuis Nicéphore Genicus jusqu'à Basile le Macédonien: 1) Les Vexations de Nicephore Genicus)' in Nouvelle revue historique de droit français et étranger, 19 (1895), pp.59-103.
  2. G.I. Bratianu, Etudes Byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale, (Paris 1938), especially the sections under the titles 'Empire et "démocratie" à Byzance', pp.93-126 and 'La politique fiscale de Nicephore 1<sup>er</sup>, ou ubu roi à Byzance', pp.183-216.



article by Professor A. Chrystophilopoulou,<sup>1</sup> who, in her turn, also made some comments on Nicephorus' fiscal and economic reforms. Finally, a new book by W. Treadgold<sup>2</sup> provides us with rough figures on both the revenues and the expenditures of the Byzantine Empire during Nicephorus I's reign.

Among other aspects of the Emperor Nicephorus' domestic policies, the concerted effort he made to assimilate the Slavs of continental Greece must be emphasized. Nicephorus' efforts to achieve this have been the object of a series of articles by P. Charanis.<sup>3</sup> The importance of such a policy from the point of view of the christianization of the area and especially of the Peloponnese, forms the subject of two articles, one by M. Dunn and another by J. Herrin.<sup>4</sup>

Among the books which shed some light on problems connected with the internal administration and organization the works of Bury,<sup>5</sup> Karayannopoulos,<sup>6</sup>

- 
1. A. Christiphilopoulou, 'Η Οικονομική καὶ Δημοσιονομική Πολιτική τοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος Νικηφόρου Α'. Εἰς Μνήμην Κ. Ἀμάντου, (Athens 1960), pp.413-31.
  2. W. Treadgold, Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries, New York 1982.
  3. P. Charanis, 'Nicephorus I, the Savior of Greece from the Slavs (810 A.D.)', Byzantina-Metabyzantina, 1 (1946), pp.75-92; id., 'On the Question of the Slavonic Settlement in Greece during the Middle Ages', Byzantinoslavica 10 (1949), pp.254-58; id., 'Observations on the History of Greece during the Early Middle Ages', Balkan Studies, vol.11, no.1, Thessalonica 1970, pp.1-34.
  4. M. Dunn. 'Evangelisation or Repentance? The re-christianization of the Peloponnese in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', Studies in Church History, 14, (1977), pp. 71-87; J. Herrin, 'Aspects of the Process of re-Hellenisation in the Early Middle Ages', Annual of the British School at Athens, 68 (London 1973), pp.113-26.
  5. J.B. Bury, The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century, New York, 1911.
  6. J. Karayannopoulos, 'Contribution au problème de thèmes Byzantins', in L'Hellénisme Contemporain, 10 (1956) pp.455-502; id., 'Die Entstehung der Byzantinischen Themenordnumg', Byzantinisches Archiv, 10, München 1959.

Lemerle,<sup>1</sup> Guillard,<sup>2</sup> Dölger,<sup>3</sup> Kaegi<sup>4</sup> and Haldon<sup>5</sup> need to be mentioned, but they have nothing specifically on the reign of Nicephorus I.

Relations between church and state during the early ninth century have also attracted the attention of a number of scholars. This is partly because the reign of Nicephorus coincides with an obvious strengthening of the so-called monastic party at Constantinople, but also because during the same time eastern church went through some quite unusual experiences. Among the books which contributed to a better knowledge of the religious tendencies and policies during the period under consideration, the works of A. Gardner,<sup>6</sup> P. Henry<sup>7</sup> and, of course, P. Alexander<sup>8</sup> must be singled out for special mention. Yet again the aim of these works is not to reveal the Emperor Nicephorus' religious tendencies and policies, but

- 
1. P. Lemerle, 'Esquisse pour un histoire agraire de Byzance', Part I, RH, 219 (1958), pp.32-74, 254-284. Part II, RH 220 (1958), pp.42-94.
  2. R. Guillard, Recherches sur les institutions Byzantines, 2 vols., Berlin 1967.
  3. F. Dölger, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung besonders des 10 and 11 Jahrhunderts, Hildesheim 1960; id., 'Zur Ableitung des Byzantinischen Verwaltungsterminus δέρα, in his Paraspora, Ettal 1961, pp.231-40.
  4. W.E. Kaegi, Jr., Byzantine Military Unrest, 471-843, Amsterdam 1981.
  5. J.F. Haldon, Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army C.550-950, Wien 1979; id., Byzantine Praetorians, Bonn 1984.
  6. A. Gardner, Theodore of Studium, London 1905.
  7. P. Henry III, Theodore of Stoudios, the Churchman, Ph.D. Yale University (1967); id., 'The Moechian Controversy and the Constantinopolitan Synod of January A.D. 809', in Journal of Theological Studies, N.S. vol.XX, pt.2, October 1969, pp.495-522.
  8. P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople, Oxford 1958.



to illuminate the ecclesiastical and political role played either by Theodore, the abbot of Stoudios, or by the Emperor's namesake, the Patriarch Nicephorus.

Scholars who have dealt with the relations between Byzantium and the newly created Frankish Empire in the West have mainly directed their research on Charlemagne and his various achievements. This is, of course, understandable, since he was a dominant figure on the political scene at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. Among the abundant literature on Charlemagne, the works which seem to have covered new ground in regard to the rivalry between the two Empires, are those of F. Dölger,<sup>1</sup> P. Classen<sup>2</sup> and W. Ohnsorge.<sup>3</sup>

Disturbances in Asia Minor and conflicts between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate have been sketched by several scholars, none of whom, nevertheless, refers exclusively to the reign of the Emperor Nicephorus I. Though the majority of them are Arabists and not Byzantinists, their works have certainly contributed to the history of Byzantium too, in its relations with the Muslim world. For a better knowledge on this subject works dating from the last century such as the book by W. Muir<sup>4</sup> must be examined together with the results of recent research

- 
1. F. Dölger, 'Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der frankisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9. Jahrhunderts', in his collected studies under the title: Byzance und europäische Staatenwelt, Ettal 1953.
  2. P. Classen, Carl der Große, das Papsttum und Byzanz, Düsseldorf 1968.
  3. W. Ohnsorge, Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter, Hildesheim 1947; id., Abendland und Byzanz, Darmstadt 1958; id., Konstantinopel und der Okzident, Darmstadt 1966; id., Ost-Rom und der Westen, Darmstadt 1983.
  4. W. Muir, The Caliphate; its Rise, Decline and Fall, Oxford 1892, Reprint, New York 1975.

made mainly by J.J. Saunders,<sup>1</sup> M.A. Shaban<sup>2</sup> and H. Kennedy.<sup>3</sup> In regard to the geographic data, we possess the outstanding book of W. Ramsay,<sup>4</sup> still of great value, though outdated, and the article by J.G.C. Anderson,<sup>5</sup> referring basically to the road system of Asia Minor. Problems connected with the eastern frontier line of the Byzantine Empire during our period have been tackled by E. Honigmann,<sup>6</sup> while the work of J.F. Haldon and H. Kennedy<sup>7</sup> is of slightly different character. Finally, the Arab invasions in Byzantine territory have been discussed by H. Ahrweiler<sup>8</sup> and by M. Canard.<sup>9</sup>

Students who wish to study the Bulgarian history without knowing the Bulgarian language, inevitably limit themselves and their access to a rather small number of works written in western European languages. Among them the most valuable for our purpose are the books by S. Runciman<sup>10</sup> and R. Browning.<sup>11</sup> For the geographical background, the

- 
1. J.J. Saunders, A History of Mediaeval Islam, London 1972.
  2. M.A. Shaban, Islamic History 2, A.D. 750-1065, Cambridge 1976.
  3. H. Kennedy, The Early Abbasid Caliphate, Totowa, N. Jersey 1981.
  4. W.M. Ramsay, The Historical Geography of Asia Minor, Royal Geographical Society's Supplementary Papers, IV (London 1890).
  5. J.G.C. Anderson, 'The Road System of Eastern Asia Minor with the Evidence of Byzantine Campaigns' (with map) in J.H.S., XVII (1897), pp.22-44.
  6. E. Honigmann, Die Ostgrenzen des Byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071, as third volume in A. Vasiliev's Byzance et les Arabes (Brussels 1935).
  7. J.F. Haldon and H. Kennedy, 'The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Century: Military Organization and Society in the Border-lands', in Zbornik Radova, 19 (1979), pp.79-116.
  8. H. Ahrweiler, 'L'Asie Mineure et les invasions Arabes' in R.H., 227 (1962), pp.1-32.
  9. M. Canard, Byzance et les musulmans du proche Orient (Variorum Reprints) London 1973.
  10. S. Runciman, A History of the First Bulgarian Empire, London 1930.
  11. R. Browning, Byzantium and Bulgaria, London 1975.



works of J. Cvijic,<sup>1</sup> S. Michailov<sup>2</sup> and N. Banescu<sup>3</sup> are also indispensable.

The books or articles which have been listed so far cover several aspects of the reign of the Emperor Nicephorus I separately. They do draw our attention to some of the problems connected with our period in one way or another. The general histories of the Byzantine Empire, such as the works of A.A. Vasiliev<sup>4</sup> and the better one of G. Ostrogorsky,<sup>5</sup> also have their value. However, because they cover a vast chronological era, namely from the rise till the fall of the Byzantine Empire, they could not afford the luxury of devoting much attention and enough space to rather short reigns, such as the one of the Emperor Nicephorus I (A.D. 802-811). It must be said, however, that Ostrogorsky goes out of his way to stress the importance of the reign, because of the reforms Nicephorus initiated while R. Jenkins<sup>6</sup> prefers to emphasize his role as the 'Saviour of Greece'. R. Jenkins' account is fluent but somehow superficial. One gets the impression that the various sources have not been exploited either extensively or profoundly. What J.B. Bury<sup>7</sup> has written on the Byzantine history of the years 802-867 has not so far been surpassed by any other work covering the

- 
1. J. Cvijic, La péninsule balkanique: géographie humaine, Paris 1918.
  2. S. Michailov, Pliska, die Hauptstadt des ersten bulgarischen Reiches, Berlin 1960.
  3. N. Banescu, 'Les frontières de l'ancien état Bulgare', in Mémorial Louis Petit, Bucarest 1948, pp.4-14.
  4. A.A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, Second English Edition, Oxford, 1952.
  5. G. Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, trans. by Joan Hussey, second edn. Oxford, 1968.
  6. R. Jenkins, Byzantium, The Imperial Centuries A.D. 610-1071, London 1966.
  7. J.B. Bury, E.R.E.

same period. Though more than seventy years old, Bury's book still remains the best guide for students dealing with this period. Bury's major contribution to the reign of Nicephorus I was to see through the bias of the sources and to present Nicephorus as a competent, if not outstanding, ruler. His intention was, of course, to write a history of the period 802-867, not a monograph devoted to the reign of Nicephorus. Thus he does not treat the reign on its own but as part of a general history. As a result his treatment is somewhat fragmented, and its impact slightly blunted.

It is quite clear from this brief survey of modern historical writing devoted to the reign of the Emperor Nicephorus that it still awaits a proper treatment from the historian. The comparative lack of attention paid to this Emperor is all the more surprising because, as we shall see in the opening chapter, the sources for his reign are relatively abundant. It will be the task of this thesis to bring out its special character. By way of an introduction there will be a survey of the condition of the Byzantine Empire in 802. This will concentrate on the particular problems facing Nicephorus I, at the moment he came to power as the result of a coup d'état. How he dealt with these problems will be the subject of a series of chapters on his domestic, religious, and foreign policies. It cannot be claimed that he was uniformly successful. His death in battle in 811 at the hands of the Bulgarian Khan Krum was the signal for more than a decade of political turmoil, which nearly brought the Byzantine Empire to its knees. That the Empire survived was very much the result of the far-reaching internal reorganization that he was able to effect. But it went further than this: he provided the foundations for the

sustained advance of the Byzantine Empire from the middle of the ninth century. In so many ways, his reign seems to provide the key to the success of the Empire under the house of Macedon. He was faced with a series of problems, that threatened to overwhelm the government of the Empress Irene: the challenge from the West, in the shape of Charlemagne's coronation on Christmas Day 800; the revival of Bulgarian power; the renewed aggression of the Caliphate; and the emergence of a monastic party around Theodore of Stoudios as a decisive factor in the internal politics of the Empire; not to mention the imperial government's loss of control over so many aspects of everyday life. Nicephorus pioneered lines of approaches and even solutions to all these problems. In doing so, he was providing prescriptions for the Empire's future achievements.

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES



## Chapter I

### THE SOURCES

The sources which cover the reign of Nicephorus I can be divided into the following main categories:

- A: Narrative sources (Greek-Latin-Arabic-Syriac).
- B: Saints' Lives
- C: Letters of Theodore of Stoudios, and
- D: Other sources.

#### A: NARRATIVE SOURCES

##### 1. Greek

###### a. Theophanes the Confessor

Without any doubt Theophanes should be seen as the crucial source for the period on which we focus. We learn about this iconodule author mainly from his Vitae. Four of them are appended to De Boor's edition of Theophanes' Chronographia (vol.2).<sup>1</sup> An anonymous fifth one was copied from a codex of the monastery of Koutloumousion on Mount Athos and edited by M.I. Gedeon in 1896.<sup>2</sup> However, it

- 
1. The first one was written by an anonymous author and the second by Nicephorus, the skevophylax of Vlachernae. Of the remaining two, also anonymous and much shorter than the previous ones, one has been copied from the Paris manuscript of Theophanes and the other is transcripta ex menologio codicis bibliothecae messinensis.
  2. The text was published in an appendix to the 26th vol. of the periodical of the Greek Philological Association of Constantinople (Ἐν Κωνσταντινῶν Φιλολογικὸς Σύνλογος). The editor dates the ms. from which he copied the Vita, to the twelfth century.

would seem that all these Vitae are based on a sixth and the only complete Life of Theophanes, written by the Patriarch Methodius.<sup>1</sup>

Dating probably from the period 820-29<sup>2</sup> the Life is of vital importance, not only because its author is a near contemporary source, who played a prominent role in Byzantium during the first half of ninth century, but also, and mainly, for its impartiality.<sup>3</sup>

Some information on Theophanes can also be derived from the so-called Panegyric of Theophanes, which, if it has been written by Theodore of Stoudios, as C. Mango and I. Ševčenko seem to assume,<sup>4</sup> would be the earliest source on the Confessor,<sup>5</sup> and from a letter by Michael Psellos, (dating from the year 1078) which describes the voyage of Theophanes along the coast of the sea of Marmara and his landing somewhere near Agros.<sup>6</sup>

- 
1. It was edited by D. Spyridonos in 'Εκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος, 12 (Constantinople 1913), pp.95-96 and 113-65. Unfortunately, another edition by V.V. Latysev, 'Methodii Patr. Const. Vita S. Theophanis Confessoris...' Zapiski Russijskoj Akad. Nauk. po istor-filol. otdeljeniju, 8<sup>e</sup> serié, 13, 4 (1918) was not available to me. On this Vita see, E. Kurtz, 'Zum Leben des h. Theophanes von Methodius', B.N.G.J. 5, (1926-27), pp.390-96.
  2. On the date see: J. Guillard, 'Une oeuvre inédite du Patriarche Méthode: La vie d'Euthyme de Sardes', B.Z. 53, (1960), pp.36-46; cf. p.45; see also I. Ševčenko, 'Hagiography of the Iconoclastic Period', in Iconoclasm, (Birmingham 1977), p.118.
  3. On this cf. below, p.24.
  4. C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, 'Some Churches and Monasteries on the Southern Shore of Marmara', D.O.P. 27 (1973), p.260.
  5. On this see, C. Van de Vorst, 'Un Panégyrique de S. Théophile le Chronographe par S. Théodore Studite', A.B., 31 (1912), pp.11-23.
  6. E. Kurtz and F. Drexl, Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora II, (Milan 1941), pp. 167-68.

Theophanes was born in 759-60.<sup>1</sup> His family was one of the most noble and distinguished in Byzantium.<sup>2</sup> His mother's name was Theodote. His father, whose name was Isaac, was a close friend and collaborator of the Emperor Constantine V. When Theophanes was three years old, his father died.<sup>3</sup> At that time the Emperor gave the child the second name<sup>4</sup> of Isaac,<sup>5</sup> in memory of his father.

Being the son of a high officer<sup>6</sup> and the heir to a large estate, Theophanes was destined to follow an army career. At the age of eighteen he became a member of the corps of stratores<sup>7</sup> in the reign of Leo IV (775-80).

---

1. The patriarch Methodius (op.cit. p.128) asserts that at the time the Emperor Leo IV died, i.e. in 780, Theophanes was twenty-one, and in the same Vita (p.147) it is stated that Theophanes was fifty-three at the time of Leo V's accession to the throne (813). Therefore the much earlier dating of the Confessor's birth 'somewhere around the year 752' provided by A.R. Santoro: Byzantium and the Arabs during the Isaurian period 717-802, Ph.D. 1978, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, p.2, is unacceptable.

2. Anonymous Vita, De. Boor II, p.4 "...εὐγενῶν γονέων καὶ τῶν ἐν ἀξιώμασι περιβλέπτων χέρονε τέκνον."

3. Methodius (op.cit.), p.115.

4. Methodius (op.cit., p.115) asserts that, when the child was baptised, probably much earlier than his father's death, he was given only one name, that of Theophanes.

5. According to a custom in Greece today, when somebody's death leaves an unbaptised son or daughter, then the child is given the name of his father or his mother who had died recently.

6. One can assume that from the Patriarch Methodius' (op.cit., p.116) phrase: "...ἐν τῇ διενομένῃ αὐτῷ τῶν Αἰχαιοπελαγιτῶν ἀρκῆ."

7. Methodius, p.119. On the corps of stratores see J.B. Bury, The Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.117-18. One of their tasks was to assist the emperor in mounting his horse; in general they performed the duties of imperial grooms. See also R. Guiland, 'Etudes de titulature et de prosopographie byzantines, le protostrator' in R.E.B., 7 (1949), pp.156-79.



Later, after he had led a successful operation around Cyzicus, Theophanes received the dignity of spatharius.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime he had been engaged at the age of ten and married at eighteen to Megalô, whose father Leo was a high dignitary of his namesake the Emperor Leo IV. However, Theophanes does not seem to have been a worldly man. He never consummated his marriage and after some time, retiring from public life, established two monasteries. The first one was built on the island of Kalonymos,<sup>2</sup> where the Confessor spent the first six years of his retirement. Nevertheless our Saint is best known as the abbot of the monastery called Megas Agros on Mount Sigriana, where he spent the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup>

Theophanes was one of the participants of the second council of Nicaea, which restored the veneration of sacred images. ~~There is no need, of course, to say that~~ He was an iconodule. Thus at the time of the revival of

- 
1. Anonymous, Βίος Θεοφάνους, (op.cit.), p.8: "...τῶν σπαθαρίων τῷ καταλόγῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τιμηθεῖς." The highest rank of spatharii was obtained by the protospatharius, on whom see R. Guiland, 'Etudes sur l'histoire administrative de l'Empire Byzantin. Les titres auliques des eunuques. Le Protospathaire' in Byz. 25-27 (1955-57), pp.649-711.
  2. Methodius, p.131; Vita Theophanis Parisina (op.cit.), p.29; From the sources one may argue that this island was one of the Prince's Islands in the Propontis; see C. de Boor's edition of Theophanes, vol.II, p.635 where it is stated: "insula Propontidis in qua Theophanis Chronographi uxor vitam deget". See also J.B. Bury, E.R.E. p.74, note 1, who identifies Kalonymos as the ancient Besbikos, the modern Emir Ali Adasi.
  3. Methodius, p.132; Life by Nicephorus Skevophylax, (loc.cit.), p.19; According to this Vita (p.26) the monastery was located twelve βημεία from Hieria; cf. also Vita Parisina, (loc.cit.), p.29. For location of the monastery see W. Ramsay, The Historical Geography... (op.cit.), p.162, where he says: 'The hilly country between Cyzicus and the north of the Rhydakos was called Sigriana'. Further below Ramsay translates the word βημεία as miles. Such a location has also been identified by Bury, E.R.E., 74, n.1; see also T.E. Evangelides, Ἡ μονὴ τῆς Σιγριανῆς ἢ τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀγροῦ Athens 1895, and the article by C. Mango - I. Sevčenko, 'Some Churches...', (loc.cit.), pp.259-67.

Iconoclasm in 815,<sup>1</sup> Theophanes bravely opposed the Emperor Leo V's policy against icons. This Emperor's attempt to win over Theophanes by peaceful means failed, and thus the abbot of Megas Agros was put in prison for two years.<sup>2</sup> After that we find him banished to the island of Samothrace,<sup>3</sup> where he spent the last days of his life,<sup>4</sup> before he died on 12 March 818.<sup>5</sup>

- 
1. On the second Iconoclasm see the following: K. Schwarzlose, Der Bilderstreit. Ein Kampf der griechischen Kirche um ihre Freiheit (Gotha, 1890); J. Pargoire, 'Saint Méthode et la persécution', E.O., 6 (1903), pp.183-91; D. Serruys, 'Les actes du concile iconoclaste de l'an 815', Melanges d'archéologie et d'histoire, 23 (1903), pp.345-51; L. Bréhier, La Querelle des images (VIII<sup>e</sup> IX<sup>e</sup> siècles) (Paris 1904), pp.30-38; J. Pargoire, L'Eglise Byzantine de 527-847, (Paris 1905), pp.265-272; J.B. Bury, E.R.E., (op.cit.), pp.56-76 and 135-143; A.J. Visser, Nikephorus und der Bilderstreit. Eine Untersuchung über die Stellung des Konstantinopler Patriarchen Nikephoros innerhalb der ikonoklastischen Wirren (Haag, 1952); P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus (op.cit.), pp.111-47; id., 'Church Councils and Patristic Authority. The Iconoclastic Councils of Hieria (754) and St. Sophia (815)', Harvard Studies in Classical Philosophy, 63, (Cambridge Mass., 1958), pp.493-505; H.G. Beck, 'The Greek Church in the Epoch of Iconoclasm', Handbook of Church History, vol. III (New York, 1969); A. Bryer and I. Herrin, Iconoclasm (op.cit.), Birmingham 1977; H.G. Beck, Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte, (Göttingen 1980), pp.81-90.
  2. Methodius, p.150; Nicephorus Skevophylax, p.25; Anonymous edit. by Gedeon p.85.
  3. Methodius, p.151; Nicephorus Skevophylax, p.25; Anonymous, de Boor p.12; Anonymous, Gedeon p.85.
  4. Most of Theophanes' hagiographers do not commit themselves to the problem of how long the abbot of Megas Agros survived his banishment. Nicephorus Skevophylax, however, (loc.cit. p.25) gives us a duration of only twenty-three days, after which Theophanes died.
  5. C. Van de Vorst 'En quelle année mourut S. Theophane?', A.B., 31 (1912), pp.148-56, dates the death of the Confessor to the year 817. See, however, J. Pargoire, 'Saint Théophile le chronographe et ses rapports avec Saint Théodore Studite', V.V., 9 (1902), p.73 fn. as well as Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio, (ed. Moravcsik), Commentary (London 1962), p.80, where it is clearly stated that Theophanes died in 818.



Scholars all around the world have always seen Theophanes as a prominent literary figure and as a very important historian. This is because of his Chronographia, which is a world chronicle covering the period from A.D. 284 to A.D. 813.<sup>1</sup> This work is a continuation of the work of George Syncellus,<sup>2</sup> which starts from the creation of the world and ends in the year A.D. 284. Theophanes was a close friend of George Syncellus and the latter, before his death, had asked the abbot of Megas Agros<sup>3</sup> to complete the unfinished chronicle.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Two modern editions of Theophanes' Chronographia exist: The first one in Corpus Script. Hist. Byzantinae (Bonn 1839-41, 2 vol.) and the second and better one by C. de Boor, Theophanis Chronographia, with a Latin translation, (Leipzig 1883-85). The work was republished by Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, in 2 vol., Hildesheim 1963. The Greek text is contained in vol.1. Unless otherwise stated, my references to Theophanes are made from De Boor's edition. For literature on Theophanes, see the following: K. Krumbacher, 'Zur Chronik des Theophanes', Hermes, 23 (1888), pp.626-28; C. de Boor, 'Zur Chronographia des Theophanes', Hermes, 25 (1890), pp.301-307; id., 'Zu Theophanes', B.Z., 1 (1892), pp.591-93; K. Krumbacher, Geschichte der Byzantinischen Literatur, second edit., (München 1897), pp.342-47; J.B. Bury, 'Zu einer Stelle der Chronik des Theophanes', B.Z., 6 (1897), p.508; id., 'An unnoticed Ms. of Theophanes', B.Z., 14 (1905), pp.612-13; N. Jorga, 'Medaillons d'histoire litteraire Byzantine', Byz., 2 (1925), pp.248-50; V. Beševliev, 'Zur Chronographia des Theophanes', B.Z., 27 (1927), p.35; G. Ostrogorsky, 'Theophanes', in Paulys Real Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft 10, Reihe 2, (Stuttgart 1934) pp.2127-32.
  2. He had served as Syncellus under the Patriarch Tarasius (Theoph. de Boor 1, p.3 "ὁ καὶ εὐγγέλιος γεγονὼς Ταρασίου." On the office of Syncellus see J.B. Bury, Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.116-17. He was the intermediary between the emperor and the patriarch.
  3. We cannot be sure about the exact year of George's death, but we do know that he was still writing in 810 (on this cf. his chronicle, Bonn ed. vol.1, p.389).
  4. Theophanes 1, p.4.

In a recent article C. Mango has put forward the strong possibility that Theophanes' Chronographia was not written by Theophanes, but by George Syncellus.<sup>1</sup> The scholar seems to argue that George kept writing till the year 813 and that Theophanes 'had little part in the compilation of the work that has made his name immortal'.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore Professor Mango suggests that Theophanes' task was nothing more than 'to fill in certain gaps or verify certain chronological calculations'.<sup>3</sup>

Though Mango's article is based on good arguments, the problem of the identity of the author of the Chronographia is not going to be solved till some concrete evidence will point either to George or to Theophanes. But so far as we are concerned here the really important thing is who wrote the section on Nicephorus I, which, one might rightly observe, has a slightly different character from the rest of the Chronographia.<sup>4</sup> One might, of course, have some reservations about Theophanes being the author of the section on Nicephorus, because the slant against the Emperor ill accords with <sup>his biographer</sup> Methodius' favourable treatment of this Emperor. But, then, his perspective is rather different. Both the Emperor and the Patriarch Nicephorus fell foul of the Studites, because they seemed to be less favourable to the monastic party than Irene had been. But can Theophanes be considered to have been a member of the Studites?<sup>5</sup> Broadly defined, the answer must

- 
1. C. Mango, 'Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?', S.R., 18 (1978), pp.9-17.
  2. C. Mango, 'Who Wrote...', (op.cit.), p.16.
  3. ibid.
  4. On this see below, pp.24-25.
  5. On this see J. Pargoire: 'Saint Théophane le Chronographe et ses rapports avec Théodore Studite.' V.V., 9 (1902), pp.31-102.



be yes! For he was a member of the monastic party, of which Theodore and his monks were the core. More precisely, it seems that the only issue which divided the abbot of Megas Agros from his disciple, the abbot of Stoudios, was the so-called Moechian controversy.<sup>1</sup> Now, it must be remembered that after the death of the Emperor Nicephorus in 811 that obstacle was removed with the deposition of the Skandalon, Joseph, abbot of Kathara. Therefore the problem of the authorship of Chronographia's section on Nicephorus would be better solved, if we first indicate the time during which this part of the Chronographia must have been written. It cannot be dated from a period after the outbreak of the second Iconoclasm, because, in the light of it, Nicephorus' measures would seem less oppressive. Even the sections of the Chronographia devoted to the Emperors Michael I and Leo V must have been completed before the later part of the year 814, because, as G. Ostrogorsky has already rightly observed,<sup>2</sup> Leo V is called εὐσεβῆς (pious),<sup>3</sup> and his elevation to the throne as 'most legitimate'.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand the section which concerns us cannot have been written before the year 811 either, because the death of Nicephorus, an event which the Chronographia records in detail, occurred on 26 July of that very year. We can therefore conclude that the section devoted to Nicephorus is likely to have been written between 811 and 813 and, if this was the case, it is more likely that it was the work of Theophanes than of George Syncellus.

---

1. On this see below, pp.64-65 and 177-81.

2. G. Ostrogorsky, 'Theophanes', R.E., Reihe 2, vol.10 (Stuttgart 1934), col. 2129.

3. Theophanes, I, p.502.

4. ibid.



The Chronographia is written in the form of annals. Each year is headed by a chronological table, in which, next to the year of the creation of the world and that of the incarnation, one finds the current date of the Byzantine emperor in power, as well as those of the contemporary Arab and Persian rulers. The current dates of the Pope and the patriarchs in office at Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch are also given. Moreover, Theophanes provides the number of the indiction cycle. For the reign of Nicephorus I the number of each year provided by Theophanes' calculation does not coincide with the indiction number, a coincidence which also does not occur for an earlier period, i.e. from the year of creation 6102 (A.D. 609-10) to 6265 (A.D. 772-3) with the exception of the eleven years from 6207 to 6218 (A.D. 714-15 to 725-26).<sup>1</sup>

Surprisingly enough, Theophanes does not employ the Byzantine era, which puts the incarnation 5508 years after the creation. Instead of this, he uses the Alexandrian era, according to which the incarnation occurred 5492 years after the creation.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the grounds that C. Mango employed to support his 'serious doubts'<sup>3</sup> concerning the real author of the Chronographia.

- 
1. Thanks to G. Ostrogorsky's article: 'Die Chronologie des Theophanes im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert, B.N.G.J., 7 (1930), pp.1-56, problems associated with chronology have been eliminated.
  2. On the question of chronology used by Theophanes, see furthermore: E.W. Brooks, 'The Chronology of Theophanes, 605-775', B.Z., 8 (1899), pp.82-97; F. Martroye, 'Chronologie de Theophane', Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France (1910), pp.292-95; V. Grumel, 'L'année du monde dans la Chronographie de Theophane', E.O., 33 (1934), pp.396-408; F. Dölger, 'Das Kaiserjahr der Byzantiner', Jahrbuch der Bayer. Akad. der Wissenschaft, 1949, Heft 1, pp.21-38; V. Grumel, Traité d'études byzantines, I, La Chronologie, Paris 1958), pp.95-96.
  3. C. Mango, 'Who Wrote...' (loc.cit.), p.17.

George Syncellus had lived in Palestine, where, as V. Grumel has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the Alexandrian era was current, at least among ecclesiastical circles. But some further remarks must be made about the chronology and more especially about the way Theophanes counts the years in his Chronographia.

As has already been mentioned above, in the Confessor's Chronographia each year is headed by a chronological table, indicating various dates. According to this chronological table, Theophanes dates Nicephorus' elevation to the year 6295, which in the Alexandrian era is the year 803 from the incarnation. The table assures us that this was the eighteenth year of Hārūn al-Rashīd's rule, the seventh year of Pope Leo III's office and the nineteenth year since Tarasius became patriarch at Constantinople. The rest of the dates are not recorded. However, one must be very careful in accepting the accuracy of these lists. The reason for this seems to be the fact that, when one of the dates in the chronological table changes, the rest of them change together too. Let us take an example: The Patriarch Tarasius remained 22 years in office (784-806). His last year was the third of Nicephorus' reign, the twentieth of Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphate and the ninth of Leo III's papacy. On 18 February 806 Tarasius died and the Emperor's namesake Nicephorus was elevated to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople. From that time, of course, the first year of Nicephorus' patriarchate begins, but it becomes obvious that the year 806 counts as Tarasius' twenty second and at the same time as Nicephorus' first year in office. It is clear, nevertheless, that, in reality, it is one and not two solar years, as they are reckoned in Theophanes. Furthermore,

---

1. V. Grumel, Traité... (op.cit.), p.95, note 4.



what also strikes us here is that with the election of the new Patriarch, Theophanes adds one year to each of the other three columns of the chronological table. Thus, we get the impression that in the Chronographia some years begin at a certain date, let us say the 1 September or the 25 March, as V. Grumel seems to suggest,<sup>1</sup> and other years begin at any indefinite date in which a major change occurred. In other words, it would seem that in Theophanes some years become shorter, just because they happened to be marked by a major change, i.e. a change on the thrones of Constantinople, of Rakka, of Rome, etc. In brief, in the Chronographia one finds two 'categories' of years, the 'solar' ones, i.e. those which complete a full round of 365 days, and the 'occasional' ones, the length of which varies according to the case. Although this classification does not apply only to our period, it is of some importance and it provides us with sufficient explanation of why, when the Annus Mundi and the indiction do not fall in line, it is safer for us to trust the indiction rather than the year from the creation of the world, provided by the Confessor.

One last point: V. Grumel's hint that in Theophanes the year begins on 25 March,<sup>2</sup> does not seem to apply to the period of Nicephorus' reign. Theophanes dates the elevation of that very Emperor to 31 October of A.M. 6295, which is the year 802. According to the same author Bardanes' rebellion broke out on 19 July 803<sup>3</sup> and the death of Irene at Lesbos occurred the same year on 9 August.<sup>4</sup>

---

1. V. Grumel, 'L'année...', (loc.cit.), p.408.

2. ibid.; id., Traité... (op.cit.), p.95, note 4.

3. Theophanes 1, p.479.

4. ibid., p.480.

These three events dominate a period of slightly more than nine months which extends from October 802 to August 803. Now it would be quite inconceivable that, although he considers 25 March as the first<sup>day</sup> of the year, Theophanes includes these three events in the same year. In brief, if Theophanes took the 25 March as the first day of the year, he would not have included all these three events, as he does, in the same year, that of 6295. It looks as if the Confessor employed the Alexandrian era only in so far as it concerned the year of the creation and not the first day of the year. The first day of the indiction could mark the first day of the year too in Theophanes,<sup>1</sup> at least for the period under consideration.

As for his sources, it seems very possible that our chronicler drew his information from a number of materials, which had been available to him through George Syncellus. The Hungarian Byzantinist G. Moravcsik<sup>2</sup> argues that the chronicle of Traianos Patrikios, extending till the end of the eighth century must have been used by Theophanes. In addition to this the Great Chronicler (Μέγας Χρονολόγος), a work which emerges at the end of the eighth century and exists in fragments, was probably consulted by Theophanes as well as by the Patriarch Nicephorus.<sup>3</sup>

It would be a common place to say that for the period of Nicephorus' reign the Confessor relies on oral information. Being a contemporary of the Emperor Nicephorus, Theophanes is very likely to have had strong connections and acquaintances among prominent people at court and in ecclesiastical circles.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore his military

---

1. On this, cf. the English translation by H. Turtledove, The Chronicle of Theophanes, Philadelphia 1982, where each Annus Mundi begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August.

2. G. Moravcsik, Byzantinoturcica, second edit., (Berlin 1958), p.532.

3. A.R. Santoro, Byzantium and... (op.cit.), p.8.

4. A hint of this is apparent in the Emperor Leo V's attempt to win over Theophanes by peaceful persuasion at the very beginning of the second Iconoclasm (A.D. 815).



background and, more important, his acquaintances among high officers made the chronicler well informed on everything that happened among the tagmata as well as the thematic army.

For no other emperor's reign does Theophanes dedicate so much space in the Chronographia as he does for the relatively short period (802-811), during which Nicephorus I was in power. The Confessor's narrative description of this reign covers eighteen pages in De Boor's edition. The passion and liveliness of the narration is also an astonishing fact. The chronicler provides a detailed description of all the policies followed by that Emperor. His intention is to show how entirely mistaken they were. No historian has so far provided a sufficient explanation for the bias with which Theophanes has treated Nicephorus. It is noteworthy that another reliable contemporary author, the Patriarch Methodius, not only did not try to denigrate Nicephorus, but, on the contrary, he left us a very favourable account, fulsome in its praise of the Emperor. This is of considerable interest, because Methodius was also the biographer - the main one - of Theophanes and might therefore have been expected to follow the latter's view on Nicephorus. Taking into account this contrast, one might argue that, if Theophanes had private motives for hating the Emperor,<sup>1</sup> then Methodius would not have chosen the Confessor's hagiography to insert an eulogy of Nicephorus;<sup>2</sup> unless we admit that Methodius was not in a position to know of any such private motives.

- 
1. C. Mango, 'Who Wrote...', (loc.cit.), p.15;  
F.H. Tinnefeld (Kategorien der Kaiserkritik in der byzantinischen Historiographie, München 1971, p.78) also attributes Theophanes' bias mainly to 'persönlichen Erfahrungen des Chronisten mit dem Kaiser'.
  2. Methodius, (op.cit.), p.26.

Such ignorance is, after all, not totally impossible, since he does not seem to have spent much of his life at Constantinople before the year 821.<sup>1</sup> But, no matter how plausible appears the opinion of modern historians, i.e. that Theophanes' bias against Nicephorus was for personal reasons, there is no real evidence to support this. Instead, it would perhaps be sufficient to say that Methodius' perspective is different from that of Theophanes. The author of the Chronographia seems to have been capable only of a very schematic approach to history dominated by rather crude value judgements on the personality of the different emperors. Theophanes is the type of historian whom R. Jenkins calls 'essentially mediaeval'.<sup>2</sup> His hagiographer, the later Patriarch Methodius, can be better classified as a broad minded author perhaps influenced by the more humanistic approach of a historian, such as Plutarch.

Nevertheless, there is one point which might help us to explain the unjustified bias, which informs Theophanes' section on Nicephorus. It must be remembered that the chronicler accuses Nicephorus of having been a close friend of the Paulicians whose heretic rituals - ~~as~~ Theophanes says - the Emperor found delectable.<sup>3</sup> But, what seemed to have irritated Theophanes more than anything else, was the fact that during Nicephorus' reign these heretics felt free to preach their own ideas openly, with the result that a number of orthodox Christians were converted to the heresy.<sup>4</sup> No matter how exaggerated these reports of

---

1. On this see his Life, in P.G. 100, col.1245; See also J. Pargoire's article 'Saint Méthode de Constantinople avant 821', E.O., 6 (1903), pp.126-31 and V. Laurent, 'Méthode de Constantinople', D.Th. C., 10 (1929), cl. 1597.

2. R. Jenkins, 'The Classical Background of the Scriptores post Theophanem', D.O.P., 8 (1954), p.14.

3. Theophanes 1, p.488.

4. ibid.

Theophanes are, they do reveal the chronicler's strong opposition to the Emperor's tolerant policy towards the Paulicians. Moreover, an advocate of these heretics' annihilation, Theophanes probably wrote this section on the Paulicians, after Nicephorus' successor, the Emperor Michael I, had already inflicted capital punishment against a certain number of these heretics, almost immediately after his accession to the imperial throne in 811.<sup>1</sup> It is definitely of some interest to know that at that time (late in 811) the Patriarch Nicephorus persuaded Michael to go ahead with the annihilation of the Paulicians and the Athinganoi. But, the Patriarch was not the only person by whom the Emperor Michael I was influenced. It would seem that the Studites had already won the upper hand on certain matters, and their advice to the Emperor to spare the lives of these heretics, proved stronger.<sup>2</sup> This change in the mind of Michael which resulted in the survival of the heretics disappointed Theophanes who, nevertheless, celebrates the fact that 'the pious Emperor Michael decapitated many of them anyway'.<sup>3</sup>

But there is more. From the way Theophanes records it, it becomes obvious that the chronicler favoured Bardanes' rebellion against Nicephorus in 803. Such a sympathy, of course, does not need much explanation. Since he hated this Emperor, it is quite understandable that our chronicler favoured any movement against Nicephorus. However, one needs also to remember that at the time he held the powerful post of the monostrategos of the five eastern themes, Bardanes had already built a monastery at

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.495.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.



the island of Proti with the intention of retiring there and becoming a monk at a later age.<sup>1</sup> His failure to seize power in 803 forced him to fulfil this long term intention much earlier than originally planned. But even as a monk Bardanes did not escape his opponents' attack. As we hear from our main source about the event, some time during the first half of 804 a band of Lycaonians deprived him of his eyesight in his own monastery on the isle of Proti.<sup>2</sup> Theophanes does not say, of course, that these people were heretics, but this is probably what he implies by asserting that they were of the same opinion ~~as~~ the Emperor.<sup>3</sup> In relation to that one needs to remember that both the Paulicians and the Athinganoi were settled in Phrygia and Lycaonia.<sup>4</sup> In brief, these data lead us to the following consideration: given the clear hatred of Theophanes against the Paulicians, together with the Emperor Nicephorus' clear tolerance towards the same heretics, one would be tempted to suggest that the bias with which the Confessor treated this Emperor might have been caused by this contrast of opinion of the two men on this particular issue. Furthermore, as we have already calculated above,<sup>5</sup> this section must have been written between 811 and 813, at a time when Nicephorus' successor Michael I was in power and, more important, at a time when the Radicals were in the ascendancy. Therefore, would it be totally groundless to suggest that the criticisms of Nicephorus would be intended as a guide to the new regime? Methodius' favourable opinion is similarly to be explained by a realization of the Emperor Nicephorus' true worth,

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.479.

2. ibid., p.480.

3. ibid.

4. ibid., p.495.

5. On p.19.



now that the iconoclasts were back in power.

To end the section on Theophanes, one must admit that, in spite of the bias with which its author treated the Emperor Nicephorus, the Chronographia's contribution to the history of the early ninth century is invaluable, because it is the only contemporary source describing his reign in detail.

b. Nicephorus the Patriarch (758-828)

Born in Constantinople of a distinguished and noble family,<sup>1</sup> Nicephorus, like his contemporary Theophanes, was a prominent figure of our period. His father, Theodore, who at first was imperial secretary under Constantine V, later lost his post and was sent into exile because of his iconodule ideas. Nicephorus seems to have received a mainly secular education, but he did not neglect to study the Bible and the writings of the church fathers. Like

---

1. Our main source on Nicephorus is his Vita written by Ignatius the Deacon. It was edited by C. De Boor, Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Opuscula Historica (Leipzig 1880), pp.139-217. P. Alexander, 'Secular Biography at Byzantium', Speculum, 15 (Cambridge, Mass. 1940) p.204, argues that, because of the lack of miracles performed by the saint, Nicephorus' Life can be classified as a 'semi-secular hagiography'. For bibliography on Nicephorus see among others: Gass 'Nicephorus' in Herzog and Plitt, Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., X. (Leipzig 1882), pp.537 sq.; A. Ehrhard, 'Nicephorus', in Wetzer and Welte, Kirchenlexikon, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. IX, pp.249-59; Karl Krumbacher, Geschichte..., (op.cit.), pp.71-73 and 349-52; E. von Dobschütz 'Nicephorus', in Hauck Realenzyklopädie für... (op.cit.), XIV, pp.22-25; N. Jorga, 'Médailles d'histoire littéraire byzantine, 8. Le patriarche Nicéphore', in Byz., 2 (1925), pp.252-53; R. Janin, 'Nicéphore de Constantinople', D.Th.C. XI, pt.I, (Paris 1931), pp.452-55; G. Moravcsik 'Byzantinoturcica', (op.cit.), 1, pp.456-59; A.J. Visser, Nikephoros... (op.cit.); P. Alexander, 'The Patriarch Nicephorus...' (op.cit.); R.P. Blake, 'Note sur l'activité littéraire de Nicéphore 1er Patriarche de Constantinople', Byz., 14 (1939), pp.1-15.

his father, Nicephorus too, held the post of imperial secretary, from which he later resigned with the intention of becoming a monk.<sup>1</sup> Before becoming patriarch (806) Nicephorus served for a time as head of a poorhouse at Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> During the second outbreak of Iconoclasm he became an outspoken defender of the icons.

But Nicephorus is not only a person deeply involved in our period. He is also a prominent literary figure, who wrote both, historical as well as theological works. Unfortunately his historical writings cover a period much earlier than the reign of his namesake Nicephorus,<sup>3</sup> while the theological ones refer mostly to the second Iconoclasm.

Nevertheless, there is one work, namely his Epistola ad Leonem III, which is of vital importance for our period.<sup>4</sup> The letter must have been sent to the Pope some time between October and December of 811. This letter, which does not appear to have been exploited properly so far, illuminates from inside the following problems:

- i) The relations between church and state in Byzantium and in the West.
- ii) The rivalry between the eastern and western Empire.
- iii) The involvement of the papacy in the political scene of the West during the very last years of the eighth and the first years of the ninth centuries.

- 
1. cf. his: Epistola ad Leonem, Migne: P.G. vol.100, 176 A: "ὡς ἄρα εἰ δυνατόν τοῦ μονήρους βίου ἐφαιτόμενος"
  2. Vita Nicephori, (ed. De Boor, loc.cit.), p.152. More about his activities before and during his patriarchate can be found below, pp.182-95.
  3. His chronicle, for example, ed. C. de Boor, Nicephori Archiepiscopi... (op.cit.), pp.3-77, extends from the death of Mauricius (602) to the time when Leo IV was married to Irene (769).
  4. The letter can be found in J.D. Mansi: Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio (Florence 1757-98), Reprint, (Paris and Leipzig 1901-27), vol.XIV, pp. 29-56 and in Migne's P.G. 100, col. 169-200. On this letter see also V. Grumel, Le patriarchat byzantin, Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople, vol.I, fasc. II, pp.25-26.



c. George the Monk

It is difficult to say for sure whether George the Monk is an original or a derivative source of information for our period. Only a few things about him are known. He was a monk and called himself Hamartolos (= the sinful). He lived during the ninth century probably dying at the end of the reign of Michael III (842-867).<sup>1</sup> His contribution to the Byzantine literature is a world chronicle under the title Chronikon Syntomon<sup>2</sup> which begins with the creation of the world and ends with the first year of Michael III's reign in 842-43.

It is true that George's interest concentrates mainly on ecclesiastical matters. However for the period of Nicephorus' reign the chronicle is certainly of considerable importance. Though he used the Chronographia of Theophanes, his historical judgements display a large measure of independence. In contrast to the Confessor's bias against Nicephorus, George the Monk considers this Emperor as a 'very pious and friend of the Christians'<sup>3</sup> as well as 'a prudent and sensible'<sup>4</sup> ruler. Therefore St. Runciman's argument that George based his work on Theophanes,<sup>5</sup> is only partly correct, for he brings to his treatment of the reign of Nicephorus I an independence of

- 
1. J. Karayannopoulos, Ἱστορίαι τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Ἱστορίας, second edit., Thessalonica 1971, p.203.
  2. The best edition of the chronicle is the one made by C. de Boor, Georgii Monachi Chronicon, (Lipsiae 1904). For literature on George see among others: F. Hirsch, Byzantinische Studien (Leipzig 1876), p.88; Fr. Lauchert, 'Zur Textüberlieferung des Georgios Monachos', B.Z., 4 (1895), pp.493-513; K. Krumbacher, Geschichte..., (op.cit.), pp.352-58; J.B. Bury, E.R.E., pp.453-54; N. Jorga, 'Medaillons...' (loc.cit.), pp.258-60; G. Moravcsik, Byzantinoturcica (op.cit.), I, pp.277-80.
  3. C. de Boor, Georgii..., (op.cit.), vol.2, p.772.
  4. C. de Boor, Georgii..., (op.cit.), vol.2, p.774.
  5. St. Runciman, The First..., appendix 1, p.266.



outlook. This is in contrast to the first part of his chronicle, which covers the period up to the deposition of Irene (802) and which is not of much significance. For this section George relies heavily on Sozomenus, J. Malalas, Theodore Anagnostes, the Patriarch Nicephorus and Theophanes.<sup>1</sup> However, it is the second part of his chronicle covering the period 802-842, for which George deserves attention. Not only is he for the period 813-842 the only contemporary narrative source, but for Nicephorus' reign, too, he is an independent witness. To take just one example: in contrast to Theophanes, George believes that the Emperor Nicephorus was sincere when he disclaimed responsibility for Bardanes Turcus' blinding by the Lycaonians in 803.<sup>2</sup> This is all the more remarkable, because he was well aware of Theophanes' opinion on this matter. Both historians use the same phraseology to describe the Lycaonians. George was therefore deliberately disassociating himself from Theophanes' point of view.

d. The Chronicle of the year 811

The title of this little chronicle is: Περὶ Νικηφόρου τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ πῶς ἀφίγη τὰ κῶλα ἐν Βουλγαρίᾳ, and refers to the disastrous defeat of the Byzantine army by Krum in July 811. At times it was thought to have been a fragment of a longer chronicle under the title Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio.<sup>3</sup> The best and most recent edition with a commentary is the one made by Ivan Dujčev.<sup>4</sup> The text seems to be of great importance

- 
1. I. Karayannopoulos, Πηγαί... (op.cit.), p.203.
  2. C. de Boor, Georgii... (op.cit.), vol.2, p.772.
  3. H. Grégoire, 'Un nouveau fragment du "scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio"', Byz., 11 (1936), pp.417-27.
  4. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique byzantine de l'an 811', in T.M., vol.I, (Paris 1965), pp.205-54.

for our period. It matches and at the same time differs from Theophanes' narration. Its anonymous author is more objective than Theophanes, providing a balanced portrait of Nicephorus I.

e. The Chronicle of Monemvasia

The chronicle is an invaluable source of information for our period. Without it the problem of the invasion and the settlement of the Slavs in Greece and particularly in the Peloponnese would scarcely have been illuminated. Together with Theophanes, the Chronicle of Monemvasia is also our main source for the activities of the Emperor Nicephorus in repopulating the area and strengthening its Byzantine and christian character.

Though short, the Chronicle of Monemvasia has attracted the interest of many scholars, mainly Greeks. This is quite understandable, since it refers to the question of the Slavonic settlement in Greece. It was much exploited by Fallmerayer to support his argument that the inhabitants of modern Greece are mostly of Slavic origin and that the roots of the ancient Greeks have completely disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

The Chronicle of Monemvasia has survived in three versions: the Iberikon, the Koutloumousion and the Turin version.<sup>2</sup> The so-called Scholion of Arethas cannot be

- 
1. J. Ph. Fallmerayer, Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea, Stuttgart 1830, Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1965, vol.1, pp.171 sq.
  2. The first complete edition was made by S.P. Lampros, 'Τὸ περὶ τῆς κτίσεως τῆς Μονεμβασίας χρονικόν' in his Ἱστορικὰ Μελετήματα, (Athens 1909), pp. 37-105. See also: P. Charanis, 'The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlement in Greece', in D.O.P., 5 (1950), pp.141-166; E. Chrysanthopoulos, 'Περὶ τοῦ χρονικοῦ τῆς Μονεμβασίας' in E.E.B.S., 21 (1951), pp.238-53; the best edition, however, seems to be the one made by P. Lemerle, 'La chronique improprement dite de Monemvasie: le contexte historique et légendaire', R.E.B., 21 (1963), pp.5-49.



considered as a fourth version. The text of the Scholion on which S. Kougeas has commented,<sup>1</sup> is smaller than the last three and it shows many similarities with the Iberikon version. For our period the most important texts are the Iberikon text and the Scholion of Arethas. The other two versions refer to later periods.

## 2. Latin Sources

We should consider ourselves lucky, because Nicephorus' reign in the East coincides with the era during which Charlemagne was in power in the West, and there are fairly abundant sources of information for the reign of that Frankish Emperor.

Among these sources the most valuable ones are three series of chronicles called Annales Regni Francorum,<sup>2</sup> covering the period from 741 to 829,<sup>3</sup> a revision of these Annales for the period 741-801 and the Annales Mosellani, or Moselle Annals for the period 703-797. The rest of the Annales, such as those of Fulda, Lorsch, Saint Amand, Althenses, etc., seem to be of lesser importance for our period.

The author or the authors of the Annales are unknown, but it must be assumed that they belonged to Charlemagne's circle or court. The Annales very often refer to the

- 
1. S. Kougeas, 'Ἐπὶ τοῦ καλουμένου χρονικοῦ τῆς Μονεμβασίας', in Νέος Ἑλληνομνημῶν, 9 (1912), pp.473-80.
  2. They are published in M.G.H., Scriptorum, vol.I, Hannoverae 1826. The works are described by W. Wattenbach, Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter, New edit., Weimar 1953, Heft 2; see also the introduction in F. Kurtz's edition: Annales Regni Francorum, inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses Majores et Einhardi, post editionem G.H. Pertzii, Hannoverae 1895, as well as R. Rau, Quellen zur Karolinischen Reichsgeschichte, Darmstadt 1955.
  3. Later a continuation extending down to the year 1073, was added.



rivalry between East and West during the crucial years of the turn of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries by giving us the names of ambassadors and contents of letters exchanged between the Frankish and the Byzantine emperor of the time.

As for the dating of the events, it is noteworthy that there is usually a gap of one year between the dates we get from eastern sources and those of the Annales Regni Francorum. The latter ones, for example, date the death of Nicephorus I to the year 812 instead of the correct 811.

The two Lives of Charlemagne, one by Einhard and the second by Notker the Stammerer, monk of Saint Gall,<sup>1</sup> though biased against the eastern Empire and consequently in favour of Charlemagne, also provide us with pieces of useful information on the period. The first of these two Vitae, modeled on the pattern used by Suetonius in his Lives of the Caesars and especially that of Augustus, provides us with valuable information on the period under consideration. Its significance has been pointed out by A.J. Grant who argues that 'in the chronicles of the same period by other hands we can feel confidence only in such parts as are corroborated or supported by Eginhard'.<sup>2</sup> This Vita, dating

- 
1. The Latin texts of both Lives can be found in M.G.H., Script. Rerum German. N.S. vols. 25 and 12 respectively. There exist two English translations with introductions on the authors. The first is the one by A.J. Grant Early Lives of Charlemagne, New York 1966, and the second is the Penguin Classics one: Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, Two Lives of Charlemagne (translation and introduction by Lewis Thorpe), Middlesex 1969. For literature, see among others: R. Folz, Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiéval (Paris 1950), pp. 4-15; D.A. Bullough, 'Europae Pater: Charlemagne and his Achievements in the Light of Recent Scholarship', in E.H.R. 85 (1970) pp. 67-69; F.L. Ganshof, The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy, (London 1971), pp. 1-16.
  2. A.J. Grant, Early Lives... (op.cit.), Introduction, p. vii.

from some time between the years 829-36 can be seen as 'the memoirs of a former public servant who is now in retirement'.<sup>1</sup> The second one is more or less a mixture of fiction and history, and as such is of lesser value than the one by Einhard.

Much more valuable are the pieces of information that we get from the Liber Pontificalis,<sup>2</sup> and from the Epistolae Carolinae.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Arabic Sources

The relations between Byzantium and the Arabic world during the years under consideration cannot be sketched out properly without taking into account reports provided by Arabic sources, namely historians and geographers. These authors not only confirm information given by Greek sources, but they add their own contribution. The annual raids launched by the Arabs against the Byzantine territory are reported systematically and almost exclusively by Arab historians, while the Byzantine chroniclers hardly refer to them. Among these Arabic sources the most invaluable ones are:

- 
1. Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, Two Lives of Charlemagne, (op.cit.), p.15.
  2. Ed. by L'abbé L. Duchesne, Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Romanae, 2 vols, (Paris 1886-92). Reprinted in 3 vols (Paris 1955). For the events under pope Leo III see vol.2, pp.1-48.
  3. Ed. by Ph. Jaffé, Monumenta Carolina, Epistolae Carolinae, Berolini 1864-73. The letter number twenty-nine is of particular interest. It was sent by Charlemagne to the Emperor Nicephorus and reflects the views of the Frankish Emperor on the relations between East and West. More about the contents and the importance of this letter see below, p.243.

a. Ya 'Kūbī

Ya 'Kūbī is a ninth century historian and geographer, who brought his world history down to the year A.H. 259 (A.D. 872). He was born in Egypt, where he lived for the greater part of his life.<sup>2</sup> Of his work, which is divided into two parts, the most important for our period is the second one, since it is in this part that the author includes a summary of the Arabic raids against the eastern provinces of Byzantium.<sup>3</sup> He died in A.H. 284 (A.D. 897).

b. Al-Ṭabarī (839-923)

One of the most outstanding Arab historians, Abū Dja'far Muḥammad b. Djarīr, is commonly known as al-Ṭabarī, because he was born in Tabaristan. He was educated first at Baghdād. Later, travelling extensively, he visited Syria and Egypt. Finally he settled again at Baghdād teaching and writing. His main work Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa'l Mulūk (History of the prophets and kings) is usually known as the Annals. It is a world history from the creation

---

1. His full name was: Al-Ya'kūbī Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'Kūb b. Dja'far b. Wahb b. Waḍiḥ Al-Kātib Al-'Abbāsī, (Encyclopaedia of Islam), ed. M. Th. Houtsma, A.J. Wensinck, Leiden 1934, vol.IV, p.1152.

2. For literature see: C. Brockelmann, Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur, vol.I (Weimar 1898-1902), p.226; R.A. Nicholson, A literary History of the Arabs, (Cambridge 1930), p.349; F. Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography, Leiden 1952, pp.114-16.

3. On these raids see E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids', E.H.R., vol.15 (1900), pp.728-47. It is in this article (p.740) that Brooks presumes that Ṭabarī has derived his information partly from Al-Wāḳidī.



to the year 915 (A.H. 302).<sup>1</sup> According to its editor De Goeje, what makes Tabarī's work of great importance is: 'completeness of detail, accuracy and the truly stupendous learning of its author that is revealed throughout and that makes the Annals a vast storehouse of information for the historian as well as for the student of Islam'.<sup>2</sup> Less enthusiastic, however, is the remark made by D.S. Straley, who argues that 'we must treat al-Tabarī with the same circumspection as other sources',<sup>3</sup> and that 'there is no foundation for considering him an "objective" historian'.<sup>4</sup>

c. Al Mas'ūdī

Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Al-Ḥusain is another important Arab historian, whose works cover our period. He is called Mas'ūdī 'after one of the Prophet's companions, 'Abdullah b. Mas'ūd from whom he traced his descent'.<sup>5</sup> He was a

- 
1. The best edition with a translation into French was made by De Goeje, Kitāb Akbar al-Rusul wa'al Mulūk, Annales, 15 vols, (Leiden 1897-1901). For literature see: K. Brockelmann, Geschichte..., (op.cit.), I, pp.142 sq.; R.A. Nicholson, A literary... (op.cit.), pp.350-52; Encyclopaedia of Islam, old edition, (op.cit.), vol.IV, pp.578-79; Ilse Lichtenstadter, 'Arabic and Islamic Historiography', The Moslem World, 35 (1945), pp.130-31; Fr. Rosenthal, A history..., (op.cit.), pp.116-17; D.M. Dunlop, Arab Civilization to A.D. 1500, (London 1971), pp.88-92; D.S. Margoliouth, Lectures on Arabic Historians, N. York 1930, pp.101-102.
  2. Selection from the Annals of Tabarī (ed. by J.J. de Goeje, Leyden 1902, XI).
  3. D.S. Straley, Perspective and Method in Early Islamic Historiography: A study of Al-Tabarī's Ta'rikh... Edin. Univers. Ph.D. Th. 1977, p.171.
  4. ibid.
  5. R.A. Nicholson, A Literary..., (op.cit.), p.352.

native of Baghdād, born probably some time between 890 and 895.<sup>1</sup> Following Ibn Khaldun's opinion, Nicholson calls Mas'ūdī 'the Herodotus of the Arabs', because like the Greek historian, Mas'ūdī shows 'the same eager spirit of enquiry, the same open-mindedness and disposition to record without prejudice all the marvellous things that he had heard or seen, the same ripe experience and large outlook on the present as on the past'.<sup>2</sup> He spent almost all his life travelling. As a stimulus for his constant travels should be seen not his thirst for adventure but his 'desire for knowledge'.<sup>3</sup>

Mas'ūdī showed particular interest in the Byzantine world. According to A.M.H. Shboul, he was the first Arab historian to have shown interest in the Byzantines 'not only as an enemy of Islam, but as people of their own right too'.<sup>4</sup> We find information on Byzantium in both of his works, the Murūd̲j al-Dhahab (the Meadows of Gold),<sup>5</sup> as well as in the Kitāb al-Tanbīh (the Book of the Warning).<sup>6</sup> In fact it is in this second work, though much shorter than the first, that Mas'ūdī dedicates much more space on Byzantine affairs than he does in the Murūd̲j, which is his main historical work.<sup>7</sup> Mas'ūdī's account on Byzantine

- 
1. D.M. Dunlop, Arab Civilization..., (op.cit.), p.89.
  2. R.A. Nicholson, A Literary... (op.cit.), p.353.
  3. Encyclopaedia of Islam (op.cit.), vol.3, p.403.
  4. A.M.H. Shboul, Al-Mas'ūdī and his World (London 1979), p.227.
  5. It was edited and translated into French (Les prairies d'or) by G. Barbier de Meynard (Paris 1861-77). Pavet de Courteille was co-editor of the first four out of a total nine volumes.
  6. It has been translated into French (Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision) by B. Charra de Vaux, Paris 1897.
  7. For literature on Mas'ūdī cf. also: F. Rosenthal (op.cit.), pp.117-18; D.M. Dunlop, (op.cit.), pp.99-114.

affairs is slightly different from the accounts provided by the other two already mentioned Arab historians. Mas'ūdī is not interested in listing the yearly raids launched by the Arabic forces against Byzantine territory. Military events seem not to have played an important role in Mas'ūdī's history. He appears to have seen the Byzantines as a neighbouring nation and not as a rival to the Caliphate. In his references to the Byzantine emperors, Mas'ūdī tries to assess their competence or their weakness in governing. His reports are in some ways similar to those provided by the Syriac sources, namely Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus. They have all tried to sketch portraits of the Byzantine emperors of the day. Furthermore, Mas'ūdī was well versed in ancient Greek and Byzantine history and philosophy. Such a knowledge had been built up with the help of various sources, both written and oral. Here his frequent visits to the frontier area acquire a certain significance. There is evidence that in the year 946 Mas'ūdī met at Damascus with an important Byzantine ambassador, the mystikos John, proconsul and patrician,<sup>1</sup> who had a considerable reputation as a scholar. The details contained in Mas'ūdī's account of the Emperor Nicephorus I may have come from some such source, but his anxiety to present Nicephorus as a great ruler may have another explanation. It will be shown elsewhere<sup>2</sup> that Mas'ūdī considered Nicephorus to have been of Arabic origin.

---

1. al-Mas'ūdī, Le livre de l'avertissement, (op.cit.), p.261.

2. Below p.80.



#### 4. Syriac Sources

Being of some importance themselves, the Syriac sources can be considered as exceptionally significant for the early ninth century history of Byzantium. It has been argued that during the seventh century, and probably later, Byzantine historians relied on Syriac sources.<sup>1</sup> However, the two chroniclers whose reports refer directly to the reign of Nicephorus I, belong to a considerably later period. These are:

##### a. Michael the Syrian

He was born in 1126 at Antioch or its neighbourhood,<sup>2</sup> where later he served as the Jacobite patriarch from 1166 until his death in 1199.<sup>3</sup> Among his literary works, what interests us here is his world history up to the end of the twelfth century (1196).<sup>4</sup> In the dating of the events he used the *Seleucian* era, i.e. he started counting from 311 B.C. We would not, of course, expect Michael to have been a completely independent source. He must have relied both on some Greek as well as on some Arabic sources. Furthermore, he seems to have used a source, also used by Theophanes.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless as far as Nicephorus' reign is concerned, Michael is in complete disagreement with

- 
1. S.P. Brock, 'Syriac Sources for Seventh-Century History', Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2 (1976), pp.17-36.
  2. V. Langlois, Chronique de Michael le Grant, (Venice 1868), p.2.
  3. For literature see: W. Wright, A Short History of Syriac Literature, (London 1894), pp.250-53; A. Baumstark, Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, Bonn 1922, pp.298-300; R. Duval, La littérature syriaque, Paris 1907, pp.401-02 (second vol, in the Series: Anciennes littératures chrétiennes); J.B. Chabot Littérature Syriaque, Boucard 1934; see also the introduction in Langlois' translation into French.
  4. It was edited and translated into French by J.B. Chabot, Chronique de Michael le Syrien (4 vol.), Paris 1899-1910.
  5. E.W. Brooks, 'The Sources of Theophanes and the Syriac Chronicles', B.Z., 15 (1906), pp.578-87.

the Confessor. Michael speaks very highly of this Emperor, suggesting with some exaggeration that nobody until then had been 'so courageous and so brilliant in war as him'.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Syrian chronicler traces Nicephorus' abilities in government and administration.<sup>2</sup> This is in contrast to the account of Nicephorus provided by Theophanes. It is of some importance, since Michael seems to have read or at least to have heard of the accusations made by the abbot of Megas Agros against this particular Emperor.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, though a derivative source of a considerably later period, Michael the Syrian must be considered as indispensable for an assessment of Nicephorus' character and achievements.

b. Bar - Hebraeus

Another outstanding Syrian writer is the so-called Bar-Hebraeus, also known as Abu'l-Faraj Gregory.<sup>4</sup> He was born in Melitene in 1225-26 of a Jewish father. His first name was John, but it seems that he adopted the name Gregory, when he later became bishop of Goubos, near Melitene in 1246.<sup>5</sup> Among his prolific works what is of interest to us, is the first part of his universal history, which is nothing less than a political history of the world from the creation down to his times.<sup>6</sup> He died in 1286.<sup>7</sup> Though he used Michael the Syrian as his main source, Bar - Hebraeus

- 
1. J.B. Chabot, Chronique... (op.cit.), III, p.16.
  2. ibid., p.15: 'homme vigoureux et capable de gouverner'.
  3. ibid., p.16: 'Un des écrivains chalcédoniens accuse ce Nicephorus de beaucoup de choses'.
  4. W. Wright, A Short History... (op.cit.), p.265.
  5. J.B. Chabot, Littérature Syrienne, (op.cit.), p.131.
  6. For a translation into English see E.A.W. Budge, The Chronography of Bar-Hebraeus, (London 1932). The work was reprinted in Amsterdam (1976). For literature see also A. Baumstark, Geschichte... (op.cit.), pp.312-20.
  7. R. Duval, La littérature..., (op.cit.), p.410.



alters Michael's narration on Nicephorus in many points. His reference, for example, to Nicephorus' elevation to the throne and to Irene's banishment includes some peculiar details - mostly not true - which are not recorded by Michael. Bar - Hebraeus says, for instance, that the Empress was sent into exile to Athens, where she became a nun.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it would seem that in addition to Michael, Bar - Hebraeus had access to a different chronicle tradition. At any rate, it is quite obvious that with regard to the period in question, our two Syriac sources complement one another rather well. Finally Bar - Hebraeus is one of the four sources<sup>2</sup> from whom we hear about a possible Arabic background of the Emperor Nicephorus.

#### B: SAINTS' LIVES

The iconoclastic controversy, if nothing else, 'produced' a great number of saints. As our period covers a part of the short interval between its two phases, it touches both periods and consequently the number of saints' Lives connected with the reign of Nicephorus I, in one way or another, is rather high. No fewer than forty-two relate to the short reign of the Emperor under consideration. In practice, however, the real number of the Vitae is much higher, because sometimes two or three and even more Lives, or versions of the Life of one saint exist.<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. E.A.W. Budge, The Chronography... (op.cit.), p.120.
  2. The other three are Tabarī, Mas'ūdī and Michael the Syrian.
  3. We have, for example, at our disposal six Vitae of Theophanes the Confessor, three of St. Ioannikios, three of St. Peter, the Patrician and Domestic of the Schools, two of St. Theodore of Stoudios, etc.



These forty-two hagiographies concern a vast range of the populace, running from the top of the secular or ecclesiastical hierarchy to the anonymous soldiers killed by the Bulgars in the fatal battle of July 811. We possess the Vitae of one empress,<sup>1</sup> four patriarchs, one ek prosopou who later became a monk, two patricians, three archbishops or metropolitans, seven bishops, one syncellus, ten abbots, eleven monks or nuns, one rich landowner, Philaretos the Merciful,<sup>2</sup> and one Life which refers collectively to the martyrs of 811.

Our hagiographies also cover a vast array of backgrounds. Some of the saints were descendants of distinguished and noble families, while others had already reached high posts in the civil service. A few of them had built considerable careers in the army, from which they later resigned to become monks. There are nevertheless some insignificant ones, who came from poor backgrounds and became known either because of their pious life or thanks to their actions against Iconoclasm.

In a certain number of Vitae the authors kept their anonymity. The rest of them were written by clergymen and mostly by monks, usually connected in one way or another with the saint, belonging to the same monastery or group of monasteries, or even being kinsmen of the saints; for example: St. Philaretos' biographer was his grandson Nicetas. The majority of the authors lived in the course of the ninth century and one may argue that they themselves witnessed what they narrate. Among these, the most prominent ones seem to have been the Patriarch Methodius,

- 
1. The unedited Life of Irene, Nicephorus' predecessor on the throne of Constantinople.
  2. His granddaughter Maria of Amnia was married to the Emperor Constantine VI.

who wrote the complete Vita of St. Theophanes the Confessor, and Ignatius the Deacon, whose hagiographical activity produced the Vitae of the Patriarchs Tarasius and Nicephorus and perhaps that of Gregory the Decapolite too. Among the hagiographers who wrote after the ninth century, Nicetas-David the Paphlagonian (1st half of tenth century), who wrote the Life of Ignatius the Patriarch (d. 877) and Symeon Metaphrastes (2nd half of the tenth century),<sup>1</sup> author of one of the Vitae of St. Theoctiste of Lesbos and of one version of the Life of St. Ioannikios, must be mentioned.

The majority of the hagiographers are, of course, iconodules. The Life of George, bishop of Amastris, might form an exception to the rule, an observation which has already been made by I. Ševčenko,<sup>2</sup> who also thinks that the Life of St. Philaretos is non-iconodule and has iconoclast traits.<sup>3</sup>

Saints' Vitae as texts are different from the chronicles. The intention of the hagiographers is in fact entirely different from that of the chroniclers. They aim at another target. They would like their readers to know how great the holiness of their saint or saints had been. Only occasionally do they refer to political events and mainly to those connected with the life of their saint.

Hagiographers of the period follow a certain pattern in their narrations, but they do not copy each other. Sometimes they extend their stories by using too many quotations from the Bible. In other cases they exaggerate

---

1. K. Krumbacher, Geschichte... (op.cit.), p.200.

2. Ihor Ševčenko, 'Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period', in Iconoclasm, Birmingham, 1977, p.121. The hagiographer of this Vita kept his anonymity, but I. Ševčenko argues on good grounds that it is a work of Ignatius the Deacon (ibid. p.123).

3. ibid., p.126; Life of St. Philaretos, text and French translation of the original version in M.H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, 'La vie de S. Philarète', Byz., 7 (1934), pp.85-170.



the performance of miracles by their 'heroes'. But again, in comparison to saints' Lives written during earlier times, the ninth century Vitae are not overloaded with miracles.<sup>1</sup> The Vita of St. Peter of Atroa,<sup>2</sup> in which the Saint is reported to have performed twenty miracles, forms probably an exception to that rule. This lack of many miracles in the Vitae of our period should not come as a surprise. It was by their opposition to the second Iconoclasm and not by the performance of miracles that their holiness was established, along with their claim to be called confessors. For this reason the reign of Nicephorus I is less well covered by saints' Lives than for example the reign of Leo V or that of Theophilus. One further point: It is well known that monastic opposition to Iconoclasm was centred mainly in and around Constantinople and, to a lesser extent, around the Mount Olympus in Bithynia. This is, of course, of importance, since we would have preferred our hagiographies to cover a much wider variety of geographical settings; the point being that because the Vitae are centred mostly around Constantinople, social and economic life in the provinces is not well illustrated by them. But again social and economic conditions do not change decisively in a reign lasting only nine years, such as that of Nicephorus. The task of a student who deals with short periods like this, is mainly to reveal and interpret policies in the short term, and in this, saints' Lives provide valuable help, not only over religious matters, but also as a guide to the political and even economic concerns of the time.

- 
1. See D.Z.F. Abrahamse, Hagiographic Sources for Byz. Cities 500-900, Ph.D. 1967, Michigan Univ., pp.324-26; see also J. Pargoire, 'Saints Iconophiles', in E.O., 4 (1900-901), pp.347-56, and D.Z.F. Abrahamse, 'The Transformation of the Saint in the Early Medieval Byzantium', B.S., vol.2, pt.2 (1975), pp.122-31.
  2. V. Laurent, La vie merveilleuse de Saint Pierre d'Atroa (d. 837), Brussels, 1956; id., La vita retractata et les miracles posthumes de Saint Pierre d'Atroa, Brussels, 1958.



## C: LETTERS OF THEODORE OF STOUDIOS

Theodore was born at Constantinople in A.D. 759, from a family 'intimately connected with the administration of the imperial government and intensely susceptible to the religious influences around'.<sup>1</sup> We learn about the life of this outstanding monk from various sources, the most important of which are his two Vitae, written by the monk Michael, probably a Studite, after Theodore's death.<sup>2</sup> His father, Photinus, held a post in the imperial treasury, while his mother, Theoctiste, had been a lady of good birth.<sup>3</sup> Theodore was the first among the four children of the family. From his hagiographer we hear that he received a good Greek education.<sup>4</sup> Later, when he became a monk at the age of twenty-two, Theodore dedicated himself almost completely to the study of the Bible and of the works of church fathers, especially to those of St. Basil.<sup>5</sup> After the death of Photinus, Theoctiste, deserting her children, retreated into a monastery. At about the same

- 
1. A. Gardner, Theodore of Studium. His Life and Times (London 1905), p.3.
  2. Both Lives can be found in Migne, P.G.99, columns 113-328. A slightly different version of the first Vita was edited by B. Latyshev, 'Vita S. Theodori Studitae', V.V., 21 (ser.1, 1914), pp.258-304.
  3. On Theoctiste's background and life, cf. C. Diehl, 'Une bourgeoise de Byzance au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Figures byzantines, 1 (Paris 1948), pp.111-132; see also the funeral speech by her son, Theodore, in P.G.99, cols 883-902.
  4. B. Latyshev, 'Vita... (loc.cit.)', p.260.
  5. B. Latyshev, 'Vita... (op.cit.)', p.264; for literature on Theodore, see among others: E. Marin, De Studio coenobio Constantinopolitano, (Paris 1897); A. Gardner, Theodore..., (op.cit.), London 1905; C. Van de Vorst, 'La translation de S. Théodore Studite et de S. Joseph de Thessalonique', A.B., 32 (1913), pp.27-62; H. Delehaye, 'Stoudion-Stoudios', A.B. 52 (1934), pp. 64-5; J. Leroy, 'La vie quotidienne du moine studite', Irénikon, 17 (1954), 1<sup>er</sup> trimestre, pp.21-50; N.X. Eleopoulos, Ἡ Βιβλιοθήκη καὶ τὸ Βιβλιογραφικὸν Ἐργαστήριον τῆς Μονῆς τῶν Στουδίου, Athens, 1967; J. Leroy, Studitisches Mönchtum, Graz, Wien, Köln 1969.

time her brother, Plato, founded the monastery of Sakkoudion, in the neighbourhood of Prousa. He held the position of abbot, a post in which his nephew, Theodore, later succeeded him. The new abbot's monastic life was to be very turbulent. He was sent into exile for the first time in the year 795, because he had been an outspoken opponent of the Emperor Constantine VI's second marriage. Two years later, when Irene became the sole ruler of the Empire, Theodore and those exiled with him were allowed to come back to their monastery. Immediately or shortly after their return, they abandoned Sakkoudion and took up residence in the capital itself, where they reactivated and reorganized the monastery of Stoudios. This transfer was to prove ~~to have been~~ very decisive for Theodore himself and for the so-called Studite movement in general. Their influence, not only on purely religious, but also on political issues, dates mainly from this time.

After the death of the Patriarch Tarasius in 806, Theodore was probably a candidate for the see of Constantinople which, nevertheless, was filled by the Emperor's namesake Nicephorus. In the following years Theodore played a very important role, strongly opposing the restoration of Joseph, who as abbot of Kathara had consecrated Constantine VI's second marriage. But since it was the Emperor Nicephorus himself who desired and initiated that rehabilitation, Theodore and his followers were sent into exile for the second time (809).

The reign of Michael I (811-13) witnessed the peak of the Studite influence and political power. Theodore is reported to have been among the Emperor's close advisers even on problems related to foreign affairs.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.498.



Theodore died in 826, long before the second restoration of the icons (843), for the sake of which he suffered his third exile during the second outbreak of Iconoclasm under the Emperor Leo V. In the meantime he had come to terms with the leader of the Moderates, the Patriarch Nicephorus.

Theodore of Stoudios is well known not only as the leader of the monastic party, the influence and power of which he strongly promoted, but also as a reformer of the monastic life in Byzantium,<sup>1</sup> and as a prominent literary figure, too. Of his prolific output which includes speeches and catechisms, it is his letters, which are of a particular interest for this thesis.

In Migne, P.G. 99, col.903-1670, we find a selection of 278 letters sent by Theodore to various persons, male or female, laymen or clergymen. Migne has divided these letters into two books. However, as we learn from Theodore's Lives,<sup>2</sup> his letters originally formed five books. Migne simply reprinted what Jacques Sirmond had edited in 1696,<sup>3</sup> i.e. the first two out of the five books into which the whole body of the letters was divided. It looks as if the designation of the books was derived from the manuscripts used by Sirmond.<sup>4</sup>

The first book includes fifty-seven letters,<sup>5</sup> which are supposed to have been written mainly during Theodore's

---

1. On the reforms introduced to monastic life by Theodore, cf. J. Leroy, 'La reforme studite', Il Monachesimo orientale, (actes du congrès tenu à l'Institut Pontifical Oriental du 9 au 12 avril 1958), pp.201-206.

2. Migne P.G., vol.99, cols.153B, 264D.

3. Theodori Studitae, Epistolae, ed. by J. Sirmond, Opera Varia, 5 (1696).

4. Patrick O'Connell, 'The Letters and Catecheses of Theodore Studites', O.Ch.P., 38 (Rome 1972), p.256.

5. Of the letters 45, 46 and 47 we possess only the names of the persons to whom they were sent, without anything else.



first and second exile. The second book contains two hundred and twenty-one letters, mostly written during Theodore's third exile. Some of the letters of the second book are incomplete. It is worth noting that these two hundred and seventy-eight letters are followed - in Migne's edition - by a list of another two hundred and seventy-seven, of which we are given only the names of the addressees and the incipits. Migne took these titles and incipits from the Paris manuscript, Coislianus 94.<sup>1</sup> It was the full text and the Latin translation of these 277 letters that Cozza Luzi printed in 1871.<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Mai, who was involved in this edition, added another seven letters, so that the total number edited by C. Luzi reached two hundred and eighty-four. At the same time and in the same edition Mai also provided a complete text of twelve letters, which were incomplete in Migne's edition.

Now, to the five hundred and fifty-nine letters, which were published either by Migne (275)<sup>3</sup> or by Cozza Luzi - Mai (284), another two letters are added. The first was published in 1950 by R. Dévréesse,<sup>4</sup> and the second in 1968 by J. Gill.<sup>5</sup> They both belong to a rather early period of Theodore's correspondence and are related to the Moechian Schism. Therefore a total of five hundred and sixty-one letters of Theodore of Stoudios have been edited so far.

It should be indicated here that from this bulk of letters, it is only the first book in Migne's edition and the two recently edited letters, that refer to our period.

- 
1. J.P. Migne, P.G., vol.99, cols.1669-80.
  2. Patrum Nova Bibliotheca, VIII, 1. (Romae, 1871.)
  3. The already mentioned 45th, 46th and 47th letters of the first book are not included in this number.
  4. R. Dévréesse, 'Une lettre de S. Théodore Studite relative au Synode Moechien (809)', A.B., 68 (1950), pp.44-57.
  5. Joseph Gill, 'An Unpublished Letter of Theodore the Studite', O.Ch.P. 34, (1968), pp.62-69.

More precisely, even from the fifty-four letters of the first book only a certain number were composed between the years 802 and 811. The rest of them relate to the sole reign of Constantine VI (792-97) as well as that of Irene (797-802). They are still of importance, because they reveal the social framework on which Theodore relied in order to oppose the alliance of the two Nicephori (emperor and patriarch) over the restoration of Joseph of Kathara.

Of the fifty-six letters, forty-one were addressed to clergymen (including monks and nuns), twelve to laymen and three to mixed communities. Among the letters sent to clergymen the most valuable ones for our purposes seem to be the four addressed to Theodore's uncle Plato, the two sent to Pope Leo III, another two to Theodore's brother Joseph, archbishop of Thessalonica, two again, of which the addressee was the Patriarch Nicephorus and the six sent to Naukratios, who at the time of Theodore's exiles was the acting abbot at Stoudios' monastery.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand among the letters addressed to laymen we should mention one letter sent to the Empress Irene, one to the Emperor Nicephorus, one to Magister Theoctistus and a fourth one to Spatharius John, who had named an icon of St. Demetrius as the God-father of his son. Baronius dated twenty-seven letters from the first book. It looks as if the dated ones are the most important and that the dates which he provided are more or less accurate. Baronius' dating is based on the content or on the contents of the letters. Through the dating, which is important, one can observe that Theodore was exceptionally active at the peak of the Moechian controversy. The letters which

---

1. He was also elected as abbot of the monastery of Stoudios after Theodore's death.



Theodore wrote during his second exile (809-811) exceed in number and in variety of addressees those which form Theodore's correspondence during his first exile (795-97). In order to understand this, one needs only to remember that Theodore suffered his first deposition at a time he was still at the remote monastery of Sakkoudion, from where his contact with Constantinople and its surroundings had been, no doubt, limited.

As for the issues discussed in these fifty-six letters, the dominant one is, of course, the Emperor Constantine VI's adultery and its implications or consequences (restoration of Joseph, Moechian Schism, etc.). No matter how effective this correspondence of Theodore proved to have been, what cannot be denied is that he had already established a wide contact with a variety of persons, some of whom had prominent posts, both in the ecclesiastical and secular hierarchy. On these acquaintances he could also rely later during the second outbreak of Iconoclasm. Unfortunately we do not possess any reply to Theodore's letters. There must have been some. Elements of replies can be traced in cases that the abbot of Stoudios addressed more than one letter to the same person. In some of these cases Theodore complains either because he did not get any reply to the letter which he had already sent to the same person, or because the reply had not been satisfactory. In other cases the abbot of Stoudios expresses his gratitude for the understanding and the moral help which he had already received from some of his correspondents, or he gives answers to special questions put to him by various persons.

Generally speaking the letters of Theodore of Stoudios are very important for the history of the turn of the eighth and the very early ninth century. Being a contemporary source, they illuminate the period from





inside, i.e. from the views and the connections of a person deeply involved in the political and ecclesiastical scene of the era. Furthermore, as K.M. Ringrose has already rightly pointed out,<sup>1</sup> these letters were not written for publication. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that they often reflect real conditions in a way that the chronicles and hagiographical sources do not. Moreover, Theodore of Stoudios was at the time the leader of the monastic party. As such he had his own convictions and his own policies over certain issues. His letters provide us with the necessary information, first, as to what exactly these convictions and policies were and, secondly, on the consistency with which they were followed. In other words some of his letters make us sceptical as to how 'rigorist' the leader of the party of the Rigorists was. Finally, the letters enable us to trace Theodore's views on the relations between church and state as well as on the relations between eastern and western Christianity. But, above all, the letters reveal Theodore's attitude towards the ecclesiastical party of the 'Economists', i.e. towards those who favoured the use of dispensation from rules in exceptional circumstances. Although Theodore does not seem to have influenced the Emperor Nicephorus' policies very much, his letters are of primary importance both for the political and ecclesiastical history of the period under consideration. It would be perhaps sufficient to remember the vital role which the monastic party played in Byzantium during the years immediately after Nicephorus' death in 811. In other words, it might be argued that the persecution and exile, which the monastic party suffered under Nicephorus, stimulated its strength, prestige, and determination, so

---

1. K.M. Ringrose, Saints, Holy Men and Byzantine Society, 726 to 843, Ph.D., Rutgers University, New Brunswick 1976, p.59.

that when Michael I came to office, the monks had already paved their way to power.

#### D: OTHER SOURCES

Arrayed under this rather odd title are other sources, which are otherwise difficult to categorize. These are: The three treatises by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (De Cerimoniis, de Administrando Imperio and De Thematibus) and the records of the oecumenical councils.

##### 1. De Cerimoniis

In the Emperor Constantine VII's literary activity the treatise on the ceremonies of the Byzantine court, etc. occupies a prominent position. There is only one manuscript at our disposal<sup>1</sup> and on this the work is ascribed to that Emperor. Given its general character, the treatise De Cerimoniis is <sup>to be</sup> used very cautiously. The few references made to it are intended to shed some light on problems of the early ninth century, only in comparison

---

1. In Leipzig University library. The manuscript has been dated to the XI or the XII century. The treatise was first edited in 1751-4 by Leich and Reiske, an edition which was reprinted later in C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1829-30). About a century later a new edition with a French translation by A. Vogt appeared in four volumes, of which two are commentaries (Paris 1935-40). For problems connected with the original composition and the periods to which each one of the incorporated documents belongs, see J.B. Bury, 'The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos', E.H.R., 22 (1907), pp.209-227 and 417-39. For literature see: H. Wäsche, Studien zu den Ceremonien des K. Porphyrogenitos, Zerbst 1884, A. Rambaud, L'empire grec au dixième siècle, Paris 1870, New York reprint, 1964, pp.128-136; K. Krumbacher, Geschichte..., (op.cit.), pp.254-57. C. Diehl, Etudes Byzantines (Paris 1905), pp.293-306; see also Vogt's introduction in the Paris edition.



to what was happening in the mid-tenth century. For example, the section of the De Cerimoniis which refers to the process to be followed during the election of a new patriarch provides a useful comparison with the reports we have from other sources on the election of Nicephorus' namesake as patriarch in 806. Furthermore, a passage of this treatise, helps to corroborate the details provided by Theophanes on the Emperor Nicephorus' reform of the system of military recruitment.

## 2. De Administrando Imperio

This treatise was compiled between the years 948 and 952.<sup>1</sup> It was originally without a title. The Latin title was given to it by its first editor John Meursius in 1611.<sup>2</sup> By addressing and dedicating the work to his son Romanus, Constantine Porphyrogenitus wanted him to become a wise sovereign. But the purpose for which the De Administrando Imperio was written is better illustrated in the following passage attributed to the Emperor Constantine VII himself:

'But what of events which have taken place at various times between the Romans and different nations? For it is worthwhile, my dearest son, that record of these things also should not escape you, in order that, should the same things come about on similar occasions, you may by foreknowledge find a ready remedy.'<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. J.B. Bury, 'The Treatise De Administrando Imperio', B.Z. 15 (1906) p.539; for literature see: G. Manojlovic, 'La composition de "De administrando imperio"', Deuxième Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines, Belgrade 1927; G. Moravcsik, 'Ἡ Χειρόγραφος Παράδοσις τοῦ De Administrando Imperio', E.E.B.S., 7 (1930), pp.138-152, id., 'L'édition critique du "De administrando imperio"', Byz., 14 (1939), pp.353-60.
  2. Among the five editions which followed, the best and recent one is the one by G. Moravcsik - R.J.H. Jenkins, Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio, with an English translation, Budapest 1949, (in two volumes, the second one being the commentary). My references are made to this edition.
  3. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio, (op.cit.), p.223.



The important thing for us is the abundant information provided by the treatise on the nations around Byzantium and also on its internal history and organization. The information which this treatise provides on the reconquest of the Peloponnese during Nicephorus' reign, is also invaluable.

### 3. De Thematibus

A third and equally valuable treatise by Constantine VII is the book: De Thematibus.<sup>1</sup> As the title itself indicates, the work deals with the structure and the organization of the themes, i.e. the provincial army units and local administrations. It is generally believed that the promotion of some European provinces into theme units took place at the very beginning of the ninth century and most probably during the reign of Nicephorus I. The De Thematibus is one of the sources which enable us, if not to solve, at least to discuss this particular problem.

### 4. Records of Oecumenical Councils

Nicephorus' reign follows hard on the last oecumenical synod of the eastern church, i.e. the second Nicaean (787), which restored images. Some of the participants of that council were also prominent figures in the history of the early ninth century. It would be perhaps sufficient to say that some otherwise well known ecclesiastical figures, such as the bishops, Euthymius of Sardis, Michael of Synada,

---

1. Edit. by A. Pertusi, De thematibus Citta del Vaticano 1952. For literature see: A. Pertusi, 'La formation des Thèmes Byzantines', Berichte zum XI intern. Byzant. Kongress, München 1958, I, pp.1-40.

Manuel of Adrianople and Gregory of Amastris along with the abbots, Theophanes of Megas Agros and Sabbas of Symboli, were among the participants of the seventh oecumenical council. From this point of view the records of the councils are precious for our purpose.<sup>1</sup>

#### E: GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Of the majority of the sources for our period we know the authors, though some are anonymous. Most of the sources are contemporary or near contemporary. Some of them, though only a minority, are biased against the Emperor Nicephorus I. Others are more or less impartial. Some of them, mainly chroniclers, copy each other, while others rely on texts unknown to us. Some of the sources illuminate our period from inside, i.e. they reflect the views of persons who were themselves involved either as supporters or as opponents of certain policies of the Emperor Nicephorus I.

How well is our period covered by the sources? They provide us with a relative abundance of information, and in some fields, such as religious affairs, they do help us to unravel the Emperor Nicephorus' policies and convictions. This is understandable enough, since the vast majority of our sources have been written by monks or clergymen. In other areas, however, as for example administration, the evidence provided by the sources is less generous. This will have a bearing on the generally accepted view that Nicephorus was a reformer. In order to test this, we must embark on a detailed examination of the various policies adopted by Nicephorus in both domestic and foreign affairs.

---

1. They were edited by Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum... (op.cit.), Paris and Leipzig 1901-27, vols XII and XIII.

By the time Nicephorus I came to office at the beginning of the ninth century, certain lines of policy had been elaborated by his predecessors. It is also well known that during Irene's reign some problems facing the Empire were at a peak. With his elevation to the Byzantine throne, Nicephorus inherited both, policies and problems. How did he react? What did he keep and what did he jettison from the policies of his predecessors? How well did he maintain Byzantine power and prestige, balanced as it was, between Aachen, Pliska and Baghdād? Futhermore, the various religious and political groups, who existed at that time in Byzantium, pulled in different directions. How successfully did Nicephorus manage to control them and keep a balance between their aspirations and the interests of the Empire? These are some of the main problems to which the sources direct our attention. Finally, a careful sifting of the sources will enable us to establish dates, a very necessary task, because in a short reign like that of Nicephorus, it is all too easy to confuse different events and different policies.



## Chapter II

BYZANTIUM IN 802

## Chapter II

### BYZANTIUM IN 802

At the seventh oecumenical council held in 787 at Nicaea the Empress Irene was able to engineer the restoration of images. She hoped in this way to make a contribution to the internal peace in the Empire. Iconoclasm was by no means completely beaten. Its adherents surrounded the young Emperor Constantine VI, whose rights to the throne Irene was not very prompt to recognize. Constantine himself does not appear to have bothered much about religious affairs. What probably concerned him most were the reins of power, which, at least from the year 790 onwards, he wanted entirely for himself. Constantine was tired of his mother's tutelage. She continued to act as the sole ruler of the Empire, even when her son had reached manhood. Furthermore, Constantine's dissatisfaction with the situation must have grown greater, because of the fact that the eunuch Stauracius had concentrated in his hands every power he could.<sup>1</sup> Stauracius had been a sort of prime minister under Irene. It is worth noting that for Constantine, it was not his mother Irene but the powerful Stauracius who seemed to be blocking his way to power. Theophanes lets us know that, at least, at this stage, Constantine was content to go on ruling together with his mother.<sup>2</sup> He thought, nevertheless, of arresting Stauracius

---

1. Theophanes, 1, p.464.

2. ibid.

and sending him into exile to Sicily.<sup>1</sup> The plan, however, did not work and as a consequence Constantine's agents, who ought to have carried out the deposition of Stauracius,<sup>2</sup> were now themselves punished either by exile or by dismissal from their posts. Even Constantine himself was flogged as a result of the conspiracy (790).<sup>3</sup> After all these events, it became clear which way the wind was blowing. Irene's success in putting down the conspiracy strengthened her in her intention of remaining sole ruler of the Empire. She demanded that the military forces recognize her as first ruler, while she left for her son the consolatory title of co-emperor. The tagmata at Constantinople obeyed without any objection,<sup>4</sup> but the thematic army of the Armeniacs rebelled against the plans of the Empress. Unfortunately, the sources at our disposal do not say for sure what the motives of that rebellion had been. Did the soldiers of the Armeniac theme oppose Irene's plans out of mere interest for the rights of Constantine VI to the throne, or were they also opposing the Empress' iconodule policy? G. Ostrogorsky suggests that the motives of the soldiers were mainly religious.<sup>5</sup> It could have been. But so far as we know, no source reports that Constantine had shown, at least up to that

---

1. Theophanes, 1, p.464.

2. ibid., pp.464-65. They were the Magister Peter, the Patrician Theodore Camulianus, the Patrician Damianus and the Protospatharius John Picridius.

3. Theophanes, 1, p.465.

4. One must remember that these soldiers were brought into the capital from Thrace four years <sup>previously</sup> in order to replace the iconoclastic army which disturbed the first session of the seventh oecumenical council, which took place at the church of Holy Apostles of Constantinople. In the course of the year 786, Irene, using an Arabic threat as a pretext, sent these soldiers to Asia Minor and replaced them with <sup>an</sup> army from <sup>the</sup> European provinces with iconodule convictions. On this replacement see Theophanes 1, p.462.

5. G. Ostrogorsky, History... (op.cit.), pp.179-80.



time, any affiliation to Iconoclasm. On the contrary, it is reported that three years earlier (i.e. in 787), Constantine along with his mother signed the decisions of the seventh oecumenical council<sup>1</sup> by which the icons were restored. It is true that from a letter of Theodore of Stoudios we hear that in the year 795, at a time that Constantine divorced his legitimate wife Maria of Amnia for the sake of the *κουβικουλαρέα* Theodote,<sup>2</sup> the young Emperor placed the Patriarch Tarasius in dilemma: according to the source, Constantine demanded that either the official church would perform the wedding ceremony and recognize his second marriage as valid, or he threatened to renew Iconoclasm: "τοῦ βασιλέως ἄλλο θέλοντος, ἢ γουνο μοιχῶειν ἢ αἰρετίζειν."<sup>3</sup> The letter dates from the year 809 and, since the information comes from an iconodule source, it might have been fabricated some time after the year 797 in order to lessen the enmity of the populace against Irene, following the blinding of her son on 15 August of that year. In any case, even if such a threat took place in the year 795,<sup>4</sup> there is nothing to make us believe that by the year 790 Constantine had shown any affiliation to Iconoclasm.<sup>5</sup> Iconoclastic emperors had been strong rulers, while Constantine VI was too weak a character to attempt to renew the iconoclastic controversy. Therefore, it might be more reasonable to believe that in the year 790, the soldiers of the Armeniac theme rebelled against the Empress Irene not only out of mere religious motives. It would seem that they were deeply concerned about

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.463.

2. More about Constantine's second marriage and the Moechian Schism which originated from that marriage, see below, pp.64-65 and 177-80.

3. J.P. Migne, *P.G.*, 99, col.1032 D.

4. For further discussion on this hypothetical threat, see again below, p.179, note 2.

5. P. Speck (*Kaiser Konstantin VI, op.cit.*, p.299) also believes that the young Emperor was "Kein Ikonoklast und auch nicht das Zentrum einer ikonoklastischen Partei".

the rights of the young Emperor to the throne. At a time when Constantine's capabilities as a ruler had not yet been tested, the soldiers might have expected him to become a sound ruler as his grandfather Constantine V had been. Furthermore, it would not appear unthinkable to suggest that Constantine's marriage to a daughter of a landowner of the region must have been a factor behind the action of the soldiers of the Armeniac theme. But it is also likely that the soldiers, or at least the majority of them, did not like Irene simply because she was a woman. Finally, the arrogance of the eunuch Stauracius, might have been a sufficient reason in itself for the rebellion of the army of the Armeniac theme. In reference to that, one needs only to remember that already in the year 782 Tatzatius the strategos of the Boukellarion theme deserted to the Arabs and this flight was caused by his dislike of Stauracius.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, what seems to be of more significance, is that the opposition against Irene spread to the whole of the Asiatic army which, putting aside her claims, declared Constantine as sole ruler of Byzantium. At that stage (October 790), Irene seemed to have lost the throne for ever and she therefore left the imperial palace. It appears, however, that Constantine was not<sup>a</sup> strong enough character to keep his mother away from power for long. Less than two years later, supporters of the Empress managed to persuade the young Emperor to allow his mother to come back to the palace and ~~sub~~sequently to power, too. The events which followed in the course of the next five years and especially what happened in August 797 showed that Constantine VI did not understand the character and the aspirations of his mother

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.456.



at all and, by permitting her to return to palace, he made a mistake with fatal consequences for himself. Had Constantine been a strong ruler, he could, even with his mother next to him, have managed to control the situation and check Irene's activities. But the young Emperor did not have the abilities and the courage required by circumstances. Nevertheless, by putting aside the eunuchs favoured by Irene,<sup>1</sup> Constantine VI does seem to have strengthened his hold over the key posts of the government and of the army. Judging from the case of Michael Lachanodrakon, who is well known to have been one of the Emperor's very close collaborators,<sup>2</sup> one might assume that Constantine relied on persons who had started their career during his grandfather's or his father's reigns.<sup>3</sup>

In regard to the relations between Byzantium and its neighbours, the prestige of Constantinople was decisively damaged, by a campaign which Constantine undertook in the summer of the year 793 against the Bulgars. The total defeat of the Byzantine army near the border outpost of Marcellae, became even more sensational, because the Emperor himself deserted the battlefield and many of the prominent leaders of the imperial army were captured.<sup>4</sup> After such shameful behaviour, even his close supporters must have become disenchanted with the young Emperor. Thus the outbreak of a conspiracy in favour of his uncle Nicephorus, the eldest of the five surviving sons of Constantine V, did not come as a surprise to anyone. But the Emperor, as if expecting such a movement, reacted

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.466.

2. *ibid.*

3. P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI (op.cit.), p.237.

4. Theophanes 1, pp.467-68.



immediately and decisively: Nicephorus was blinded and the tongues of the rest four of the Emperor's uncles were slit.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that at that time, Irene had already overcome Constantine in their struggle for supreme power. There can be no other explanation for the fact that Alexius Mousele, the strategos of the Armeniac theme, who more than two years <sup>previously</sup> had supported Constantine against his mother, was now deprived of his eyesight. According to Theophanes, the blinding of Alexius was suggested, if not demanded, by Irene and Stauracius. They argued that Alexius was about to be proclaimed an emperor and, therefore, if Constantine VI wanted to sit safely on the throne, he ought to deprive Alexius of his eyesight.<sup>2</sup> The army of the Armeniac theme rebelled against the central government and Constantine found himself in the humiliating position of undertaking a campaign against his previous supporters. The cruelty with which he put down the rebellion proves that Constantine had become a mere pawn in the hands of his mother. She had managed to deprive her son of any support either from the army or from populace (793).

However, what seems to have given the final blow to Constantine VI's popularity, was his second marriage. In January of 795, the Emperor divorced his wife Maria, whom he forced to become a nun. A few months later (August of the same year), a lady-in-waiting (κουβικουλαρέα) of the Empress Irene, called Theodote, became Constantine's fiancée and augusta and in September, Constantine celebrated his notorious second marriage. If the duration of the celebration (Theophanes says it lasted fifty days!)<sup>3</sup> was

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.468.

2. ibid. It reads "... εἰ μὴ τοῦτον ἐκτυπλώσειεν, εἰς βασιλέα αὐτῶν ψηφίζονται."

3. ibid., p.470.

probably a provocation to public feelings, the second marriage itself, while the first and lawful wife of the Emperor was still alive, was definitely considered to have been a real scandal. With such an abuse of authority, the Emperor alienated the 'Rigorists', i.e. those who demanded the application of the canon law to everybody and to every case. At a time ~~when~~ this part of <sup>the</sup> population was either headed, or simply influenced, by dynamic monks such as Plato of Sakkoudion or later his nephew Theodore of Stoudios, the damage which the second marriage of Constantine VI did to the unity of the Byzantine society in 795 was too big to be healed in the near future. Thus the unity between the different religious factions in Byzantine society, achieved by the seventh oecumenical council in 787, was partly destroyed eight years later by the second marriage of the young and inexperienced Emperor Constantine VI. More important, the irregularity in the 'adulterous'<sup>1</sup> marriage of Constantine, gave ground for another irregularity to *take place*, for the Empress Irene was able to use Constantine's second marriage as a good pretext to blind her son two years later (August 797).

During the period 797-802, Irene ruled alone with the help of her eunuchs. It was the first time in Byzantine history that a woman became the sole ruler of the Empire, not as a guardian for a young emperor, but as the only ruler. Irene realized that by assuming the supreme power in Byzantium, she had broken a long Roman tradition, which required that a man be the head of the state and at the same time the head of the army. That is why in the acts of

---

1. The words *μοικία, μοικὸς* etc., by which the monks characterized the Emperor's second marriage, do not seem, however, to have been used before the later's blinding and deposition in 797.



her government, she is called βασιλεύς instead of the more appropriate βασίλισσα.<sup>1</sup>

Irene had been in power for only two months, when a conspiracy, again in favour of the imprisoned sons of Constantine V, took place (October 797). The movement was revealed in time and put down by the eunuch Aetius who sent them into exile to Athens.<sup>2</sup> About one and a half years later (March 799), the Slavs of mainland Greece under the leadership of Acamer, the archon of Belzetia, tried to free the sons of Constantine V and proclaim one of them as emperor. Irene reacted immediately and sent against Acamer the Patrician Constantine Sarantapechus and his son, the nephew of the Empress, the Spatharius Theophylactus. The two men managed to catch the ringleaders of the conspiracy and deprive them of their eyesight.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Theophanes lets us know that the rivalry between Irene's chief eunuchs, i.e. Aetius and Stauracius, came into open from that time.<sup>4</sup> They both wanted to secure the throne for one of their relatives. Aetius was thinking of his brother Leo, whom he promoted to monostrategos of the themes of Macedonia and Thrace some time between 797 and 801. Stauracius' intentions are a bit of a mystery. The sources do not mention by name any of his relatives, whom he might have wished to elevate to the imperial throne. On the contrary, in the year 800, Stauracius is reported to have plotted to overthrow Irene, but it is not known in favour of whom. Theophanes narrates that Stauracius'

- 
1. J. and P. Zepos, Jus Graecoromanum (Athens 1931, 1, p.45: "Ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος Εἰρήνη πιστὸς βασιλεύς". See also J.B. Bury, Constitution of the Later Roman Empire (Cambridge 1910), p.23 sq.; G. Rösch, "Ὄνομα Βασιλείας, Studien zum offiziellen Gebrauch der Kaisertitel in spätantiker and frühbyzantinischer Zeit, (Wien 1978), pp.110-116 and St. Mashev, 'Die staatsrechtliche Stellung der byzantinischen Kaiserinnen', Byzantinoslavica, 27 (1966), pp.322-23.
  2. Theophanes 1, p.473.
  3. ibid., pp.473-74.
  4. ibid., p.473.



plan was revealed in time and as a result he was very severely wounded. Many people were hoping that he would live and become emperor,<sup>1</sup> but he died shortly afterwards. This suggests that Stauracius might have thought of assuming the supreme power and becoming an emperor himself. Since a woman with only ambition as her qualification had already achieved it, why should a capable eunuch, like Stauracius, not become emperor? Though Stauracius died in 800, Aetius' plans were not to succeed either. One thing, however, remains clear: all these plots and intrigues can be taken to mean that in the eyes of the Byzantines, the problem of the imperial office had not been solved by Irene assuming sole rule in 797.

The way in which Irene ruled and handled the various problems of the Empire, does not seem to have been successful either. In her domestic policy, trying to regain her lost popularity, she granted remissions from taxes to certain categories of people. Judging from the enthusiastic way in which Theodore of Stoudios welcomed the measures,<sup>2</sup> the monks must have been one group of people who benefited from these measures. A certain tax paid by the inhabitants of Constantinople was abolished,<sup>3</sup> while the import and export taxes paid at the two main toll stations of the capital, i.e. at Abydos and Hieron, were reduced.<sup>4</sup> Modern scholars see these economic measures as the result of a lax policy, which weakened the Byzantine economy to an unacceptable degree.<sup>5</sup> P. Speck, nevertheless, sees these measures of Irene, not only as a demagogic policy

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.475.

2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist., I, 6, P.G. vol.99, cols 929 sq.

3. Theophanes 1, p.475: "Βυζαντίοις τοὺς πολιτικοὺς ἔχαρίσατο φόρους"

4. ibid.: "...τῆς τε Ἀβύδου καὶ τοῦ Ἱερού τὰ λεγόμενα κωμάρκια ἐκούφισεν."

5. See for example, J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.212: G. Ostrogorsky, History... (op.cit.), p.182.

in favour of the iconodules, but also as an effort made by the Empress to meet the demands of the domestic trade.<sup>1</sup> Speck's argument is based mainly on the already mentioned letter of Theodore of Stoudios, where a remission or, perhaps, an abolition of taxes paid not only at ports but also at road toll stations is reported to have taken place.<sup>2</sup> In other words, as the measures are described by the abbot of Stoudios, they seem to have applied<sup>to</sup> and to have affected sea and land trade, too. This, of course, might be true. The question, however, is not of how far people, or categories of people, stood to gain from the measures, but how far these remissions and abolitions served or damaged the interests of the state finance in the long term. It is mainly from this point of view that Irene's measures might be reckoned weak and demagogic in intent.

The situation of the Byzantine Empire with regard to its neighbours during the last two decades of the eighth century had not been particularly favourable either.

Even if the number of the Arabic raids launched against Byzantine territory cannot be estimated precisely, they were growing in number and intensity. The Greek sources, as might be expected, record many fewer raids than our Arabic ones do. However, even the latter ones do not agree between each other. For instance, the number of the incidents recorded by Tabarī is much smaller than the ones which we hear about from Ya'Kūbī. In fact, the latter speaks about an Arabic raid almost every year during the period 780-802).<sup>3</sup> The Empress Irene tried

- 
1. P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI (op.cit.), p.383; see also, S. Runciman, 'The Empress Irene the Athenian' in Mediaeval Women, Oxford 1978, pp.114-15.
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epistola I, 6 (loc.cit.), 99, col.932C.
  3. Problems connected with the sources and their better exploitation are discussed lengthily in the chapter on foreign policies, and more precisely in the section under the title: Byzantium and the Arabs, pp.247-48.



to avoid an open war against the Arabs by signing a peace treaty in the year 782. Here again, while Theophanes speaks only about a peace treaty signed by the two sides, the Arabic sources suggest that the Byzantine Empress undertook the obligation of paying an annual tribute to the Arabs.<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the young Emperor Constantine VI is reported to have undertaken three campaigns against the Arabs,<sup>2</sup> one of which seems to have been successful.<sup>3</sup>

After the blinding and the deposition of Constantine in 797, the situation on<sup>the</sup> eastern fronts remained more or less unchanged. It is very likely that the Arabs further strengthened their position, with their campaigns penetrating deeply into Asia Minor; in 798 as far as Malagina. Since from that year until the fall of Irene (802) our sources do not record any hostilities between the two sides,<sup>4</sup> one might assume that the Empress agreed once again to pay some tribute to the Caliphate.

Along the northern borders of Byzantine Empire, the situation was no better. During Constantine V's reign (741-775), the Bulgars had been repeatedly defeated, but they do not seem to have been totally weakened. Under the leadership of Kardam, they again began causing considerable disturbances in the northern borders of Byzantium. In the year 788, the strategos of Thrace,

- 
1. Al Ṭabarī in E.W. Brooks: 'Byzantines and Arabs in the time of the early Abbasids', E.H.R., 15 (1900), p.739. Unless otherwise stated, I refer to the Arabic sources by using Brooks' article.
  2. Theophanes dates these campaigns in the years 793, 795 and 797, shortly before his deposition.
  3. The one of the year 795 (Theophanes 1, p.469).
  4. On the exceptions formed by Ya'Ḳubī (E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines...', (loc.cit. p.742) and Michael the Syrian (J.B. Chabot, Chronique de... op.cit., vol.III, p.12), see the chapter on foreign policies p.253, note 3.



Philetus, was defeated and killed by the Bulgars somewhere in the Strymon region.<sup>1</sup> Four years later the young Emperor Constantine VI leading a campaign against Cardam, reached the fort of Probaton, where he met with the Bulgarian forces. Theophanes who reports this event lets us assume that the two armies did not really fight each other. After a skirmish which took place in the evening hours, the Byzantines were the first to have deserted the place during the night and 'returned shamefully'<sup>2</sup> because of cowardice. The Bulgars thinking probably that this could have been a well planned trap, did not dare to pursue the Byzantine army preferring the safe return to their territory.<sup>3</sup> The next year (793), Constantine again took the initiative against the Bulgars. He reached and rebuilt Marcellae, a very important fortress at the borders with Bulgaria. The consequences of the total defeat of the Byzantine army which followed<sup>4</sup> seem to have been enormous, not only because the Byzantines lost a very strong outpost on their northern borders, but also and mainly because, to some extent, it proved Byzantium's incapacity to defend its northern border line properly. It would seem that the Bulgars realized this weakness and tried to exploit the situation by becoming more and more aggressive towards Byzantium. Cardam's strong position is proved by the message he sent three years later (796) to Constantine VI. According to Theophanes, the message was presumptuous, saying: 'Either you pay me tribute, or I will reach the Golden Gate and I will ruin Thrace'.<sup>5</sup> It is

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.463-64.

2. ibid., p.467.

3. ibid.

4. For the consequences of that defeat of Constantine VI for his own popularity among the army and the populace cf. above p.63.

5. Theophanes 1, p.470.

true that Constantine's reply to such a demand was equally proud. Furthermore, the Emperor did not wait for the Bulgarian Khan to attack Byzantine provinces, but he himself led an army against the Bulgars somewhere near Versinicia. For a period of seventeen days, Constantine kept challenging the Bulgarian army, but Kardam carefully avoided a battle.<sup>1</sup> Finally the two armies returned to their territories without having clashed and thus the situation at the borders between Byzantium and Bulgaria remained unclear. Theophanes who is almost our only source for events in the region, does not record any further incidents during the sole reign of Irene and the first four years of Nicephorus' reign. It would seem that during this period, the Bulgars were occupied with the succession to Kardam, as well as with the war against the Avars in central Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Finally the relations of Byzantium with the Franks during the period 780-802 went through a more dramatic fluctuation than the ones with the Arabs or even the Bulgars.

Already one year after the death of Leo IV (780), his widow Irene, acting on behalf of her son Constantine VI, at the time a child of eleven, tried to build strong connections between the Byzantine Empire and the rising power in the West. She made arrangements for a betrothal of the child Emperor to the daughter of Charlemagne Rotrud (Ῥοτρούδω). The agreement was concluded and an educated eunuch, named Elissaios, was left at the palace of Charlemagne in order to teach the young Princess the Greek language and introduce her to the habits and customs of the

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.470.

2. For the elevation of Krum and the expansion of the Bulgars to the West, see the chapter on foreign policies (section C, Byzantium and the Bulgars), pp. 288-89.



Byzantine court life.<sup>1</sup> That betrothal, however, had no future. It was broken off six years later (autumn 787), when Irene, in her effort to strengthen Byzantine influence in Italy, sided with the Beneventans, who were enemies of Charlemagne. W. Ohnsorge, however, suggests that the reason why Charlemagne broke up the betrothal was the restoration of the icons by the Nicaean synod of 787,<sup>2</sup> with which the Frankish king disagreed. Less than six months later (spring of 788), the relations between Byzantium and the Franks worsened still more; to the point of full-scale war. Irene tried to defend Byzantium's rights in Italy against Charlemagne's ambition: in the peninsula. It seems that *Adalgis, the son of the Lombard king Desiderius*, had asked the Byzantine government to help him against the Franks. Irene promptly sent him a detachment of troops under the leadership of John, the Sacellarius and Logothete of the Stratiotikon, with the order to save what he could save from Charlemagne. Theodore, the strategos of Sicily, had also received orders to co-operate with John and *Adalgis*.<sup>3</sup> However, no matter how much importance the Empress of Constantinople had attached to this expedition, it appears that it resulted in a catastrophe for the Byzantine army. John himself was among the captives and was killed by the Franks.<sup>4</sup>

For a period of thirteen years, i.e. until the spring of the year 801, we do not hear of any action taken by either side. During that time Byzantium had been mostly occupied with the wars on its eastern and northern borders, as well as with the internal rivalry between mother and son for the supreme power. The intrigues among the various

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.455.

2. W. Ohnsorge, Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter (Hildesheim 1947), p.19.

3. Theophanes 1, p.464.

4. ibid.



ambitious dignitaries and eunuchs of the court were also another important element of Byzantine political life at this time.

In the meantime, a change at the top of the western church occurred. Some time late in the year 795, the Pope Hadrian died and Leo III succeeded him. This change, though totally normal, must have been of great significance not only for the ecclesiastical, but also for the political history of the period. The coronation of Charlemagne as emperor of the Romans at Christmas Day of 800 seemed to have been planned and worked out by the new Pope. In order to understand this, one has to consider more closely the events in Rome during the year previous to the coronation. In April 799, relatives of his predecessor, the late Pope Hadrian, reacted against the new Pope in a strange way. They attacked Leo, they arrested him and tried to put out his eyes. So far as we know, their motives remain obscure. They definitely tried to deprive Leo of his papal throne, but it is not known in favour of whom. At any rate, the Pope asked for Charlemagne's help, who, punishing his enemies, reinstated him on the throne. Theophanes who reports the incident, suggests that, by crowning Charlemagne in 800, Pope Leo III repaid a favour he had received more than one year earlier<sup>1</sup> from the Frankish king. Relying on the similarity between the attack against Pope Leo III and the blinding of Constantine VI, P. Speck considers these two events as being strongly interconnected and as forming decisive factors for Irene's sole rule and for Charlemagne's emperorship.<sup>2</sup> But this seem to be pressing the evidence much too far.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.473.

2. P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI (op.cit.), p.372.

Unfortunately, we do not hear anything about the Empress Irene's immediate reactions, if there were any, to the shocking news that a second Roman emperor had been proclaimed in the West. As for Charlemagne himself, he seems to have been very careful in handling the situation created by the events of Christmas Day 800. A few months after his coronation (early in the year 801), Charlemagne was planning a naval attack of Sicily, but then, on second thoughts, he abandoned these plans and decided to adopt a more effective policy. It was already summer or early autumn of 802 when the delegation of Charlemagne reached Constantinople. Their proposal for a marriage between the Frankish Emperor and the Byzantine Empress, so that the eastern provinces (τὰ ἑῶα) could be joined to the western ones (τὰ ἑγνέρια), was really very tempting to Irene. Had Aetius not prevented the marriage, the ambitious Empress would have accepted the proposal.<sup>1</sup> But, as has already been said, the powerful eunuch wanted to secure the Byzantine throne for his brother Leo.<sup>2</sup> A marriage of Irene to Charlemagne would have ruined Aetius' plans. However, it would be more appropriate to suggest that Aetius was not the only person at Byzantine court who was opposed to the marriage. It is very likely that other officials at Byzantium for various reasons were also strongly against it. To the eyes of the proud Byzantines such a union would have been very humiliating for the eastern Empire. They would not have minded, of course, if a Byzantine prince was about to marry a Frankish princess, but the case which was now before them was just the opposite. A very ambitious Frankish emperor wanted

- 
1. Theophanes 1, p.475. For a discussion on this delegation, cf. W. Ohnsorge, 'Orthodoxus Imperator. Vom religiösen Motiv für das Kaisertum Karls des Großen', in his Abendland und Byzanz (Darmstadt 1958), p.73; P. Classen, Karl der Grosse, das Papstum... (op.cit.), pp.60-62; S. Runciman, 'The Empress Irene the Athenian', (loc.cit.), (Oxford 1978), p.115; J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.5.
  2. Theophanes 1, p.475.



to enlarge his Empire, this time by peaceful means. The Byzantines were probably afraid that their Empire was in danger of being absorbed by their western rival. Therefore, it appears that from the very moment the arrival and the purpose of the Frankish delegation was known, the machinery for the dethronement of Irene was put into operation. In such circumstances the deposition of the Empress must have surprised nobody. But who was to be appointed as Irene's successor? Now that Stauracius was dead, one would have expected the powerful eunuch Aetius to elevate his brother Leo to the imperial throne. However, Aetius did not have enough support from the officials for such an enterprise. They seem to have had their own reservations about Aetius and his family. Some of them might have been sympathizers of the late Stauracius and therefore opponents of Aetius. The memory of their leader and the way in which he was killed were, no doubt, still fresh in their mind. Other dignitaries of the court were certainly disappointed by Aetius' inappropriate behaviour against them. According to Theophanes, after Stauracius' death, Aetius became too arrogant and kept insulting and humiliating other court officials.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that such provocative behaviour on the part of an eunuch, not only speeded up the procedure for the dethronement of Irene, but also turned the preference of the electoral body towards Nicephorus, whose candidature was thus greatly strengthened. Therefore, no matter how well Nicephorus himself had paved his way to power, it appears that circumstances and coincidences also favoured his elevation to the imperial throne.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.475.



But who was really behind the fall of Irene and the elevation of Nicephorus? The Empress' failure to exercise any firm policy over domestic and foreign affairs does not seem to have caused very much anxiety among the populace. In reference to that, one needs to remember that Irene's supporters, the monks, were always at her side, ready to influence the people in favour of the Empress by reminding them of her role in the restoration of the icons. Furthermore, a certain part of the population were probably pleased with the fiscal remissions introduced by Irene in the course of the previous year. Therefore it becomes clear that the populace did not play any role in the Empress' dethronement. Theophanes is, more or less, specific about its organisers. It was a coup d'etat planned and executed entirely by high rank officials in the court and in the army. By saying that it was carried out by the "ἐν τέλει ἄρχοντες",<sup>1</sup> the chronicler probably means all those who still had some power and some influence over political and military affairs (i.e. the important officers and dignitaries). Among them, the key figure was probably the Domestic of the Schools Nicetas Triphyllius who, two years before, had been Aetius' main partisan in the latter's rivalry with Stauracius.<sup>2</sup> It appears, however, certain that, by now, Nicetas had broken with Aetius and decided to destroy the plans and the ambitions of the influential eunuch. But what were the reasons for this conspiracy against Irene? It does not seem to have anything to do with the unlucky Constantine VI who seems to have been forgotten after 797. Nor does the rivalry between Stauracius and Aetius seem to have been a

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.475.

2. ibid., p.474.

factor, since it had come to an end with the death of the former two years earlier. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the conspirators who backed Nicephorus I had been partisans of Stauracius. In fact, the very reverse, since two of the conspirators, as we shall see, had been opponents of Stauracius. According to Theophanes the real reason behind the conspiracy was Aetius' abuse of power and his desire to make his brother emperor. The plot had already been hatched before the arrival of the Frankish envoys with their famous marriage proposal, which Irene was apparently inclined to accept. This was not to the liking of Aetius, as it was a threat to his ambitions for his brother. The conspirators behind Nicephorus I were forced to put their plan into immediate operation, not so much because they opposed a possible marriage alliance with the Franks, more because they feared that Aetius would overthrow Irene, before they could do so. But such precipitate action may mean that Nicephorus was a last minute choice, and those who appointed the new Emperor meant him to be a mere figurehead, while the real power would still be exercised by them. It seems that this last point would provide us with some explanation for the internal unrest attested during the first months of Nicephorus' reign. In other words, events such as the death of Nicetas Triphyllius in April and the rebellion of Bardanes Turcus in July 803 should be seen as a result of the Emperor's failure or refusal to meet the demands of those who elevated him to the imperial throne a few months earlier. Returning to the plot itself, it can be argued that it was not so much a conspiracy against the Empress Irene, who was very ill anyway;<sup>1</sup> it was more an action against Aetius' specific plans and aspirations.

---

1. Theophanes 1, 474 and 478.



The dethronement of Irene occurred on 31 *October* 802<sup>1</sup> and it was more or less well organized. Theophanes names six patricians who participated in the move, among them, Nicetas, the already mentioned Domestic of the Schools<sup>2</sup> and the Quaestor<sup>3</sup> Theoctistus. Two other participants, the Patricians Peter and Theodore Camulianus, are known to us from the year 790. At that time, they supported the Emperor Constantine VI's efforts to get rid of the then powerful eunuch Stauracius. As we have already seen above,<sup>4</sup> their plan was revealed in time to Stauracius, and as a result the Emperor himself was flogged and these two Patricians were insulted and dismissed from their posts.<sup>5</sup> It would seem that by participating now in the Empress' dethronement, these two Patricians took revenge on behalf of Constantine VI for the events of the year 790 and, of course, for those of August 797.

According to Theophanes these six Patricians cheated the guards of the Great Palace by saying that Irene herself had sent them to elevate Nicephorus to the throne, just because the Empress could no longer stand Aetius' demands for the elevation of his brother Leo to the throne.<sup>6</sup> Irene was taken by surprise. Some of those involved in her deposition were among her previous close collaborators. These dignitaries went over to Nicephorus, not 'because of

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.476.

2. On the dignitary of the Domestic of the Schools cf. J.B. Bury, The Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.49-57. In the Kletorologion of Philotheos, he is fifth in the list of high officials of Byzantium.

3. On the Quaestor sacri palatii see also J.B. Bury, The Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.73-77. In the already mentioned list by Philotheos he runs thirty fourth.

4. Cf. above, p.60.

5. Peter was at that time magister (Theophanes 1, p.465).

6. Theophanes 1, p.476.



avarice', as our main source for the events suggests,<sup>1</sup> but for the common good. Furthermore, Theophanes speaks of a dialogue between the deposed Empress and the new Emperor Nicephorus. The conversation took place the day after Nicephorus' elevation and the chronicler records it, in order to indicate that rumours about Nicephorus' plans to dethrone Irene had previously reached the Empress' ears on many occasions, and, although she could have had easily killed the ambitious Logothete, she did not do so.<sup>2</sup> However, in reference to such hypothetical plots on behalf of Nicephorus, one can argue that they never really occurred. They are probably Theophanes' invention, in his effort to illustrate Irene's character in contrast to that of Nicephorus, whom the chronicler wanted to denigrate. We reach this conclusion by taking into account Irene's brutal actions against the unhappy sons of Constantine V. She clearly had no compunction in dealing with any threat to her position. After her dethronement, Irene was sent into exile, first in the Prince's island called Proti, and later to the island of Lesbos, where she died shortly afterwards (August 803).<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, very little is known about the background of the new Emperor. It is of interest that four of our sources present Nicephorus as being of Arabic origin. They all suggest that this Byzantine Emperor was the descendant of a noble family, perhaps even the Ghassanids, and that for various reasons his ancestors deserted the Arabic land and went over to Byzantine territory in the province of Cappadocia. There they became Christians.

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.476-77.

2. ibid., p.478.

3. ibid., p.480.

Judging from this unanimity, one would be tempted to argue that these four authors derive their information from the same source and if we believe Ṭabarī, that source must have been a Greek one. Ṭabarī says that 'the Romans record that this Nikephoros was a descendant of Gafna of Ghassan'.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, one point on which these reports do not agree. This is the name of Nicephorus' hypothetical ancestor who abandoned the Arabic territory and fled to the Byzantine Empire. Thus Michael the Syrian traces the origins of Nicephorus' family to a certain prince from Yemen, named Djabalah, who was first Christian, then in Mohammed's time became Muslim and finally crossing the Byzantine borders returned to Christianity and settled himself in Cappadocia.<sup>2</sup> A similar story is reported by Bar Hebraeus, in whose record nevertheless, Nicephorus' ancestor is named Cabbala.<sup>3</sup> Finally the Arab historian Mas'ūdī expresses two possibilities: according to the first, the Emperor Nicephorus was a descendant of the family of Djafnah the Gassanid, which sometime in the past had become Christians.<sup>4</sup> The second suggests that Nicephorus' ancestors were Christians who emigrated from Mesopotamia to the Byzantine Empire.<sup>5</sup> If one can trace some elements of truth in these reports, then it might be assumed that the new Emperor's far ancestors had been perhaps Christian Arabs. The Arabic descent of the Emperor under consideration is not reported by any known Greek source, but his origin from the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire is

- 
1. E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs...' (loc.cit.), p.7+.
  2. J.B. Chabot, Chronique de Michel le Syrien (op.cit.), vol.3, p.15.
  3. Bar Hebraeus, (op.cit.), Amsterdam reprint, p.121.
  4. Mas'ūdī, Le livre de l'avertissement, (op.cit.), p.228.
  5. ibid.



suggested by Theophanes. Although the chronicler does not say that Nicephorus was a Cappadocian, he asserts that the Emperor was a close neighbour of the Athinganoi, who were inhabitants of Phrygia and Lycaonia.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it would be reasonable to believe that the person who in October 802 rose to the supreme power of the Empire, was a Cappadocian. Such an assumption would be in line with Michael the Syrian's opinion on the background of Nicephorus.<sup>2</sup>

However, more important than his origin, is the post he was holding before he became an emperor. He was General Logothete<sup>3</sup> and it appears that his service in this crucial section of the Byzantine government had made him an expert on fiscal and economic issues. For how long he had served in that post, is not known. Certain factors, nevertheless, provide us with some clues that Nicephorus, before becoming emperor, had already served the Empire for a long time: the first hint in this direction is provided by the fact that no other General Logothete is mentioned for a period of more than twenty years (780-802). The second piece of information is again provided by our two Syrian sources, i.e. Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus. The latter, in this case, seems to have copied Michael. These two sources narrate that, when Abd al-Malik, an Arab commander 'entrusted with war against the Byzantines',<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.488.

2. J.B. Chabot, Chronique Michel... (op.cit.), vol.3, p.12: "...Alors les Romains voulurent faire régner sur eux Nicephorus le Logothète, Cappadocien".

3. On the post of General Logothete see J.B. Bury, Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.86-90; F. Dölger, Beiträge zur Geschichte... (op.cit.), pp.19-21 and 47-91. He supervised and collected the taxes of the Empire; see also, G. Millet, 'L'origine du Logothète Général, Mélanges d'histoire du Moyen Age, Offerts à M.F. Lot (Paris 1925), pp.563-73.

4. J.B. Chabot, Chronique Michel... (op.cit.), vol.3, p.15.



heard about Nicephorus' elevation to the imperial throne, he asked Elpidius, the ex-strategos of Sicily who had fled to the Arabs,<sup>1</sup> whether he had known anything about the new strong man at Constantinople. Elpidius' reply: 'If Nicephorus rules, then you should throw away the silky clothes you are wearing and be prepared for war'.<sup>2</sup> The ~~readiness~~ and mainly the certainty of this reply might be taken to suggest that Elpidius himself had experience of Nicephorus' abilities and qualifications and that he had not simply heard about him from somebody else. Now, keeping in mind that Elpidius had been named strategos of Sicily in the year 781<sup>3</sup> and fled to the Arabs about one year later,<sup>4</sup> one might be entitled to argue that already from that time, Nicephorus had shown his potential and determination to play an important role in the public affairs of Byzantium.

One further remark: in Byzantine history, plots, uprisings and rebellions are more or less a common story. Most of them were organized either in favour of high ranking military officers or of members of the imperial family, whose rights to the throne were considered to have been neglected. The events of October 802, however, form an exception to that rule: army officers supported the elevation of a ~~republican~~, i.e. of somebody whose military background is at best questionable. To this development two possible explanations can be given: firstly that, as previous remarks suggest, the new Emperor, though a politician, had also the reputation as a man of a warlike disposition, and secondly that Nicephorus had been successful

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.455.

2. J.B. Chabot, Chronique Michel... (op.cit.), vol.3, p.16; E.A.W. Budge, The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus, (op.cit.), Amsterdam reprint, p.121.

3. Theophanes 1, p.454.

4. ibid., p.455.

in the post of General Logothete and perhaps he had carefully and for a long time laid his plans. Such a preparation must have included the creation of a good reputation as a competent minister of finance, and the establishment of strong connections with army, administration and court circles.

Nicephorus was married to a wife, about whose name or background we do not know anything. Perhaps she was already dead at the time of his elevation to the throne. In any case, she had left him two children, a daughter, Procopia, and a son, Stauracius. Procopia had been married before her father's elevation to the throne. Her husband was Michael Rangabe, the future Emperor Michael I. Her father-in-law Theophylactus<sup>1</sup> Rangabe, having served as Drungarius of the Dodecanese under the Emperor Leo IV, lost his post and was sent into exile at the very beginning of the reign of Constantine VI and Irene, because he had been involved in a movement, which tried to elevate to the throne Nicephorus, Irene's eldest brother-in-law.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the motives of that plot escape us, but several reasons could have caused it. One needs to remember that members of Irene's staff had been found with icons during the lifetime of Leo IV, which suggests that her iconodule sympathies were already from that time common knowledge. In connection to this it would be also

- 
1. Mas'ūdī's (Le livre de l'avertissement, op.cit., p.229) record, according to which the name of Procopia's father-in-law was George, is not founded on any other data. On the contrary, the fact that Michael Rangabe named his first son, Theophylactus (Vita Ignatii, archiep, C.P. Migne, P.G., vol.105, col.492C) forms, I believe, a clear indication, if not a proof, that his father's name was also Theophylactus; and this, of course, is in line with Theophanes (1, p.454).
  2. Theophanes 1, p.454.



reasonable to believe that, by plotting against Irene and Constantine VI in 780, Theophylactus Rangabe and his collaborators were upholding the rights which Irene's brother-in-law had to the imperial throne. Their action against the child Emperor and his mother was perhaps motivated by the former's tender years and the latter's scheming nature. At any rate, according to the tenth-century Continuator of Theophanes, Theophylactus<sup>1</sup> was recalled from exile - we are not told when - and was named curopalates.<sup>2</sup> The important thing in this story appears to have been that, by giving his daughter Procopia as a wife to Michael Rangabe, the future Emperor Nicephorus established powerful connections with magnates, definitely capable of helping him in his aspirations. Stauracius, whom Nicephorus crowned as co-emperor at Christmas of 803,<sup>3</sup> got married to Theophanô, a kinswoman of the late Empress Irene on 20 December 808.<sup>4</sup> Stauracius and Theophanô were childless, but Procopia had given birth to five children, the fourth of which, Nicetas, the future Patriarch Ignatius, was fourteen at the time of his father's deposition in 813.<sup>5</sup> This can be taken to mean that

- 
1. Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. Bekker, C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1838), p.3: in Vita Ignatii, (Migne, P.G. 105, col.489C). Theophylactus is called simply patrician.
  2. ibid., on the curopalates cf. J.B. Bury, Imperial..., (op.cit.), pp.33-35. According to Theophanes (1, p.492) and to Vita Ignatii, (loc.cit., col.489C), Michael Rangabe himself, before becoming emperor, held the dignity of curopalates in the reign of his father-in-law. Later, in the tenth century, it became a practice that the title of curopalates was bestowed only on a relative of the emperor (J.B. Bury, Imperial... op.cit., p.34).
  3. Theophanes 1, p.480.
  4. ibid., p.483.
  5. Vita S. Ignatii, (loc.cit. vol.105, col.492B). According to his Vita, Nicetas had been put by his grandfather, already at the age of ten at the head of the Hikanatoi 'a body which was created at that time' (ibid.). For more about the origin of the tagma of the Hikanatoi cf. J.B. Bury, Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.63-64. The other four of Nicephorus' grandchildren were: Georgô, Theophylactus, Stauracius and Theophanô (Vita Ignatii, loc.cit. col.492A).



Nicephorus was not that young at the time of his elevation to the imperial throne in 802. Such a conclusion can also be derived from Nicephorus' physical description which is preserved in the so-called Chronicle of 811. The anonymous author of that short report attributes to the Emperor Nicephorus characteristics of an old person, such as a very white beard,<sup>1</sup> etc. J.B. Bury who, working on the age of Nicetas, has made some calculations, argues on good grounds that, when he ascended the throne, Nicephorus must have been forty-five at least.<sup>2</sup> He was probably older. But more important than his age, are the problems, domestic and foreign, facing the new Emperor immediately after he seized the supreme power.

#### A: DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

##### 1. The situation in the army

Problems connected with the army should not be limited only to those created by, or related to, the strategoi or the officers in general. We have already seen that in the year 787 the Empress Irene removed the tagmatic army from the capital and, sending them to the eastern provinces, replaced them with soldiers from the European themes, who were of iconodule convictions. One must also remember the brutal way in which Constantine VI treated the army of the Armeniac theme, simply because they had rebelled in favour of him and against his mother, the Empress Irene. All these caused division, bitterness, and disappointment

---

1. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.216: "πρόσωπον ἔχων μέγα καὶ γένειον πολὺ πεποιημένον."

2. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.14, fig.2.

among the soldiers. Now, if that disappointment is combined with the demoralization caused by the defeats on the eastern and northern borders, as well as by the humiliating peace treaties, which Irene had concluded with the enemies of the Empire, one can easily see that the condition of the Byzantine army at the turn of the eighth century was far from being satisfactory. It hardly needs to be emphasized that the reasons which caused military unrest during the last two decades of the eighth, were not automatically removed at the beginning of the ninth century. Therefore one is entitled to expect that the same trends would normally be prolonged, not only into the short period in which Nicephorus I ruled, but certainly into much later years, let us say, into the whole first half of the ninth century.

Furthermore, one cannot be sure about the extent of the new Emperor's military experience. This, of course, is of some significance, because the Byzantine emperor was the head of the imperial army. Some of the strategoi and the domestics, who were in charge of the themes and the tagmata, were, nevertheless, ready to accept a politician at the top of the army. Others, however, would not tolerate it, and they would use the Emperor's inexperience of military affairs as a pretext for trying to fulfil their own aspirations. The rebellion of Bardanes Turcus only months after Nicephorus had been in office, provides a good example.

Another problem was the way, in which new soldiers were recruited up to that time. It would seem that up to the beginning of the ninth century, the recruitment of new soldiers had been made only among those who could provide at least their own military equipment and in some cases a



horse.<sup>1</sup> Such a law, or a custom, discriminated against those who wanted to join the army, but whose poverty prevented them from being enrolled. This automatically limited the social strata from which new soldiers were recruited, thus creating a source of injustice for the poor of the Empire. Furthermore, as J. Haldon has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> there must have been a category of people who, although registered for army service, were not called up, or called up again, because of their poverty. Such problems needed to be faced and solutions found, which could take into account another difficulty, that of the shortage in military manpower which clearly existed at the very beginning of the ninth century.

2. Problems caused by the Slavs of the Empire and especially those of the Peloponnese

It will be demonstrated below<sup>3</sup> that from the end of the sixth century, the Slavs were well established in various parts of the Empire, which were called Sclaveniae. The Peloponnese appears to have been heavily affected by these settlements. The Slavs should not be considered to have been real enemies of the Empire, but they formed close-knit communities, keeping their own identity and from time to time rising up against the central government of Constantinople. Under the reign of Irene, some efforts had been made to bring these people under Byzantine control. The campaign of Stauracius, who in the year 783 reached

- 
1. More about the army service in Byzantium in the chapter on domestic policies, below, pp.114-16.
  2. J.F. Haldon, Recruitment and Conscription... (op.cit.), pp.50-51.
  3. Chapter on domestic policies, section under the title: Reconquest of Greece, pp.123-24.

the Peloponnese, had been, of course, victorious. However, judging from the plot of Acamer, organized and put forward by the Slavs of mainland Greece in March of 799,<sup>1</sup> it might be inferred that the Slavs of Greece had managed to regain their strength at a time of lax supervision of the peninsula by the government at Constantinople.

### 3. The creation of the monastic party

Another problem facing the new Emperor in the year 802, was the daily increasing influence and strength of the radical monks at Byzantium. The foundation of the so-called monastic party dates from the year 787 and, as it will be shown elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> between the years 787 and 802 the monks were already demonstrating signs of their uncompromising attitude, in opposition to the Patriarch Tarasius' moderate policies. They sided with the Empress Irene against her son, the unlucky Constantine VI. Therefore, having overthrown Irene, the Emperor Nicephorus would need to be cautious, if he were not to provoke the monks. Normally some opposition to his policies on the part of the monks would be expected. But the strength of their opposition could not have been foreseen. However, given the immense influence of the orthodox church on Byzantine society, it was likely that the division within the church, caused by the monks, would be reflected in Byzantine society, too.

### 4. Fiscal and economic situation

Problems related to the fiscal and economic conditions of the Empire in 802 remain to be discussed at the end of the

---

1. On the movement of Acamer, see above, p.66.

2. In the chapter on Nicephorus' religious policies, below, pp.197-99.



list of the domestic difficulties facing Nicephorus, because the department of finance seems to have suffered more than any other sector during Irene's reign. Although Irene's fiscal measures<sup>1</sup> have not yet been studied in any depth and although some good elements, such as the stimulation of trade,<sup>2</sup> can probably be traced in them, one is left with the impression that the Empress' underlying motives were at best questionable. Moreover, it appears that these were random measures, and not part of a concerted economic and fiscal strategy. Finally, the favouritism towards certain groups of population, notably towards the monks, can be singled out as a weak point of the measures. In brief, the tribute to be paid to the Arabs, and perhaps to the Bulgars too, but mainly the abolition and remission of some taxes, which the Empress granted to the populace in March of 801 in order to gain, or to regain, popularity, weakened the financial stability of the Empire to an unacceptable point. According to Treadgold's calculations Irene paid the Arabs on average 45,000 nomismata a year for a period of twenty two years (780-802).<sup>3</sup> This would mean that the total amount of money she paid to the Caliphate reached 990,000 nomismata which was more than half of the yearly state budget at her time.<sup>4</sup> One needs only to remember that it was in support of Irene's minister of finance, that the plot of October 802 broke out, and this cannot have been a mere coincidence.

- 
1. For a more lengthy discussion of these measures, cf. above, pp.67-68.
  2. S. Runciman, 'The Empress Irene...' (loc.cit.), pp.114-15; also P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI (op.cit.), p.383.
  3. W. Treadgold, The Byzantine State Finances... (op.cit.), p.84.
  4. ibid., p.119.

## B: PROBLEMS WITH BYZANTIUM'S NEIGHBOURS

### 1. The situation in the eastern and northern borders of the Empire

Byzantine political life lacked stability during the last two decades of the eighth century. This had its repercussions on Byzantium's relations with its neighbouring states, namely the Arabs and the Bulgars. Taking advantage of the Empire's internal disturbances, both went on the offensive. They launched raids and mounted campaigns against Byzantine provinces, both in the East and in the North. The aim and character of these raids is to be discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> For the moment, it would be sufficient to say that they resulted in a destabilization of the whole situation there, so that the imperial government could not be sure about its eastern and northern fortresses and outposts. Though Constantine VI also undertook some campaigns against the Arabs and the Bulgars, it had become obvious that he intended not to attack them in their own territories but to stop them from invading and destroying Byzantine provinces and, in most cases, just to push the enemies beyond the borders, releasing and relieving the peoples of Thrace and Asia Minor from the presence of foreign troops there. More important, it is tempting to suggest that Constantine VI's campaigns, or at least some of them, were undertaken, more or less, for internal consumption: he wanted to strengthen his cause against his mother. All these indicate that in the wars against the Arabs and the Bulgars in the final decades of the eighth century, the Byzantines took a defensive role and, although it cannot be argued that the Empire lost any specific provinces to these two neighbouring states, some events

---

1. For these, see the relative sections in the chapter on foreign policies, pp.277-78 and 294-95.



and some defeats of the Byzantine army, which took place in Asia Minor and in Thrace, revealed a certain weakness and a certain inability of Byzantium to defend its eastern and northern territories properly. The loss of imperial prestige and the disadvantageous position in which the Byzantine Empire found itself vis-à-vis the Arabs and the Bulgars at the time, is, I think, well illustrated by the fact that both these two enemies demanded the payment of *νάκτα* - tribute - if they were to stop invading and plundering the Byzantine provinces. It is also possible, at least in some cases, that the government at Constantinople itself offered to pay the Arabs tribute, in order to persuade them to withdraw their forces from Asia Minor. All these concessions indicate that by the year 802, the once powerful Byzantine Empire found itself in a weak position in relation to its two most powerful neighbours.

## 2. Byzantium's situation in relation to the Franks

The threat from the Franks was not of the same order as that from the Arabs and the Bulgars. The Franks were Christians, while the other two enemies of Byzantium were Muslims or pagans. Furthermore, Charlemagne, the king of the Franks, managed to dominate the Italian peninsula at a time when the area, at least for the most part, was not considered as Byzantine territory any more. Furthermore, territorial disputes between East and West seem to have been solved by a treaty which had been signed by Charlemagne and Irene in 798. By this treaty Byzantium acknowledged Charles' lordship over Istria and Beneventum, while he probably recognized the rights of Constantinople over Croatia.<sup>1</sup> This treaty, though not reported by any Greek

---

1. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.317.

source, shows that up to the end of the year 800, the two sides were prepared to solve their differences by peaceful means rather than by military confrontation.

However, it would seem appropriate to suggest that such a view applies only to the period up to the events of Christmas of 800. It would appear that, at that date, a dramatic change in the relations between the two states occurred. From that time the Frankish Empire was not simply a rival power to Byzantium in its interests in the West. Charlemagne was probably also seen as a usurper of the title 'emperor of the Romans', which until that time had been taken to apply exclusively to the Byzantine emperor. The peaceful means through which Charlemagne tried to have his new title recognized by the eastern Empire, or perhaps even to become a supreme head of both the Empires, failed, because the hardliners at Constantinople proved stronger than those prepared to compromise, or perhaps even to yield to the aspirations of Charlemagne. It was the task of Nicephorus and his government to salvage as much prestige as possible in the face of this Frankish rival.

This provides an outline of the problems in both domestic and foreign affairs, with which the Emperor Nicephorus was faced at the time of his accession to the imperial throne in 802. In relation to these problems, P. Speck suggests that the situation of The Empire during the last twenty five years of the eighth century has been presented in more or less as negative light under the influence of Nicephorus' propaganda, who, in this way, wanted to justify his elevation to the throne in 802.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI (op.cit.), p.305.



But, such an argument can be dismissed as having little foundation. There might, of course, have been some propaganda spread by the new Emperor, but the last person to have believed it, would have been our main source of the period Theophanes, who was strongly pro-Irene and fanatically anti-Nicephorus. If the Confessor had been persuaded by the posited propaganda, then he certainly would not have remained such a biased critic of all aspects of Nicephorus' reign.

In the following three chapters it should become apparent whether these problems were tackled successfully and whether the new Emperor fulfilled the expectations of those who elevated him to the highest post of the Byzantine Empire.

Chapter III

DOMESTIC POLICIES



## Chapter III

### DOMESTIC POLICIES

#### A: ADMINISTRATION

##### 1. Changes in the Government

On Easter Monday 799 the Empress Irene emerged from the church of the Holy Apostles, 'bestowing consular favours lavishly'.<sup>1</sup> She was borne away on a gold chariot drawn by four white horses, which were led by four patricians: Bardanes, the strategos of Thrakesion, Sissinius, the strategos of Thrace, his brother Nicetas, the Domestic of the Schools, and Constantine Boilas. They were clearly high in Irene's favour, but with the exception of Constantine Boilas, of whom nothing more is heard, they continued to serve under Nicephorus. Two of them, the brothers Sissinius and Nicetas, who were from the Triphyllius family, were leading members of the conspiracy which brought Nicephorus to the throne. Nicetas died six months later (30 April 803)<sup>2</sup> and it is not known who succeeded him as Domestic of the Schools. It is possible that the post was left temporarily unfilled, since Bardanes, the strategos of Thrakesion, was appointed monostrategos of the five eastern themes. As such, he may have been entrusted with the responsibilities of the Domestic of the Schools. At the end of Nicephorus' reign the post was held by the Patrician Stephen. He survived the disaster,

---

1. Theophanes I, p.474.

2. ibid., p.479.

which cost the Emperor his life, and was instrumental in having the Emperor's son Stauracius proclaimed emperor at Adrianople.<sup>1</sup>

Another of the conspirators who brought Nicephorus to the throne was the Quaestor Theoctistus. He was promoted to the rank of magister.<sup>2</sup> By 808 the post of quaestor was held by Arsaber. He was probably of Armenian origin. The future Emperor Leo V the Armenian was his son-in-law.<sup>3</sup> A plot was organised in 808 in his favour. The conspiracy was revealed in time and the poor Arsaber, whom Theophanes calls 'pious' and 'most intellectual',<sup>4</sup> was forced to become a monk and live in exile in Bithynia.<sup>5</sup>

Since Aetius had been one of the targets against whom the plot of 802 had been hatched, normally we would expect him to have disappeared after Nicephorus' elevation to the throne. However, there is some uncertainty about the future of this eunuch, for Theophanes reports that a patrician, Aetius by name - we cannot say for certain whether it is the same person, but it is more than a possibility - was among those killed in the disaster of July 811.<sup>6</sup> If this report is combined with what we have already implied, i.e. that the new Emperor soon after he seized power broke with those who supported his coup and who were, consequently, opponents of Aetius, then it might be argued that a reconciliation took place between Irene's 'prime-minister' and Nicephorus. If there was such a

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.492.

2. *ibid.*, pp.492 and 500.

3. Genesisius, *Regnum Libri Quattuor* (Berlin 1978), p.16; Theophanes *Continuatus* (Bonn 1838), p.35.

4. Theophanes 1, p.483: "ἄνδρα εὐεβῆ καὶ λογιώτατον."

5. *ibid.*

6. *ibid.*, p.491.



reconciliation, it may well have been connected with the rebellion in 803 of Bardanes Turcus. Nicephorus had appointed him monostrategos of the five eastern themes at the beginning of his reign. These must have included the themes of Opsikion and Anatolikon, which Aetius had controlled at the end of Irene's reign. Bardanes' rebellion would have brought home to Nicephorus the value of a reconciliation with Aetius.

The career of the Patrician Bardanes is of great interest for our period. We hear about him for the first time in the year 796, already occupying the high post of the Domestic of the Schools. At that time Bardanes, together with the count of the Opsikion theme, were sent by the Emperor Constantine VI to the monastery of Sakkoudion, in order to arrest its abbot Plato who had strongly opposed and protested against the 'adulterous' second marriage of the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> Three years later Bardanes holding the post of the strategos of the Thrakesion theme was one of the four patricians who led the four horses of Irene's ceremonial chariot on Easter Monday 799.<sup>2</sup> Bardanes can almost certainly be identified with Bardanes Turcus who, being the monostrategos of the five eastern themes in the spring of 803, rebelled against the central power and tried to overthrow Nicephorus. The rebellion failed and Bardanes becoming a monk asked for the Emperor's forgiveness. Though an amnesty was initially granted to him, later Bardanes Turcus had his eyesight put out by a band of Lycanians, whom Theophanes making a pun calls Lycanthropous, 'wolf-men'.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.470-71.

2. ibid., p.474.

3. ibid., p.480.

Among the dignitaries whose career had started under Irene and was prolonged into the reign of Nicephorus, the Patrician Peter has also to be mentioned. According to the Greek Menologia, Peter, having served as Domestic of the Schools under Irene was later transferred by Nicephorus I to the office of Domestic of the Hikanatoi, participated in the fatal battle of July of 811, survived it and later becoming a monk founded a monastery somewhere near Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> In Theophanes also we come across a certain patrician called Peter who helped Nicephorus seize supreme power in 802 and later quelled a rebellion of the soldiers at Sardica in 809,<sup>2</sup> participated in the campaign of 811 and was among the numerous killed at that time by the Bulgars.<sup>3</sup> Theophanes, however, does not tell us in which post the Patrician Peter served the Empire either during Irene's or during Nicephorus' reign. Nevertheless, his exact post is less important than the fact that, like other high officials, Peter too, went on serving the Empire, regardless of the change which occurred on the Byzantine throne in 802.

The case of the Patrician Leo, brother of the eunuch Aetius, is even more obscure. It should be remembered that until the year 802 Leo had been a sort of monostrategos at the head of the two main European themes, those of Macedonia and Thrace and that Aetius intended to secure for Leo the imperial throne after Irene's death.<sup>4</sup> Keeping in mind that the new Emperor adopted a policy of conciliation

- 
1. Nikodemou tou Hagioritou, Megas Synaxaristes (in Greek), vol.2, (Athens 1868), pp.240-41; on the monastery founded by the Patrician Peter, cf. R. Janin, La Géographie ecclesiastique, 1ere partie, (Paris 1953), p.415.
  2. Theophanes I, p.485; Peter acted together with the Patrician Nicephorus, of whom we do not hear again.
  3. ibid., p.491.
  4. ibid., pp.473, 475, 476.



against all those who served his predecessor and that Aetius himself probably survived the change, one might argue that Leo too was not likely to have been dismissed by the Emperor Nicephorus either. In any case, he does not seem to be identifiable with Leo the Armenian, the future Emperor Leo V. If he had been, one would have expected Theophanes to have stated clearly either that Aetius was an Armenian or that the Emperor Leo V was Aetius' brother. To our knowledge there is no such statement or even a hint. But there is more: The Continuator of Theophanes asserts that Leo the Armenian's career until the year 803 had been a humble one and that his abilities and circumstances favoured his brilliant way to power afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

This quick review of some high dignitaries who were the Emperor's collaborators after 802, suggests that Nicephorus did not dismiss anybody from his post for the mere fact that he had served under his predecessors. Some persons were moved, of course, from one post to another, but others kept their previous positions. Nevertheless, it has also to be stressed that a few persons were elevated to vital posts for the first time in their life under the reign of Nicephorus. Since these dignitaries enjoyed the Emperor Nicephorus' special confidence, their careers seem to be essential for the administrative structure of the Empire under the reign of this Emperor.

To begin with, the Spatharius Bardanes Anemas seems to have been an official on whose loyalty Nicephorus could rely. In the year 807, the Emperor started a campaign against the Bulgars. When he reached Adrianople, he learnt that a plot was being hatched against him. He was

---

1. Theophanes Continuatus, C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1838), p.10: "ἐκ ταπεινοῦ καὶ ἀδόξου περίβλεπτος ὄραθεις κατὰ τῶν τῶν φοιδερᾶτων ἀρκήν."

forced to abandon the campaign and return to the capital, but not before he had sent Bardanes Anemas to Thrace in order to arrest some people, probably involved in the plot, and to collect the annual taxes.<sup>1</sup> However, the most faithful and close collaborator of the Emperor Nicephorus was definitely the Patrician and Primiscrinus Theodosius Salibaras. In one case (809) Theodosius revealed the names of the ringleaders of the uprising of the soldiers against the Emperor, because they did not want to work as masons, helping to rebuild Sardica.<sup>2</sup> When, shortly before his departure for the fatal war against the Bulgars, (May 811) the Emperor Nicephorus asked the General Logothete Nicetas to increase the contribution of churches and monasteries to the public finance and to demand an eight year backdated basic tax from the archontes,<sup>3</sup> it was again Theodosius Salibaras who informed Nicephorus 'on behalf of all the populace',<sup>4</sup> about the general dissatisfaction.

Other officials about whom we hear for the first time during the reign of Nicephorus are the Patricians Arsaber,<sup>5</sup> Nicetas,<sup>6</sup> Nicephorus,<sup>7</sup> Romanus<sup>8</sup> and Stephen.<sup>9</sup> Finally the future Emperors Leo V and Michael II also seem to have

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.482-83.

2. ibid., pp.485-86. More about this event see below, pp.108-11.

3. ibid., p.489. More about that measures see below, p.143.

4. ibid.

5. On Arsaber and his plot cf. Theophanes 1, p.483; R. Guiland 'Contribution à la prosopographie de l'empire Byzantin: les patrices du règne de Leo III l'Isaurien (717-741) au règne de Michael II (820-29)', Byz., 40 (1970), p.337.

6. The General Logothete in the year 811. He should not be confused with Nicetas Triphyllius who had already died in 803.

7. We only know about him that in the year 809 he acted together with the Patrician Peter in mitigating the rebellion of the soldiers at Sardica (Theophanes 1, p.485).

8. Romanus was the strategos of the Anatolikon theme in 811 (Theophanes 1, p.491).

9. On the Patrician Stephen cf. above, p.95-96.



started on their way up by 803. They are both reported to have been adjutants of the Monostrategos Bardanes Turcus in 803. But during the latter's revolt in the summer of that year, Leo and Michael abandoned his cause and went over to the Emperor Nicephorus. As a reward Leo was given the post of the commander of the foederati and Michael that of the comes τῆς κόπτης (count of the tent).<sup>1</sup> Sometime between the years 803 and 811 Leo was once again promoted and became strategos of the Armeniac theme. But in February 811 he was guilty of negligence and not only dismissed from that post, but also condemned to banishment for life.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the elevation of Michael Rangabe to the throne, that Leo was recalled from exile. When he himself became emperor in 813, Leo gave Michael the Amorian the post of the Patrician and Domestic of the Excubitores.<sup>3</sup>

The 'fresh blood' in the rank of the patricians and the appearance of new persons on the political scene during Nicephorus' reign should not surprise anybody. It came as a consequence:

- 1) of the Emperor's own persuasions and policies, the execution of which definitely needed officials completely dedicated to them and, at the same time, totally devoted to the ruler and
- 2) of the several rebellions and plots which took place during Nicephorus' reign and after which persons involved in them were necessarily replaced.

---

1. Theophanes Continuatus, (loc.cit.), p.9; Genesis, (op.cit.), p.8.

2. Theophanes Continuatus, (loc.cit.), p.11.

3. Genesis (op.cit.), p.10; on the Excubitores (ἐξκουβίτορες or ἐξκούβιτοι), cf. J.B. Bury, The Imperial... (op.cit.), pp.57-58. They formed a body of palace guards.

## 2. Towards Innovations

Administration in the Byzantine Empire had, outwardly at least, an unchanging character. Byzantines preferred adaptation rather than reform. It would have been inconceivable to suggest that this general view does not apply to Nicephorus' reign. If a spectacular change in administrative system had taken place during our period, the sources would not have omitted to report it. However, one might argue that the fiscal reforms introduced by the Emperor Nicephorus should necessarily have involved changes in administration too. As a basis for such an argument the establishment of a new court of justice at Magnaura should be mentioned. We hear about this institution only from Theophanes who, there is no need to say, is trying to blacken it. It was created in the very first year of Nicephorus' reign<sup>1</sup> and at the end of his reign it was still functioning.<sup>2</sup> Though Theophanes attributes the creation of this court to the Emperor's greediness and avarice,<sup>3</sup> the chronicler lets drop the Emperor Nicephorus' own views on the matter. According to Theophanes, by creating the court of Magnaura, Nicephorus pretended to show that he wanted to put an end to injustice and to give to the poor what they deserved.<sup>4</sup> The chronicler does not seem to doubt the Emperor's intentions. But he argues that the operation of the court had results ("ὡς ἔδειξε τὰ πράγματα"),<sup>5</sup> which were either disappointing

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.478-79.

2. ibid., p.489.

3. ibid., p.478.

4. ibid., pp.478-79; it reads: "ἀλλ' ὡς δῆθεν τὴν ἀδικίαν μέλλων ἐκκόπτειν τὸ πονηρὸν ἐν τῇ Μαγναύρᾳ καὶ ἀδίκου συνεστήσατο δικαστήριον. βλοπῆς δὲ τῷ τυράννῳ οὐ τοῖς ἠπυχοῖς τὰ δίκαια ἀποδιδόναι, ὡς ἔδειξε τὰ πράγματα, κἀλλ' διὰ τούτου πάντας τοὺς ἐν τέλει ἀτιμάσαι τε καὶ αἰχμαλωτίσαι, καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν τὰ πάντα μετενεγκεῖν."

5. ibid., p.479.



or exactly the opposite of those claimed by Nicephorus.<sup>1</sup> Biased as he is against this Emperor, Theophanes says that the court of Magnaura was unfair,<sup>2</sup> but in another reference to the same institution the Confessor admits that some of the cases brought to this court were dealt with justly.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the chronicler seems to connect, indirectly of course, the establishment of the court of Magnaura with Nicephorus' fiscal reforms and he argues that the Emperor brought into this court all cases, 'so that nobody could escape his impious doings'.<sup>4</sup> The liveliness with which Theophanes tries to defame it, shows that it was an important institution which probably played a decisive role in the application of the Emperor Nicephorus' fiscal and economic reforms. Unfortunately we are not in a position to know the people's opinion on this institution, but if there was a popular outcry against it, Theophanes would not have omitted to include it in his record. But there is more: Nicephorus' successor Michael I is not reported to have abolished the court of Magnaura. He would certainly have done so, if the institution had been considered to have been an unpopular one.

When evidence is provided in insufficient quantities, other indications need to be taken into account. In this case the indications are that not only did the court of Magnaura fulfil its objectives, but also that Nicephorus forced governmental officials into a more rigorous application of laws and decrees and into a more effective exercise of their own duties. In other words, the fiscal

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.479.

2. ibid., p.478.

3. ibid., p.489.

4. ibid. It reads: "πρὸς τὸ μηδένα βροχάζειν κατὰ τῶν ἀβελειῶν αὐτοῦ."

reforms undertaken by this Emperor do not inevitably involve changes in the general administrative system of the early ninth century Byzantium. They do, however, presuppose a greater degree of efficiency in the way imperial policies in various fields were carried out while Nicephorus I was in office.

## B: THE ARMY

### 1. Military Unrest

We have already seen that the last decade of the eighth century had been marked by a degree of military unrest which was, not simply prolonged into, but intensified, during the reign of Nicephorus I. This intensification might be partly attributed to the Emperor's ambiguous background, a disadvantage which Nicephorus tried to overcome. He took personal command of several campaigns against the Empire's two main enemies, i.e. against the Arabs and the Bulgars. Nevertheless, one somehow feels that our Emperor never managed to gain the hearts of the soldiers, who regarded themselves as professionals and had little time for a civilian. Certainly not totally irrelevant to this, is Nicephorus' constant fear of plots hatched against him either in the capital itself or in the provinces. However, it should not be taken for granted that the Emperor's questionable military background was the only reason for the plots and the military unrest which can definitely be attested during the period 802-811.

The first serious threat to Nicephorus' throne appeared already in the first year of his reign. On 19 July 803 Bardanes, the monostrategos of the 'peratic' themes, i.e. the themes of Asia Minor<sup>1</sup> rebelled against the central

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.479; Theophanes Continuatus, (loc.cit.), p.8: on the 'peratic themes' cf. A. Cameron, Circus Factions (Oxford 1976), pp.87, 90, 94.



government and was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers of four Asiatic themes.<sup>1</sup> The fifth 'peratic' theme, however, the Armeniacs, remained loyal to Nicephorus.<sup>2</sup> Its army refused to join the rest of the Asiatic themes in a domestic conflict. This refusal must have been the rebel's first disappointment. Whether Bardanes Turcus rose against the Emperor simply because he intended to fulfil his own ambition or he was forced to accept the leadership of the rebellion, as the anonymous author of the thirteenth century Synopsis Chronica seems to believe,<sup>3</sup> remains unclear. Based on a story, that Bardanes had consulted a monk on his prospects of becoming emperor,<sup>4</sup> W.E. Kaegi suggests that the monostrategos 'may have aspired to become emperor for a long time'.<sup>5</sup> However, such a story, which was probably invented afterwards in order to illustrate Leo V's and Michael II's way to power, does not provide solid ground for such a suggestion. The Continuator of Theophanes speaks of two main reasons for the uprising. The first one had to do with the oppressive fiscal measures taken by the new Emperor. The tenth-century authors suggest that Bardanes exploited the indignation of the populace caused by these measures.<sup>6</sup> A second reason given by the Continuator of Theophanes concerns the division of booty that Bardanes had made among the soldiers. The

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.479.

2. Theophanes Continuatus, (loc.cit.), p.8: "τῶν Ἀρμενικῶν χωρὶς (οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπεῖσαν αὐτῶν!)"

3. Synopsis Chronica, ed. by K. Sathas, in Mesaiōnikê Bibliothêkê, vol.7, p.129: "ἐβιάζοντο βασιλέα ἀναγορεύσαι!"

4. On this story see Theophanes Continuatus, (loc.cit.) pp.7-8; Genesius, (op.cit.), pp.6-7.

5. W.E. Kaegi, Byzantine Military... (op.cit.), p.245.

6. Theophanes Continuatus (loc.cit.), p.8.

division seems to have been made not equally among the participants in a battle against the Arabs, but according to the actual efforts of each one of them.<sup>1</sup> Of these two reasons the first one seems to be less plausible than the second, since it speaks of fiscal reforms undertaken by Nicephorus during his very first months in office. But, as has already been observed, it is also possible that the rebellion of Bardanes is connected with the death of Nicetas Triphyllius on 30 April of the same year.<sup>2</sup> Both men, Nicetas and Bardanes, had been among those who brought Nicephorus to the throne. Theophanes says that Nicetas Triphyllius did not die of natural causes, but was poisoned by the Emperor.<sup>3</sup> If this is true, then it would be seen that during his first year in office, Nicephorus deliberately broke with those who had supported his elevation a few months earlier and tried to establish himself in power and put his own people in office. Though the evidence for such an interpretation is limited, the rather curious circumstances under which Nicephorus came to power, as well as the succession of plots and rebellions hatched against him afterwards, make it very likely that Bardanes' rebellion should be seen as part of a reaction by those who felt that they had been deceived by the Emperor, for, instead of being content to act as a figurehead, Nicephorus had taken steps to strengthen his hold on power and put his supporters in key positions.

During the course of the rebellion Bardanes met with great difficulties. But even so the rebel advanced as far as Malagina and then on to Chrysopolis. Here, after eight days of negotiations<sup>4</sup> Bardanes was rejected by the city and this

---

1. Theophanes Continuatus (loc.cit.), pp.8-9.  
2. cf. above, p.77.  
3. Theophanes 1, p.479.  
4. ibid.



rejection was his second disappointment. Returning to Malagina, the monostrategos became sceptical as to how useful it would have been to risk the blood of Christians for his sake. It was probably at this stage that another blow was dealt to his ambitions. Two of his associates, the future Emperors Leo the Armenian and Michael the Amorian deserted his cause and went over to Nicephorus.<sup>1</sup> After that it became obvious that the rebellion no longer had any possibility of success and Bardanes thought seriously of abandoning his efforts to seize power. Thus his revolt which lasted fifty days (until 8 September) finally collapsed and the Emperor promised an amnesty to the rebel and his followers. Here again Theophanes accused Nicephorus of inconsistency and argues that it was on the Emperor's initiative that Bardanes was later deprived of his eyesight by a band of Lycaonians.<sup>2</sup> This occurred at the monastery which Bardanes had built for himself and to which he now retired having become a monk. His property was confiscated.<sup>3</sup> It is certainly worth noting that during Bardanes' rebellion the two sides carefully avoided bloodshed.

The rebellion of Bardanes was supported by the thematic army of Asia Minor. Another plot, however, in the year 807 was staged by the tagmata and the 'imperial men'.<sup>4</sup> The incident took place while the imperial army with the Emperor Nicephorus at its head was at Adrianople campaigning against the Bulgars of Krum. The motives of the plot remain obscure. W.E. Kaegi's suggestion that by acting in this way the tagmata showed their resentment at

---

1. For the rewards which they received for their action see above, p.101.

2. Theophanes 1, p.480.

3. ibid., pp.479-80.

4. ibid., p.482.

'the recent execution of the Domestic of the Schools Nicetas'<sup>1</sup> is without foundation, in the first place because the death of Nicetas was not recent (he had died four years previously in April 803), and secondly because it is not clear at all whether Nicetas Triphyllius was poisoned by Nicephorus, as Theophanes asserts<sup>2</sup> or whether he died of a disease. At any rate, the plot was revealed in time and extinguished, again without any bloodshed. Nevertheless, the Emperor found it wiser not to proceed further against the Bulgars, but to return safely to the capital. The ringleaders of the plot were punished by exile, confiscations and flogging.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately we find ourselves unable to say for sure whether the army forces were involved in the conspiracy which took place one year later, in February 808, in the capital itself in favour of the Quaestor and Patrician Arsaber and which had the same outcome as the previous ones.<sup>4</sup>

However, the most open and massive opposition to Nicephorus on the part of the army occurred in the year 809. In the spring of that year the Emperor needed to rebuild the fortress of Sardica, which had been totally dismantled by the Bulgars a few weeks earlier. At first, desperate to have the fortress quickly and cheaply rebuilt, Nicephorus tried to appeal to his soldiers' patriotism. As the officers were on his side he prompted them to induce the soldiers to address the Emperor, asking for the restoration of the fortress. It appeared to be a spontaneous movement on the part of the soldiers, but in fact the Emperor himself was behind everything. He wanted the soldiers to work as masons. However, the soldiers were clever enough to realize what Nicephorus was 'staging' and in consequence

---

1. W.E. Kaegi, Byzantine Military..., (op.cit.), p.247.

2. Theophanes 1, p.479.

3. ibid., p.482.

4. ibid., pp.483-84.



they rose up against their superiors and the Emperor himself. They tore down the tents of the generals and the officers, and in front of Nicephorus they kept swearing against him and insulting him badly.

To the refusal of the soldiers to rebuild Sardica, three possible explanations might be given:

- a) The soldiers did not want to restore the place, which was the most northerly outpost of the Empire and which, consequently, would have been very difficult to defend against the Bulgars. In other words, it was perhaps the thought of garrisoning the place which made the soldiers irritated. The way in which 6000 of their fellow soldiers had recently been massacred there, made it very much doubtful whether in their minds this place was worthy of restoration and defence.
- b) The soldiers wanted Sardica to be rebuilt, but they refused to work as masons themselves, simply because such a task was not included in their duties, and
- c) the soldiers would not have minded restoring the fortress on condition that additional pay would be given to them for this extra job, but they refused to work for nothing.

Among these three interpretations, the last one looks most plausible, mainly because it seems to be closer to what Theophanes records. According to the chronicler, the soldiers, standing outside the Emperor's pavilion, were shouting that they would not endure his immeasurable avarice any longer.<sup>1</sup> Their indignation was all the greater because a few days earlier Nicephorus had plundered Pliska, but had not given the soldiers their share of the booty.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.485; the chronicler gives us the time of the event (~~twelve o'clock~~ at noon), but he does not provide us with the date, which would have been more useful for us to know.

At any rate, whatever the claims of the soldiers, two things become clear in the aftermath of this event:

a) No matter what were the reasons for it, Nicephorus never managed to become popular among his soldiers and  
b) The soldiers tended to think and to act more and more as professionals. When they realized that their interests were at stake, they separated themselves from the body of their officers and generals and made their indignation very clear to the Emperor himself, whom they accused and insulted openly. Theophanes reports that all the soldiers were involved in the uprising and that this was the reason why Nicephorus was extremely scared of the event.

Nevertheless on the following day the Emperor himself talked to the soldiers, making many promises and taking oaths to reassure them of his goodwill. In the meantime, following the Emperor's request two of the patricians, Nicephorus and Peter,<sup>1</sup> had managed to calm the indignation of the soldiers.

In any case, the Emperor does not seem to have restored Sardica. Although Runciman seems to have taken it for granted that the outpost was 'cheaply and quickly'<sup>2</sup> restored at that time, such a rebuilding does not appear very likely to have been done by a demoralized army. Theophanes asserts that the Emperor returned to Constantinople immediately ("παραυτίκα") after the events of Sardica, and it appears that he did so, because he wanted to punish the ringleaders, as he finally did. To suggest that the Emperor himself returned to the capital, but the army was left at Sardica with the task of rebuilding the place, sounds unlikely. In such a case we are forced to believe that

---

1. For the identity of these two patricians see:  
R. Guillard, 'Contribution... les patrices', (loc.cit.), pp.331-33.  
2. S. Runciman, The First... (op.cit.), p.54.



the punishment was inflicted on the soldiers several months after their uprising, and such a punishment sounds improbable too. Furthermore, two years later (811) during Nicephorus' fatal campaign against the Bulgars, after having conquered and plundered Pliska for a second time, the Emperor was planning to march towards Sardica ("βουλόμενος ἀναλθεῖν ἕως Σαρδικῆς")<sup>1</sup> for a second time. It looks as if Nicephorus intended to deal once more with Sardica's restoration, which he had not managed to do during his first visit there in 809, because of the soldiers' refusal to co-operate.

As has already been indicated, Nicephorus found it wiser to return to Constantinople. Nevertheless, before doing so, he asked the Patrician and Primiscrinus Theodosius Salibaras<sup>2</sup> to discover the ringleaders of the uprising, so that they could be punished for their action. Theophanes, of course, exploited the case in order to accuse Nicephorus of being inconsistent, because - we are told - although he had given solemn oaths not to punish them, the Emperor did not keep his word. When the returning army reached St. Mamas, a suburb of Constantinople, Nicephorus pretended that he was going to give the soldiers their pay, but then punished them in different ways.<sup>3</sup>

These were the cases in which the Byzantine military forces demonstrated their dissatisfaction and their dislike of the Emperor Nicephorus. A more careful look at the course of the events would reveal that in none of these crises was the right of the Emperor to lead the imperial

---

1. I. Dujčev: 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212.

2. For Theodosius Salibaras see Theophanes (1, 489), where the Patrician is called "ἡμέσιος θεράπων", good servant. Salibaras seems to have been a close advisor of the Emperor Nicephorus and a very good source of information for Theophanes, in regard to the court life during Irene's and Nicephorus' reigns (Theoph. 1, 490-91). On Salibaras, see also R. Guiland, 'Contribution... les patrices', (loc.cit.), pp.338-39; cf. also above, p.100.

3. Theophanes 1, p.486.

forces disputed. No hint of this appears in any source. The Emperor for his part managed to survive all three crucial incidents in a more or less easy way and, most significant, without any bloodshed. Though not popular among the army, Nicephorus proved to have been able to cope with difficult circumstances and internal conflicts in which military forces were involved.

## 2. Reform of the System of Military Recruitment

At a time when Byzantium was compelled to fight on all fronts, Nicephorus realized that above all the Empire was suffering from a shortage of soldiers. The way in which he made good this shortage, is certainly of significance. According to Theophanes the Emperor introduced the recruitment of new soldiers from among the poor.<sup>1</sup> In other words, people who, for various reasons, had proved unable to contribute to public finance, were now given the opportunity to join the army. They were not expected to pay for their military equipment nor to meet any obligations to pay taxes to the treasury. It was their more prosperous neighbours, who had to undertake the obligation to pay, not only the tax imposed on the land of the newly recruited soldiers, but also, and perhaps more importantly, eighteen and a half nomismata per new soldier recruited from the community.

This seems to be the first time that such a measure was introduced into the Byzantine Empire. Although the reform seems straightforward enough, there are some vital questions to be posed.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.486: "... προέταξε στρατεύεσθαι πτωχούς καὶ ἐροηί-  
ζεσθαι παρὰ τῶν ὀμοκώρων, παρέχοντας καὶ ἀνὰ ὠκτακαίδεκα  
ἡμίους νομισμάτων τῷ δημοσίῳ καὶ ἀλληλεγγύως τὰ δημόσια."  
It appears that the word ἀλληλεγγύως is used here for  
the first time.



The first question might be formulated as follows: what exactly did this reform entail? Was it a military or an economic measure? In other words, what was the Emperor trying to do: to enlarge the number of soldiers or to ensure the treasury against loss? It looks as if he aimed at and achieved both. In fact Lemerle suggests that the only new thing about this measure was the payment of the 18½ nomismata to the fisc for the coverage of a new soldier's military equipment and, perhaps, his pay too.<sup>1</sup> To support his opinion Lemerle points out that the fiscal solidarity of a village was of long standing, going back at least to the 7th century, if not before. However, it seems that it was more than this. As both Dölger<sup>2</sup> and Haldon<sup>3</sup> have already observed, Nicephorus' measure should be regarded as an extension of the principle of fiscal solidarity to another category of people, i.e. to the new soldiers and their properties. More important, as Haldon has shown 'military service was owed by individuals on a hereditary basis with their families providing their equipment and mounts'.<sup>4</sup> This can be taken to mean that before Nicephorus' measure was taken, recruiting into the army had been, more or less, a private arrangement. Therefore, it appears that the importance of Nicephorus' reform lies in the way that for the first time it ties the system of recruiting into the village community, by extending the system of fiscal solidarity to recruitment into the army of the themes.

---

1. P. Lemerle, 'Esquisse...' Part I, R.H., 219 (1958), p.73.

2. F. Dölger, Beiträge... (op.cit.), pp.129-30; also in B.Z., 36 (1936), p.158.

3. J.F. Haldon, Recruitment and Conscription... (op.cit.), p.50, note 87.

4. ibid., p.48.

Moreover, what was army service in Byzantium? Was it a privilege or an obligation and, in any case, who was entitled or who was compelled to join the army before Nicephorus' reform was issued? It seems that any peasant, who could afford to equip himself and to own a horse, was entitled to become a soldier. Since dismissal from the army was considered as a punishment,<sup>1</sup> being in the army should have been considered as a privilege, at least from a financial point of view. Although the following example refers to a period a few years after Nicephorus, it would have been characteristic: the biographer of St. Euthymius the Younger does not say what occupation the Saint's father, Epiphanius, was pursuing, but evidence appears to suggest that he had been a soldier. When, in 834, the latter died, his wife found herself in a desperate situation. She wanted very much to have a soldier in the family and, as she could not become a soldier herself, she enrolled her seven-year-old son in the army!<sup>2</sup> From that life, it becomes clear that soldiers had certain privileges which St. Euthymius' mother tried to keep for her family. It also seems to have been a hereditary status.

It is obvious that the restriction of self-equipment, mentioned above, excluded many poor people, at least until Nicephorus came into power, from the army.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the

- 
1. That kind of punishment is provided by several articles of Military Law, (I. and P. Zepos: Jus Graecoromanum, Athens 1962, vol.2, pp.75-94).
  2. L. Petit, ed. 'Vie et office de Saint-Euthyme le Jeune' in Bibliothèque Hagiographique Orientale, vol.5 (1904), p.18.
  3. The amount of money which a new soldier had to pay in order to buy his own equipment seems to have been quite high; according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, (De cerimoniis, Bonn 1829, 1, p.459), the cost for a horse during the tenth century was twelve nomismata. And this was not, of course, the only expense which a soldier had to pay.



provision of equipment by their neighbours can certainly be considered as a sufficient incentive for them to join the army. Consequently, by issuing this reform, Nicephorus enlarged the social strata, from which soldiers were recruited, and this enlargement seems to have been of vital importance. Bratianu<sup>1</sup> considered the measure as an effort towards the nationalization of the army and consequently directed against the use of mercenaries. In reference to this reform, J.F. Haldon has raised an interesting point: he argues against Ahrweiler<sup>2</sup> that Nicephorus did not actually enrol into the army every impoverished landholder who volunteered, 'an act which would surely have inflated the army beyond manageable proportions and brought thousands of totally untrained men into the ranks',<sup>3</sup> but, by this measure, the Emperor tried to help those who, although already in the military lists, had not normally been called out for service, because of their poverty. This problem is brought into relief by an incident recorded in the Life of St. Philaretos the Merciful, that well known Paphlagonian philanthropist. As the troops of the local theme (Armeniac) were mustered, the horse of one soldier, Mousoulios by name, died unexpectedly. Mousoulios was rescued from the desperate situation by St. Philaretos, who took pity of the soldier and gave him his own horse.<sup>4</sup> This would seem to show that during the second half of the eighth century there were soldiers too poor to carry out their duties effectively.

- 
1. G.I. Bratianu, Etudes... (op.cit.), p.198.
  2. H. Glykatzi - Ahrweiler, 'Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire Byzantin aux IX-XI<sup>e</sup> siècles', in B.C.H., 84 (1960), pp.19-20.
  3. J.F. Haldon, Recruitment... (op.cit.), p.51, note 87.
  4. M.H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, 'La vie de S. Philarète', (loc.cit.), p.127.

But how far can we draw general conclusions from a single incident contained in a saint's Life? One has to be careful not to press the evidence too far, but much of the material included in this Vita shows many of the traits of exempla: that is to say that they were selected for their general interest. They reflected current concerns, which the Saint's foolish generosity helped to alleviate. That not all was well with the military organization of the Anatolian themes is apparent from the comparative failure under Irene to oppose Arab incursions into these provinces. Impoverishment of the theme soldiers would seem to be a contributory factor. It could explain the need that Nicephorus had to reorganize the system of financing the armies of the themes. His first concern was to find the means to support those troops already inscribed in the military registers, who had become impoverished, but the practical implications of this measure were of a different nature: it opened up recruitment into the theme armies of poor peasants generally, giving the measure the character of an innovation, which Theophanes was quick to denounce.

We must now turn to the specific details of Nicephorus' reform. Again one might be tempted to ask: what was the sum of eighteen and a half nomismata paid for? Bratianu argues that such an amount of money was a considerable one.<sup>1</sup> However, it depends on what expenses that sum was supposed to cover. Unfortunately, the sources at our disposal do not say anything about whether the money under consideration was paid by the neighbours (homochoroi) of a new soldier only once, that is to say at the time of the latter's recruitment, or whether it was an annual contribution to the treasury established by Nicephorus,

---

1. G.I. Bratianu, Etudes..., (op.cit.), p.198.



because circumstances were very difficult. Nevertheless, the second case does not seem very likely, mainly because the second 'vexation' is mentioned only in connection with the enrolment of poor people into the army, which enrolment, of course, happened only once for each soldier. The only thing that we can be sure about is that this money cannot be considered as price of land possibly abandoned by the new soldier, because a) landed property varied in size and fertility and b) there is not any evidence that the new soldiers were forced to sell their own property before joining the army; unless they were to be resettled. On the contrary, from three novels issued during the tenth century,<sup>1</sup> we hear that soldiers needed to own landed property estimated to cost at least four pounds of gold, which property they were not allowed to sell while they were serving in the army.

Furthermore, what did the second 'vexation' mean for the 'homochoroi'? As has already been indicated, the rural community did no longer remain only a fiscal unity. Nicephorus made its inhabitants also responsible for the recruitment and the equipment of soldiers, the number of whom probably varied according to the size of the local population. In other words, the neighbours of a poor man, who was about to join the army, had to pay much more for his recruitment than for covering his debts from taxation to the state treasury, which would mean that they would still have him among them working in his fields. They had to pay his obligations to the state treasury anyway, whether he was about to stay in the community or to join the army. In fact, in the second case they had to pay an extra amount

---

1. a) by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, b) by Romanus II and c) by Nicephorus II. They all can be found in I. and P. Zepos: Jus Graecoromanum, (Athens 1962), vol.1, pp.222-23, 240 and 256.

of money which was fairly high. Apart from that, there were going to be fewer manual workers in the community, who, nevertheless, had to do the same amount of work as previously. Therefore, the easiest thing for the community to do, was to pay his debts and have him working in his fields. However, they do not seem to have tried to keep him among them, because they did not have that choice.

In brief, it seems that by this reform, Nicephorus gave the poor people a unique opportunity of changing their lives, but at the same time the measure was definitely an attack against their prosperous neighbours. It was justified by the circumstance that it enabled the Emperor to heal the shortage of soldiers from which the Empire was suffering. It enlarged the social strata from which soldiers were recruited. One last remark: as we hear from Constantine Porphyrogenitus, impoverished soldiers are sponsored by their rich fellow countrymen ( *συνδότηαι* ) in the mid-tenth century,<sup>1</sup> which suggests that Nicephorus' measure was found to be useful and, therefore, no one of his successors abolished it.

## C: PROVINCES

The need for consolidation of Byzantine control over certain areas seems to provide a guide to Nicephorus' activities in the provinces. This is most obvious in his creation of new themes in key areas.

Most scholars agree that at the beginning of the ninth century, the number of the areas under the direct control

---

1. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Cerimoniis (op.cit.), 1, pp.695-96.



of a strategos was increased by the creation of another three or four new themes. The first one must have been that of Cephalonia. In reference to the creation of the theme of Cephalonia, Constantine Porphyrogenitus contradicts himself in two of his works: in the treatise De Thematibus he asserts that Cephalonia had been united with the Peloponnese,<sup>1</sup> while in his De Administrando Imperio he states that at the beginning, this island was a subdivision, a τούρμα, of the theme of Lombardia and that it was not before the reign of Leo VI that Cephalonia with the surrounding islands became an independent theme unit.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, however, that Constantine Porphyrogenitus is wrong in both statements. In the first case, he seems to have been trapped into an error by the Synecdemus of Hierocles, according to which the island of Cephalonia belonged to the proconsul of Achaia.<sup>3</sup> He also seems to have been confused by the Tactica, according to which the bishopric of Cephalonia belonged to the metropolis of Corinth.<sup>4</sup> Even if at an earlier time Cephalonia was attached to the Peloponnese, such an attachment has nothing to do with the creation of the independent theme, known as theme of Cephalonia. Constantine Porphyrogenitus' second statement that Cephalonia was a tourma of the theme of Lombardia is definitely wrong, because, as A. Pertusi

- 
1. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Thematibus, ed. A. Pertusi (Le Vatican 1952), pp.91-92.
  2. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio. ed. G. Morarcsik - R. Jenkins (Budapest 1949), vol.1, p.236: "Ἰστέον ὅτι ἡ κεφαλληνία στρατηγία, ἔχουν τὰ νησία τούρμα ἦν τὸ παλαιὸν τῆς στρατηγίδος λαγουβαρδίας, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ λέοντος τοῦ φιλοκρίτου δευτέρου γέγονεν στρατηγία."
  3. E. Honigmann, Le Synecdemus d'Hiëraklès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre (Bruxelles 1939), p.18.
  4. H. Gelzer, Georgius Cyprius, (Lipsiae 1890), p.75, (no.1578).



has already shown the theme of Cephalonia was created at an earlier time, than the one of Lombardia.<sup>1</sup> It would appear that Cephalonia with the surrounding Ionian islands formed a theme as early as the first decade of the ninth century. The commander of the area, at least at that time, seems to have had two tasks: first to protect western Peloponnese and the entrance of the Corinthian gulf from the Saracens,<sup>2</sup> and second to confront Pepin, the son of Charlemagne and king of Italy, in the Adriatic waters. It was for this second purpose that in the year 807, Nicephorus sent to the area the Patrician Nicetas as head of a Byzantine fleet, in order to restore Dalmatia to Byzantium.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, i.e. in 809, the strategos Paul is reported to have arrived with the Byzantine fleet first in Dalmatia and then in Venice. The author of the Annales Francorum, who reports the arrival, does not say of which theme Paul was the head;<sup>4</sup> but under the year 810 the same source clearly states that Paul was Praefectus Cefaloniae, i.e. strategos of Cephalonia.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is very likely that the combined threat from the Arabs and from the Franks was the determining factor behind the creation of the theme of Cephalonia during the first decade of the ninth century and most probably some time between the years 807 and 810.<sup>6</sup>

- 
1. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Thematibus, (op.cit.), p.174.
  2. An Arabic fleet is reported to have appeared in front of Patras in the year 807. (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio, op.cit., 1, p.228.)
  3. Annales Francorum, ed. by R. Rau, Quellen zur... (op.cit.), p.84: 'Classis a Niciforo imperatore cui Niceta patricius praeerat, ad recipendam Dalmatian mittitur'.
  4. ibid., p.90.
  5. ibid., p.94.
  6. Other scholars such as D. Zakythinos ('Le thème de Céphalonie et la défense de l'Occident', L'Hellenisme Contemporain, 8, 1954, p.312), and M.V. Anastos, ('Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule', C.M.H., 4A, p.92) and J. Ferluga ('Sur la date de la Création du thème de Dyrrachium', Actes du XIIe Congr. Internat. des Etudes Byzantines, Beograd 1964, p.84) also date the creation of the theme of Cephalonia at the time of Nicephorus' reign.



Several scholars attribute the creation of the theme of the Peloponnese also to the reign of Nicephorus I. J.B. Bury,<sup>1</sup> for example, argues that such a creation was caused by the Slavonic revolt which took place at Patras, while M. Dunn dates the creation to 805 and sees it as a preliminary action to Nicephorus' invasion of Bulgaria in 807.<sup>2</sup> Bury's statement that the theme of the Peloponnese is mentioned for the first time in Scriptor Incertus, 336, (A.D. 813)<sup>3</sup> does not seem to be based on solid *evidence*, since a strategos is mentioned stationed at Corinth already during the siege of Patras by the Slavs, an event which must have taken place some time between 806 and 807.<sup>4</sup> R. Jenkins also dates the theme of the Peloponnese to the reign of Nicephorus I,<sup>5</sup> while A. Bon agrees, though not directly, with such a dating.<sup>6</sup> Finally, W. Treadgold also thinks that the creation of the theme of the Peloponnese should be ascribed to the Emperor Nicephorus I.<sup>7</sup> There seems little doubt that the creation of the theme of the Peloponnese must be dated to the reign of Nicephorus I. Such a creation, after all, would be in line with his special interest showed to this area.

Unfortunately the date of the creation of the themes of Thessalonica and Dyrrachium cannot be fixed precisely. The theme of Thessalonica is mentioned for the first time around 836 in the Life of St. Gregory the Decapolites,<sup>8</sup>

---

1. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.224.

2. M. Dunn, 'Evangelisation...' (loc.cit.), p.74.

3. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.224, note 2.

4. P. Lemerle, 'La chronique improprement...', (loc.cit.), p.10.

5. R. Jenkins, Byzantium: The imperial... (op.cit.), pp.92-93.

6. A. Bon, Le Péloponnèse Byzantine jusqu'en 1204, Paris 1951, p.89.

7. W. Treadgold, Byzantine State Finances... (op.cit.), p.71.

8. F. Dvornic, La vie de Saint Grégoire le Decapolite et les Slaves Macedoniens au IXe siècle (Paris 1926), pp.36 and 62 sq.

and that of Dyrrachium in the Tacticon of Uspensky, composed between the years 845 and 856.<sup>1</sup> F. Dvornik suggests that the theme of Thessalonica was created during Nicephorus' reign,<sup>2</sup> and that of Dyrrachium at the time of Theophilus (829-842).<sup>3</sup> Ostrogorsky, though not committing himself to an exact date for the creation of the two themes, says that they must have been created together<sup>4</sup> and he seems to propose as the time of their creation the beginning of the ninth century.<sup>5</sup> M.V. Anastos thinks there is a strong possibility that the creation of the two themes goes back to the reign of Nicephorus I.<sup>6</sup> Finally J. Ferluga, though not committing himself to a definite date for the creation of the theme of Thessalonica, suggests that the theme of Dyrrachium was created by Nicephorus I, in order to form a solid Byzantine basis at the entrance of the Adriatic Sea.<sup>7</sup>

Problems associated with the creation of the theme of Strymon seem to be much more complicated. The history of the region has been studied by P. Lemerle<sup>8</sup> and by M. Rajkovic.<sup>9</sup> Lemerle does not date the creation of the theme of Strymon before the middle of the ninth century.

- 
1. N. Oikonomidès, Les Listes de Préséance Byzantines des IXe et Xe Siècles (Paris 1972), p.49.
  2. F. Dvornik, Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance, Byzantinoslavica, Supplementa, 1, Prague 1933, p.9.
  3. ibid., p.12.
  4. G. Ostrogorsky, History... (op.cit.), p.194, note 4.
  5. ibid.
  6. M.V. Anastos, 'Iconoclasm...', (loc.cit.), p.92.
  7. J. Ferluga, 'Sur la date de la création du thème de Dyrrachium', Actes du XIIe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines II, Beograd 1964, p.92.
  8. P. Lemerle, Philippe et la Macédoine orientale, Paris 1940, p.127.
  9. M. Rajković, 'La région du Strymon et le thème du Strymon', Sbornik Radova, 5 (1958), p.7. Of the article, written in Serbo-Croat, I have consulted only its summary in French.



Rajković agrees with Lemerle but at the same time he admits that between the years 809 and 812 Byzantium showed a particular interest in the region. However, one might add that such an interest was shown in the region of Strymon before the year 809. As we will see elsewhere,

α Byzantine army was stationed there at least as early as 808.<sup>1</sup> There is even an unnamed strategos mentioned there for that year.<sup>2</sup> But, since the region of Strymon as a theme unit fails to appear in the early Tactica, it would be more reasonable to suggest that at the time of Nicephorus I, the district of Strymon still formed a Kleisoura.<sup>3</sup>

These scattered pieces of information on the creation of new theme units during the reign of Nicephorus I, provide circumstantial evidence that our Emperor took particular pains in strengthening several key regions by promoting them into independent military units. These were in the European provinces of the Empire, and this interest coincided with the Emperor's sensitivity on the Slavic issue. But more on Nicephorus' reaction to the threat from the Slavs will be included in the following section.

#### D: RECONQUEST OF GREECE

The demographic conditions in Greece had been bad since the last years of the sixth century. It was in the sixth year of the Emperor Mauricius' reign that the Slavs flooded into many parts of the peninsula. From the so-called

---

1. On this cf. below, p.129.

2. Theophanes, 1, p.485.

3. A. Toynbee (Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World, London 1973, p.268) actually points out that the area of Strymon must have been a kleisoura already since the reign of Justinian II and more precisely since 688-89.



chronicle of Monemvasia, we learn that the Slavs of the area were not subject either to the Byzantine Emperor or to anybody else.<sup>1</sup> The region most seriously affected by Slavonic settlement seems to have been the Peloponnese, where the Slavs remained for some two hundred and eighteen years,<sup>2</sup> i.e. from 588 until 806. This, however, should not be taken to mean that other districts of the Greek peninsula, and especially of northern Greece did not suffer from the Slavic settlements there. As A. Toynbee has pointed out, 'geographically the Slavs' penetration of Greece went far'.<sup>3</sup> It is only that the situation in the Peloponnese is illuminated better than in other districts by the sources at our disposal. At any rate, the Peloponnese was one of the regions which concentrated much of the interest and energy of the Emperor Nicephorus I. His aim was to reconquer and rechristianize Greece. During the fourth year of Nicephorus' reign, the strategos of the region Skleros - of Armenian origin - won an important victory over the Slavs of the Peloponnese (806).<sup>4</sup> This victory as well as the victory of the inhabitants of Patras over the same tribe some time in the course of the same or of the next year,<sup>5</sup> prompted the Emperor Nicephorus

- 
1. P. Lemerle, 'La chronique...', (loc.cit.), p.10. On the Slavonic settlements in Greece during the middle ages see: M. Vasmer, Die Slaven in Griechenland, (Berlin 1941); C. Amantos, Οἱ Σλάβοι εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα, B.N.G.J., 17 (1944) pp.210-221; D. Zakythinos, Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Ἑλλάδι, Athens 1945; St. Cyriacides, Βυζαντιναὶ Μελέται: Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ .., Thessalonica 1947; P. Charanis, 'On the Question...', (loc.cit.); id., 'Observations on the History...', (loc.cit.); id., 'The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlement in Greece', Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 5, 1950, pp.141-66; A. Toynbee, Constantine..., (op.cit.), pp.619-51.
  2. P. Lemerle, 'La chronique...', (loc.cit.), p.10.
  3. A. Toynbee, Constantine..., (op.cit.), p.619.
  4. P. Lemerle, 'La chronique...', (loc.cit.), p.10.
  5. ibid.; On this event see also Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De administrando Imperio, (op.cit.), pp.228-232, where the victory over the Slavs at Patras is attributed to the miraculous intervention of St. Andrew, the holy patron of the city.



to take a series of measures aimed at strengthening the Byzantine control and at the christianization of the areas, which up to then had mostly been populated by the Slavs. The significance of these measures has been properly emphasized in an important article by P. Charanis, who comes to the conclusion that the Emperor Nicephorus should be considered as the saviour of Greece from the Slavs.<sup>1</sup> According to the chronicle of Monemvasia and to the so-called Scholion of Arethas, the measures aiming at the hellenization and the christianization of the Slavs of the Peloponnese included rebuilding of towns and churches which had been destroyed by the heathen Slavs, as well as the promotion of Patras from an archbishopric to a metropolis. Three other cities of the Peloponnese, those of Lacedaemon (Sparta), Methone and Corone, were given the rank of bishopric.<sup>2</sup> But what seems to be the main means by which Nicephorus tried to regain control over the Slavs, not only in Peloponnese but also in other parts of Greece, was a transfer of population from other parts of the Empire into those regions of Greece, which were heavily populated by the Slavs.<sup>3</sup> Theophanes also reports the transfer, though not in order to praise but in order to defame Nicephorus. Thus Theophanes accounts this transfer of population as the first among the ten 'misdeeds' or 'vexations', committed by the Emperor Nicephorus. If his criticism of the Emperor is hardly surprising, the detail is impressive. However, the transfer of population from one place to another was not anything

- 
1. P. Charanis, 'Nicephorus I, the saviour...', (loc.cit.), p.86.
  2. P. Lemerle, 'La chronique...', (loc.cit.), p.10;  
S. Kougeas, 'Ἐπὶ τοῦ καλουμένου χρονικοῦ τῆς Μονεμβασίας', (loc.cit.), p.475.
  3. ibid.



new<sup>1</sup> and, certainly not that terrible.

Theophanes tells us that colonists were transported to areas known as Sclaveniae and dates the transfer to the year 810.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the other two sources at our disposal - i.e. the chronicle of Monemvasia and the Scholion of Arethas - locate the areas to which the population was transferred, as the Peloponnese and date the transfer during the fourth year of Nicephorus' reign.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to say for sure whether our sources, that is to say, the chronicle of Monemvasia and Arethas, on the one hand, and Theophanes, on the other, speak about the same event. The discrepancies make it seem more likely that these three sources report different events, which, however, in one way or another, resulted from the policies of Nicephorus towards the reconquest and christianization of Greece.

- 
1. For the transfer of population during the reigns of Justinian II and Constantine V, see the study by P. Charanis: 'The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire', Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol.3, part 2 (Mouton and Co. The Hague 1961), pp.140-154. As far as the transfers by Justinian II are concerned, the following articles are also useful: P. Charanis: 'Ethnic Changes in Seventh Century Byzantium', D.O.P., 13 (Washington 1959), pp.25-44; A.A. Vasiliev: 'An Edict of the Emperor Justinian II, September 688', Speculum, 18 (1943), pp.1-13, and H. Grégoire: 'Un édit de l'empereur Justinian', Byz., 17 (1944-45), pp.119-124a.
  2. Theophanes, De Boor, 1, 486. A slight, though important, difference existing in the two editions of Theophanes should not remain unnoticed: in the Bonn edition (op.cit., p.755), we read that the transfer was destined "ἐνὶ τῶν Σκλαβηνίαν" while in C. de Boor's edition we come across a plural: "ἐνὶ τὰς Σκλαβηνίας." The second one, undoubtedly, suits the case better.
  3. S. Kougeas, 'Ἐνὶ τοῦ καλουμένου Χρ...' (loc.cit.), p.475; see also P. Lemerle, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.10, where it reads: "Πατριαρχοῦντος ἔτι Ταρασίου." Tarasius died on 25 February 806. On this date cf. his Life, ed. by I.A. Heikel 'Ignatii Diaconi, Vita Tarasii, Archiep, C.P.', Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae, 17 (1891), p.421.



In the first case, the Emperor tried to strengthen the population of the western and southern Peloponnese, by rebuilding the cities of Patras and Lacedaemon (Sparta), by ordering the refugees to come back from southern Italy,<sup>1</sup> and also by transferring people from Asia Minor into the south Peloponnese. The creation of the metropolis of Patras and of the bishoprics of Lacedaemon, Methone and Korone should be considered as belonging to the same scheme of activity of the Emperor.

However, Nicephorus was not the first emperor to have shown interest in Greece and the problems rising from its dominance by the Slavs. His predecessor Irene had also tried to gain control over the Slavs of Greece. In the year 783, she sent the Patrician and Logothete of the Drome Stauracius with a strong army against them. Stauracius reached Thessalonica and Greece, won an important victory over the Slavs, and subjected 'all of them'<sup>2</sup> to the Empire. Stauracius even invaded the Peloponnese, from where he returned with a great number of captives and booty. After that triumphant campaign of Stauracius, Irene with her son Constantine VI travelled to Berrhoea in Thrace<sup>3</sup> which she rebuilt and to which she gave her name (Irenupolis). Irene also rebuilt Anchialus (783).

About twenty years later, after the victory of Skleros, the strategos of the Peloponnese, over the same people, the

- 
1. P. Lemerle, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.9. In the year 586, the inhabitants of Patras fled to Rhegium, while the inhabitants of Sparta are said to have been divided into two groups; from them, the first one travelled to Sicily and the second founded the city of Monemvasia.
  2. Theophanes, 1, p.456.
  3. This Berrhoea was located in the northern districts of the Empire, close to the borders with Bulgaria. Therefore, it must not be confused with the city of Northern Greece west of Salonica, but is to be identified with the modern Stara Zagora.

Emperor Nicephorus did the same with Patras and Lacedaemon. That entitles us to assume that Nicephorus, by rebuilding key places, extended and completed a policy inaugurated by Irene. What was new with Nicephorus' measure was the fact that, by transferring Christians into areas densely populated by the Slavs, he adopted a policy of christianization of pagan tribes in and around the Empire. That policy, which was about to be exercised systematically from the mid-ninth century onwards, had enormous consequences not only for Byzantium, but also for the whole of eastern Europe during the centuries to come. As it has already been stated, the transfer of population to the Peloponnese must have taken place during the fourth year of Nicephorus' reign (October 805 - October 806),<sup>1</sup> definitely earlier than February of 806<sup>2</sup> and this is the transfer the Chronicle of Monemvasia refers to. Therefore the time limit of six months, put by Theophanes, does not seem to apply to that transfer.

Now, given the political perspicacity of Nicephorus, if we still need to find certain other facts, which made and even urged the Emperor to take such a measure, it would not be groundless to presume that two events had played an important role in Nicephorus' decision. The first one was the effort of Acamer, the leader of the Slavs located in Belzetia, to depose Irene and proclaim one of Constantine V's sons as emperor, an attempt incited by the Slavs of continental Greece in 799.<sup>3</sup> The second one was the siege of Patras by the Slavs and the 'miraculous' release of its inhabitants. This siege, although undated, seems to have happened immediately after the victory of

---

1. S. Kougeas, 'Ἐνὶ τοῦ καλουμένου ...', (loc.cit.), p.474.  
2. See above, p.126.  
3. Theophanes 1, p.473-474; on this plot see above pp. 121, 124.



Skleros, in an effort by the Slavs 'to recover the position which they had lost as a result of their defeat'.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Peloponnese was not the only district partly populated by the Slavs. From certain sources, we hear that there were also Slavs settled in northern Greece or more accurately in the north-western part of the Empire. As far as we can interpret a passage in the Life of St. Gregory the Decapolite, the hagiographer speaks about an uprising of the Slavs, obviously located near Thessalonica, where the Saint was at that time (early ninth century).<sup>2</sup> Slavs were also established around the river Strymon, where Nicephorus later settled Christians.<sup>3</sup> Theophanes stated that the transfer was ordered 'after the campaigns by the pagans',<sup>4</sup> without giving us a definite date. Although such campaigns by the Slavs, the Arabs and the Bulgars had been very frequent during nearly the whole of Nicephorus' reign, two expeditions of Krum, one in 808 and another in 809, must have played a decisive role. During the first of them, the Bulgars attacked the region of Strymon, killed many people including the strategos and the archontes and got away with 1100 pounds of gold and the belongings of the soldiers. The money was destined for the army's pay.<sup>5</sup> The second expedition was directed against Sardica and it was definitely more disastrous for Byzantium than the first one.<sup>6</sup>

- 
1. P. Charanis: 'Nicephorus I...', (loc.cit.), p.84.
  2. F. Dvornik, La vie de Saint Grégoire..., (op.cit.), p.61.
  3. Theophanes 1, p.496. See also the letter sent by the Emperor Michael II to Louis the Pious, where the founder of the Amorian dynasty asserted that Thomas the Slav enrolled his forces 'Thraciae, Macedoniae, Thessalonicae, et circumjacentibus Sclaviniis' (The letter can be found in M.G.H., Legum sectio, III, Concilia vol.2, pt.1, Leipzig 1900, p.477).
  4. Theophanes 1, p.486.
  5. ibid., pp.484-85.
  6. For the campaign against Sardica, cf. below, p.132.

In most cases, although a certain policy has already been adopted, measures are not taken without a definite cause and reason. After the above mentioned Bulgarian campaigns, Nicephorus decided to strengthen the north-western borders of the Empire by transferring population from the Asiatic themes. It is mainly this transfer, which Theophanes is referring to, and which took place during the last years of the Emperor's reign. Furthermore, for such a transfer the time of six months given by the chronicler would have been sufficient.

A slight difference in the aims of the two transfers should not remain unnoticed: the first one was aimed against the Slavs, whom the Emperor tried to turn into Christians and assimilate with the subjects of the Empire. The second transfer had more or less a defensive character and it was undertaken in the face of a serious threat from the Bulgars. The Emperor Nicephorus realized that apart from the fortresses of Sardica, Philippo polis, Adrianople and Develtus which formed a sort of border line with the Bulgars and aimed at barring *their* advance southwards, some regions of northern Greece also needed to be strengthened against a possible attack by the Bulgars. It has already been indicated that these regions were heavily populated by Slavs who, as it will be demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> were employed by the Bulgars and participated in campaigns against Byzantine territory. In other words northern Greece was in a way exposed to the combined threat of the Slavs and the Bulgars, and it is against such circumstances that the transfer of population to these areas by Nicephorus I should be viewed.

---

1. Below, p.136.



My second point on this measure by Nicephorus concerns the people who were transferred. It would seem that the people, whom the chronicle of Monemvasia speaks about, were civilians. It is very likely that after the victories over the Slavs of the Peloponnese, Byzantium sought assimilation of those tribes through peaceful means. At least those people who came back to Patras from South Italy, were definitely civilians. It appears, however, that the same case does not necessarily apply to the people who were transferred to Macedonia, Strymon and Thrace. In his attempts to discredit Nicephorus' reign, Theophanes asserts that the Emperor ordered the transfer of the year 810 'because he intended to humiliate the army'.<sup>1</sup> Let us try to interpret things by putting a simple question: did Nicephorus have any particular reasons to humiliate the army? His controversial background does not seem to form a good reason why he should have been against the army. On the contrary, by introducing measures such as his so-called second 'vexation',<sup>2</sup> Nicephorus proved to have been much concerned about the army, which he certainly tried to strengthen rather than to weaken. Other facts and events, however, have to be taken into account, particularly the uprisings against the central government, uprisings in which the army was involved and which during Nicephorus' reign had become rather common. What was the Emperor's reaction to these rebellions? Could it not be argued, for instance, that the transfer of soldiers from other places into the Sclaveniae could be seen as a kind of punishment of the soldiers involved in plots against the Emperor? The answer seems to be NO; the evidence at our disposal for

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.486.

2. It concerns Nicephorus' reform on the way of recruitment of new soldiers. On this, cf. above, pp.112-18.

such an argument is insufficient. Nicephorus did not take any strong measures against the army involved in Bardanes' rebellion in 803. He only deprived them of their pay (*πόγα*).<sup>1</sup> The participation of the army in the conspiracy of Arsaber (February 808), if any,<sup>2</sup> was definitely unimportant. On the other hand the exile by which the Emperor Nicephorus punished some of the soldiers after their revolt at Sardica in 809<sup>3</sup> should not be confused with the transfer of army units mainly from Asia Minor into some of the Empire's European provinces densely populated by Slavs and being under constant threat from the Bulgars. Generally speaking, what Theophanes counts as Nicephorus' first 'vexation', was nothing more than a compulsory transportation of a good number of soldiers, which was after all of vital importance for the interests of the Empire to the areas called Sclaveniae. What happened in Sardica in the year 809 perhaps helps us to understand the situation better: in that year, Krum captured the city and 'massacred six thousand Byzantine soldiers, **not counting** the civilians'.<sup>4</sup> It hardly needs to be emphasized that it was not possible for the Byzantine Empire to replace such a large number of soldiers by enrolling local people into the army, especially in such urgent circumstances for the north-western borders. Therefore, Nicephorus probably decided to transfer a certain number of military families from the eastern themes and to resettle them along the borders with the European enemies of Byzantium and, more particularly, in those areas which were densely populated by the Slavs. It

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.480.

2. Though our sources do not let us assume that soldiers were involved in that movement, G.I. Bratianu (Etudes byzantines..., op.cit., p.197) seems to have taken it for granted.

3. Theophanes 1, p.486.

4. ibid., p.485.



appears very likely that such a transfer was associated, in one way or another, with the creation of new theme units in Europe, already examined. In reference to this measure and the creation of the tagma of the Hikanatoi, also attributed to this Emperor,<sup>1</sup> W. Treadgold has calculated that about ten thousand soldiers were recruited during Nicephorus' reign.<sup>2</sup> Would it be unreasonable to suggest that some of these new soldiers were recruited from the transferred population? It is difficult to say, because it appears that three distinct measures, i.e. a) the creation of new theme units, b) the recruitment of new soldiers and c) the transfer of population, all aimed at the same target, that is the strengthening of the border lands and assuring control over the Slavs of the Sclaveniae. If we knew the chronological order in which these three measures were taken, it would have been, perhaps, easier for us to interpret them more confidently.

However, in spite of all these considerations, it would seem that the only way in which Theophanes' statement on the purpose of the first 'vexation' falls in line with the Emperor's interest for the north-western parts of the Empire, is to take it for granted that those people, who were transferred into the Sclaveniae of northern Greece were soldiers with their families. Since some people had to be transferred anyway, it would have been more convenient for the Empire to order the resettlement of military families, so that their soldiers would be added to, or form the core of the local thematic army in their new settlement. Moreover, military families were perhaps more accustomed to moving their abode and could overcome

---

1. Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Vita Ignatii, P.G., 105, col.492B.

2. W. Treadgold, Byzantine State Finances (op.cit.), p.71.

difficulties in their new settlement more easily. Finally, since recruitment into the army was a privilege, the possibility of resettlement might have been viewed by military families as part of their obligations. From these considerations it becomes obvious that the term military family applies only to the thematic army and has nothing to do with the tagmata, the soldiers of which were professionals and stayed in camps in or around the capital. St. Euthymius, for example, with his mother and his sisters formed a military family and we have seen how he had to take on military obligations once his father had died. G.I. Bratianu, by arguing that the Emperor 'intended to create for the war against the Bulgars, new military forces attached to the land',<sup>1</sup> almost came to the same conclusion, but again he is probably talking about civilians who joined the army, and not about soldiers who were transferred from one place to another. To come back to the purpose of that transfer, one should say that Nicephorus ordered it, not because he intended 'to humiliate the army', but because, as it has already been indicated above, the north-western parts of the Empire were short of soldiers, although the situation there was very critical, with Krum invading the Byzantine provinces. By talking about a humiliation of the army taking place, Theophanes probably meant the compulsory character of the transfer and the bitterness felt by the soldiers who had to be resettled.

Does this transfer mean that the military forces in the eastern themes were weakened? Not at all. Nicephorus at the same time introduced his reform in the way the recruitment of new soldiers was made. Those soldiers who

---

1. G.I. Bratianu, Etudes..., (op.cit.), p.197.



were transferred into the European provinces of the Empire, were replaced by the enrolment into the army of poor people, who could not afford to pay the taxes, imposed on their land. Moreover, we must keep in mind that the eastern provinces of Byzantium were usually flooded by foreigners, Armenians, Persians, etc., seeking a career in the imperial army. On the other hand, given the fact that during the first decade of the ninth century Byzantium was deeply involved in wars against the Arabs too, we cannot presume that Nicephorus would dare to withdraw a number of soldiers from Asia Minor and to transfer them into European provinces. For such an enterprise, a certain period of peace, especially in the eastern themes, was needed. If not a peace, at least a truce came with the death of Hārūn al Rashīd in March 809. It looks as if the Byzantines took advantage of the Caliph's death, not only by recovering Camacha,<sup>1</sup> but also by being able to withdraw some forces from the eastern themes in order to have them available for the war against the Bulgars.

Is there any way of telling how effective the transfer of population into the Peloponnese and into northern Greece proved? Here again one needs to differentiate the two areas in which people were resettled. It would seem that the resettlement of Christians into the Peloponnese had very good results for the assimilation of the Slavs of the district. Though there are a few exceptions,<sup>2</sup> one

---

1. E.W. Brooks: 'The struggle with the Saracens (717-867)', in C.M.H., vol.4a, (Cambridge 1923), p.127.

2. See, for example, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, (De Administrando Imperio, p.232), where it is stated that during the reign of Michael III the Protospatharius Theoctistus was named strategos of the theme of the Peloponnese. With a strong army from all western themes, Theoctistus tried to subject the Slavs of the area. He succeeded against all the Slavic tribes of the region except the Melingi and the Ezeritae.



might argue that by these transfers Nicephorus restored Byzantine control over the area. The same argument, however, does not apply for the Slavs of the north-western parts of the Empire. The Slavs of that region kept their identity and independence against Byzantium. It was there that Krum, the Bulgarian Khan, twice enrolled Slavs in his army. The first case was just before Nicephorus' fatal battle against the Bulgars in 811<sup>1</sup> and the second during Leo V's reign in the year 814.<sup>2</sup> Although the Slavs were numerically superior to the Bulgars, the latter provided the leaders. Thus, the Slavs of that area, or at least some of them, did not have any objection to participating in a war against Byzantium, especially if they were well paid. We also hear from Theophanes that the people, who had been resettled by Nicephorus around Strymon, did not stay there long. Because of a Bulgarian expedition in 812, during which Krum extended his occupation of Thrace and Macedonia, they left their new settlement and went back to their previous homes.<sup>3</sup> The passage of the Chronographia which speaks about that flight appears to be of particular interest for the following reasons: first because it demonstrates the Emperor Nicephorus' own opinion about the transfer of population to the Sclaveniae of northern Greece. To be precise, Theophanes says that the Emperor spoke very proudly about that measure.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, because among the places

- 
1. Ivan Dujcev, 'La Chronique...', (loc.cit.), p.212: "μισθω-  
βάμενοι Ἀβάρους καὶ τὰς περὶ Σκλαβηνίας."  
It appears certain that Krum paid the Avars and the Slavs,  
in order to help him in that particular war.
  2. Scriptor Incertus de Leone Bardae, C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1842),  
p.347; the text reads: "Ὁ Κρούμος ἐστράτευεν λαὸν πολλὸν  
συναθροίσας καὶ τοὺς Ἀβάρεις καὶ πάσας τὰς Σκλαβηνίας."
  3. Theophanes 1, p.496.
  4. ibid.



abandoned by their new settlers the fortress of Probaton and 'some other strongholds' (ὄχυράματα)<sup>1</sup> are included, and this, of course, strengthens the possibility that those settled there were rather soldiers than civilians. Finally, because the special mention by Theophanes of the region of Strymon, again as a place from which its new settlers fled, demonstrates Nicephorus' special interest in a valley of strategic importance for the defence of northern Greece against the Bulgars as the event of 808 had already shown.

But, equally significant is the flight itself. It shows that, no matter how sound it looked on paper, the measure of resettlement itself proved to have been rather unpopular among the soldiers who were transferred. One wonders whether a good reason for the military dissatisfaction with Nicephorus could not be traced to the measure of the transfer of population he adopted.

These events, however, should not be taken to mean that Nicephorus' policy in the north-western borders of the Empire failed. On the contrary, it seems that even there, the first steps towards a more concerted policy towards the Slavs and the Bulgars had already been taken.

## E: ECONOMY-FINANCE

### 1. The Preliminaries

The fiscal and economic reforms, which the Emperor Nicephorus introduced in order to strengthen public finance and secure the state treasury against any loss, are of vital importance. These measures are criticized by Theophanes, who lists them under the general name 'vexations'.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.496.

Regardless of the authority's bias with his report on the matter, Theophanes gave modern scholars the opportunity of examining the fiscal policy of Nicephorus in depth and allowed them to draw some useful conclusions concerning the economic and social conditions in Byzantium during the early ninth century. After a more careful study of Nicephorus' fiscal policy, elements of sound administration have been discovered. This is, of course, a broadly accepted general view on this Emperor's economic policy. Nevertheless, one or two problems connected with the measures introduced or adopted by Nicephorus still remain to be answered.

First, there is the question of the sources. Theophanes is, of course, always our main source for Nicephorus' fiscal administration. However, as Theophanes is at the same time the leader of the critics against him, we need to hear the opinion of the altera pars, i.e. of those contemporary sources mainly hagiographers, who, being less biased than Theophanes, speak in favour of Nicephorus. At the end of the short chronicle which covers the events of 811 in Bulgaria, the anonymous author asserts that Nicephorus was 'very prudent and cunning and very clever in understanding public affairs, overparticular with details and too avaricious'.<sup>1</sup> Although this reference is very short and general, it is of some importance, because the author appears to have been an impartial observer of the circumstances. Now, if that assessment is matched with what the monk Theosterictus recorded about the same Emperor, then we do not need to rely only upon modern scholars in our effort to find apologists of Nicephorus' reign. In the Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion, Theosterictus calls

---

1. Ivan Dujčev: 'La chronique...', (loc.cit.), p.216.



Nicephorus 'very pious, a friend of the poor and a friend of the monks'.<sup>1</sup> We have also seen that the Patriarch Methodius (843-847) was another near contemporary who has left us a favourable account of the Emperor Nicephorus I.<sup>2</sup> Methodius, of course, does not refer especially to Nicephorus' economic measures, but the whole account he gives us on this Emperor's policies is enthusiastic.

The second main problem to be answered concerns the fiscal policy of Nicephorus in connection with economic measures taken or cancelled by his predecessors. In other words, the point up to which Nicephorus I was a real reformer, needs to be made clear. Some of the measures he took were nothing more than a reaction to Irene's demagogic policy. Others were either the restoration of some measures, which had been current in Rome or in early Byzantium and were cancelled some time afterwards, or the extension or alteration of measures, which at Nicephorus' time were already in use. It would also seem that in some cases the only thing that this very Emperor did, was to force government officials into a more effective application of laws and decrees, which had been almost forgotten because they had been so long unenforced. What I am trying to say is that in many cases it is not the law itself, but the degree of its enforcement which is of significance.

## 2. Restoration of Fiscal Order

Dealing with Nicephorus' fiscal policy, both R. Monnier<sup>3</sup> and G.I. Bratianu<sup>4</sup> adopted the order of 'vexations'

---

1. Vita St. Nicetas of Medikion, AASS, April 1, p.262.

2. D. Spyridonos, 'Βίος τοῦ ἁγίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ὁμολογητοῦ Θεοφάνους', (loc.cit.), pp.144-45.

3. R. Monnier, however ('Etudes de droit byzantin...', loc.cit., pp.59-103), because not all the 'vexations' are of the same interest for the 'Ἐπιβολή', left the second and ninth ones to discuss at the end of his survey.

4. G.I. Bratianu: Etudes... (op.cit.), pp.183-216.

introduced by Theophanes. However, regardless of the order in which the Emperor's measures will be examined, an overall assessment of Nicephorus' policies must not be neglected: what objectives had he in mind, what principles did he follow? These vital questions must be answered through an examination of the 'vexations', either one by one, or en bloc as a whole financial strategy.

To begin with, Nicephorus increased the tax paid by every subject of the Empire and restored another tax of two ceratia (1/12 of the nomisma),<sup>1</sup> which, having been first introduced by Leo III, had probably been abolished by Irene, in her effort to gain popularity among the populace.

Among the chroniclers, who recorded this measure, M. Glycas<sup>2</sup> does not seem to have used Theophanes as his main source. That is perhaps why, although Theophanes and the other chroniclers, who copied him or who used him as their main source, use the word 'chartiaticon' for the two ceratia tax reinforced by Nicephorus, Glycas does not do so. He only states that the 'diceraton' was reimposed by the Emperor, because the latter wanted to repair the walls of Constantinople, which at that time had become old (meaning: unstable).<sup>3</sup> However, as<sup>M.</sup> Glycas is the only authority from whom we have such information and as he is not a contemporary one,<sup>4</sup> we cannot rely upon him. He is probably muddling this measure with the tax imposed by Constantine V. The tax under consideration, at least during Nicephorus' reign, should have something to do with the new lists, on which the names of the people, subjected to taxation, were written, or the receipts given to them by

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.486.

2. Michaelis Glycae: Annales, C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1836), pars IV, p.530.

3. That task was undertaken some thirty years later by Theophilus.

4. He lived in the mid-twelfth century.



government officials. It looks as if Nicephorus ordered the revision of the lists of tax payers. At about the same time, uncial script was progressively abandoned and the cursive minuscule was introduced.<sup>1</sup> It is reasonable to believe that the revision of the lists of tax payers was not an entirely innocent act. It aimed at an increase of taxation, at least for those people, whose contribution to the state finance was not considered to have been sufficient. In any case, the word 'chartiaticon' meant a tax imposed on the 'chartes', the paper,<sup>2</sup> and it was considered as a very important one by the Emperor, who intensified control over all citizens, so that nobody could cheat the authorities and pay less than he had to.

Was 'chartiaticon' the essence of Nicephorus' third 'calamity'? It is difficult to give a positive answer. J.B. Bury<sup>3</sup> argues against Monnier<sup>4</sup> and Finlay<sup>5</sup> that these two ceratia were paid by each taxpayer and not in the nomisma.<sup>6</sup> He also argues that the 'chartiaticon' was the only increase in taxation reimposed by this reform of Nicephorus. In his first argument, Bury is probably right,

- 
1. On this see G. Mango, 'La culture grècque et l'occident au VIII siècle', in Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, XX (1973), pp.716-17.
  2. G.I. Bratianu, ('Etudes...', op.cit., p.202) expressed the opinion that the 'chartiaticon' was imposed, because perhaps at that time the official tax lists and documents, made of papyrus, were replaced by others, made of parchment. Although we do not know when the Byzantine government abandoned the fragile papyrus and adopted the much better material of parchment, the fact that leather costs a lot of money, makes Bratianu's theory possible.
  3. J.B. Bury: E.R.E., p.214.
  4. R. Monnier: 'Etudes...', (loc.cit.), p.67.
  5. G. Finlay: History of the Byzantine Empire, (London 1853), p.116.
  6. G. Ostrogorsky (History..., op.cit., pp.187-88), also thinks that the charge of two ceratia was paid per nomisma, i.e. 1/12 or 8 1/3%, and it was imposed for being entered on the tax-roll.



but in the second one he seems to have missed the point of the measure. As the texts of the chronicles stand, one could also interpret them to mean that those two ceratia were paid by each taxpayer in addition to a general increase of the basic tax, about the amount of which unfortunately we are not told anything. In other words, it is not quite clear what Theophanes understood by what he recorded. If the second clause: *παρέχοντας καὶ καρτηριατικῶν ἕνεκα ἀνακερατίων β'*, explains the infinitive *ἀναβιβάζεσθαι*, 'to increase', of the first clause, as Bury<sup>1</sup> argues, then these two ceratia were the only increase in taxation meant by this measure. However, the Greek word *καί*, 'and', following a verb or a verbal form - as, in this case, the participle *παρέχοντας* - has a clear meaning 'in addition to', 'apart from', 'besides'. Bury's interpretation is backed by the fact that, apart from these two ceratia, no other amount, or percentage of increase is mentioned by the chroniclers, as well as by the fact that Theophanes did not use harsh language when he described the reform under consideration. However, a better word by word translation of the Greek text, would make us believe that, apart from these two ceratia, a general increase of the basic tax was also introduced by the Emperor. Unfortunately, the amount or percentage of this increase remains unknown to us.

With another reform, Nicephorus increased the amount of money paid by those people and particularly institutions, to whom a remission had previously been awarded.<sup>2</sup> Theophanes speaks about the increase of *κουφισμοί*. Although the word *κουφισμός*, 'remission', mainly applies to remissions awarded to churches, monasteries and other

1. J.B. Bury: E.R.E., p.214.

2. Theophanes 1, p.486: "...*τοὺς κουφισμοὺς πάντας ἀναβιβά-  
ζεσθαι προέταττεν*".



institutions connected with the church, Nicephorus' reform, known as fourth 'vexation', seems to have been also extended to other categories of people, not necessarily related to churches and monasteries. Perhaps this measure is better illustrated by another passage, again of Theophanes: according to the chronicler, the Emperor Nicephorus, at the time of his departure (May 811) for the fatal war against the Bulgars 'ordered Nicetas, Patrician and General Logothete, to increase the taxes paid by churches and monasteries and ask for the payment of eight years' back taxes by the οἴκοι<sup>1</sup> of the dignitaries'.<sup>2</sup>

As regards the higher rate of taxation on ecclesiastical and monastic property, Theophanes seems to have recorded the same measure twice. To believe that the Emperor, whom other sources call 'friend of the monks',<sup>3</sup> increased that amount twice in a rather short reign, is out of question. To me the thing is quite clear. Since 'the properties of churches and monasteries were in principle normally liable to taxation',<sup>4</sup> it was probably Irene, ~~the Emperor~~ who awarded them a partial exemption, i.e. a reduction in the amount of money they had to pay.<sup>5</sup> When in 802 Nicephorus came to power, he accepted the situation, so that during almost the whole of his reign, he did not change anything. It was only during the last year, in fact during the last months of his reign, when, because of the critical circumstances produced by the war against the Bulgars, the Emperor decided to cancel the remission under

---

1. The word οἴκοι here should be translated 'families' (with a broad perhaps meaning).

2. Theophanes 1, p.489.

3. The monk Theosterictus in his: Vita St. Nicetas..., (loc.cit.), p.29.

4. G. Ostrogorsky: History..., (op.cit.), p.188.

5. The infinitive ἀναβιβάζεσθαι, 'to increase', lights up the problem very well.

consideration. That was also the time, when Nicephorus expressed his wish that 'the valuable holy articles of the churches should be used for the benefit of the populace'.<sup>1</sup> Although Theophanes, of course, grasped the chance to defame Nicephorus once more, it looks as if the Emperor considered his campaign against Krum as one of vital importance and perhaps, as Heraclius had done, as a crusade.

Now, we come to the second category of people affected by this reform of Nicephorus. These were the dignitaries from whom, as it has already been said, in the year 811 the Emperor demanded a payment of eight years backdated taxes. The eight years retrospection allows us to assume that to these people, an exemption had been awarded by Nicephorus himself immediately after his accession to the throne.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this has to be connected with what Theophanes recorded about the events of October 802: 'Those, who had been in the very confidence of her (of Irene), went over to him (to Nicephorus), because of avarice'.<sup>3</sup> Now, always keeping in mind that the supporters of Nicephorus' accession to the throne were certain officials and dignitaries, we are entitled to presume that those people, before they did so, had been given, or had been promised, some financial incentives.

- 
1. Theophanes 1, p.489. It is, of course, worth remembering that all charitable institutions were under the church's patronage. They were also wealthy and in the early seventh century able to subsidize Heraclius' campaign against the Persians.
  2. It is worth noting that in reference to this measure, Theophanes does not use the verb ἀναβιβάζεσθαι any more, but he asserts that the Emperor demanded for the ὀπισθοτέλειαι, 'back dated basic taxes', to be paid by the οἴκοι of the archontes. It seems to me that here we are faced with a total exemption from the basic tax.
  3. Theophanes 1, pp.476-77.



Such incentives, of course, had probably been given to only a few high officials, but it looks as if the exemption, established by Nicephorus in the first year and revoked by himself in the last year of his reign, was a more general measure, covering governmental officials and other dignitaries. As has already been said, this exemption, together with the remission in favour of churches and monasteries were the last privileges to be revoked by the Emperor. The abolition of this privilege definitely caused some discontent among those whose interests were damaged. Even the Patrician Theodosius Salibaras,<sup>1</sup> a very faithful servant to the Emperor, protested against this abolition.<sup>2</sup>

But high officials and ecclesiastical and monastic properties were not the only ones affected by Nicephorus' effort to put ~~an~~ order in the state finance. The same measure, or a similar one to that, was directed against a group of peasants, those who, although civilians, had been, in one way or another, attached to ecclesiastical or monastic property, as well as those, who had been working for various charitable institutions, such as orphanages, hostels, almshouses, etc. These people are included by Theophanes under the general term *πάροικοι*, and the tax from which they were now no longer exempted is named as the kapnikon, 'the hearth tax'.<sup>3</sup>

But what was the kapnikon? G.I. Bratianu divides the taxes into two main categories: poll taxes and land taxes. The hearth tax certainly belonged to the second group. Bratianu also noticed correctly that the kapnikon was imposed not on persons but on hearths, i.e. on families.

---

1. On Salibaras, see above, p.100.

2. Theophanes 1, p.489.

3. ibid., pp.486-87.

It seems, however, that by claiming that this tax was paid only by serfs, Bratianu went too far. He asserted that the hearth tax was nothing else than an indication of a servile condition for those who paid it 'car les paysans libres paraissent en avoir été exemptés'.<sup>1</sup> However, it would seem that the kapnikon had been too important a tax to be left for payment only by serfs. One is tempted to argue that to that tax other groups of people were also liable.<sup>2</sup> Such an argument is supported by the decision taken a few years later by the Emperor Michael II; whereby half of the hearth tax was remitted to the people of two themes, those of Opsikion and Armeniac, as a reward for their loyalty to the Emperor against the rebel Thomas the Slav.<sup>3</sup> It would sound quite unbelievable, either that an emperor in such a case would have taken a measure which benefitted only a small proportion of people, or that during the first quarter of the ninth century soldiers were recruited only among serfs. Since both these two explanations seem rather unlikely, it would appear more plausible to suggest that the remission of kapnikon has all the marks of a solemnion to a charitable institution. Their dues would go to the institution and not to the state. Therefore the revocation of this remission by the Emperor Nicephorus could probably be seen as a way of strengthening state control. Furthermore, it also needs to be remembered that by the end of his reign, Nicephorus revoked all remissions which had been awarded to

---

1. G.I. Bratianu, Etudes..., (op.cit.), p.203.

2. Among the chroniclers it is only Zonaras (Annales, Bonn 1897, vol.3, pp.306-307) who records that the hearth tax 'was imposed on the serfs of churches, almshouses and monasteries as well as on everybody who did not have either land or tax' (meaning: who did not have anything else to be taxed). He, too, uses the word πάροικοι.

3. Theophanes Continuatus, C.S.H.B., (Bonn 1838), p.54.



several categories of people either by Irene or by himself at an earlier time. The difficult situation with the Bulgars would not permit such exemptions.

So far we have been concerned with the ending of tax remissions. However, if we are to believe Theophanes' account of the fiscal policy of Nicephorus, then we must assume that he also resorted to the confiscation of ecclesiastical and monastic property. Probably the Emperor could not tolerate the fact that in such a difficult period for the Empire, the church and the monasteries owned vast areas of land, from which they obviously profited. Therefore, he chose the best and the most fertile of these properties and attached them to the imperial lands.<sup>1</sup>

The taking away of these lands was, of course, a real blow to the church and the monasteries, but it became unbearable because of the Emperor's final decision, according to which the church, the monasteries and the foundations dependent on them, were forced to pay the land tax even for the properties, which had been taken over by the Emperor! Such a measure, of course, would seem unbelievable, unless we suppose that it was only a matter of paying taxes to the state; the monasteries continued to enjoy the usufruct of these lands. The chroniclers do not say for how long they had to continue paying taxes on these properties, but it was probably until the state would find somebody else - for example, the sailors of the ninth 'vexation'<sup>2</sup> - to buy the lands. On the other hand, keeping in mind that by the eleventh century there were a series of charitable institutions under imperial

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.487: "...τὰ δὲ κρείττονα τῶν κτημάτων εἰς τὴν βασιλικὴν κουρατορίαν ἀρρεῶσαι, τὰ μέντοι τέλη αὐτῶν ἐπιτίθεσθαι τοῖς ἐναπομείναντι εἰς τοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐαχεῖς οἴκους κτήματι καὶ παροίκοις, ὡς δηλοῦσθαι πολλῶν τὰ τέλη, τῶν οἰκίαντων ὀκνημένων..."

2. ibid.; on this see below, p.154.

control, we can consider this reform of Nicephorus as a first step towards the secularization of these foundations. Nothing is said about the *πάροικοι*, possibly attached to these confiscated<sup>1</sup> lands, but they probably stayed working there, whoever the nominal owner was. However, Theophanes, indirectly of course, lets us assume that some of them abandoned the land, to which they were attached. Perhaps, taking advantage from Nicephorus' reform on the recruitment of new soldiers, they preferred to join the army.

Theophanes records that after the conspiracy by Arsaber (808), among those who were beaten, banished and those whose properties were confiscated, there were bishops, monks and clergymen of the great church, the syncellus, the sacellarius and the chartophylax.<sup>2</sup> The involvement of clergymen and monks in a purely political issue can be given two possible explanations: 1) The Emperor had already in 808 taken some of his fiscal measures against the ecclesiastical and monastic property, and 2) Those clergymen and monks probably belonged to the Studite party, which had, of course, opposed Nicephorus since the year 806, because of the election of his namesake to the patriarchal see of Constantinople and because of the restoration of Joseph, abbot of Kathara, to the priesthood.<sup>3</sup> After a more or less careful study of the Emperor's attitude towards ecclesiastical and monastic property, it becomes clear that Theophanes, especially as a representative of the interests of the clergy, was after all, entitled to use the word 'vexation' referring to the confiscation of monastic properties.

---

1. J.B. Bury, *E.R.E.*, (p.215) prefers the term 'compulsory sale' than 'confiscation'.

2. Theophanes 1, pp.483-84.

3. The so-called Moechian Schism, caused by this restoration, is discussed in the chapter on Nicephorus' religious policies, below, pp.205-15.



Nicephorus tried to ensure the state against any loss from treasure trove finders,<sup>1</sup> as well as against those, whose fortune had changed in a short time from poverty to riches.<sup>2</sup> Theophanes asserts that the Emperor became suspicious and considered as treasure trove finders those who had found a vase, even if it was empty.<sup>3</sup> From the existence of such a vase in a house, the authorities would have inferred that the owner of the container must have found some money in it some time ago. It was not so much a matter of how much money the state could claim, more a way of preserving the state's rights to treasure trove. This tax on treasure trove finders was to apply over the previous twenty years. It looks as if the 'twenty' was chosen not for any particular reason, but because it was a conveniently round number.

Those who inherited from parents or grandparents (direct line of kinship) were also taxed by Nicephorus.<sup>4</sup> Here again the tax was backdated twenty years. As the text of Theophanes stands, it gives us the impression that Nicephorus taxed something which had not been taxed before. Bratianu, however, asserts that Justinian's successors re-established the 5% tax on a direct inheritance, which he had abolished.<sup>5</sup> As Theophanes rarely gives us percentages, it is difficult for us to know for sure whether Nicephorus created a new tax or increased an existing one, which must have been tolerable. In the second case, we would like, of course, to know the percentage of the increase. Possibly

- 
1. Theophanes 1, p.487: '...(προέταττεν) σκοπεῖσθαι παρὰ τῶν βρατηγούτων τοὺς ἀδρῶς ἐκ πτωκείας ἀνακτησάμενους, καὶ ἀπαιτεῖσθαι κρήματα ὡς ἑρέτας θηβαιῶν.'
  2. ibid.
  3. Theophanes 1, p.487: "...τοὺς πρὸ κ' χρόνων <sup>εὐρηκότας</sup> καὶ μέχρι τῆς δευροπίθου ἢ βικύου ὀτιοῦν καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐξαρχυρίσθαι (προέταττεν)."
  4. ibid., "...τοὺς ἐκ πάππων ἢ πατέρων κληρονομήσαντας διαιρεθέντας ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν χρόνων κ' ἐξαναδίδοναι (προέταττεν) τῇ δημοσίῳ τοὺς πένητας."
  5. G.I. Bratianu, Etudes..., (op.cit.), p.207.



the word  $\delta\iota\alpha\rho\epsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma$  'divided', provides us with some kind of an answer, especially if it is connected with the word  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\tau\alpha\varsigma$ , 'poor'. To be more precise, if somebody was the only heir of his father or his grandfather, then, as he probably was about to inherit the entire property, he did not mind if he was forced to pay a small amount of it to the state treasury. This, however, did not apply to the case, when there were a number of heirs who had to divide the inheritance into small pieces. In such a case, unless the inheritance had been a huge property, which is quite improbable for the period under consideration,<sup>1</sup> the heirs would have had to earn their livelihood from a very small property. Therefore, they would have become poor, so that any taxation imposed on them would have been unbearable. These people do not seem to have been paying any tax for their small inheritance so far, and, therefore, no matter how heavy the new one was, they considered it as a vexation.

By another measure, Nicephorus established a custom tax connected with<sup>the</sup> slave trade.<sup>2</sup> This tax consisting of two nomismata was now imposed on each slave,<sup>3</sup> who was sold outside Abydos and particularly in the Dodecanese.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. The sources at our disposal do not speak about many magnates or about very rich people of the period. Saint Philaretos' case was probably an exception.
  2. Theophanes 1, p.487: "...καὶ τοὺς ὠνηγαμένους ἔξω τῆς Ἀβύδου βώματα οἰκετικά, ἀνὰ β' νομισμάτων τελέσαι προέταξεν, καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς κατὰ τὴν Δωδεκάνησον."
  3. Here one can spot clearly the attempt by Theophanes to avoid the 'bad' word 'slaves', by using the moderate words βώματα οἰκετικά. Instead of protesting against slavery itself, the representatives of the eastern church avoided the use of the word, and this was, of course, considered to be a contribution to the battle against social inequality!
  4. Neither R. Monnier, ('Etudes de droit...', loc.cit., p.82), nor H. Antoniadès-Bibicou, (Recherches sur les Douanes à Byzance, Paris 1963, pp.200-01, Map), include Rhodes in the Dodecanese.



Although Theophanes records that these two nomismata were paid by those, who had bought (the chronicler used a past participle: τοὺς ὠνησάμενους) slaves outside Abydos, he does not say for certain whether this measure applied retrospectively, as some previous ones had done. Furthermore, why were these two nomismata imposed as a tax only on the slaves sold outside Abydos and not on those sold outside Hieron too? It hardly needs to be observed that the aim of this measure was to tax something which had not been taxed so far. It is reasonable to believe that a tax was already being paid for slaves imported to Constantinople either from Abydos or from Hieron. We do not hear anything about the amount of that tax because it had been imposed at a time much earlier than that of Nicephorus'. Our Emperor did not alter this tax. He only introduced a similar one, that of two nomismata per slave, to areas where such a tax previously did not apply. These areas were the Aegean Sea islands and especially the Dodecanese. From Theophanes' reference to that measure, it becomes clear that slaves who were sold in the Euxine regions, if any, were exempted from that tax. Based probably on this differentiation, Bury argues that Aegean Sea ports and especially the Dodecanese were the market places of slaves destined for light work, such as waiters, chamberlains, dancers, etc.<sup>1</sup> Slaves for heavy work were 'recruited' in the Black Sea ports and consequently they were imported through Hieron. Therefore, it would seem that the two nomismata was a sort of luxury tax.

As has been observed, 'slaves were one of the most important articles of trade during the Middle Ages'.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.217.

2. R.S. Lopez and I.N. Raymond, Medieval trade in the Mediterranean World, New York - London 1961, p.115. On the trade of slaves see also: A. Chadjinicolaou-Marava, Recherches sur la vie des esclaves dans le monde byzantin, Athens 1950, especially the sections under the titles: La loi et l'esclavage, (pp.22-28) and Le commerce des esclavages (pp.89-94).



There were even fixed prices for different categories.<sup>1</sup> In brief, slavery had been so broadly spread that Theodore of Stoudios thought it necessary to stress that monks were not allowed to own a slave: 'like marriage, (the ownership of slaves) is allowed only to laymen'.<sup>2</sup> However, since slavery and city life of antiquity went together, and since Byzantium proved to have been not an urban but a rural society, it must be concluded that consumption of slaves in the Byzantine Empire was limited to Constantinople itself and, perhaps, to only a few cities, let us say Thessalonica, Ephesus and Rhodes. Most of the slaves imported into Byzantium could have gone to work in the capital. But, among the other three provincial cities, the last one needs to be treated with special consideration, not so much for its consumption of slaves, as for its activity in the slave trade. Rhodes in the early middle ages is interesting. It clearly serves as a commercial post between the Byzantine Empire and the countries of Islam. There is a passage in the Rhodian Sea Law which speaks about the following case: if a slave is about to be transferred by ship to another destination, then his owner finds either a merchant or a passenger on the same ship, to whom he entrusts the guardianship of the slave. Suppose that the latter somehow manages or is permitted to escape, the person who had

- 
1. During Justinian I's reign, ordinary adult slaves were bought at the price of 20 nomismata, artisans 30, and slaves with professional qualifications, such as notaries or doctors, 50 or 60 (Cod. Just. VI 43, 3). From the Life of St. John the Merciful, we hear that in the first half of the seventh century, educated slaves cost in Jerusalem up to 30 nomismata (H. Gelzer, 'Leontios' von Neapolis, Leben des heiligen Johannes des Barmherzigen, Erzbischofs von Alexandrien, Sammlung ausgewählter Kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften 5, Freiburg und Leipzig 1893, p.44).
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epistolae, I, 10, (loc.cit.), 99, col.940D.



undertook the obligation to guard him - a contract sealed by payment - is responsible to the slave's owner.<sup>1</sup>

This passage would seem to confirm the importance of the slave trade passing through Rhodes. But, the growth of Rhodes as a centre of the trade of slaves meant that the Empire was likely to be losing out as far as taxes were concerned. It would seem that in the Emperor's mind, such a growth contributed to the economic independence of the island from the central government.<sup>2</sup> It was this that Nicephorus was to check. Furthermore, given the Emperor Nicephorus' sensitivity over economic and fiscal issues, as well as his tendency to supervise all aspects of economic life, it would appear that he was mainly interested in concentrating commercial activity in Constantinople and clamping down on provincial trade, simply because it was difficult to supervise. Therefore, the two nomismata tax, put on each slave sold outside Abydos can probably be seen as a measure taken not so much against the trade of slaves itself, but against the growth of the provincial slave trade and especially that of Rhodes.

### 3. State Control of Shipping

After the transfer of population from all themes into the Sclaveniae, the enrolling of poor people in the army, the secularization of the best ecclesiastical and monastic fields and the confiscation of properties, for even simple offences, it is not surprising that suddenly the state became the owner of huge properties, especially of land.

---

1. I. and P. Zepos, Jus Graecoromanum (op.cit.), vol.II, p.99.  
2. R. Lopez, ('Trade in Seventh Century Byzantium', D.O.P., 13, 1959, p.79) also suggests that the naukleroi at Rhodes were, more or less, independent traders.

As he was very experienced in these matters, Nicephorus immediately realized that, if all these lands remained under governmental ownership for long, the loss for the state treasury would have been triple. Firstly, it would have been a loss of the tax to which land was subjected. Secondly, as there was a shortage of manual workers in Byzantium, it was most likely that these lands would remain uncultivated and especially in Mediterranean climate, uncultivated land loses its fertility. Finally, as a 'sales tax' was basic to Byzantine fiscal system, the state treasury would have been found to lose the tax on agricultural products, sold on the market. Therefore, the less time these properties remained under state ownership, the better. Nicephorus found buyers, even if it meant the use of force. It was the shipowners and sailors in general, who lived on the coasts of Asia Minor, and who were forced to buy land from the government at a price fixed by its officials.<sup>1</sup> In brief, these people were coerced into taking up a second profession 'to which they were not accustomed',<sup>2</sup> as the chroniclers complain. However, this was not the whole of the essence of that reform. H. Antoniadès-Bibicou<sup>3</sup> argues that the measure should not be considered apart from the so-called tenth 'vexation', according to which the government offered to shipowners at Constantinople a kind of loan at a high interest rate. It would seem, however, that it is closer in principle to the reform, by which Nicephorus recruited poor people into the army (Theophanes' second 'vexation').

- 
1. Theophanes 1, p.487: "...τοὺς τὰς παραθαλασσίους οἰκοῦντας, μάλιστα τῆς μικρᾶς Ἀσίας, ναυκλήρους μηδέποτε γηπονικῶς ζήσαντας ἄκοντας ἠνετίθεαι ἐκ τῶν καθαρπαγέντων αὐτῶ κτημάτων ὡς ἂν ἐκτιμηθῶσι παρ' αὐτῶ."
  2. *ibid.*, G. Cedrenus: Hist. Compendium (Bonn 1839), vol.2, p.38. Zonarae: Annales, C.S.H.B., vol.3, (Bonn 1897), p.307.
  3. H. Antoniadès-Bibicou: Études d'histoire maritime de Byzance à propos du thème de Caravisiens, Paris 1966, p.110.



By issuing that measure the Emperor tried to ensure the state against any shortage of soldiers. By forcing the sailors to buy land property, he wanted to protect the Empire from a possible future lack of sailors. It is worth remembering that Constantine VII will regularize the custom, according to which sailors, like soldiers, needed to own a property of the value of either four or two pounds of gold according to their case.<sup>1</sup>

All the fiscal reforms undertaken by Nicephorus aimed at the strengthening of the public finances. With almost all of them, the Emperor transferred money from the pockets of Byzantine citizens into the state treasury. To this rule, however, the last reform - Theophanes' tenth 'vexation' - can be seen as an exception. Now it is the government ~~who~~ who offers money to a certain category of people, i.e. to Constantinople's ship owners, as a loan at a high interest rate (16.6% approximately).<sup>2</sup>

Dealing with this measure, one notices from the very beginning a difference, which exists in the verb used by Theophanes and the one used by Zonaras: the first one recorded that Nicephorus  $\delta \acute{\epsilon} \delta \omega \kappa \epsilon \nu$ ,<sup>3</sup> 'he gave', while the second asserted that the Emperor  $\pi \rho \omicron \beta \epsilon \rho \rho \acute{\iota} \nu \tau \epsilon \iota$ ,<sup>4</sup> that is to say 'he threw at them forcefully', the amount of twelve pounds of gold. This difference of expression by the two chroniclers has caused a great deal of discussion among scholars. The question they tried to give an answer might be formulated as follows: How far was this measure compulsory for the ship owners? J.B. Bury put an end

---

1. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Nov.VIII, in I. and P. Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, p.223.

2. Theophanes I, p.487: "...τοὺς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ναυκλήρους δυναρχῶν δέδωκεν ἐπὶ τόκῳ τετρακέρῳ τὸ νόμισμα ἀνὰ χρυσίου λιτρῶν δώδεκα τελούντας καὶ τὰ βωθήθη κωμέρκια"

3. *ibid.*

4. *Zonarae Annales* (op.cit.), 3, p.307.

to these arguments by confirming that the ship owners were not forced to accept the loan, whether they wanted it or not, but, if they wanted a loan, they had 'to borrow a fixed sum from the state and from no one else; other lenders were excluded by the law, forbidding private usury'.<sup>1</sup> J.B. Bury seems to have been right, because, if Nicephorus had forced the ship owners to accept an unwanted loan, Theophanes would not have used the moderate verb 'he gave', but he would have found another word, stronger even than the one used by Zonaras. Gr. Cassimatis<sup>2</sup> also argued that no force took place in that reform and that Theophanes considered as a vexation Nicephorus' inconsistency, because the Emperor abolished a law created by himself and also because his decision was against the church's doctrine. On the other hand, the possibility, expressed by Zonaras, that the loan was imposed not on each ship owner but on each ship,<sup>3</sup> has not been accepted by modern historians. One can object that Theophanes also gave us such a clue by recording that Nicephorus during his last year 'extended...lending with interest (imposed) on ships...'.<sup>4</sup> However, as this phrase cannot be taken as referring to taxes imposed on cargoes, it appears that Theophanes here repeated more or less what he had already said in his record on the tenth 'vexation'. Nevertheless, despite all these considerations, one vital question remains unanswered: why did Nicephorus take such a measure?

The interest of 16.6% was, of course, very high for the period. The highest rate until that time seems to have

---

1. J.B. Bury: E.R.E., p.217, note 1.

2. Gr. Cassimatis: 'La dixième "vexation" de l'Empereur Nicephore', in Byz., 7 (1932), pp.149-160.

3. Zonarae Annales, op.cit.3, p.307.

4. Theophanes 1, p.488.



been 8% ('besses usurae') provided by Justinianic Law,<sup>1</sup> and it was only merchants who were allowed to lend money at that rate. Therefore, we cannot see the loan given to the ἐπίβηται ship owners of Constantinople as an incentive for them to build and equip more ships. This, of course, does not mean that Nicephorus did not want a strong merchant fleet to be built; on the contrary, he was wise enough to realize the immense importance of a strong fleet for Byzantium. In relation to this point one needs to remember that the 'navicularii', i.e. state-controlled shippers, so prominent in earlier periods, seem to have disappeared at the end of the seventh century.<sup>2</sup> During the whole of the eighth century things for the imperial navy became progressively worse. Thus, when Nicephorus seized power, the situation was more or less crucial. He realized that something had to be done. The late Roman legislation had made the 'navicularii' the main stay of the merchant marine in the Mediterranean. Therefore, it would not seem groundless to suggest that, by issuing his tenth 'vexation', Nicephorus tried to make the ship owners active again as they used to be in earlier times. Nicephorus was thus trying to reverse the Empire's recent policy of attracting foreign merchants to Constantinople and to strengthen the Byzantine merchant navy. Considering, as he did, the state as the embodiment of all power,<sup>3</sup> he thought in terms of state control and sought to achieve his ends by state intervention. It would therefore seem that Nicephorus gave to the ship

---

1. Codex Justinianus, IV, 32, 26.

2. A. Lewis, Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean, A.D. 500-1100 (Princeton 1951), p.83.

3. Theophanes 1, p.489.

owners twelve pounds of gold as a loan at a high interest, because he wanted the state to be involved in the 'ship-business'. It was a matter of prestige for Nicephorus. He seemed to believe that the state should exercise control in every field of private activity. But state control over shipping may well have been undermined, in the meantime, especially by Irene's measures. Its restoration, however, seems to have been an issue of vital importance in the mind of the Emperor. Thus, by issuing this reform, he is probably trying to reverse the trend which had seen trade escaping state control. In brief, the spirit of the tenth 'misdeed' was the spirit of control and power. Whether Nicephorus in fact had this power, is unimportant. Apart from that, we should always keep in mind that in the event of war, the merchant ships undertook military action.

#### 4. General Assessment

Nicephorus is mostly known from the series of economic and fiscal measures he took during his short reign. After a survey of these reforms, the vital question which still needs an answer is: was there any grand economic 'strategy', uniting these measures, or did Nicephorus act out of necessity, because of the rather lax policy of his predecessor?

The answer to such a question is not going to be simple. To begin with, let us see what the Emperor under consideration thought about his predecessors. According to Theophanes, Nicephorus 'accused all those who ruled before him of having been bad administrators without any exception'.<sup>1</sup> However, the last three words of the quotation must be considered as an exaggeration added by the chronicler, always ready to defame Nicephorus.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.489.



Because, how could Nicephorus have condemned a certain number of brilliant rulers, whose policy or policies, up to a certain point, he himself followed? He probably detested Irene's administration, because during the latter's reign, two eunuchs were the real rulers of the Empire. He was also worried about the critical situation, which Byzantium was faced with, in relation to the Empress' external policy. The prestige of the Empire had been lost as a result of a series of concessions made to the Arabs and to the newly established Roman Empire in the West. However, it would seem that even in such a disorganized reign, Nicephorus found some elements of good policy, which he followed and extended. What Theophanes calls first 'vexation' of Nicephorus, was more or less a continuation of Irene's policy about Greece.

Nevertheless, Nicephorus had his own convictions. He had also a standard against which he tried to judge his predecessor's reign. That standard seems to have been the ideal one of the late Roman practice, which he now was trying to re-establish. In connection with that, in several of his reforms (3, 7, 8) Nicephorus applied measures, which, although they had been introduced by good administrators, such as Justinian I and Leo III, had been allowed to lapse or had been abolished by others. By issuing his tenth 'vexation', Nicephorus was also trying to reactivate the late Roman legislation about the 'navicularii' = ship owners.

Do all these adaptations mean that Nicephorus lacked real initiative for a better economic and fiscal administration? On the contrary; the fact that he made fiscal legislation effective in cases where previously it had fallen into disuse, and the fact that he restored and extended measures concerning the financial welfare of the

Empire, proved him to have been a pragmatist, an expert in controlling finance. Apart from that, he was himself an innovator. By introducing the 4th, 5th, 6th and 9th 'vexations', Nicephorus tried to create a stable base for the Byzantine economy. We see him spending money in order to rebuild the cities of Thebasa, Patras, Ancyra, Andrassos and Sparta. Like Irene, he too, paid a tribute to the Arabs, though of a smaller amount and for much shorter a period. His loss of 2400 pounds of gold, captured by the Arabs and the Bulgars at Euchaita and Strymon correspondingly, was not such a small amount. More important, the creation of new themes definitely entailed considerable expense. But, by issuing his fiscal reforms, Nicephorus not only managed to meet these expenses, but, when killed, he certainly left the state treasury full.<sup>1</sup> It should not go unnoticed that no source presents the Emperor abusing his power by spending money on luxuries and donatives. Pragmatist as he was, Nicephorus realized that army and economy were the two pillars of the Empire. Thus, it was towards these two targets that the Emperor directed his measures. It was not a mere coincidence that the first two and the last two of his reforms affected the army and the navy, either directly or indirectly.

Who suffered, or who suffered most, because of Nicephorus' tough fiscal policy? It looks as if, among the ten measures listed by Theophanes, it was only one, the third, which applied to vast categories of the populace. That one concerned a general increase in taxation and the restoration of the 'diceraton'. The rest of the reforms concerned certain groups or classes of people, who, according to the Emperor's opinion, could and should contribute to the state finance more than they had previously

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.494.



done. Therefore, it is very doubtful whether the verb 'to suffer' describes the situation adequately. It would be better to say that it was the economic interests of some groups that were damaged. Those who were resettled forcibly into the Sclaveniae could be considered, perhaps, as sufferers. Monks, officials and dignitaries were also definitely among those people who were ~~not~~ no longer exempted from certain taxes. To be more specific, we have to say that all kinds of privileges were directly or indirectly abolished and this, of course, can be taken to mean that Nicephorus went back to the late Roman christian ideal that privilege meant responsibility, and, above all, responsibility for paying taxes!

Who benefited from these reforms? The difficult circumstances and the external danger, which the Empire was facing with at his time, do not seem to have been the only forces that urged Nicephorus to take these vital economic measures. More careful study and an overall view of Nicephorus' policies and goals leads us to the conclusion that his fiscal policy was not only a result of past and contemporary events and coincidence, but it also looked to the future.

One would need to remember that Nicephorus I was the first emperor to have applied 'austerity' measures with success and this becomes of particular importance since such measures were fully justified by circumstances. In order to achieve this, in some cases, Nicephorus needed to reactivate Roman and Byzantine legislation on certain issues. In other cases, let us say the transfer of population, Nicephorus applied methods which had already been used by emperors of earlier times. But even so, the transfer under Nicephorus seems to have been of a slightly different character from those made by his predecessors. Furthermore, the enrolment of poor into the army, a measure applied for

the first time by our Emperor, should be seen as a decisive step against social inequality. However, regardless of their originality, the fiscal and economic measures undertaken by Nicephorus demonstrate a proper application of laws and an incentive to civil servants to carry out their duties more effectively. In other words, it would seem that during Nicephorus' reign people felt the presence of the central government in almost all aspects of their lives, with all its consequences.

To conclude, if a grand economic strategy cannot be traced in the measures taken by Nicephorus, then their aim and their target might help us to form an overall view of his reforms: they all aimed at the strengthening of the economy of the Empire and one could hardly deny that this goal was finally achieved. The Emperors of the second Iconoclasm (815-842), although they do not seem to have been fiscal reformers, ~~they~~ managed to maintain an economic stability, just by adopting Nicephorus' fiscal policy, or, more accurately, by reaping the benefits of it. Perhaps, it is not too much to suggest that the surpluses under Theophilus (97,000 pounds of gold)<sup>1</sup> and under his wife Theodora (197,000 pounds of gold)<sup>2</sup> had their roots in Nicephorus' prudent handling of the imperial economy. Generally speaking, his fiscal and economic policies seem to have been sound and no one else, except the state treasury, benefited from them.

---

1. W. Treadgold, Byzantine State Finances..., (op.cit.), p.11.  
2. ibid.



Chapter IV

RELIGIOUS POLICIES

## Chapter IV

### RELIGIOUS POLICIES

#### A: ICONOCLASM - HERESY

To the question whether the Emperor Nicephorus' attitude towards the church or the religious parties forms a clear cut policy or is a reaction dictated by circumstances, a direct answer does not seem to be the suitable one. It would be, perhaps, more appropriate to say that Nicephorus' very character and persuasions, have something to do with the policies he adopted or tried to follow on this issue. According to Theophanes, Nicephorus considered all his predecessors as 'unable to govern',<sup>1</sup> and giving in a way the gold rule for governing, he used to say that 'if the ruler wants to be safe on his throne, he should not let anybody else excel the emperor's power'.<sup>2</sup> His desire for supremacy is evident in his domestic and foreign policies. No *παρὰ δυναστεύων* is mentioned during his reign, in contrast to Irene's sole rule, while Nicephorus' desire for supremacy becomes of particular importance in his attempt to deal with ecclesiastical issues.

Before saying anything regarding Nicephorus' actions against the two main religious groups of the time, usually referred to as the 'Politicians' and the 'Zealots' (or Moderates and Radicals), we should perhaps first consider this Emperor's policy towards images.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.489.

2. ibid.



As it has already been stated above (the chapter on the sources), Theophanes accuses Nicephorus of many evil actions. However, the chronicler does not state openly that the Emperor was an iconoclast. The portrait of Nicephorus sketched out by the hagiographer of St. George, Bishop of Amastris is that of a believer. It is recorded for example, that the Emperor, a friend of the Saint, used to put on sacerdotal clothes, which occasionally he preferred to the imperial ones, and to spend whole nights in praying etc.<sup>1</sup> Though this piece of information comes from a Vita which, as I. Ševčenko has shown, is an iconoclast one,<sup>2</sup> it is of some importance, since it shows that for other contemporaries, Nicephorus was a pious orthodox. It appears that the Emperor Nicephorus' neutral attitude over the iconoclastic issue, gave grounds for speculation about his religious views and stand. For the moment, it would be fair to say that the Vita of St. George of Amastris points in the direction that iconoclasts were well disposed to Nicephorus, though this does not mean that he was an iconoclast. In regard to the Emperor's religious convictions one needs to bear in mind that Nicephorus did not alter the settlement of the iconoclastic controversy made by Irene in 787. Other contemporary sources also stress the fact that, at least formally, Nicephorus was not an iconoclast.<sup>3</sup> But Nicephorus was hardly an iconodule either. He seems to have been tolerant of almost any religious movement inside the Empire. J.B. Bury suggests that 'he was little interested in religious matters except in relation to the state'.<sup>4</sup> Such an opinion might be

---

1. Anonymous, Vita St. George of Amastris (loc.cit.), pp.155-56.

2. I. Ševčenko, 'Hagiography...', (loc.cit.), pp.121-25.

3. Michael the Monk, Vita A Theodore of Stoudios, (P.G. 99, 153 D); see also Vita Tarasii, Archiep. C.P. by Ignatius the Deacon (loc.cit.), p.420, where it reads: "...τῆς αλουρηγίδος πιστῶς διεξάγων τὸ τρίτον"; also Vita St. Ignatii Archiep. C.P., P.G. 105, 489 C where it reads: "...προκοπήα δὲ θυγάτηρ Νικηφόρου τοῦ εὐεβοῦς ὑπῆρξε βασιλέως"; finally Vita Nicetas, by Theosterictus (AASS, April 1, p.261 EF) where Nicephorus is called "pietissimus, pauperumque et monachorumque amantissimus".

4. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.38.



dismissed as a mere generalization, but it does justice to his refusal to take measures either in favour of or against the icons. However, the Emperor's intervention in some ecclesiastical or semi-ecclesiastical issues suggests that Nicephorus felt it one of his duties to maintain peace within the church. Where this peace was broken, the Emperor did not hesitate to act as the 'disciplinarian' of the church, even if he had to displease certain groups of the populace. His tolerant behaviour towards the iconoclasts definitely irritated the advocates of image-worship. Theophanes accuses Nicephorus of 'sheltering' an iconoclastic monk, named Nicolas, and allowing him to preach his ideas.<sup>1</sup> For Theophanes, of course, such an attitude by the Emperor exceeded the permissible limits of toleration toward Iconoclasm. But, if we believe Theophanes' account of Nicephorus, then we must assume that the Emperor almost joined the heresy of Paulicians.<sup>2</sup> Followers of this sect inhabited the eastern provinces of the Empire and it seems that during the uprising of Bardanes in 803, they sided with the imperial forces against the usurper. This, however, does not mean that Nicephorus managed to put down the uprising by the employment of 'sorceries' which were in use by them, as Theophanes implies.<sup>3</sup> It appears that the Emperor's tolerant attitude against the Paulicians and the Athinganoi

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.488-89.

2. On these heretics, see: Ch. Astruc, 'Les sources grècques pour l'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure', T.M., 4, (1970), pp.1-226; J. Guillard, 'L'hérésie dans l'empire byzantin des origines au XIIe siècle', T.M., 1, (1965), pp.299-324; N. Garsoian, 'Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation', DOP, 25 (1971), pp.85-113; P. Lemerle, 'L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après de sources grecques', T.M. 5, (1973), pp.1-144.

3. Theophanes 1, p.488.



irritated Theophanes more than Nicephorus' similar policy towards the iconoclasts. In connection with that, one needs to bear in mind that, when in the year 811 the Emperor Michael I was uncertain as to whether to annihilate these heretics or to give them a chance of repentance sparing their lives, Theophanes calls 'bad advisers'<sup>1</sup> those who suggested and finally persuaded the Emperor to adopt the less hard line of policies towards the Paulicians and the Athinganoi. Perhaps, in the eyes of the chronicler the toleration of a heresy was tantamount to a heresy itself.

Why did the Emperor follow such a tolerant policy towards these heretics? Unfortunately the sources at our disposal do not provide sufficient information in order to give a direct answer to this question. However, relying again on the negative way in which Theophanes speaks of the Emperor's attitude towards the Paulicians, as well as on Nicephorus' broad views about religious issues, one might possibly suggest that the Emperor did not think of the Paulicians as heretics! But, even if that was not the case, Nicephorus' plan to use them against the Arabs cannot be ruled out. What is, nevertheless, certain is that the Paulicians' readiness to fight side by side with the imperial forces against Bardanes Turcus in 803, played a prominent role in Nicephorus' benevolent attitude to them. He had cause to be grateful to them. Moreover, if we keep a close eye on the whole scene of events at the very beginning of the ninth century, we would have to admit that Nicephorus was very clear about his priorities: in the complex situation he faced when he came to power, problems connected with the church or with religious sectors were not of primary significance. Foreign affairs, fiscal

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.495.

reforms and army command were of much greater urgency than ecclesiastical problems. The way Nicephorus acted in an undoubtedly difficult period was justified by circumstances and therefore suggests that he was, if not a great believer, at least, a clear-minded ruler.

#### B: NICEPHORUS AND THE PATRIARCH

Two persons occupied the patriarchal throne of Constantinople during Nicephorus' reign. Tarasius, who had been patriarch since 784, held the highest ecclesiastical post of the East till his death in 806. In that year the empty throne was filled by another layman, the Emperor's namesake Nicephorus.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor's relations with his two patriarchs have to be considered separately. The mere fact that Tarasius was the patriarch who crowned Nicephorus as emperor in 802, while the latter selected his namesake as patriarch in 806, suggests that the Emperor's dealings with the former were bound to have a different character from those with the latter.

##### 1. Nicephorus and Tarasius

When the General Logothete Nicephorus overthrew the Empress Irene in 802, Tarasius had already been sitting on the patriarchal throne of Constantinople for eighteen years. During that period he had established himself very firmly in the post and had gained a very high reputation. His great role, even if he did not take the initiative, in the restoration of the icons in 787, was of vital importance for his popularity. Tarasius seems also to have been a key

---

1. On his appointment to the patriarchal throne see below, pp. 183-86.



figure in the political life of Byzantium, not only during the first years of Nicephorus' reign, but much earlier, ever since his accession to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople in 784. His ideas regarding the need to reform the clergy are echoed by many sources.<sup>1</sup> Tarasius had established a monastic community to serve as a nursery for new priests and bishops. The hagiographers of the period particularly speak of the efforts made by this Patriarch to end the practice of purchasing ecclesiastical offices. The lavish lifestyle of the secular clergy was also something which Tarasius could not tolerate any longer.<sup>2</sup> In his effort to abolish these practices and to make the body of the church 'healthy', Tarasius elevated many monks not only to priesthood but also to bishoprics. Among those owing their priesthood to this Patriarch, St. Macarius of Pelecete, St. John the Psychaitē and St. Nicetas of Medikion must be mentioned. But Tarasius above all needed good bishops ready to adopt and extend his plans on reform, giving them permanence. At least four bishops, i.e. St. Michael of Synada, St. Theophylact of Nicomedia, Emilian bishop of Cyzicus and Eudoxius bishop of Amorion, were appointed to their bishoprics by Tarasius. To those four, another two, Euthymius of Sardis and Joseph of Thessalonica, must be added. These two, though they were not ordained by Tarasius, belonged to his group. Euthymius of Sardis and Michael of Synada are well known to us, because they served on important diplomatic missions under the Emperors Constantine VI, Irene, Nicephorus I and Michael I.

- 
1. See for instance, I.A. Heikel, 'Ignatii Diaconi Vita Tarasii...', (loc.cit.), p.406; A. Vogt, 'St Theophylacte de Nicomedie', in A.B. 50 (1932), p.74.
  2. Vita Tarasii, (loc.cit.), p.406.

Everybody seemed to respect St. Tarasius' name. Even the Studites, though disagreeing with his pathetic silence on the second marriage of Constantine VI,<sup>1</sup> carefully avoided coming to an open clash with him. Furthermore, Tarasius had 'survived' the reigns of two emperors, the most difficult one having been, of course, that of Constantine VI. Therefore we might assume that he was definitely not prepared to become just a figure-head or a tool in the hands of a third emperor, no matter how determined the latter was to rule over the church. Such an unyielding attitude on the part of this Patriarch applies especially to the reign of Nicephorus, because Tarasius seems to have played a prominent role in the accession of this Emperor to the throne in October 802. After all, he was the one who put the imperial crown on the head of the new strong man of the state. Referring to this coronation Theophanes states with some bitterness that the people of Constantinople were cursing both, the one who was crowning (i.e. the Patriarch) and the one who was being crowned (i.e. Nicephorus).<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately very little information covers the church and state relations during the period from the elevation of Nicephorus to the throne (October 802) until the death of the Patriarch Tarasius (February 806). In the course of this time the Patriarch seems to have concentrated primarily on religious issues. He probably went on with his efforts to reform the clergy, so that they carried out their pastoral duties more effectively. Nevertheless there exists one event during these years, which demanded that Tarasius declare himself, either in favour or against the Emperor. This event was the attempted usurpation of the imperial throne

---

1. On this see below, p.179.

2. Theophanes 1, p.476.



by Bardanes Turcus in 803. What is of particular importance for us here, is that some bishops who were supposed to be under Tarasius' influence, somehow sided with the usurper. These bishops were Euthymius of Sardis, Theophylact of Nicomedia and Eudoxius of Amorion. All three were punished by exile. Thanks to Tarasius' efforts two of them were soon released and reinstated, but St. Euthymius remained in exile for a long time.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that such an attitude on the part of Tarasius' group, taught the Emperor a valuable lesson: he realized that he could not rely on them and also that the only way for him to survive political usurpations and ecclesiastical intrigues, was to toughen his policies in all directions. Though Tarasius himself seems to have remained loyal to the Emperor, it is easy to see that the group of bishops under his patronage lost credibility in the eyes of Nicephorus and probably their influence on ecclesiastical issues too. Under these circumstances it is unlikely that less than three years later, when Tarasius died in February 806, the same group of bishops exercised any influence on the Emperor as far as the election of the new patriarch is concerned. They were probably consulted, but the final decision was made by Nicephorus himself.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor Nicephorus' tolerance towards some iconoclasts might also have shadowed the state's good relations with the church. According to Theophanes, for example, by covering up the iconoclastic activities of the monk Nicolas and his group, Nicephorus provoked the Patriarch

- 
1. J. Guillard, 'Une oeuvre inconnue du Patriarche Méthode: La vie d'Euthyme de Sardes', in B.Z., 53 (1960), p.38.
  2. K. Ringrose, Saints, Holy Men and Byzantine Society, 726 to 843 (Ph.D. 1976, Rutgers University, New Brunswick p.110), suggests the opposite. However, no sufficient evidence seems to be given for it. As the author of the thesis honestly admits, her conclusion is only an inference 'based on the many similarities between Saints Nicephorus and Tarasius, the continuity of their policies and the continuing importance of the role played by the followers of St. Tarasius during the reign of St. Nicephorus as patriarch' (ibid.).



Tarasius' iconodule feelings.<sup>1</sup> However, even if this report by Theophanes reflects true events, it would appear that such incidents, if any, were rather rare and they do not necessarily disturb the good relations between Nicephorus and Tarasius. Such incidents, nevertheless, might reflect the Patriarch's inability to influence the Emperor towards his own iconodule views.

Trying to outline and summarize the relations between church and state during the last three and a half years of Tarasius' patriarchate and the first three and a half years of Nicephorus' reign, it would be best to say that their relations were marked by cautious respect. They were very careful to avoid provocation. Furthermore, it seems that a sort of independence of each other also existed and, most important, no interference by either side is reported by the sources. The Emperor, though he keenly wanted to, did not ask the Patriarch to restore the Skandalon, i.e. Joseph of Kathara, to<sup>the</sup> priesthood. As P. Alexander points out, a third shift on the same issue made by the same patriarch would have been too much.<sup>2</sup> The Emperor realized that on this very affair he would have to wait until the death of the Patriarch and so he did.

Finally Tarasius, after having sat on the patriarchal throne for twenty two years, died on 25 February 806.<sup>3</sup> Referring to his death and to his funeral, Tarasius' hagiographer, Ignatius the Deacon, draws our attention especially to the Emperor's reaction and behaviour to this event. According to this author, the Emperor Nicephorus surrendered himself to a deep grief, and during Tarasius'

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.488-89.

2. P. Alexander, The patriarch Nicephorus... (op.cit.), p.87.

3. Vita Tarasii, (loc.cit.), p.421; Theophanes (1, p.481) has it that Tarasius died on 18 February 806.



funeral, having embraced his coffin and having covered it with the imperial purple robe, he kept crying and calling the dead Patriarch, shepherd, father, assistant in ruling, source of light, sleepless guide of the state to the better, holy teacher, invincible supporter in the expeditions, etc.<sup>1</sup> This information should be considered as valuable, for the following three reasons: first, because it comes out of a very reliable source; secondly, because these words are among the very few, spoken by the Emperor Nicephorus which have survived, and thirdly because, so far as we know, Nicephorus was very prompt to accuse, but slow to praise. Furthermore the mere fact that this Emperor lavished such praise on the dead Patriarch, can also mean two things: first that Nicephorus owed Tarasius a great deal - probably more than his elevation to the throne - and secondly that during the short period 802-806 church and state co-operated more or less happily.

## 2. The Two Nicephori

After the successful patriarchate of Tarasius, it is quite understandable that the election of his successor raised great interest at court as well as among all political and ecclesiastical groups at Constantinople. A capable patriarch would act, not only for the benefit of the church, but for the welfare of the state, too. The Emperor knew that all too well from his experience of Tarasius' patriarchate. He was a person, broad-minded enough<sup>2</sup> to

---

1. Vita Tarasii (loc.cit.), p.420.

2. The hagiographer of St. Nicephorus, Ignatius the Deacon, asserts that the Emperor Nicephorus was "ἀγχινοῦβτατος" (P.G. 100, 61D).

realize that, in the long term, the interests of both, the church and the state, would be better served with a strong man on the patriarchal throne. However, it remains very doubtful whether Nicephorus was prepared to appoint a patriarch with an equally strong, and perhaps even stronger personality, than that of Tarasius. Such an appointment would definitely have been against the Emperor's own convictions, regarding the supremacy of imperial authority over every other power in the state or in the church.<sup>1</sup>

It is also possible that Nicephorus was already thinking of having Joseph of Kathara restored to <sup>the</sup> priesthood. If this was the case, then the new patriarch would need, not only to be a rather weak character, but also to belong to the party of the Moderates.

The division of the ecclesiastical forces at Constantinople into Moderates and Radicals<sup>2</sup> goes back to the eighth century. Tarasius had been head of the Moderates since his election to the patriarchal throne (784). Leaders of the Radicals were in order, Sabbas and Theoctistus of Symboli, Plato of Sakkoudion and, of course, Theodore of Stoudios.<sup>3</sup>

Different opinions had been expressed by the two parties for the first time during the seventh oecumenical council of Nicaea (787) on the question of the lapsi, i.e. those who, during the first phase of the iconoclastic controversy had yielded to Iconoclasm.<sup>4</sup> The Radicals,

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.489.

2. On this see P. Alexander (The Patriarch Nicephorus... p.80 sq.), where the terms 'secular and monastic clergy' are used. I prefer the names 'Moderates' and 'Radicals', because, after the Emperor Leo IV allowed the monks to become bishops, several members of the monastic clergy abandoned the harsh line of their leaders and yielded to Iconoclasm.

3. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 38 (P.G. 99, 1044A).

4. I.D. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum... (op.cit.), vol.12, 1115-18.



founding their argument on St. Athanasius' works,<sup>1</sup> demanded that the backsliding bishops, at least the ringleaders, should lose their sees, while the Moderates would prefer to see the decisions of the fourth oecumenical council repeated, and, thus, they adopted a conciliatory policy, with which the Radicals finally agreed.<sup>2</sup>

The second issue on which the two parties opposed each other again, was that of the Simoniacs.<sup>3</sup> Under this name both, those who had paid money in order to be ordained as priests or bishops, as well as those bishops who had received money to ordain priests, were included. We are told that this issue was left to be discussed after the seventh oecumenical council.<sup>4</sup> During the discussion the Moderates proposed that Simoniacs could be restored after having received at least one year of penance. Theodore of Stoudios implies that the proposal was accepted and enacted by the Patriarch backed by some monks, whose names are not mentioned.<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasized that in regard to the issue of Simoniacs the Patriarch found himself in a rather dramatic situation. He was standing somewhere between the Empress Irene and the Radical monks. Irene insisted on the restoration of the Simoniacs, after one year of penance. But to such a restoration the radical party strongly objected. The Patriarch yielded in turn, first to them, by denying that he had ever granted penance to the

- 
1. Mainly his letter to Rufinianus, P.G. 26, 1180 sq.
  2. I.D. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum... (op.cit.), vol.12, 1118.
  3. On this see Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 38 (loc.cit.), col.1044 BC.
  4. ibid., 1044 B.
  5. ibid. It reads: "...ἐὺν τῶν μοναχῶν, ὧν ἀσκήμι λέγειν τὰ ὀνόματα". Here again a proportion among the monks did not side their rigorous leaders, but preferred to join the Moderates. One might be entitled to assume that these monks formed the core of the monastic group around the Patriarch Tarasius and that a number of them were later promoted to bishops.

Simoniacs, and secondly to the Empress, when at the festival of Theophany (6 January) of the year 788, he held communion with the Simoniacs, whose time of penance had been completed.<sup>1</sup> Two years later Irene was deposed by her son, and Tarasius grasped the chance to denounce his earlier deeds by saying that he did not have communion with a person whom he knew to be a Simoniac. It looks as if the Radicals had accused a great number of bishops of Simony and the Patriarch was demanding proof. But proof was available only for a few cases and thus the Rigorists had to limit their demands for deposition to only those bishops, who had publicly admitted to having bought their see.

In short the difference between the two parties in regard to the Simoniac issue might be formulated as following: they both denounced Simony. The radical monks could not accuse the Patriarch of the opposite.<sup>2</sup> They both fought against any Simoniac ordination after the second council of Nicaea. They both wanted the purification of the body of the church from the Simoniacs. But how many bishops ought to lose their sees for the sake of this purification? The Radicals asked for a great number, perhaps the majority of them, while the Patriarch compromised, by limiting matters to only a few well known cases. In principle, the victory went to the Rigorists, who brought the matter into <sup>the</sup> open and managed to have certain bishops deposed. However, in reality the Moderates can hardly be called losers. To a certain degree they managed to connect Simony with Iconoclasm and presented

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 38, (loc.cit.), col. 1044 C.

2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 53 (loc.cit.), col. 1105 D: "... καὶ οὕτω λέγω ὅτι Ταράσιος οὐκ ἐκήρυξε ἐν χρήματι χειροτονεῖσθαι."



it (Simony) as a result of the iconoclastic policy of previous emperors. The radical monks were told that for the sake of unity against Iconoclasm they should make a concession and moderate their hard line against the Simoniac bishops. They did so probably with some bitterness. A few bishops lost their sees and thus the Simoniac issue ended in a compromise solution. Perhaps, such an outcome did not satisfy either side, but neither was it rejected by either side.

The two parties clashed for a third time on the issue of the second marriage of the Emperor Constantine VI and its implications. The so-called Moechian controversy was to be renewed and prolonged during the reign of Nicephorus I, and it did not end before the reign of Michael I. But, let us take the events one by one.

We have already seen<sup>1</sup> that in the year 781 Constantine VI, being only eleven, was betrothed to Rotrud, daughter of Charlemagne.<sup>2</sup> That betrothal, though favoured by both sides, was broken off in 787<sup>3</sup> and one year later (788), Constantine VI was forced by his mother to marry Maria of Amnia, the granddaughter of a rich landowner from Paphlagonia, who is known as St. Philaretos the Merciful.<sup>4</sup> From this marriage a daughter was born, who later became the wife of the Emperor Michael II. But, like the betrothal of Rotrud, the marriage of Constantine to Maria was also of short duration. Seven years after he had been married (i.e. in 795) the Emperor divorced his lawful wife and in August of the same year he married Theodote, a lady-in-waiting<sup>5</sup>

---

1. See above, p.71.

2. Theophanes 1, pp.455, 463.

3. More about this betrothal and its breaking off, cf. above, pp.71-72.

4. On the background of Maria see M.H. Fourmy - M. Leroy, 'La vie de S. Philarete', (loc.cit.), pp.85-170.

5. Theophanes 1, p.470: "κουβικουκάρειαν εἰς αὐγούβταν."

of the Empress.<sup>1</sup> This employment of Theodote in Irene's chamber as well as the fact that the young Empress was a cousin of Theodore of Stoudios has led P. Speck to imply that Theodote should be seen as the instrument - unwitting perhaps - which both Irene and the Studites, used in order to destroy Constantine VI.<sup>2</sup> Joseph, the abbot of Kathara, performed the wedding ceremony and an unnamed catechist tonsured Maria into the monastic life.

Though Tarasius himself was not directly involved in this matter and though the new Empress Theodote was a cousin of Theodore, at the time abbot of Sakkoudion, a new conflict between the two parties burst out. This clash, known as Moechian Schism or Moechian controversy,<sup>3</sup> was more severe than the previous ones. It divides into two stages. The first phase was rather short and covered the years 795-797, while the second, which is going to be discussed in a later section, extended over the period from 806 to 811.

During the first period Plato and his nephew Theodore accused the Emperor, whom they called new Herod,<sup>4</sup> of

- 
1. Theophanes (1, p.469) implies that the Empress Irene was behind Constantine's decision to divorce Maria and force her to become a nun "...ὕποβολῇ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ μητρὸς ἐφιεμένης τῆς ἀρχῆς πρὸς τὸ καταχρῶσθαι ὑπὸ πάντων." Though this is our only source for such an information, the extraordinary ambition of the Emperor's mother allows us to assume that she would have done - as she actually did - everything in order to assert herself against her own son. Moreover, Constantine VI was a rather weak character, open to suggestions. Furthermore he does not seem to have been clever enough to foresee the consequences and the repercussions of what he was up to. Finally he does not seem to have ever loved his wife Maria.
  2. I.P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI, (op.cit.), pp.255-56.
  3. On the Moechian issue see Theophanes 1, p.470; Theodore of Stoudios, Epist.: I, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 43, 48, 53.



having committed adultery,<sup>1</sup> they directed their indignation against the abbot of Kathara, and they also accused the Patriarch Tarasius of having permitted the unnamed catechist to tonsure Maria and Joseph to perform the wedding ceremony and of holding communion with him (i.e. with Joseph) after that.<sup>2</sup> The Radicals separated themselves from the secular clergy and they abstained from communion with the Patriarch. Once again Tarasius found himself caught between two powers. Once again the Radicals condemned his conciliatory policy.

- 
1. In Theodore of Stoudios, Epist., I, 25, (loc.cit.), vol.99, col.989 B, it is argued that Constantine VI had already committed adultery with various persons even before his second marriage. In the same letter Theodore is emphatic that Joseph, though he knew about those relations of the Emperor, went on giving the Emperor holy communion, sharing his dinners and, in general, behaving toward him as if nothing immoral was happening. According to the same letter, this was the reason why the abbot of Kathara, when asked, did not hesitate to perform the unlawful second marriage of the Emperor. To my knowledge this is our only source for these 'activities' of Constantine VI outside his marriage. Regardless of its validity this information reveals two things: first that even the Emperor's private life would not have escaped the attention of the Studites, and second that Joseph of Kathara had been equally popular with both Emperors, Constantine VI and Nicephorus I.
  2. There were rumours circulating that Tarasius, in permitting Joseph to perform the wedding ceremony, was acting under duress, given that Constantine VI had threatened to renew Iconoclasm, unless his demand for second marriage would be met. These rumours are echoed by three sources, the earliest of which seems to be Theodore of Stoudios, Epist., I, 36 (loc.cit. vol.99, col.1032D) where it reads: "...τοῦ βασιλέως ἄλλο θέλοντος, ἔχουν μοικεύειν ἢ αἰρετίζειν"; the second source is the anonymous Narratio de sanctis patriarchis Tarasio et Nicephoro (P.G. 99, 1852 D), and the third the Life of Theodore of Stoudios (P.G. 99, 144 A). However, one might argue that, if such a threat had really been made by the Emperor, Theophanes would not have omitted to record it, in order to support Irene's attitude against her own son in August 797.



At the beginning of the dispute Constantine tried to win over the Radicals by persuasion. In the name of their kinship, Theodote sent Theodore some valuable presents, while the Emperor himself undertook the humiliating step of visiting the monastery of Sakkoudion.<sup>1</sup> But all was in vain. The monks refused to accept Theodote's presents and ignored Constantine's arrival in their neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> Such behaviour on the part of the monks irritated the Emperor enough to order the flogging of Theodore and of the most courageous among them and the dispersion of the monastery. Theodore was exiled with another ten monks to Thessalonica.<sup>3</sup>

Less than two years later (15 August 797) Constantine VI was deprived of his eyesight and deposed by his mother,<sup>4</sup> who from now onward reigned as the sole ruler for a period of five years, i.e. until October 802. The balance of forces changed. Irene took measures in favour of the

- 
1. Michael, 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios' A, (P.G. vol.99, col.140 A). There was a source of curative hot water in Sakkoudion's neighbourhood and according to this author Constantine used his visit to the source as a pretext to speak with the monks on the purpose of conciliation.
  2. Such a refusal to welcome the Emperor would sound unbelievable, if one of our sources did not provide a sort of explanation: it is Michael, Theodore's hagiographer, who suggests that for Theodore and for his monks Constantine was not an emperor any more! By committing adultery he automatically lost his imperial throne; he became *ἐκπρωτος*, i.e. fallen ('Vita Theodore of Stoudios', loc.cit. vol.99, col.137C).
  3. Michael 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios' A, (loc.cit.), 140 B; see also Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 3 (loc.cit.), 916C-917C, where their route to Thessalonica is described.
  4. Theophanes 1, p.472. We are not told much about the rest of Constantine VI's life, but he must have died some time before the year 805. On this, see E.W. Brooks, 'On the Date of the Death of Constantine the Son of Irene', B.Z., IX (1900), p.655.



Rigorists and against Joseph of Kathara. The Radicals returned from their exile almost immediately.<sup>1</sup> On his return to Constantinople, Theodore was welcomed as a hero. The Patriarch Tarasius and the Empress herself were there at the entrance of the city to welcome him.<sup>2</sup> Joseph was deprived<sup>of</sup> the priesthood. Since the Skandalon was removed, friendly relations between the radical monks and the Patriarch were resumed.

Soon after these developments Theodore left Sakkoudion and established himself at the old monastery of Stoudios inside Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> It was a move reportedly made at the request of the Empress Irene and the Patriarch Tarasius.<sup>4</sup>

For a period of about nine years, there was peace in the body of the church. During this time Theodore seems to have dedicated himself completely to the task of reorganizing monastic life in Byzantium.<sup>5</sup> The two parties did not clash again, at least until after the death of the moderate Tarasius in 806. This reconciliation, however, should not be taken to mean that the differences separating the two parties had been removed. The differences remained more or less unchanged and the two sides stuck to their convictions. Given the occasion they were certainly ready to clash once again.

This sketch of the internal strife of the church is a necessary introduction to the whole ecclesiastical 'climate' at Constantinople and the dilemma the Emperor Nicephorus was faced with, when he came to appoint St. Tarasius' successor in 806.

---

1. Michael, 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios' A, (loc.cit.), 141 B: "Διὸ καὶ παραυτίκα λύει τοῖς πατράσιν ὑπερορίαν."

2. ibid.

3. Michael, 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios' A, (loc.cit.), 144 CD. On the reasons which caused the transfer, see also below, pp.197-99.

4. ibid., col.144D.

5. On this see, J. Leroy, 'La réforme Studite', (loc.cit.), pp.201-206.



A fair number of sources refer to the election of the new patriarch.<sup>1</sup> However, though all sources agree on the name and the background of the person, who was finally elevated, the proceedings of the election or appointment remain vague. As the Book of Ceremonies<sup>2</sup> has it, the appointment of a new patriarch took place in two stages, the first one being the election itself (Ψηφοφορία) and the second the liturgical ordination (χειροτονία) of the nominee.<sup>3</sup> The enthronement was the final step and took place the same day as the ordination, which day ought to have been a Sunday or a holiday. The already mentioned passage from the Book of Ceremonies, which is a rather detailed one, speaks of an assembly of the metropolitan bishops, held at the church of St. Sophia. The purpose of the meeting was to elect three candidates and to submit their names to the emperor. As the final word belonged to him, the emperor either appointed one of these three, or he rejected all of them and expressed his preference for somebody else. In the second case his choice, of course, prevailed. In the year A.D. 933, to which the passage refers, the powerful Emperor Romanus Lecapenus appointed as patriarch his own son, Theophylact, though his name does not seem to have been among the three forwarded by the metropolitan bishops.<sup>4</sup> Nothing is said

- 
1. Theophanes 1, p.481; Vita Nicephori by Ignatius the Deacon (P.G. 100, 61B-64B; Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis (P.G. 99, 837 BC) and especially his Epist. I, 16, (P.G. 99, col.960-61).
  2. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Cerimoniis (op.cit.), vol.I, pp.564-66.
  3. For bibliography see mainly, K. Lübeck, 'Die Patriarchenwahl in der griechisch-melkitischen Kirche', Theologie und Glaube, VI (1914), pp.730-40; L. Bréhier, 'l'investiture des patriarches de Constantinople au moyen âge', Studi e Testi, CXXIII (Miscellanea G. Mercati, III, 1946), pp.368-72; id., Institutions (2nd vol. of Le monde byzantin), pp.477-82; P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus... (op.cit.), pp.65-66.
  4. On this see. G. Ostrogorsky and E. Stein, 'Die Krönungsurkunden des Zeremoniebuches', Byz., VII (1932), pp.185-233.



about any role, played by the lay element in this election. According to I. Pargoire "la part du peuple dans cet acte (i.e. elections of bishops) tend à se restreindre"<sup>1</sup> and P. Alexander suggests that 'even ordinary bishops had no vote in this matter'.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the participation of the laity was restricted to the acclamation only. But the acclamation was a clear stage itself, totally separated from the election. In addition to this, the acclamation, which was made by the senate, usually at the Magnaura, does not seem to have been an essential part for the procedure of the election of a new patriarch. From what has been said, it becomes obvious that the intervention of the emperor took place either during the actual election ( $\Psi\eta\phi\theta\phi\theta\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ) or after that, between the election and the acclamation. Undoubtedly such an intervention was uncanonical, but strong emperors did not worry much about canon law.

Coming back to the year 806, the sources at our disposal allow us to assume that in this year the election of the new patriarch was done in a more or less unprecedented, not to say peculiar, way. No assembly of metropolitan bishops is mentioned as having taken place and consequently the Emperor did not need to choose between three candidates. From what the sources report, it seems very likely that Nicephorus took the initiative from the very first moment. Making a careful inquiry, he wrote to all distinguished priests, monks and senators, asking each one of them to indicate his preference.<sup>3</sup> We possess neither the total

---

1. J. Pargoire, Eglise Byzantine de 527 à 847 (Paris 1905) p.57.

2. P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus... (op.cit.), p.66.

3. Vita Nicephori (loc.cit.), cols.61B-64A; Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis (loc.cit.), col.837B; id., Epist. I, 16 (loc.cit.), cols.960A-961A.

number, nor the names of those asked to vote. Two persons, however, Plato and his nephew Theodore, the leaders of the Studite movement, are known to have been asked.

From Theodore's reply to the Emperor, a letter which is an invaluable source for the history of this period, it becomes clear that Nicephorus asked those consulted to indicate, not three, but only one candidate. Theodore himself did not propose anybody specifically.<sup>1</sup> He only referred to the general qualifications, which an appropriate candidate ought to have, and he went on to say that the person to be elected should already be in holy orders.<sup>2</sup> Though he does not say it directly, from the context of the letter it becomes clear that Theodore refused to consider the candidature of a layman.

Plato's reply to the Emperor on the same issue is not preserved. We learn about it from the Laudatio Platonis, delivered by Theodore, on the occasion of his uncle's funeral in 814.<sup>3</sup> From this speech one might assume that Plato considered himself a suitable person to put forward a candidate. He nominated a person, whose name Theodore carefully avoids mentioning. But, is not such coyness an indication that it was Theodore himself who had been nominated by Plato as a candidate for the patriarchate?

At any rate, the name of the person, proposed by Plato, is not something of vital importance, at least at this stage of our research. More significance can certainly be attached to the fact that those consulted did not agree on a unanimous proposition. Theodore of Stoudios has it that not five, but many persons had been proposed by those

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 16 (loc.cit.), col. 960B: "...οὐ γινώσκωμεν, οὐδὲ ἐπιβτάμεθα τινά."
  2. ibid., 960C.
  3. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis, (loc.cit.), col.837B.



consulted.<sup>1</sup> What has also to be stressed is that the key to the issue was always the Emperor himself, about whose behaviour and mentality certain questions arise. First, did he not know, for instance, that, given the existing divisions within the church, he could not expect an unanimous choice? Second, was it not the Emperor's intention to appoint his namesake Nicephorus to the patriarchate, even before he undertook the task of making his thorough inquiry? And third, would the Emperor be prepared to accept an unanimous choice, made by those consulted, if this went against his own preference? Nicephorus' whole character and outlook point in the opposite direction. He would have undoubtedly ignored any advice which did not fall in line with his own wishes.

At any rate, from what we read in the Patriarch Nicephorus' Vita,<sup>2</sup> it is clear that the Emperor did not indicate his preference from the very first. It was only after the disagreement of those asked, that he made his decision public.<sup>3</sup> We do not know how many, if any, of those asked for their opinion, nominated the Emperor's namesake Nicephorus as patriarch. It, in any case, seems unlikely that even a simple majority in favour of one candidate was achieved.<sup>4</sup> No doubt such a disagreement provided the Emperor with a good pretext, to ignore their choices.

Theophanes' account that Nicephorus (the Patriarch) was elected "...ψήφῳ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τῶν ἱερέων, πρὸς δὲ καὶ τῶν βασιλέων",<sup>5</sup> does not shed much light on the problem for

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis, (loc.cit. col. 837B: "...τὰ ψηφίσματα ἐπὶ πολλοὺς οἱ πολλοί, ὡς ἕκαστος εἶπεν κατὰ φιλίαν ἢ ἀλήθειαν."
  2. Ignatius the Deacon, Vita Nicephori... (loc.cit.), col.64A.
  3. ibid., col.64AB: "...τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τὸ τοῦ νοῦ δραστήριον ὑπερωγράθει ποιμνίαρχον Νικηφόρον"
  4. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis (loc.cit.), col. 837 B.
  5. Theophanes 1, p.481.

the following reasons: first, because it is very general and does not go into any details regarding the work preliminary to the election, second, because he is biased against the Emperor and by saying "πρὸς δὲ καὶ τῶν βασιλέων"<sup>1</sup> he gives us the impression that the Emperor Nicephorus and his son Stauracius were the last ones to have an opinion on the matter, and thirdly, because, as it stands, it seems very likely that Theophanes' account refers not to the ψηφοφορία itself, but to later stages of the whole procedure of the election, i.e. to the acclamation and the ordination. It is significant that the author of the Chronographia does not say that the new Patriarch "was elected" (ἐξελέγη), but he goes straight to the ordination using the verb "ἔχειροτονήθη" (he was ordained). It is true that Theophanes uses the word ψήφω (by the vote) too, but from the whole context it becomes clear that the phrase "ψήφω παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τῶν ἱερέων" (by the vote of all the populace and the clergy),<sup>2</sup> he refers to the acclamation and not to the actual election.

Nevertheless the Chronographia is useful, though not the only source, for the background of the person, who obtained the Emperor's preference for the patriarchate. His name too was Nicephorus; he was a high ranking civil servant, asecretis,<sup>4</sup> a post from which he had already retired with the intention of becoming a monk. At the time of his election Nicephorus was at the head of a poorhouse in Constantinople. He resided somewhere outside the capital, where the Emperor sent messengers to persuade<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.481.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.; Vita Nicephori (loc.cit.), col.49A.

4. ibid., col.64BC.



him to accept the honour offered to him and accompany them to Constantinople for the rest of the proceedings.

It should be noted that Nicephorus' Vita records two elections (Ψηφοφορίαι): the first one, which is identical with the Emperor's preliminary inquiries - also known to us from Theodore of Stoudios<sup>1</sup> - and in which those asked did not agree on the person to be appointed,<sup>2</sup> while the second took place after the Emperor had already made his preference clear. This second inquiry, if it ever took place,<sup>3</sup> does not seem to have been as thorough as the previous one. It is very likely that it was only those ready to fulfil the Emperor's wish that were asked. It needs now to be emphasized that this time their vote was totally in accord with the Emperor's already known wishes.<sup>4</sup>

But, what made Nicephorus, the Emperor, decide upon his namesake for the patriarchate?

Though the latter's hagiographer, Ignatius the Deacon, attributes a number of qualifications, fulfilled by his Saint,<sup>5</sup> these do not seem to have played any role of importance for his appointment. His background as a high civil servant, however, was just the same as that of Tarasius, his predecessor. Tarasius had been a successful patriarch, at least in the Emperor's eyes,<sup>6</sup> and one might assume that this similarity of backgrounds would have meant much to the Emperor. Furthermore, Nicephorus himself, before becoming emperor, had been General Logothete, i.e. a minister in Irene's government, and it is more than

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 16 (loc.cit.), col.960B; id., Laudatio Platonis, (loc.cit.), col.837B.

2. Vita Nicephori (loc.cit.) col.64A: "ἄλλος ἄλλον ἐψηφολόγει"

3. ibid., col.64AB. Here again it is possible that Ignatius the Deacon takes the acclamation as a second election.

4. ibid., col.64B: "καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον ὄραν πάντας συνήλαυνεν."

5. ibid.

6. See above, pp.172-73.

likely that as such he was already acquainted with his namesake, the asecretis, though no positive proof can be adduced.

By appointing Nicephorus, the Emperor probably rejected other candidates, some of whom certainly did not belong to the party of the Studites.

Four days were enough for the appointee to be ordained as deacon, to climb up the steps of ecclesiastical hierarchy and become patriarch on Easter Sunday 806. Two archbishops, Nicolas of Caesarea in Cappadocia and Thomas of Thessalonica, and one metropolitan bishop, Leo of Heraclea in Thrace, performed the consecration.<sup>1</sup> The Emperors were also present. The Studites not only did not participate in the ordination, but they strongly opposed the appointment of a layman. They were probably preparing some sort of a demonstration and thus the Emperor thought it necessary to imprison their leaders, Plato and Theodore, for twenty-four days, i.e. until the whole procedure had been gone through.<sup>2</sup> This imprisonment can definitely be seen as the renewal of the struggle between the Moderates and the Radicals. In the years to come the two parties would clash again, perhaps more vigorously than earlier.

From what we have seen so far, it becomes more or less clear that the new Patriarch was totally 'Emperor made' and as such he could hardly oppose the will of his master.

However, the way in which Nicephorus was appointed does not seem to be the only factor that determined his future as patriarch. His weak character as well as the lack of support from the populace, appears to have played their

---

1. P. Alexander, The patriarch Nicephorus... p.69.

2. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis, (loc.cit.), col.837D.



role in the course of his patriarchate. On the other hand, the Emperor Nicephorus revealed his intention of dominating the new Patriarch almost immediately after the latter's consecration took place. It would seem that some issues, which were normally regarded as purely religious, were in his eyes mainly of political significance. In two of these issues the new Patriarch was forced to act not as the head of an independent church, but as a minister of religion and public worship,<sup>1</sup> definitely under the command of the Emperor.

The first of these affairs was the relations between eastern and western Christianity.

It had been a custom for a newly elected patriarch at Constantinople to send a letter to the Pope, reporting his own election and enthronement. That letter contained also a confession of belief and an outline of the ecclesiastical policy, which the new patriarch had it in mind to follow. The Patriarch Nicephorus, though he badly wanted to report his enthronement to the Pope Leo III, was not allowed by the Emperor to fulfil his desire until the death of the latter in the year 811. The letter which at that time the Patriarch sent to the Pope is preserved and serves as an excellent example of how the ecclesiastical power yielded to the secular, not only in the East, but also in the West.<sup>2</sup>

From the letter's context one might assume that the Emperor at Constantinople did not intend to humiliate the head of the eastern church. He simply wanted to punish the Pope for his role in the events of Christmas 800.

---

1. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.31; id., The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire, (Cambridge 1910), p.32.

2. St. Nicephori patriarchae, Epistola ad Leonem III papam, P.G., 100, cols.169A-200C.



The letter goes on to say that in the eyes of the Byzantine Emperor, Pope Leo III, by anointing Charlemagne,<sup>1</sup> separated the papacy from the whole body of the church,<sup>2</sup> i.e. he created a schism. Thus, Nicephorus the Emperor considered the issue of the relations between the two churches primarily political and on this ground he prevented his Patriarch from entering into any official communication with the Pope. In other words, in the Emperor's mind political interests of the eastern Empire were of more significance than respect for ecclesiastical customs. Although his namesake the Patriarch, did not share the views of his master, he realised that he had to compromise and behave according to the will of the Emperor. The impression which we get from the letter of enthronement (τὰ βυνοδικά), sent during the reign of Michael I some time at the end of 811, is that the Patriarch abstained from an old ecclesiastical custom, not out of his

- 
1. The unction of Charlemagne is also reported by Theophanes 1, p.473. Western sources, however, state that it was only Charlemagne's eldest son, also called Charles, who was anointed. See, for example, Liber Pontificalis, Vita Leonis III, § XXIV (vol.II, p.7 ed. L. Duchesne) where it reads: "et pontifex unxit oleo sancto Karolo, excellentissimo filio eius rege, in ipso die Natalis domini nostri Jesu Christi". The explanation provided by E. Amann (L'epoque carolingienne, in A. Fliche and V. Martin, Histoire de l'Eglise, (Paris 1937), VI, p.161, n.3, that eastern sources confused the two Charles, is, of course, likely. But it should not go unnoticed that even a western source, Johannes Venetus (Cronaca Veneziana, ed. Monticolo, Fonti per la storia d'Italia IX, 1890, 100) speaks of an unction of Charlemagne: "ab apostolico coronatus et unctus est in imperatore". Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus... (p.107, n.3) attributes this statement to a probability that J. Venetus used a Byzantine source. On the events of Christmas 800, see among others, P.E. Schramm, 'Die Anerkennung Karls des Grossen als Kaiser', Historische Zeitschrift, CLXXII (1951), pp.449-515.
  2. St. Nicephori, Epistola ad Leonem III (loc.cit.), col. 197AB. It reads: "καὶ ὡς ὑμεῖς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἑαυτοὺς ἀπερρήξατε"



own freewill.<sup>1</sup> At a time when the Emperor Nicephorus was already dead, he did not need to hide his feelings. He is probably expressing his indignation at the late Emperor's dominance by saying: "ὡς ἐξουσίας θκληρὰ καὶ ἀμείλικτος ἐπρυτάνευσε καλῦτιν ἡμῶς τοῖς δεδωγμένοις κρηθαι δυναμίνῃ<sup>2</sup>"

One might draw attention to the fact that by the year 811 the political relations between East and West had also been improved and it might be possible that the Patriarch sent the letter as a result of this improvement and not simply because he felt free from his namesake Emperor. To such an argument the answer can be that the relations between the two Empires had started improving even before the death of the Emperor Nicephorus. In fact, it was this very Emperor, who under the threat from the Bulgars started negotiations with the West. If the *ΕΥΡΟΔΙΚΑ* had been sent at that time, it would have definitely helped the normalization in the relations, not only between the two churches, but also and mainly between the two Empires. Therefore, under normal circumstances, we would have expected the Emperor Nicephorus in the last years of his reign, not only not to hinder his Patriarch from sending a letter of enthronement to the Pope, but to urge its implementation himself. The fact that the Emperor of the East stuck to his refusal until his death (July 811) might be explained by a suggestion that in Nicephorus' mind Pope Leo III shared the greater part of responsibility for the events of Christmas of 800.

Soon after his election in 806, the new Patriarch was forced to yield to the secular authority for a second time.

---

1. St. Nicephori, Epistola ad Leonem III (loc.cit.), 197B: "δύνα-

6θαι ευχυνώμονες ἔεεθαι τοῖς ὁμοίοις περιήτηουσιν ἀβουλήτως".

2. ibid., 197A.

It will be remembered that Joseph, the abbot of Kathara, had been excluded from any religious performance since the year 797. Now, nine years after this exclusion, the Emperor asked the newly elected Patriarch Nicephorus to restore Joseph to priesthood. As Bury has it, by doing so the Emperor Nicephorus 'proceeded to procure a definite affirmation of the superiority of the Emperor to canonical laws'.<sup>1</sup> It looks, however, that such an explanation of the Emperor's desire for the restoration of the Skandalon is not sufficient, because in this particular case two sources speak of other reasons.

The first source is Michael, the hagiographer of Theodore of Stoudios. He says that the Emperor ordered the restoration of Joseph, because the latter 'is said to have caused peace and to have made arrangements for the proper solution to the crisis',<sup>2</sup> but he does not say anything about the actual crisis. To this problem much more light is shed by our second text, the Synodicon Vetus, a compilation written during the patriarchate of Photius.<sup>3</sup> The passage which is of interest for us here states clearly that Joseph the Presbyter and Oeconomus of the great church of Constantinople mediated between the Emperor Nicephorus and Bardanes Turcus, during the latter's uprising in 803.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore the anonymous author adds that the assault of Bardanes was scattered without bloodshed,<sup>5</sup>

---

1. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.34.

2. Michael, 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios' B, P.G. 99, col. 265CD "ὡς παραίτιον γεγονόςτα εἰρήνης φησὶν, καὶ τοῦ λυβιτελοῦντος φροντίσαντα".

3. P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus., p.86.

4. The Synodicon Vetus (ed. and transl. by J. Duffy and J. Parker) (CFHB 15) (Washington D.C., 1979), pp.128-29.

5. The Synodicon Vetus (loc.cit.), p.129.



and here his account agrees with Theophanes who stresses the fact that the Empire had been spared a civil war.<sup>1</sup> If the already mentioned two sources are of value, then it is easy to see why the Emperor Nicephorus was so eager to restore Joseph to priesthood. The abbot of Kathara had served the interests of the state in a very crucial situation and, consequently, he deserved his reward. More precisely, Joseph's exclusion from religious activities (797) turned him towards politics. He acted as mediator between the Emperor and the rebel in 803. One wonders, of course, why Joseph of Kathara should have been chosen to mediate, but the sources at our disposal do not provide more facts about this 'political' abbot. Unfortunately, we are not told whether Joseph intervened in the conflict on his own initiative, or he was asked to do so by the Emperor Nicephorus. On the other hand, it is quite understandable why the Emperor waited until after the death of the Patriarch Tarasius before instituting his restoration. Tarasius had already been criticized for his inconsistency in this matter and, therefore, nobody could expect him to change his mind yet again on the same issue. Perhaps the Emperor had already asked Tarasius to restore Joseph. If this is the case, then Nicephorus met with Tarasius' refusal. But such suppositions cannot be proved. What seems to be certain is that Nicephorus the Patriarch was much more compliant with the Emperor's will than his predecessor. The new Patriarch probably did not want the restoration of Joseph either. This seems to be the reason why in the year 811, after the death of the Emperor Nicephorus and the elevation of Michael I, the Patriarch Nicephorus did not object to deposing and excommunicating Joseph again, as his predecessor Tarasius had done in the year 797.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.479.

Returning to the events of 806, we have to assess whether Nicephorus the Patriarch surrendered to the imperial will, because he was convinced that the restoration of the abbot of Kathara was a matter of dispensation (οἰκονομία), or simply because he could not oppose the Emperor's designs. Although no source gives a direct answer to the dilemma, after a very careful examination of the letter sent by the Patriarch to Pope Leo III in 811, as well as of some crucial letters of Theodore of Stoudios,<sup>1</sup> it would seem that the Patriarch Nicephorus, being a rather weak character, could not oppose his namesake the Emperor for the additional reason that he owed him his appointment. He will oppose, of course, the iconoclastic policy of Leo V in 815, but at that time another emperor was in office<sup>2</sup> and the issue was certainly of much greater importance than the restoration of a priest.

Now given the Patriarch's tendency to yield before imperial pressure, another question remains to be answered: to what extent did the Emperor Nicephorus exploit the situation to make his namesake Patriarch a mere tool of his own will? Though such an exploitation seems to have taken place, it remains, however, very doubtful as to whether the Emperor saw it in that way. It would be more correct to say that the humiliation of the Patriarch, though not intended on the Emperor's part, took place as a result of the latter's desire to exercise real influence on ecclesiastical affairs.

---

1. See for instance the letters: I, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 43, 48.

2. This nevertheless should not be taken as an argument that Leo V was less determined to rule over the church than Nicephorus I. But as far as the Patriarch Nicephorus is concerned, it seems that by the year 815, he was tired of his 'moderate' policy. A time comes for everybody to say a great 'No' in his life. For the Patriarch Nicephorus this time came relatively late, after he had been in office for nine years.



Thus, in the year 806 a synod of fifteen bishops was called,<sup>1</sup> which decided on the restoration of the stormy Joseph of Kathara to priesthood. As Theophanes says nothing about this synod, we hear of it mainly from the letters of Theodore of Stoudios. The reaction of the Studites to such a 'notorious' rehabilitation will form part of our next section of this chapter.

### C: THE EMPEROR AND THE STUDITES\*

In a theocratic state like Byzantium, religious groups and especially monks would be expected to have played quite an important role in the everyday life of both the ruling elite and the populace. For various reasons the monks were particularly influential in our period and this demands a detailed explanation. When Nicephorus ~~the~~ I came into office in 802, the monks had already established themselves both as a religious and as a political force in the Byzantine Empire. Not long before that, their leader had abandoned his previous monastic establishment at Sakkoudion and settled himself with his monks, or at least with most of them, at the old monastery of Stoudios, inside

---

1. On the date see V. Grumel, Le patriarcat byzantin, série i: fasc.2, (Chalcedon 1936), no.377. The names of the bishops-participants in that synod escape us.

\* The name 'Studites' is used here more or less as an alternative to the term 'the monks'. This is because of the prominent role played by the Studites during the last years of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. Other monastic communities outside Constantinople or those on Mountain Olympus in Bithynia are definitely of minor significance for the political and religious scene of the Empire during the years under consideration.

Constantinople itself.<sup>1</sup> The threat from the Arabs, who at the time were almost continuously invading and plundering Asia Minor is given by the sources as the main reason for their removal.<sup>2</sup> However, it would seem that such a threat could only have been used as a mere pretext. Other monastic institutions scattered in all parts of the peninsula were flourishing at the same time. The Arabic raids do not seem to have bothered them very much. Furthermore, as J. Leroy has shown, Sakkoudion was never completely abandoned. A group of monks remained there and, after Theodore's departure, life went on at the monastery as if nothing had changed.<sup>3</sup> Leroy does not, in fact, accept the Arab raids as the real reason behind the move. He argues that a Studite monastic order was in the course of developing, with a number of monasteries coming under the leadership of a single abbot.<sup>4</sup> Patrick Henry suggests that an Arabic raid took place, but it was an ephemeral one, which did not disturb for long life at Sakkoudion.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the real reason, why the monks of Sakkoudion moved to the capital, must be sought elsewhere. The framework of the relevant events and circumstances appears to suggest that Theodore was determined to play a more decisive role in Constantinople itself and to impose his party on the political scene of the Empire. Furthermore, perhaps, he wanted to connect his name with a monastery, other than that of Sakkoudion, with which Plato's, his uncle's, name had been associated. Moreover, as Michael the Monk, the

---

1. Michael the Monk, 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios, A', (loc.cit.), col.144D.

2. ibid.

3. J. Leroy, 'La Réforme studite', (loc.cit.), pp.201-206.

4. ibid.

5. P. Henry, 'The Moechian Controversy and the Constantinopolitan Synod A.D. 809', Journal of Theological Studies, N.S. vol.XX pt.2, October 1969, p.504, footnote 1.



hagiographer of Theodore of Stoudios, has it, the Empress Irene and the Patriarch Tarasius made a request to Theodore, at that time abbot in Sakkoudion, to transfer his monastic establishment to Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> It was only a few months earlier (August 797) that Irene had undertaken the decisive step of blinding and deposing her own son Constantine VI, in order to govern the Empire alone! No woman had ever dared to execute such an atrocity in Byzantium's previous history. The army was mostly devoted to the deposed Emperor and consequently hostile to his mother. Therefore, Irene badly needed any kind of support, and Theodore could be considered as one of the best sources of moral support. His willingness to provide Irene with the support she needed is proved by the letter, which he sent to her four years later.<sup>2</sup> In this letter, Theodore could not have found more extravagant words with which to show his approval of the Empress, for the tax concession which she granted to the inhabitants of Constantinople in A.D. 801.

But Irene's need for support, no matter how strong, cannot be the only reason for the transfer of the monks to Constantinople. The mentality and the ambitions of Theodore must also be taken into account. By the year 797 Theodore had definitely established himself as the leader of the Rigorists among the monks. This particular monastic grouping acquired vital importance at the turn of the eighth and for most of the ninth century. We have already seen<sup>3</sup> that their leaders had suffered their first exile because of their strong opposition to the marriage of the Emperor Constantine ~~VI~~ VI with Theodote. It can hardly be argued

---

1. Michael, 'Vita of Theodore of Stoudios' A, (loc.cit.), col.144D "ὅτι καὶ λιπαροῦσιν αὐτόν, ἐγκρατῆ τῆς τοῦ Στουδίου γενέσθαι μονῆς."

2. The letter can be found in Migne, P.G. 99, 929B-933B.

3. Above, p.180.

that their opposition to this marriage had been unsuccessful. Irene's attitude in this matter can be seen as an adoption of the hard line followed by the Rigorists. The first step of the Empress, after she had become the sole ruler of the Empire in 797, was to recall the radical monks from exile and to excommunicate Joseph, the abbot of Kathara, who had performed the adulterous wedding. It should not be allowed to pass unnoticed that, at this stage, the excommunication of Joseph, meant a humiliation of the Patriarch Tarasius. In other words, in the year 797 Irene made her choice. She decided to back the Rigorists against the Moderates, not only because her deposed son had done the opposite, but probably and mainly because these bold monks were at that time the strongest body on which she could rely.

We do not know the exact number of the letters written by Theodore, at that time abbot of Sakkoudion, during his first exile. Such a knowledge would enable us to estimate Theodore's contact with people outside his monastic order and, more particularly, with dignitaries of the civil hierarchy. At any rate, it seems that the letters belonging to this early period of Theodore's correspondence are not that many. Baronius dates only six letters from that period, and this small number entitles us to believe that at that time, Theodore had not yet built up his influence outside his monastic order. Nevertheless, he was definitely in the process of doing so. On the other hand, his eagerness to play a prominent role in both, the ecclesiastical and the political scene of Constantinople, is beyond dispute. However, it must be remembered that the distance between Constantinople and the monastery of Sakkoudion was certainly an obstacle to such ambitions. Theodore realized that, if he really wanted to exercise some influence on more people than he had done so far and if he wanted to be in the centre



of the events during the years to come, he ought to be in Constantinople. The only way of achieving this, was the transfer of his institution from its remote place to the capital itself. He did so probably at the end of the year 797 or ~~the~~ early 798,<sup>1</sup> and his influence on the Empress until her fall in 802 can be taken for granted. Therefore, when Nicephorus I came to power, he was confronted with a monk, who had been used to exercise influence on both the political and the ecclesiastical affairs of the Empire. Moreover, the number of the monks of the monastery of Stoudios grew rapidly. Less than four years later, (i.e. in 806) it had almost reached the thousand mark.<sup>2</sup>

Under these circumstances it becomes quite understandable why in the year 806, at the time when the Patriarch Tarasius died and the empty patriarchal post was about to be filled, the Emperor Nicephorus, in his thorough preliminary inquiry, could not afford to ignore Theodore and his uncle Plato. In regard to this inquiry the following question arises: did the Emperor ask for the opinion of the Studites out of mere concern about the church or did he only use it as a pretext, in order to show himself impartial towards all spiritual movements, while in the meantime he had already made his own decision on the appointment of his namesake Nicephorus to the patriarchate? Although every answer to such a question seems to be quite risky, it is certain that the relations between the Studites and the Emperor, during the first four years of the latter's reign were, if not friendly, at least not hostile. This, however, by no means suggests that the Emperor Nicephorus

- 
1. The date of the transfer cannot be fixed precisely; but, since it is connected with Arabic incursions, it must be noticed that Theophanes (vol.1, p.473) records an Arabic raid in the vicinity of Sakkoudion under the year A.M. 6291 (A.D. 798).
  2. Michael, 'Vita Theodore of Stoudios' B, (loc.cit.), col. 260C. See, however, Theophanes A.M. 6298 (1, p.481), where the number of the Studite monks is estimated to about seven hundred.



was prepared to appoint Theodore, probably named by Plato, to the empty patriarchal throne.<sup>1</sup> The reply of Theodore to the Emperor's inquiry is preserved<sup>2</sup> and forms a very good source, if not for the relations between church and state,<sup>3</sup> at least for the relations between the Emperor and the Studites. It certainly reflects Theodore's views about the rights of the Emperor in the governance of the church. It sheds light on the question of how far Theodore could be seen as an advocate of church's full independence against the state. Had it been written under different circumstances, this letter would have been an invaluable source: that is to say that, since the abbot of Stoudios was writing at a time when he himself probably hoped to ascend the patriarchal throne, he refrained from expressing his real views on church-state relations.

Theodore begins his reply by saying that Nicephorus' elevation to the imperial throne should be seen as a proof of God's care for the church. The text goes on to say that before Nicephorus' accession to the throne, the political situation of the Empire was bad, but now it was beginning to improve; church affairs were correspondingly on the mend. In other words, ecclesiastical matters too, will be better with Nicephorus as Emperor than they had been during Irene's reign. While J.B. Bury<sup>4</sup> considers these somewhat surprising sentiments as an effort by Theodore to flatter the Emperor, P. Henry attributes it to Theodore's 'coolness' and ability to appreciate efficiency and competence more than temporary favours.<sup>5</sup> The opening would surely have been

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis (loc.cit.), col. 837B: 'he gave a vote, but for whom, I will not say'.
  2. It is his Epistola I, 16, P.G. 99, 960A-961A.
  3. P. Henry, (Theodore of Stoudios..., op.cit., p.55) argues that it is misleading to see this letter as concerned with the problem of church and state.
  4. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.32.
  5. P. Henry, 'The Moechian Controversy'... (loc.cit.), p.505.



different, if the letter had been written on a different occasion, when there was not the possibility that Theodore might become patriarch. In any case, what is certain, is that Theodore does not deny to the Emperor the right to supervise the patriarchal election, which a valiant defender of church's independence might well have done. Furthermore, the letter suggests that, since the political affairs had already partially improved, ecclesiastical matters were now in turn to attract the Emperor's attention. The improvement of church affairs will start with the proper<sup>1</sup> election of the new patriarch. Such a statement, however, would mean that the Studites were never fully satisfied with Tarasius' patriarchate. They had their own reservations about him and the party of the Moderates.

Though the procedure which Theodore proposes for the election of the new patriarch is of little interest here, it has to be stressed that according to the abbot of the Studites, the Emperor should take the initiative in the choice of an electoral body to be made up of prominent members of each of the following ecclesiastical groups: bishops, abbots, stylites, recluses, and clergy. Representatives of these groups will form the electoral college. But, here again, it will be the Emperor who, in consultation with this body, will choose the best candidate. It would seem that Theodore was willing to give the Emperor the final word on the election. What is difficult to say is whether, by doing so, the abbot of Stoudios was simply respecting tradition or only hoping to benefit from flattering the Emperor. But references to any tradition on the matter do not exist in Theodore's letter. On the other hand, the fact that he does not

---

1. The Greek word, used in the letter, is "νόμιμος", the exact translation of which 'legal' does not fit in the context.



include laymen in the electoral committee should not surprise anybody. The role of non-ecclesiastical elements in episcopal elections appears already to have been eliminated.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in Theodore's view, the only layman to be involved in the election would be the Emperor.<sup>2</sup>

Finally a few words must be said about the qualifications that Theodore demands of the proper candidate for the patriarchate. He says that the patriarch should be able to claim God's rights.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore he needs to have risen gradually from lower to higher (ecclesiastical) position, to have gone through everything, so that from the sufferings he himself experienced,<sup>4</sup> he could help those, who need him. In a word, the new patriarch should excel other people in the way that sun is brighter than other stars.

These were, of course, Theodore's views. However, it would seem that in the Emperor's eyes, such an overqualified candidate would perhaps make too independent a patriarch. But an independent patriarch could easily be a rival to the imperial power and a challenger and an opponent of the Emperor's tendency to keep an eye on church's affairs: a consideration which ruled out the possibility of a Studite becoming patriarch. Thus, their reaction to the appointment of a layman, the Emperor's namesake Nicephorus, to the patriarchal throne did not surprise anybody.

It was not only 'respect for church tradition with a touch of jealousy',<sup>5</sup> that made the Studites irritated. By the election of a moderate layman their hopes of strengthening

---

1. J. Pargoire, L'Eglise byzantine (op.cit.), p.57.

2. P. Alexander's (The patriarch Nicephorus..., p.67) argument that 'distinguished laymen were consulted in the election' does not appear to be based on solid evidence.

3. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 16 (loc.cit.), col.960C. Though it is not indicated against whom, one might assume that here a hint for the distinction between ἱερωσύνη and βασιλεία is given.

4. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 16 (loc.cit.), col.960C. If Theodore considered himself as the ideal candidate, then here is a clue, for he and his followers had suffered exile under Constantine VI.

5. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.33.



their presence and gaining influence among high officials in church and state, were dashed. It was obvious that the new Patriarch was very much 'Emperor-made', and as such he would bend to the Emperor's wishes. The monks saw the patriarchate as the key post, through which they would have been able to impose their policies on various issues and to influence society in a more effective way. It must be remembered that the Studites had good reason not to be satisfied with the 'moderate' Tarasius. It can be argued that the late Patriarch had submitted in turn to the will of three consecutive emperors, but not once to the pressure of the radical monks. In brief, the election, or better the appointment, of a new 'moderate' to the patriarchal post, was a real blow for the ambitions of the Studites. Therefore they reacted against it and opposed the appointment, on the ground that the nominee was a layman. But the reaction on behalf of the Emperor was equally strong. First he thought of dispersing the Studite community and sending their leaders, Theodore and Plato, into exile. But, on second thoughts the Emperor was content with the imprisonment of the two monks for twenty-four days, probably until the whole process of Nicephorus' ordination and enthronement was over.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, with the election of the 'moderate' layman Nicephorus, the prestige of the Studite brotherhood was ignored. The Radicals probably realized that the Emperor in power was not amenable to their influence. This, however, does not mean that the Studites were ready to abandon their hard line and to moderate their policies. They went on trying to preserve - and perhaps to extend - their influence on the populace. It would also seem that they adopted a policy of reconciliation with the newly elected

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis (loc.cit.), col.837C.

Patriarch Nicephorus. From four of Theodore's letters <sup>1</sup> we hear that the Studites accepted Nicephorus as patriarch. They prayed for him as well as for the Emperor, and they mentioned their names in every religious service. Such an attitude was dictated not so much by the need for compromise, more from the belief that a person ordained to the highest post of priesthood had already the grace of God bestowed upon him. <sup>2</sup>

At the same time Theodore's brother, Joseph, was appointed archbishop of Thessalonica, the Empire's second biggest city. This appointment as well as the affair of the monastery of Dalmatou can certainly be seen as a gesture of goodwill and as an effort for conciliation on behalf of the new Patriarch. <sup>3</sup> We learn about the affair of the monastery of Dalmatou, 'le plus ancien de la capitale', <sup>4</sup> mainly from the Vita of St. Hilarion the Younger who, after spending the first ten years of his monastic life in this monastery, moved to that of Kathara. <sup>5</sup> This took place at some point after 806 while the abbot of the monastery of Dalmatou was dying. The monks reported the situation to the Patriarch Nicephorus and demanded that Hilarion should return to the monastery of Dalmatou and become abbot. The Emperor Nicephorus became involved in this issue and finally managed to persuade Hilarion to

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 25, 989 AB; I, 28, 1001 C; I, 30, 1008 ABC and I, 32, 1016 C.
  2. This belief applies to the elevation of a person to the imperial throne too. In Byzantium nothing was done without God's approval.
  3. P. Alexander, The patriarch Nicephorus..., p.71.
  4. R. Janin, La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, vol.3 (Paris 1969), p.82; see also, D. Stiernon, 'Notice sur S. Jean Higoumene du monastere de Kathara', REB, 28 (1970), pp.111-27, espec. pp.114-23.
  5. Vita St. Hilarioni Junioris, AASS, June 1, p.747.



come back to the capital and 'become abbot and archimandrite according to a custom issued by a synod'.<sup>1</sup> D. Stiernon, relying on: 1) the Vita of St. Hilarion, 2) the Vita of St. John,<sup>2</sup> abbot of Kathara, who was initially ordained as priest at the monastery of Dalmatou, and 3) on an unpublished catechism of Theodore of Stoudios, relative to the monastery of Kathara, has shown that strong connections between these three monasteries existed at the beginning of the ninth century.<sup>3</sup> These relations will later result in an alliance between them against the iconoclastic policy of Leo V. Therefore, it might be argued that in the case of St. Hilarion, the two Nicephori, Emperor and Patriarch, yielded to the demand of the monastic party, and this for the sake of unity of all religious forces in the Empire.

These two issues, i.e. the appointment of Joseph, Theodore's brother, as archbishop of Thessalonica and the appointment of Hilarion as abbot at Dalmatou, seem to have been of a purely ecclesiastical nature. However, in regard to another affair, which might be called 'semi-political', the Emperor Nicephorus did not show the same readiness for compromise with the Radicals. As has already been stated,<sup>4</sup> he initiated the restoration of Joseph, abbot of Kathara, to the priesthood. It will be seen that this rehabilitation led to a further widening of the gap, already existing between the two sides.

The synod of the fifteen bishops which restored Joseph, took place very soon after the ordination and enthronement

---

1. Vita St. Hilarioni Junioris, AASS, June 1, p.747.

2. On this Vita, see AASS, Propylaeum Novembris (Brussels 1902), cols.631-34.

3. D. Stiernon, 'Notice sur...' (loc.cit.), pp.118-23.

4. See above, p.192.

of the new Patriarch Nicephorus in 806.<sup>1</sup> It is definitely noteworthy that Theodore does not seem to have ever recognised that assembly as a legitimate synod. In his letter sent to the Patriarch Nicephorus in 808, the abbot of Stoudios does not hesitate to call it 'small gathering, or I do not know how to call it',<sup>2</sup> while in another letter addressed to the Magister Theoctistus, Theodore argues that such an assembly could not be considered to have been a synod, because without any respect for canon law<sup>it</sup> decided against God's will.<sup>3</sup> At the first stage the reaction of the Studites to the event was unexpectedly mild. In fact, it took them two years before they came to an open clash with the abbot of Kathara and his main supporters, i.e. the two Nicephori, Emperor and Patriarch.

Though the Radicals called this delay 'economy', it comes as a surprise that they felt it necessary to wait for two years on a matter, for which they had already suffered floggings and exile. There are possible explanations for such behaviour on the part of the Studites. The first is that Theodore was himself probably present at the small synod which restored Joseph to the priesthood. There are two passages from two different letters of Theodore of Stoudios that suggest this: the first is letter I, 25, addressed to the Patriarch Nicephorus. The letter was written in 808, at a time when the conflict between the two men had already come into the open. Theodore says that he was just out of prison,<sup>4</sup> at the time the synod took place.

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epistola I, 24 (loc.cit.), col.985B.
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epistola I, 25 (loc.cit.), col.989C.
  3. Theodore of Stoudios, Epistola I, 24 (loc.cit.), col.985BC.
  4. He refers, of course, to the twenty-four days imprisonment, which he and his uncle Plato went through during the election, consecration and enthronement of Nicephorus (see above, p.188 ).



To suggest that the leader of the Rigorists was released on the condition that he participated in such a synod, would be going too far. It is, nevertheless, clearly stated that Theodore witnessed those, who had previously consented to the Emperor Constantine VI's adultery, embracing Joseph, who had performed the wedding ceremony.<sup>1</sup> The letter goes on to say that at that moment Theodore thought it wiser not to say anything, because circumstances were 'unpropitious'.<sup>2</sup> But one may argue that this letter is deliberately rather obscure to disguise Theodore's presence at the synod. To such an objection letter I, 43, addressed to his brother Joseph in 809, comes as an answer. In this letter Theodore gives the impression that he now feels remorse, not only because he was present<sup>3</sup> in the synod of 806, but also because, in a way, he gave his consent to the restoration of the abbot of Kathara, whom he cleared from the accusations that he had officiated at the adulterous wedding.<sup>4</sup> This consent and clearance had, of course, come about as a result of Theodore's silence,<sup>5</sup> which, nevertheless, comes as something of a surprise. The text also implies that the decision for adopting the policy of toleration of 806 was not only Theodore's. Other members of the Studite community and most probably his brother Joseph were also to be blamed for the inconsistency.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the letter says that Theodore's bitterness was even greater, because of the fact

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 25 (loc.cit.), col.989CD.
  2. ibid., 989D "ὅτι καιρὸς πονηρὸς ἔστιν."
  3. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 43, 1065A: "παρόντος μου ἐκεῖ."
  4. ibid.: "ἠθώσουν τὸν μοιχο|λύκτην."
  5. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 43, 1065A: "βιωπήσαντες"
  6. ibid. The phrase "καθὰ συνεβουλευόμεθα" could easily be taken to mean: '(I behaved) according to the decision, which we had taken'.

that later his opponents reminded him of his silence in the year 806 and on this ground they tried to restrain his protest in 808.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the first reason why the Studites exercised 'economy' during the period 806-808 was the lack of any reaction by their leader, though present in the synod of 806, against the rehabilitation of the Skandalon. A possible second reason can be posited after a careful interpretation of the events, by taking into account the mentality of the protagonists. Let us make one thing clear: the fact that the Studites did not achieve the election of one of themselves as patriarch does not mean that they abandoned every effort to bring influence to bear on the Emperor. They sought to work through the latter's kinsman, the monk Symeon.<sup>2</sup> In other words, in 806 it was difficult for the Studites to estimate the extent to which the new Patriarch would become merely a figure-head: a pawn in the hands of the Emperor. During the period 806-808 the Radicals entertained some serious hopes of overcoming difficulties and again playing an important role in the church and in court. Theodore's participation in the synod of 806 as well as the acceptance by his brother of the archbishopric of Thessalonica a few months later, ceases to be mysterious. It hardly needs to be stressed that these two reasons for the mild behaviour of the Studites during these two years are more or less interdependent. Theodore participated in the synod, because he and his followers believed that not everything had yet been lost by the election of Nicephorus, and that things could still be handled to their satisfaction. But then

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 43, 1065A: ὡς (θιωπῆς) καὶ δρα-  
ξάμενοι οἱ ἐξ ἐναντίας, ὡς οἶδα ἀποκλείειν ἡμᾶς ἐπειρῶντο τῆς ἐνστάσεως.
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 21 and 22 (loc.cit.),  
cols.969C-980C.



their policy until the year 808 was, of course, dictated by their attitude towards the synod of 806. In short, it took the Studites two whole years to realize how things were turning out. During those two years they demonstrated their disapproval of Joseph's rehabilitation by avoiding communication with him and with all those who concelebrated the liturgy with him, including the Patriarch, whom, nevertheless, they went on mentioning in their masses and prayers.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the above mentioned two years 806-808, Joseph of Thessalonica visited Constantinople several times. It seems that according to custom, bishops from the provinces, who were visiting the capital, joined the patriarch in a concelebration of the liturgy or in other ceremonies at St. Sophia. Joseph carefully abstained from these concelebrations for the additional reason that after his restoration to priesthood his namesake Joseph of Kathara was officiating in this very church.<sup>2</sup> But such an attitude on the part of the archbishop of Thessalonica revealed the true reaction of the Studites. It so irritated the state authorities that, when in the year 808 the Emperor was leaving for a campaign, Theodore was not allowed to participate in the Emperor's ceremonial departure from the capital.<sup>3</sup> Only a few days previously the Emperor had denied an audience to the abbot of Stoudios.<sup>4</sup> Thus by now it had become more than obvious that the Emperor felt it necessary to toughen his attitude against the Studites.

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 25 (loc.cit.), 989AB.
  2. R. Devreese, 'Une lettre de S. Théodore Studite.'(loc.cit.) p.55. It reads: "εἰσκρίνεται πάλιν ἱερούργειν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ καθολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ".
  3. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 23 (loc.cit.), 980D. On the date of this campaign which is not reported by other sources, see P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus..., p.73, n.7.
  4. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 26 (loc.cit.), col.993A.



During the Emperor's absence Theodore did not give up his efforts to avoid a final break. Among the letters he wrote to this end, the most significant ones seem to be those addressed to the monk Symeon,<sup>1</sup> a relative of the Emperor, and to the Patriarch Nicephorus.<sup>2</sup> But, ironically for him, these two persons were probably the only ones who could not, or perhaps did not want to, act as mediators between the Emperor and the Studites. This is because they had both already sided with the Emperor and therefore Theodore's activities were for them something of a nuisance. Symeon appears to have replied to Theodore's letters, but the answer was not satisfactory. Referring to him elsewhere, Theodore says that Symeon was of the same opinion and of the same will as the Emperors.<sup>3</sup> However, Theodore's bitterness is even greater, because of the behaviour of the Patriarch on the issue, for not only did he not reply to Theodore's letter, he also made it clear that he did not want to receive his messages either.<sup>4</sup>

It was probably during this time that Joseph of Thessalonica had a decisive interview with a very high imperial agent, the logothete of the drome. The logothete asked the Archbishop:

'Why have not you communicated with us and the Patriarch, although so many feast days have passed? State the reason freely!'<sup>5</sup>

Joseph replied:

'I do not have anything against our devout Emperor or against the Patriarch, but only against the Steward, who wedded the adulterer and who for this reason, was deposed by the sacred canons.'

The logothete replied as follows:

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist.I, 21, 22, 23.

2. Id., Epist. I, 25.

3. Id., Epist. I, 26, col.993A: "ἐκείνα φρονῶν καὶ ζητῶν ἂν ἐφετᾶ πάντως τοῖς κρατοῦσιν"

4. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 26 (loc.cit.), col.992D: "μήτε λόγον διαπέμψαντα, μήτε ἐθέλοντα ἀκοῦν δέξασθαι, ταμιευόμενον πάντα καίβαρι"

5. Id., Epist. I, 31 (loc.cit.), col.1009B.



'Our pious Emperors have no need of you,  
either in Thessalonica or elsewhere.'<sup>1</sup>

Theodore of Stoudios, who reports the interview in a letter addressed to the brotherhood of Sakkoudion only thirteen days after it took place, expresses his anxiety about the consequences of his brother's brave answer. It would seem, however, that nothing happened until the Emperor's return from the campaign. But as soon as the Emperor was back, decisive events took place.

In what appears to be an effort of intimidation, the monastery of Stoudios was surrounded by troops, so that in Theodore's words, 'the monks could scarcely breathe'.<sup>2</sup> The bishops of Chrysopolis and Nicaea came to Stoudios and tried to convince Theodore and his followers to stop protesting against Joseph of Kathara.<sup>3</sup> The formula proposed by the two Bishops was that the Steward performed the wedding ceremony of Constantine VI and Theodote after he had been allowed to do so by the ex-Patriarch Tarasius. Such an argument could, of course, have been very convincing, since by now Tarasius was among the saints. Therefore, had Theodore the slightest doubt whether the ex-Patriarch had given his concession, the abbot of Stoudios would have been persuaded to give up his protest. But Theodore was more

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 31 (loc.cit.), col.1009B; P.Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus... p.91, n.1, finds the logothete's reply "οἱ εὐσεβεῖς βασιλεῖς ἡμῶν χρείαν σου οὐκ ἔχουσιν, οὔτε ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ, οὔτε..." very similar to the words spoken by the Emperor Leo V to the Patriarch Nicephorus in 815: "οὐ γὰρ ἔχει σου χρείαν ἡ ἐκκλησία," (Vita Nicetae by Theosterictus, AASS, Aprilis I, XXXB) and wonders whether this sort of phrase was not the formula of deposition. Such a possibility cannot, of course, be rejected completely. However, regardless of the literary similarity of the two phrases, it looks that in the case under consideration, Joseph remained archbishop of Thessalonica until the synod of January 809. It was at that time that he was dismissed as a result of his judgement by that very synod (see below, p.213 ).
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 48 (loc.cit.), col.1073B.
  3. ibid.



than sure that Tarasius had been faced by a fait accompli and had never really approved the adulterous wedding. Thus, the efforts of the two Bishops were in vain. As a consequence of that, Theodore, Joseph of Thessalonica, their uncle Plato and an unnamed leading Studite, called simply Kalogeros, were taken away from Stoudios and held in custody at the monastery of St. Sergius. Here our prisoners were given their last chance for compromise, when the Emperor's kinsman, the monk Symeon came twice, in an attempt at reconciliation. But like the one made by the two Bishops, Symeon's efforts also proved to be fruitless.<sup>1</sup> It was probably at this monastery that the synod of January 809 took place.

We hear about this synod mainly from the letters of the man (i.e. Theodore of Stoudios) against whom it was convoked.<sup>2</sup> All scholars agree that the assembly was called on imperial initiative. The presence of the Emperor in the synod is, nevertheless, not mentioned by any source. The number of the participants is also unknown. Theophanes simply records that the Emperor gathered many bishops and abbots.<sup>3</sup> The presence of governmental officials in the synod is testimony to its primarily political character.

Theodore, Joseph, Plato and the Kalogeros were brought before the council. The main accusation against them was that they did not accept the 'economy' of the saints. Joseph of Thessalonica was also accused of joining the Radicals by celebrating the liturgy at the monastery of Stoudios.<sup>4</sup> In the course of the synod some participants

---

1. An account in detail of these events is provided in Theodore's, Epist. I, 48, cols.1069C-1084B.

2. Mainly from his Epist. I, 34, (1021C) and Epist. I, 48, (1073C-1076A).

3. Theophanes 1, p.484.

4. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 48, col.1073D.



testified that the ex-Patriarch Tarasius, by now among the saints, had allowed Joseph of Kathara to perform the wedding ceremony of Constantine and Theodote.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that the synod reached the four following decisions:

- 1) It confirmed the earlier restoration of Joseph of Kathara to priesthood.
- 2) It anathematized anyone who did not accept the 'economies' of the saints.
- 3) It reduced the Archbishop of Thessalonica to the rank of priest, and
- 4) It sent the leaders of the Studite brotherhood into exile.

No matter how severe these punishments were, it appears that for the Emperor Nicephorus, a re-establishment of communion between his namesake Patriarch and the Studite community was very important. That is why, when the synod was over, he decided to give the Studites a last chance for compromise. First he called the whole brotherhood into his presence and then he tried to win over the leading members privately. When this attempt failed, he promised clemency to the whole group, on condition that they would re-establish communion with the Patriarch. As the Emperor was standing in the middle, he called all those who wanted the reunion with the Patriarch to place themselves at his right side, and those who did not want to fulfill his wish, to move to his left hand. Without any hesitation all the monks went to the Emperor's left.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of their boldness, the Studites were dispersed by imperial order and exiled to various places, either near the capital, or as far distant as Cherson or

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 48, col.1073D.

2. Michael, 'Vita B of Theodore of Stoudios', (loc.cit.) col.269 BCD.

the Lipari islands off Sicily. Some of them were imprisoned in monasteries, the abbots of which treated their prisoners with special hardness.<sup>1</sup> The persecution seems to have been extended to some people who did not belong to the Studite community, but they certainly sympathised with the strict stance adopted by Theodore on the Moechian controversy. The abbot of Stoudios speaks of the abbot Theosostos with his monks at Thessalonica, who suffered punishment, simply because they refused to communicate with the man who had succeeded Theodore's brother as archbishop of that big city.<sup>2</sup> Another abbot, also at Thessalonica, was flogged,<sup>3</sup> probably for the same reason.

The sufferings of the Studites and their sympathisers went on for a period of more than two and half years, until Michael Rangabe, Nicephorus' son-in-law, came into power (September 811). In that year the radical monks, not only came back from their exile, but they became very influential with the new Emperor. This influence on both, political and ecclesiastical affairs, was definitely what the Studites would have dreamed of exercising during Nicephorus' reign too. This, however, did not happen, partly because of their boldness, but mainly because the Emperor Nicephorus seems to have been very suspicious about the existence of strong religious movements in the Empire. It might be that the rebellion of Arsaber in 808, an event in which many clerics are reported to have been involved,<sup>4</sup> made it plain to the Emperor that these groups could easily be used against the imperial authority itself.

- 
1. Theodore of Stoudios, Laudatio Platonis, (loc.cit.) cols.840C-841A.
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 48, col.1072C and I, 43, col.1068BC.
  3. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 48, (loc.cit.), col.1072C.
  4. Theophanes 1, pp.483-84.



On the other hand it is reasonable to believe that in the Emperor Nicephorus' eyes the rehabilitation of Joseph of Kathara was, or had become, a purely political issue, in which ecclesiastical groups ought not to have been involved. One more point: the Studite demonstration against the restoration of Joseph of Kathara was indirectly directed against the Patriarch Nicephorus' moderate and conciliatory attitude. It would seem that the Emperor Nicephorus took it as a matter of prestige to protect his Patriarch from the strong Studite opposition, which he decided to break. In doing so, he was very tactful. Constantine VI had sent the Radicals into exile, just by giving an order. Nicephorus dispersed the Studite brotherhood by convoking the synod of January of 809. This more tactful policy proves that the Emperor did not want to show himself as a tyrant over any ecclesiastical group. In that year, although his will was fulfilled, it was the official church and not the Emperor, who sent his opponents into exile.

#### **D: GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

While Theophanes has blackened the Emperor Nicephorus' fiscal and economic policies, Theodore of Stoudios has spoken against his religious principles. Because these two main sources are biased against this ruler, it makes a fair judgement of his actions difficult.

To begin with, it needs to be remembered that, when Nicephorus I came into power in 802, he did not inherit problems connected only with political issues at home and abroad, but also a more or less bad situation with respect to the Byzantine church and the religious groups at the time existing and operating in different parts of the Empire.

It has been seen that in his controversial reply to the Emperor's inquiry in 806, the leader of the Studite movement, Theodore, admitted that the ecclesiastical situation was far from being satisfactory and that a certain improvement was definitely needed.<sup>1</sup> Although it remains questionable what Theodore meant by the improvement he was suggesting to the Emperor, it could not be denied that elements of truth could be traced in his statement. The situation in the Byzantine church since 787 had been more or less chaotic. From what has been seen so far, the Emperor Nicephorus intervened in ecclesiastical or politico-ecclesiastical issues several times. It would seem that if ecclesiastical affairs appear to have been of minor importance beside purely political issues, then this was testimony to the Emperor's skill in handling the church. He was able to hold the Studites in check. His very success would be reflected in the bias of the largely pro-Studite sources against him. They present Nicephorus as having adopted a ruthless stance in his relations to the church, though this is not supported by any concrete evidence. Theophanes' statement that the Emperor Nicephorus urged military officials to treat bishops and clergymen in general as servants<sup>2</sup> refers to the strictness with which the Emperor taxed ecclesiastical and monastic property. Therefore, it would be, perhaps, more reasonable to suggest that Nicephorus' intervention in ecclesiastical affairs could be seen as a desire on the part of the Emperor to bring some order to the confusion reigning in the Byzantine church during the last years of the eighth century. In Nicephorus' mind the church was the state's 'department of religion',<sup>3</sup> and as such ought not to cause any internal

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 16 (loc.cit.), col.960 AB.

2. Theophanes 1, p.489.

3. J.B. Bury, The Constitution... (op.cit.), p.32.



disturbances. Such an obligation should have applied equally to para-ecclesiastical groups, i.e. the monks and their party, against whom the Emperor did not hesitate to adopt a rather harsh stance, involving imprisonment and exile. Furthermore, it would also seem that Nicephorus was convinced that in a theocratic state like Byzantium, even purely religious, or better ecclesiastical, issues would not be totally separated from politics. Thus, none of the religious parties and movements, existing at the time, enjoyed a complete independence from the state during Nicephorus' reign. It looks as if the Emperor kept an eye on ecclesiastical issues, because he wanted to keep a balance between the various religious forces of the Empire. His constant fear of internal disturbances had, perhaps, something to do with the Emperor Nicephorus' attitude towards both the Radicals and the Moderates. He simply tried to avoid, or to eliminate, problems originating from ecclesiastical and monastic sources.

Finally, iconoclastic emperors were against <sup>the</sup> papacy, because the Popes of the time supported the iconodules. Nicephorus, though not an iconoclast, had, nevertheless, good reasons for adopting not only the same, but even harder a policy toward the Pope Leo III. Here again it can be argued that Nicephorus considered relations between the eastern Empire and the western church as a primarily political issue. After all, it really was an affair of political significance. As such, these relations will be treated in the relative section of the chapter on foreign policies.

Chapter V

FOREIGN POLICIES



## Chapter V

### FOREIGN POLICIES

#### A: NICEPHORUS AND THE WEST

##### 1. The Preliminaries

In comparison with the interest shown by the Byzantine chroniclers in the Empire's relations with the Arabs and the Bulgars, the negligence with which events in the West are treated comes almost as a surprise. With the exception of Theophanes and Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Byzantine authors do not seem to have bothered to know and to record information concerning the newly created Frankish Empire of Charlemagne. It is also noteworthy that even Theophanes who is the unique contemporary Byzantine source to report the events of Christmas 800, refers to the coronation of Charlemagne in a rather odd way. Theophanes seems to have been impressed not by the coronation itself, which was after all of great importance, but by the way in which, according to his source of information, it was performed. He says that at the same time as the coronation was taking place Charlemagne was anointed from head to foot,<sup>1</sup> something which by Byzantine standards was quite unusual.<sup>2</sup> Modern scholars have discerned traces of mockery in the way Theophanes reports Charlemagne's coronation as emperor

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.473: "ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς ἕως ποδῶν."

2. For the difference in the way in which emperors and co-emperors were installed in Byzantium and in the West, cf. J.L. Nelson, 'Symbols in Context: Rulers' Inauguration Rituals in Byzantium and the West in the Early Middle Ages', in Studies in Church History, 13 (1976), pp.97-119.

in 800.<sup>1</sup> It is not, however, clear whether it was the Confessor's intention to mock the way in which the Frankish King was promoted to the imperial dignity or whether he was simply ill informed about the character that unction possessed in the West. In other words, it seems very likely that Theophanes was in a way trapped by his source because it was not Charlemagne, but his son, also called Charles, who was anointed during his father's coronation.

But the unction itself does not seem to be of great significance and P. Classen points to three occasions on which Charlemagne had been anointed before becoming emperor.<sup>2</sup> However, Theophanes' records on the events of Christmas 800 are of interest because of the way that they reflect the Byzantine reaction on Charlemagne's coronation. It would seem that a certain coolness and mockery mixed, perhaps, with some slight anxiety and indignation, were the feelings of the populace at Constantinople, after the news of Charlemagne's coronation had reached the capital. The coolness and the mockery were derived from a definite self-confidence and from an assurance that only the emperor on the banks of Bosphorus could claim to be the heir of the Roman Empire. Therefore, had Charlemagne aspired to become imperator Romanorum, it would have been at Constantinople and not in Rome that he would have had to be acclaimed as basileus. But the Byzantine views of the Franks are perhaps better illuminated by what the tenth century source Constantine Porphyrogenitus has to say about them. In his treatise De Administrando Imperio, the imperial author displays real respect for Charlemagne. Constantine VII considered the reign of this Frankish king

---

1. See for instance, F. Dölger, Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt (Speyer am Rhein 1953), p.297.  
2. P. Classen, Karl der Grosse... (op.cit.), p.48.



so crucial that, while before him his country is called simply Frankia, from Charlemagne's reign onwards is called Great Frankia (Μεγάλη Φραγγία). The De Administrando Imperio puts emphasis on the fact that 'Charles was sole ruler over all the kingdoms'<sup>1</sup> and that 'in his days none of the other kings dared call himself a king',<sup>2</sup> a statement which reflects the respect in which he was held by the Byzantines.

Byzantine views of the Franks can only be fully appreciated, if the eastern interests of Charlemagne are taken into consideration. These interests are echoed by several of our main sources, one eastern and the rest western. The record of the De Administrando Imperio is rather short, saying that Charles 'sent much money and abundant treasure to Palestine',<sup>3</sup> while Einhard refers to Charlemagne's activities in the East, more in detail. From this contemporary Latin source we hear that the Frankish king took care of all Christians who at that time were living outside his Empire. With a certain exaggeration the biographer names Syria, Egypt, Africa, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Carthage.<sup>4</sup> As one can easily see, these districts were under Muslim rule and, although Charlemagne's activities in these regions were mostly limited to charity in favour of the Christians, such an involvement seems to have been a sign of increasing Frankish

---

1. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio, (op.cit.), p.109.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

4. Éginhard, Vie de Charlemagne, (ed. by L. Halphen),

Paris 1947, p. 78.

prestige.<sup>1</sup> F.L. Ganshof suggests that the correspondence between Charlemagne and Hārūn al-Rashīd started in 797-98 with the former sending an embassy to the East.<sup>2</sup> The departure of this embassy is reported by Einhard who, however, does not provide us with any dating.<sup>3</sup> A Jew, Isaac by name, seems to have been either the head of the embassy or its only survivor. In any case, the participation of a Jew in a delegation which was sent 'with offerings to the most holy sepulchre of our Lord and Saviour and to the place of his resurrection',<sup>4</sup> underlines its mainly political rather than ecclesiastical character. Isaac returned to the West in 801 with presents and with an elephant, all sent to Charlemagne by the Caliph.<sup>5</sup>

It can hardly be ignored that Charlemagne enjoyed close and friendly relations with Hārūn al-Rashīd,<sup>6</sup> at a time when the latter was involved in more or less constant rivalry with Byzantium. These pointed to a foreign policy which enjoyed greater success, perhaps, than the one of the Byzantine emperors. There is no way of telling whether Charlemagne's overtures to Irene would necessarily have jeopardized his good relations with the Caliphate.

- 
1. In connection with this devotion of Charlemagne, A. Gasquet (L'empire byzantin et la monarchie franque, originally published 1888, New York reprint 1972, pp.293-94), emphasizes the truth that in such a way the name of the Franks became known in countries where nobody had known anything about them previously.
  2. F.L. Ganshof, The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy (op.cit.), p.186, note 40.
  3. Eginhard, Vie de Charlemagne, (op.cit.), p.46.
  4. ibid.
  5. Annales regni Frankorum, (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), years 801-802; see also Annales Mettenses Priores, in M.G.H., Scriptorum Rerum Germanicarum in Usus Scholarum Separatim Editi, vol.10 (Hannover 1979), years 801-02.
  6. Eginhard, Vie de Charlemagne (op.cit.), pp.46-48; ~~on this see also~~ on this see also W. Buckler, Harun al Rashid and Charles the Great (Cambridge, Mass. 1931), pp.17-42.



Finally, in contrast to the very close relations between Charlemagne and Pope Leo III, Byzantium seemed to have lost all influence over the papacy from the mid-eighth century.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, given the aspirations of Charlemagne and all the evidence which points to a definite strengthening of his position, the Emperor Nicephorus would have, from the beginning, been extremely wary in his dealings with the West.

## 2. Nicephorus and the Papacy

From Einhard, the main biographer of Charlemagne, we hear that the Frankish king did not actually seek his coronation in the year 800, but 'he made it clear that he would not have entered the cathedral that day at all, although it was the greatest of all the festivals of the church, if he had known what the Pope was planning to do'.<sup>2</sup> This statement reflects the fact that already from the mid-eighth century onwards, the Popes in the West had become much more influential in political terms than the patriarchs at Constantinople. This influence, exercised on behalf of the papacy reached its peak at the turn of that century. To say that the Pope played a decisive role in the events of Christmas 800 would be to state the obvious. W. Ohnsorge suggests that Leo III was playing off Charlemagne against Irene and this game marked the end of the peaceful relations with Byzantium which had been established during the last years of the eighth century.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. D.H. Miller, 'Byzantine-papal Relations During the Pontificate of Paul I: Confirmation and Completion of the Roman Revolution of the Eighth Century', in B.Z., 68 (1975), p.51.

2. Einhard, Vie... (op. cit.), p.80: "adfirmaret se eo die, (p. t. o.)"

3. W. Ohnsorge, Das Zweikaiserproblem... (op. cit.), p.22.

It looks, however, that the whole context of circumstances does not allow us to approach the events of Christmas 800 with such an over-simplification. Other modern scholars, such as P. Classen<sup>1</sup> and F.L. Ganshof<sup>2</sup> think that the key figure behind Charlemagne's coronation was Alcuin, the famous abbot of St. Martin's of Tours, who, from the year 798 onwards in his correspondence with Charlemagne used the expression Imperium Christianum in order to indicate that 'Charles is master of almost the whole of western Christendom and Rome itself is subject to his protectorate'.<sup>3</sup> But, even so, as F.L. Ganshof has pointed out, Alcuin was deeply devoted to the Holy See<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, it might be observed that the role he played after the events of 25 April 799, i.e. the attack against Pope Leo III by his opponents, served the interests both of Charlemagne and of the Pope. At any rate, it would, perhaps, be more appropriate to say that since the end of the year 795 when Leo III succeeded Hadrian on the papal throne, the whole scheme of relations existing between the eastern Empire and the papacy changed completely, with the Pope now siding with the Franks. Such an argument is supported not only by what followed in Christmas 800, but also by the number of the letters addressed by this particular Pope to Charlemagne, either before the latter became emperor (three) or after his coronation (eleven).<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that we do not possess any letter, sent at the same time by the same Pope to the emperors of the East or even to the

---

1. P. Classen, Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum... (op.cit.), pp.35-41.

2. F.L. Ganshof, The Carolingians... (op.cit.), pp.45-48.

3. ibid., p.45.

4. ibid.

5. They can be found in M.G.H., Epistolae, V, (Berlin 1899), pp.58-103.



patriarch of Constantinople. But, by acting in such a way, what was Pope Leo III up to? Can it be, for instance, that he was trying to strengthen the position of the western church by bringing the two Empires into conflict with each other? It appears that such an assumption exceeds the evidence provided by our sources. It would seem more reasonable to say that Leo knew about the existence of the opposition against him even before it broke out in 799. He badly needed support and Charlemagne was considered by him as the best source of it. In relation to this we also hear from Notker the Stammerer<sup>1</sup> and Constantine Manasses<sup>2</sup> that, before turning to the Franks, Leo had asked for help in his difficulties from the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VI and his mother from whom, however, he received no reply. The credibility of these two sources cannot be checked, though J.B. Bury thinks that the statement is in itself by no means incredible.<sup>3</sup> If that was the case, then Leo was, at least, equipped with a good pretext for his turning to the Franks.

It appears that this change was only properly understood by the Byzantine government, at least after the elevation of Nicephorus I in 802. We would, nevertheless, not expect the new Byzantine Emperor to have taken any very decisive measures against the leader of the western Christendom. He could, for example, have asked the then Patriarch Tarasius to excommunicate the Pope Leo III. Such a step was never taken, probably for the following reasons: a) the Byzantine Emperor must have realized that a sort of common front had been created in the West and, consequently, any

---

1. A.J. Grant (edit. and transl.), Early Lives (op.cit.), p.89.

2. Constantine Manasses, Breviarium Historiae Metricum (ed. Bekker), Bonn 1837, p.193.

3. J.B. Bury, 'Charles the Great and Irene', in Hermathena, 8 (1893), p.30.

measure taken against the western church would be considered as being taken against the newly created western Empire too, and this, of course, was something that Nicephorus did not want to happen, at least at an early stage of his reign. One needs only to remember that during his first year in power, the Emperor Nicephorus kept himself busy with internal events and with the situation on the eastern borders of the Empire. b) The Byzantine government could not have been sure about the possible implications of such a measure and about the reaction of the monastic party at Constantinople, which still considered the Pope as the head of the church in its universal conception.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Studites might have tried to protest on the grounds that an excommunication of the Pope was against canon law. Nobody could judge the Pope. c) Such a measure would have been contrary to the Emperor Nicephorus' own character and persuasions. In cases where the Byzantine territorial interests were not at stake, he preferred to compromise rather than to strain relations.

Nevertheless, a proper answer to the papal intrigues was given less than four years later, at the time the Patriarch Tarasius died and the Emperor's namesake Nicephorus succeeded him in the ecclesiastical throne of Constantinople. By forbidding the new Patriarch to send the letter of his enthronement (τὰ συνοδικὰ γράμματα) to the Pope, the Emperor Nicephorus showed his disapproval of, if not his indignation at, the role played by Leo III in the

---

1. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 33, (loc.cit.), 99,, col.1017B; for a discussion of Theodore's views and relations with the papacy, cf. C. Van de Vorst, 'Les relations de S. Théodore Studite avec Rome', in A.B., 32 (1913), pp.439-47; see also, J. Gill, 'St. Theodore the Studite Against the Papacy?' in Byzantinische Forschungen, 1 (1966), pp.115-23.



events of the year 800. In the letter of his enthronement, finally sent to Pope Leo III in 811, the Patriarch Nicephorus makes it clear that his namesake the Emperor did not permit him to enter into official communication with the head of the western church, because of the anointing that took place along with Charlemagne's coronation.<sup>1</sup> If this information is combined with the unction of Charlemagne reported by Theophanes,<sup>2</sup> then, it might be suggested that considerable importance must have been attached by the Byzantines and by the Emperor himself not merely to Charlemagne's imperial status but even more to the rite of anointing - a rite which was then absent from the Byzantine coronation service. It seemed almost as though Charlemagne was claiming a divine sanction for his office that set him above the Byzantine emperor. Furthermore, it would also seem that, in the eyes of the Byzantine government, by having sided with the Franks in that crucial period, the Pope lost his position as primus inter pares among the five patriarchs, and was considered to have separated the western church from the rest of Christendom. Such a thesis is supported once again by Patriarch Nicephorus' letter of enthronement, in which it is clearly stated that this was one of the grounds upon which the Emperor based his refusal to let his patriarch communicate with Rome.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the participation of the archbishop of Zara in a delegation to Charlemagne in the same year<sup>4</sup> strengthens the possibility that political and ecclesiastical issues were considered

1. The Patriarch Nicephorus, Epistola ad Leonem, P.G., 100 col.197A; it reads: "ἔδοκει γὰρ τῷ εἰρχοντι καὶ ἀφορμὴν εὐπρόσωπον προβάλλεσθαι ἐφ' ἡμῶν τῶν ἐπιτελεσθέντων τοῦ χρίσματος ἕνεκεν."

For more about this letter see above, pp.189-91.

2. Theophanes 1, p.473,

3. The Patriarch Nicephorus, Epist ad Leonem, P.G. 100 col.197A: "καὶ ὡς ὑμεῖς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἑαυτοῦς ἀπερρήξατε διεθρύλλει."

4. On this delegation cf. below, p.238.

simultaneously. Though our sources do not shed much light on this episode, it is known that Dalmatia remained Latin and Catholic. Therefore, would it not be, perhaps, reasonable to suggest that the so called problem of the Illyrian provinces can also be connected with the Emperor Nicephorus' stand against papacy?

Unfortunately very little is known about possible political activities of the Pope during the years 802-11. It is, of course, likely that Pope Leo III was behind the famous proposal for a marriage between Charlemagne and Irene, which, however, speeded up the dethronement of the Empress in October 802. We also hear that in the year 806 Leo sent a letter to Charlemagne, in support of the reinstatement of the *patriarch of Grado* Fortunatus,<sup>1</sup> against Christopher who was favoured by the pro-Byzantine party of the Galbairi. But, to our knowledge, Fortunatus was also the preference of Charlemagne himself and later he acted as mediator between the doge Obelierius and the Frankish Emperor.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances it would appear that the passive reaction of the Byzantine Emperor against Pope Leo III in 806, was fully justified.

### 3. Reality Above Tradition

When Nicephorus I deposed Irene and assumed supreme power, he was faced with a fait accompli, regarding the relations between East and West. If he did not like it he had to show to his contemporaries, not only that there was a new emperor

---

1. M.G.H., Epistolae, V, (Berlin 1899), pp.94-95.

2. J.J. Norwich, Venice, the Rise to Empire, (London 1977), p.44; W.C. Hazlitt, The Venetian Republic (London 1915, Reprint, New York 1966), 1, p.37.



sitting on the throne of Constantinople, but also that a new more determined policy was about to be adopted and exercised against the western usurper. He had to dispel the feelings of dissatisfaction and anxiety, which had been growing especially among the courtiers in the capital. These feelings, after all, had been one of the decisive factors which brought Nicephorus into power.

In dealing with Nicephorus' policy toward the newly created western Empire, it is of some importance to know whether or not the ideology of a single Roman Empire, was a reality in the mind of the Byzantine Emperor.

A. Vasiliev argues that 'the idea of a single Empire was still alive in the year 800, when the famous imperial coronation of Charles the Great occurred in Rome'.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to Vasiliev's interpretation, H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler considers the iconoclastic era as the period during which the Byzantines developed a national consciousness. This sense of *exclusiveness* at first appeared to be 'the Byzantine answer to the holy war of Islam'.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, however, that when a certain degree of *spiritual solidarity* develops, it is directed not only against one enemy, but spreads to every place, where rivals exist. This sense of national feeling did not quite accord with the idea of a single universal Roman Empire. The Byzantines, of course, did not dislike the idea of being the heirs of the Roman world. They continued to call themselves Romans and their capital the Second or New Rome. What a gap, however, between theory and practice! The former western Roman provinces seemed to have been lost for

---

1. A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, (op.cit.), 1, p.265.

2. H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, L'idéologie politique de l'empire Byzantin (Paris 1975), p.35.

Byzantium once and for all since the year 476. The tremendous efforts of Justinian and his generals to restore these districts to Constantinople, have been attributed by modern historians to a lack of pragmatism.<sup>1</sup> However, if the sixth-century Justinian was lacking in realism, the ninth-century Nicephorus was pragmatist enough to estimate the situation properly. The western provinces of the old Roman Empire were now too distant, while at the same time the Arabs from the East and the Bulgars from the North were threatening Constantinople itself. In other words, the eastern and northern borders of the Empire were of much more crucial importance than the western ones. The memories of the Byzantine Italy lost to the Ostrogoths and to the Lombards were vague, while the memories of the eastern provinces lost to the Arabs, were, in a sense, still fresh. Furthermore, the Arabs during most of the eighth century did not stop trying to break the natural barrier of the Cilician mountains and occupy the whole of Asia Minor. Unluckily for Byzantium things became even more difficult towards the end of the eighth century, at a time when Hārūn al-Rashīd and Krum ascended the Arabic and the Bulgarian thrones respectively. But here we are dealing only with the relations between Nicephorus and Charlemagne. Do we really come across a dynamic policy on the part of the Byzantine Emperor against his western rival?

To begin with, one might argue that, before undertaking any action, Nicephorus tried to understand the way, in which Charlemagne himself would handle this new and rather complicated situation. It is true that the imperial title itself did not invest the Frankish king with any significant

---

1. G. Ostrogorsky, History... (op.cit.), p.78.



political power. But, even if we consider it to have been only a dignity, it had of necessity to be recognized by the rival Empire of the East, if it was to have any validity. Charlemagne probably sought this recognition immediately after his coronation. Because, whatever the prestige of the title at the beginning of the ninth century, the long history behind it was a truth which it was not easy to obliterate. That was perhaps the reason why Charlemagne found it wise to avoid provocation. We would not, of course, expect him to abandon all the rights and privileges with which the events of Christmas 800 invested him. However, a movement towards a peaceful solution had to be made, and Charlemagne did not hesitate to proceed to it. Thus, he did not use the title imperator Romanorum but the one: imperator Romanorum gubernans imperium.<sup>1</sup> Was it a real modification of the title imperator Romanorum, as Pfister and Ganshof<sup>2</sup> see it? Although the Latin language does not use any definite or indefinite articles, it looks as if there is a substantial difference between the phrase imperator Romanorum gubernans imperium<sup>3</sup> which was adopted by Charlemagne, and the hypothetical title imperator gubernans imperium Romanorum, which he could have adopted, if he really wanted to be recognized as the only emperor of the Romans. In any case, both Emperors were clever and prudent enough to realize that a war between East and West was best avoided. Charlemagne, of course, did not need to make much effort in that direction. His authority

---

1. M.G.H., Diplomata Karolinorum, 1 (Hannover 1906), No.197.

2. F. Lot, Ch. Pfister, L. Ganshof, Histoire du Moyen Age, vol.1: (Les destinees de l'Empire en Occident), Paris 1928, p.458.

3. More about this title and its use, see in P. Classen, 'Romanum gubernans imperium', in Deutsches Archiv fur Erforschung des Mittelalters, 9 (1951-52), pp.103-21.

over the West had never been challenged and, this was of much more importance: during the two last years Byzantium did not openly dispute his proclamation as Roman emperor. On the other hand, although the idea of a single Empire 'is a historical anachronism from the modern point of view though not in the opinion of the Middle Ages',<sup>1</sup> Nicephorus did not consider it worth fighting against his western rival, simply because Charlemagne had usurped the imperial title. This, nevertheless, should not be taken to mean that Nicephorus was prepared to make any major concession to the western Empire. It has been shown elsewhere that in his domestic policies this Byzantine Emperor is concerned to restore imperial authority, and this might imply that the question of the title must have been important to him. But, a war against the Franks, at least at this stage, was precisely what Byzantium had to avoid. After all, it was a matter of priorities, i.e. Nicephorus waited until he was well established domestically before turning his attention to questions of ideology.

Are we entitled to assume that Nicephorus accepted more or less the situation, which had been created in the West after the events of Christmas 800? Instead of giving an affirmative or negative answer, let us try to follow and interpret the events, mainly the relations between the two Empires during the period 802-811 and then draw the necessary conclusions.

From the Annales regni Francorum<sup>2</sup> we hear that at the time of Irene's deposition two envoys of Charlemagne,<sup>3</sup> had already been at Constantinople for peace negotiations

---

1. A. Vasiliev, History... (op.cit.), 1, p.265.

2. Annales regni Francorum (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 802.

3. They were Iesse, Bishop of Amiens, and Count Helmgand.



with the Empress. According to Theophanes,<sup>1</sup> these negotiations aimed at a marriage between Charlemagne and Irene, a marriage which could have achieved the union of the two Empires and 'might have greatly altered the course of history'.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately our western sources do not provide us with any information concerning such a proposal by Charlemagne. They only say that peace was the aim of that delegation.<sup>3</sup> Among these two different aims of the Frankish embassy to Constantinople, the one provided by Theophanes, is definitely stronger. This is not only because it explains better the almost immediate fall of Irene, but also and, perhaps mainly because it would sound a bit odd, were Charlemagne's delegates to claim that they were seeking to establish peace at a time when the relations between the two Empires were more peaceful than ever! Nevertheless, a combination of the information provided by both sources might give ground for a speculation that, had the planned marriage of Charlemagne to Irene been achieved, it would have been doubly useful to the Frankish Emperor, by uniting the two Empires under his power and, of course, by preserving peace!

At any rate, whatever the main purpose of the arrival of the Frankish delegates to Constantinople, we would have expected them to try to get permission to stay for some time probably months after the deposition of the Empress, in order to realize and discuss the intentions of the new Emperor, as well as the feelings at Constantinople, concerning the relatively recent events in the West. In

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.475.

2. M.V. Anastos, 'Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule 717-842' in C.M.H. vol.4, part a, (Cambridge 1966), p.90.

3. "ut pacem cum ea (Irene) statuerunt" (Annales regni Francorum), (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 802.

reference to these circumstances, it is of particular significance to hear that Nicephorus replied to Charlemagne's mission by sending his own ambassadors to the West.<sup>1</sup> Such an attitude of the Byzantine Emperor, can be taken to mean that: a) the proposed crucial marriage was not the only aim of the Frankish envoys, b) Nicephorus considered the western delegation as having been sent not to Irene personally, but to the supreme authority in Constantinople. That is why he did not 'kick' them out of the capital immediately after his accession to the throne. c) Peace was prized above anything else by both the Emperors,<sup>2</sup> and d) the Byzantine Emperor had been probably informed about the 'existence of some alliance, or at least of a friendly understanding'<sup>3</sup> between Charlemagne and Hārūn al-Rashīd.

The Byzantine delegation consisted of: the Bishop Michael (probably of Synada), the abbot Peter and the Candidatus Callistus. These envoys in fact accompanied the Frankish ones on their way back home. By the time they reached Italy, Charlemagne had already gone back to Germany. Therefore the Byzantine mission travelled to the North and met with him at Salz.<sup>4</sup> Although it is obvious that these ambassadors had been ordered to seek a conciliation, R. Jenkins argues that they rejected summarily the claims of Charlemagne.<sup>5</sup> However, Jenkins does not seem to have founded his argument in the contemporary sources. Nicephorus would not have sent his envoys, if there was not anything to be negotiated. The assertion by the sources that

---

1. Annales regni Francorum, (ed. R. Rau), year 803.

2. P. Classen, Karl der Grosse... (op.cit.), p.66.

3. W. Buckler, Hārūn al-Rashīd... (op.cit.), pp.26-27.

4. Annales regni Francorum, (ed. R. Rau), year 803.

5. R. Jenkins: Byzantium, the Imperial Centuries, (op.cit.), p.113.



he sent such an embassy, proves by itself that the new Emperor of Constantinople wanted to live in peace with his rival of the West. Moreover, the main text at our disposal speaks about a peace treaty, which was signed between the two sides at Salz ~~...~~ some time in 803.<sup>1</sup> The same statement is also made by the second biographer of Charlemagne Notker the Stammerer, who asserts that 'the delegates of the King of Constantinople had come and had told him (Charlemagne) that their master wished to be his faithful friend'.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the argument of Buckler that 'these negotiations broke down ostensibly, on the demand of Charles to be recognized as the Emperor of the West, a condition unacceptable to the East',<sup>3</sup> does not seem to be based on solid grounds. In contrast to Buckler, W.C. Hazlitt argues that in 803 a peace treaty was signed between the two Empires in which it was agreed that the maritime towns of Istria and Dalmatia 'should be considered as forming an integral portion'<sup>4</sup> of Byzantium, but he does not provide any evidence, either.

We would have liked, of course, to know, whether the controversial title of Charlemagne was discussed in these negotiations, but unfortunately we are not told of any details about the contents of the peace treaty. One might wonder whether the modification of the title by Charlemagne did not come as a result of mutual concessions made by both sides in their effort to avoid provocation and challenge for the sake of peace. The lack of any conflicts between

- 
1. Annales regni Francorum (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 803: "et pactum faciendae pacis in scripto susceperunt".
  2. Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, Two Lives... (op.cit.) p.124.
  3. W. Buckler, Harun al Rashid, (op.cit.), p.27.
  4. W.C. Hazlitt, The Venetian Republic (op.cit.), 1, p.42.

the two Empires during the period 803-806 can also be interpreted as pointing to such concessions.

In fact an absolute absence of information regarding the East-West relations governs this relatively short period. The only thing that we know about those years, is that Nicephorus was occupied with the conflicts against Hārūn al-Rashīd along the eastern frontiers, and Charlemagne spent the same time dealing with various tasks. He transferred all Saxons, who were inhabiting the eastern banks of the river Elbe, as well as the district called Wihmuodi (a region between Elbe and Weser) and settled them together with their families in his kingdom (September 804). In 805 Charlemagne established friendly relations with the Avars, whose leader (capcanus) was a Christian, named Theodore. During the same year the Frankish Emperor sent his son Charles against the Slavs of Bohemia. The campaign was successful for the Frankish army. Charles devastated and depopulated their whole land and even killed their leader, a certain Lecho.<sup>1</sup> After Easter of 806 the same son of Charlemagne had an equal success against another Slavic tribe, that of Sobari, whose leader was also killed in the clashes.<sup>2</sup>

However, it can hardly be ignored here that all these achievements of the Franks did not touch the Byzantine interests in the West. This permits us to assume that a compromise had been reached by both sides in 803 that they ought to respect each other's territorial rights.<sup>3</sup> So far the two Emperors had shown their goodwill and their intention to avoid any escalation of ill-will. However,

---

1. Annales regni Francorum (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 805.

2. ibid., year 806.

3. The Vita of Charlemagne by Einhard (~~Einhard and Notker~~ (Eginhard, Vie de Charlemagne, op.cit., p.50) also confirms such an assumption.



there was still a problem waiting for its solution. That was Charlemagne's imperial title, the recognition of which by the eastern Empire had yet to be achieved.

#### 4. Charlemagne Strengthens his Bargaining Position

Some time during the first half of the year 806 Charlemagne interfered in areas, which were always assumed to have been under Byzantine control, or at least under Byzantine influence. These were Venice and the Dalmatian coasts.<sup>1</sup> It would appear that by that year, a pro-Frankish party, or a pro-Frankish feeling had been created in the area of the lagoons. Whether the Franks themselves initiated such a movement, is not known, but their intervention was partly caused by the brutal way in which the pro-Byzantine doge Giovanni Galbani killed a prominent opponent, the patriarch of Grado. Therefore, it only remained for the Franks to exploit a situation which was turning in their favour. Thus Charlemagne was able to organize a 'coup d'État' in Venice, depose the doges loyal to Byzantium and replace them with two brothers, Obelierius and Beatus.<sup>2</sup>

From now on, of course, the situation becomes much easier for the Franks in Venice. R. Jenkins suggests that

- 
1. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio. (op.cit.), p.120; J. Calmette (Charlemagne, Paris 1951, p.43), however, argues that "cette suzeranneté n'était que nominale". W.C. Hazlitt, (The Venetian Republic, op.cit., vol.1, p.36), who suggests that, at least a section of the Venetians saw Byzantium as 'the more ancient ally and as the less dangerous neighbour', seems to have appreciated the situation better.
  2. A. Dandolo, Chronicon Venetum, in M.R.I.S., vol.12 (new edit. by G. Carducci, V. Fiorini and P. Fedele (Bologna 1958), pt.1, p.128; F. Lot, Ch. Pfister and L. Ganshof, Histoire... (op.cit.), vol.1, p.462.

the fact that the Byzantine embassy in 803 rejected Charlemagne's claims to imperial status, provoked a war with him, which Byzantium was certainly not prepared to face.<sup>1</sup> By no means, however, can the Frankish interference in Venice be taken as Charlemagne's automatic reaction to the Byzantine embassy of 803. Because, if the assumed negative attitude of the Byzantine envoys had provoked the interference of Charlemagne in Venice, then we would have expected his intervention to have taken place immediately after the conjectural failure of the negotiations and not three years later. Furthermore, it has already been shown<sup>2</sup> that the negotiations in 803 were far from unsuccessful for both Empires. Moreover, it appears that the period 803-806 had proved decisive for the pro-Frankish movement at Venice, which Charlemagne only exploited in 806. Therefore, it would seem more reasonable to assume that the Frankish Emperor intervened in Venice in an effort to strengthen his bargaining position against the Byzantine government, with regard to the recognition of his imperial title. Later on Charlemagne will not miss the opportunity of playing the role of suzerain of the area, as well as that of mediator between his son Pepin, King of Italy (since 806) and the Byzantine forces, sent to the district by Nicephorus.

Sometime early in the year 806 the two above-mentioned doges of Venice, i.e. Obelierius and Beatus, together with the duke and archbishop of Zara (Iadera), arrived at the court of Charlemagne. The aim of that visit is not clearly indicated by the sources, but J. Calmette suggests that they placed both Venice and Dalmatia under Frankish protection.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. R. Jenkins, Byzantium, the Imperial Centuries (op.cit.) p.113.

2. Above, p.235.

3. J. Calmette, Charlemagne, (op.cit.), p.43.



It looks, however, that such a suggestion has inadequate support in the sources. What is recorded by our main source, is that Charlemagne arranged the situation in Venice and Dalmatia.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the Frankish Emperor really did at that time, regarding these two regions, the information that envoys from both places went to him "cum magnis donis"<sup>2</sup> and asked for his intervention or supervision, speaks for itself. His authority was, no doubt, recognized as supreme by the smaller countries, which, after all, could hardly count on Byzantine support because of the distance and also because at that time the Byzantine Empire was forced by circumstances to fight on other fronts, more crucial for its own existence. In any case, the situation in the area is partly illuminated by Constantine Porphyrogenitus who asserts us that from Heraclius' time onwards, the Byzantines neglected the western provinces of the Empire, and, as a result, during the reign of Michael II (820-29) the Dalmatians became independent and autonomous 'subjected neither to the Byzantine emperor nor to anybody else'.<sup>3</sup> However, it appears that the assertion given by the tenth century Emperor, does not apply to the period under consideration, because Nicephorus certainly did not abandon the Byzantine interests on the Dalmatian coasts. As soon as he heard about Charlemagne's intervention in Venetian and Dalmatian affairs, Nicephorus sent the Patrician Nicetas at the head of a fleet, in order to maintain the Byzantine rights in these two areas. Nicetas reached Venice some time before the end of 806 and stayed there for a period of one year.

- 
1. Annales regni Francorum (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 806. The text reads: "Et facta est ibi ordinatio ab imperatore de ducibus et populis tam Venetiae quam Dalmatiae".
  2. ibid.
  3. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio, (op.cit.), p.124.

It seems that his presence in the districts had at least psychological effects for both the peoples, of Venice and of Dalmatia. Before leaving for Constantinople, he concluded a peace treaty (we are not told for how long) and a truce, bound to last until August 808.<sup>1</sup> The confirmation of a peace treaty and a truce sounds a little odd. The usual situation is that, when a peace is signed, a truce is not needed; unless we admit that the truce referred to Venice and the peace to Dalmatia, which is not after all impossible. The poor results achieved by Nicetas' presence at Venice, are attributed by Hazlitt to his unawareness or poor knowledge 'of the state of parties and the division of feeling'<sup>2</sup> among its people. It would seem, however, that the Venetians had already reached a point where they regarded their independence as more precious than any patronage and influence, either from Byzantium or from the Franks. In brief, the question concerning the value and effectiveness of such a treaty remains wide open. Moreover, the shortness of the period, for which the agreement was signed, permits us to assume that the rivalry between the two Empires over Venice and Dalmatia was far from ended. On the other hand, the haste of the Patrician Nicetas to leave the Adriatic waters and come back to Constantinople, might be given the explanation that he was sent there with only a few ships, in order to evaluate the situation and underline the Byzantine interests on the area. Thus, he could not be involved in a long conflict with the Franks.

Nicetas left the Adriatic waters some time at the end of 807. About one year later (at the end of 808 or

---

1. Annales regni Francorum, (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 807.  
2. W.C. Hazlitt, The Venetian Republic, (op.cit.), 1, p.43.



the beginning of 809) Paul, the strategos of Cephalonia, arrived in the controversial area at the head of a fleet and visited both districts, Dalmatia and Venice, where he spent the rest of the winter. In the spring of 809 a part of that fleet attacked the island of Commacchio,<sup>1</sup> but the forces in charge of the island defended it successfully. It is a pity that eastern sources have almost completely neglected these events while the western ones present only the Frankish point of view. In the case under consideration they have Paul seeking a peace agreement with Pepin. Whatever the details, it looks as if the intervention of Charlemagne and his masterminding of the "coup d'État" in Venice three years *previously*, proved to have been a real blow to the Byzantine interests in the area.

The two doges of Venice, Obelierius and Beatus, considered their position as not safe, because of the presence of the Byzantine fleet in the northern Adriatic. It is likely that, before starting negotiations with Pepin, Paul had demanded the replacement of the two puppets of Charlemagne, i.e. Obelierius and Beatus, with another two more likely to serve the Byzantine interests in Venice. However, Paul was not going to succeed at all in what he was planning. Obelierius and Beatus realized his intentions, resorted to intrigue and undermined the peace treaty. Bitterly disappointed, Paul returned to Cephalonia. After his withdrawal, Pepin turned his naval forces, originally

---

1. Annales regni Francorum (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 809. Since there is not any evidence of Byzantine militaristic and imperialistic aspirations in the area, the only possible explanation for the attack of Commacchio, is that the Byzantines tried to regain control of an island, which in 806, like Venice and other Dalmatian cities, had been placed under Frankish protection or domination. But, since Commacchio is also a rival of Venice, it may be that, in this case, the Byzantine navy was acting on the demand of the Venetians.

aimed at Dalmatia, against the islands of Venice. Facing such a threat against their own freedom, the inhabitants of the islands came together, forced the two pro-Frankish doges to resign and under the leadership of Angelo Badoer, organized their defence successfully (809). Pepin returned to Italy in shame. The seeds of an independent state at Venice had been sown by its own people. The rivalry between the two Empires over Venice and the Dalmatian coasts seemed also to have come to an end.

##### 5. Towards Peace and Recognition of Charlemagne's Imperial Title

From what we have seen so far, it becomes clear that Byzantium could not afford to be involved with all its forces in a war against the Frankish Empire. The interests of the Byzantine state were threatened on other fronts much more than on the western one. Nicephorus himself led the campaigns against the Arabs of Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Bulgars of Krum. At the same time he sent the Patrician Nicetas and later the strategos Paul not so much to start a war against the Franks, more to secure Byzantine control and influence on the coasts of the Adriatic.

On the other hand, it seems very likely that Charlemagne wanted to exercise control over Venice and Dalmatia, not for any particular reason, other than because he needed to be in a strong position during the negotiations to come with the eastern Empire.

Thus, in the course of the year 810 everything was ready for a final peaceful settlement. In July a Byzantine delegation under the Spatharius Arsaphius arrived in Italy in order to negotiate the terms.<sup>1</sup> We hear more details about

---

1. The other participants were, the Metropolitan Michael, the abbot Peter and the Candidatus Callistus. It is definitely worth remembering that these three envoys had been the members of the delegation sent to Charlemagne already in the year 803. (On that mission see above, p. 234 .)



Arsaphius' mission from Charlemagne's reply to Nicephorus, a letter which was sent early in 811.<sup>1</sup> At least three points of that letter need to be emphasized: a) Charles the Great calls Nicephorus his brother. b) He refers to the Byzantine embassy as desiring peace,<sup>2</sup> a peace which was probably going to put an end to the cold war between the two Empires over the control of Venice and Dalmatia and c) Arsaphius' embassy was sent not to Charlemagne himself, but to his son Pepin. But Pepin had in the meantime died and, as a consequence of that event, the Byzantine envoys were received by his father. In reference to that third point, one might wonder whether Charlemagne, after the appointment of his son as King of Italy, had not considered himself as the mediator between Pepin and the Emperor of the East, or perhaps the suzerain of the coasts of the northern Adriatic.

The Byzantine mission arrived at Aachen in October of 810, seeking a peace over the Venetian issue.<sup>3</sup> Such a peace, according to the western sources,<sup>4</sup> was signed in the course of the same year and it seems that it was 'bought' at a high price by Nicephorus.<sup>5</sup> As a condition of peace, Charlemagne demanded Dalmatia and the Byzantine envoys had no choice but to comply. It is also worth noting here that Charlemagne does not appear to have raised the issue of the recognition of his imperial title. At this stage it had become obvious that time was on his side and therefore there was no need to hurry. Buckler's interpretation that

---

1. M.G.H., Epistolae, IV, pp.546-47. The letter was also edited by H. Lietzmann in: Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen, (Berlin 1931), pp.35-37.

2. M.G.H., Epistolae, IV, p.547: "ad constituendam nobiscum pacem".

3. F. Lot, Ch. Pfister, L. Ganshof, Histoire... (op.cit.) 1, p.463.

4. Annales regni Francorum, (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 811.

5. Ph. Grierson, 'The Carolingian Empire in the Eyes of Byzantium', in Centro Italiano di Studio sull'Alto Medioevo Settimane di Studio, 27 (Spoleto 1981), p. 909.

Nicephorus was forced to recognize Charles in his new status as emperor, after he had failed to break up the friendly understanding between Aachen and Baghdad,<sup>1</sup> does not appear to be supported by ~~any~~ evidence.

Arsaphius stayed at Charlemagne's court until January of 811. On his way back to Constantinople, he was accompanied by a Frankish delegation,<sup>2</sup> sent to the East in order to confirm the peace treaty between the two Empires. By the time both embassies reached Constantinople Nicephorus had already been killed and thus his son-in-law Michael I had to continue negotiations from a rather weak position. He welcomed the Frankish delegates, but, as the final agreement was about to be signed at Aachen, they again left the capital of the eastern Empire, accompanied by the Byzantine negotiators. These were, the already mentioned Arsaphius, who had in the meantime been promoted to the rank of protospatharius, the Metropolitan Michael of Synada, participating in such a mission for a third time, and another protospatharius, named Theognostus.<sup>3</sup> Charlemagne received the Byzantine embassy at Aachen where, after a final agreement was reached and signed, they (the Byzantine envoys) called him officially and in the Greek language "βασιλεύς".<sup>4</sup> According to the final arrangements, Charlemagne allowed Venice and the Dalmatian coasts to remain under Byzantine influence<sup>5</sup> and this as a reward for the recognition of his imperial title (812).

---

1. W. Buckler, *Hārūn al-Rashīd...* (op.cit.), p.27.

2. The Frankish negotiators were: The Bishop Haido, the Count Hug and a Lombard named Aio (Annales regni Francorum, (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 811.

3. ibid.

4. Annales regni Francorum (ed. R. Rau, op.cit.), year 812: "scriptum pacti ab eo in ecclesia suscipientes more suo, id est Graeca lingua, laudes ei dixerunt, imperatorem et basileum appellantes".

5. P. Classen, 'Italien zwischen Byzanz und dem Frankenreich', in Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo Settimane di Studio, 27 (Spoleto 1981), p. 935.



## 6. General Assessment

Now that the main events in the relations between the two Empires have been recorded, it might be argued that a really dynamic reaction of Nicephorus I against Charlemagne did not finally come about. He surely tried to save the prestige of Byzantium, but circumstances strongly opposed his efforts. Thus, under the pressure of the state of affairs he inherited and current events, the idea of a single Roman Empire became more and more of a secondary importance. If the recognition of Charlemagne's imperial title in 812 became inevitable, Nicephorus I is certainly not the one to be blamed for it. But in regard to this recognition some further remarks must be added. It appears that Charlemagne wanted recognition only for himself and not for his successors too. Otherwise, he would not have divided the Frankish Empire among his sons, as he actually did, in 806. That division meant that no one of them would be called imperator Romanorum. In other words, Charlemagne sought recognition of his imperial title as a mark of his personal achievements, without any attempt to divide the single Roman Empire. Perhaps, in his mind there could easily be two Roman emperors in a single Roman Empire, at least for a short time. But, even so, Nicephorus was not at first prepared to recognize the Frankish King's imperial title. If he wanted to, the Byzantine Emperor could have proceeded to give his recognition some time between 802-811. The prolongation of the negotiations can only be explained by Nicephorus' refusal to grant the imperial title to Charlemagne. He was, probably, hoping that the already old Frankish monarch would die in the near future and thus the problem would come to an end by itself. But, ironically for the Byzantine Emperor, his own death occurred three years earlier

than his western rival's. Nicephorus' successor, Michael Rangabe, had neither the competence of his father-in-law, nor the strength for further tough negotiations with Charlemagne. Nevertheless, after the final arrangement and the recognition in 812, Venice and Dalmatia were finally kept within the Byzantine sphere of influence, and that was of greater significance than, perhaps, the imperial title itself.

In brief, moderation and understanding rather than extremism, governed the policy of the Emperor Nicephorus I towards the West, where he seems to have defended the interests of Byzantium more or less successfully.



## B: BYZANTIUM AND THE ARABS

### 1. The Sources

In our effort to outline the Arab-Byzantine relations at the beginning of the ninth century, we are mainly dependent on the accounts provided by Arabic sources. The Greek chroniclers, with the slight exception of Theophanes and the even slighter ones of George the Monk and Cedrenus, ignore events along the eastern frontiers. Even Theophanes fails to provide a systematic account of the conflicts between Byzantium and the Caliphate during Nicephorus' reign.

Another problem relevant to the sources, is that in some cases accounts of conflicts, recorded by the Greek chroniclers do not tally with the events, narrated by the Arabic sources. The Greeks, for example, mention no Arabic invasion in 803, while the Arab chroniclers do not record the defeat of Leo, the strategos of the Armeniac theme (the future Emperor Leo V) at Euchaita in 811.

Moreover, the reports provided by the Arabic sources are as a rule very general. They do not say much about the duration or even about the destination of the campaigns. Ya<sup>c</sup> Kūbī,<sup>1</sup> for example, mentions three Arabic raids during the course of the year A.H. 187 (30 December 802 to 19 December 803), but he does not say anything either about the places against which the raids were launched, or about their results. Under these circumstances our most reliable guide, at least among the Arabic authors, seems

---

1. E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids', E.H.R., 15 (1900), p.742.

to be Tabarī, who, although usually numbering fewer raids than Ya<sup>c</sup>Kūbī, is more detailed in what he records.

Nevertheless, as chroniclers in general are almost the only sources for the Arab-Byzantine relations during the period under consideration, their records are valuable to us, but only if treated with caution. Great care must be taken to find corroborating evidence.

Our Syriac sources, though not contemporary with the events can definitely shed some light on events occurring in the Arab-Byzantine frontier zone, especially where the accounts provided by Greek and Arabic chroniclers contradict each other.

Finally our Latin sources hardly touch events, taking place between Byzantium and the Caliphate. However, this should not be taken to mean that they can be overlooked. For it is mainly through them that we hear about the establishment of friendly relations between Charlemagne and the caliphs, and it would seem that these relations illuminate - to a certain extent - the whole political and diplomatic framework, in which the clashes between Nicephorus and Hārūn al-Rashīd must be put.

## 2. The Historical Background of the Conflicts

It is not certain whether, by having agreed to pay a tribute to the Arabs in 782,<sup>1</sup> Irene had bought a permanent peace or simply a truce. It appears, in any case, that the period for which peace lasted, was rather short.

Constantine VI was very anxious to prove that he was the real emperor and military success against the Arabs would

---

1. Tabarī, in Brooks 'Byzantines...' (loc.cit.), p.738.

Theophanes (1, p.456) speaks about a peace without mentioning any tribute.



have been the best proof of this. Ṭabarī gives the truce a duration of thirty two months, during which, as he stresses, there was no summer raid 'on account of the truce made for that period'.<sup>1</sup> Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī, however, reports that even during this time two Arab raids occurred, the first one led by al-Fadhl, the son of Ṣāliḥ, in the year A.H. 167 (5 August 783 to 23 July 784) and the second by Muḥammad, the son of Ibrahim in A.H. 168 (24 July 784 to 13 July 785).<sup>2</sup>

It looks as if the peace treaty or truce had a personal achievement of the Caliph al-Mahdī, the father of Hārūn. However, it was the son's very successful raid (he reached the Bosphorus at the head of a raiding party),<sup>3</sup> which forced Irene to seek for a peace agreement. Hārūn at that time was an ambitious prince and the second heir to the throne. - However, it is possible that his rivals in Baghdād did not consider themselves obliged to respect such a treaty. This seems to have been the reason why they kept launching raids - if Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī is correct - even during the period of the thirty two months, for which the truce lasted. Thus, it appears that the Arabic raids<sup>4</sup> were of two different sorts: the official ones, issued and directed from the court of Baghdād, and the unofficial ones undertaken occasionally by ambitious princes. However, both categories were directed against Byzantine territory. In a way a sort of rivalry existed between their leaders.

Theophanes' silence on these raids cannot, of course, be taken as proof that they did not occur. His account is not usually so detailed as the one provided by Arabic sources.

- 
1. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.) p.738. According to him the sum was 90,000 or 70,000 dinars, but the Kitāb al<sup>c</sup>Uyūm (in Brooks loc.cit., p.739) raises the yearly paid sum to 100,000 dinars plus 10,000 silk garments.
  2. In Brooks (loc.cit.), p.739.
  3. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.738.
  4. On the character of the Arab campaigns, cf. H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, 'L'Asie Mineure et les invasions Arabes' in R.H., 227 (1962), p.7.

Ṭabarī's silence, however, must make us suspicious about the importance of the raids led by al-Faḍl and Muḥammad. It would seem that these two leaders acted on their own initiative and independently from the central government. Unfortunately, Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī, who mentions the raids, does not go into any details. On the other hand, Ṭabarī does not report anything about these two raids, probably because they did not result either in any remarkable achievements for the Arabic army, or in any changes at the borders with the Byzantine Empire.

At any rate, Ṭabarī accuses the Byzantines of breaking the peace treaty, which they had signed with Hārūn.<sup>1</sup> Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī's account does not tally with that of Ṭabarī. Under the year A.H. 167, he states that al-Faḍl, the son of Sālih, conducted a raid.<sup>2</sup> As Brooks has pointed out,<sup>3</sup> if Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī is correct, then the rupture was the fault of the Arabs. Theophanes does not mention any hostilities until September of 788.

After the year 785, in which the peace treaty is supposed to have been broken, the Arabs kept conducting raids against the eastern Byzantine provinces, each summer. These raids were launched under various leaders, but Hārūn himself (Caliph since the year 786) is not reported to have led any of them before the year A.H. 181 (5 March 797 to 21 February 798).

It is worth noting that Ṭabarī does not mention any Arabic raid during the period 797-802, in which the Empress Irene was the sole ruler at Byzantium. One campaign of Hārūn, recorded by both Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī and Ṭabarī, seems to have occurred in the spring or early summer of 797, i.e. before

---

1. Under the year A.H. 168; in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.739.  
2. ibid.  
3. ibid.



the deposition and blinding of Constantine VI. However, it would seem that more crucial than the raid of the Caliph, was the expedition undertaken by al-Malik.<sup>1</sup> This Arab leader reached Ancyra, where he captured a subterranean granary.<sup>2</sup> This raid is dated by Ṭabarī in A.H. 181 (5 March 797 to 21 February 798) and before the deposition of Constantine, which, according to the same Arab chronicler, took place in the year after (22 February 798 to 11 February 799). Now, the same two events (campaign of al-Malik and deposition of Constantine VI) are reported by Theophanes too, though in a different order. According to him, the deposition of the unlucky Constantine VI took place on 15 August 797, and there is no doubt that in regard to this dating Theophanes is correct. As far as the expedition of al-Malik against Asia Minor is concerned, Theophanes reports him plundering Cappadocia and Galatia<sup>3</sup> some time after the deposition of the Emperor Constantine VI. It would seem that the only way to match the records provided by Ṭabarī and Theophanes, is to admit that al-Malik launched his raid against Asia Minor some time in the spring or the early summer of 797. Theophanes narrates that in March of that year Constantine started a campaign against the Arabs,<sup>4</sup> who had already penetrated Byzantine territory. That expedition, of course, was never going to reach the Arabic forces, because the plot against the Emperor had already been put into operation. Therefore, it appears that al-Malik took advantage of the internal disturbances at Byzantium during the summer of 797. He stayed in Asia Minor

---

1. Theophanes (1, p.473) calls him Ἀβιμέλεχ.

2. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (*loc.cit.*), p.741.

3. Theophanes 1, p.473: "ληϊζόμενον τὰ κέρη Καππαδοκίας καὶ Γαλατίας"

4. Theophanes 1, p.471.

and launched his plundering against various regions, but mainly against Cappadocia and Galatia.<sup>1</sup> Since the Byzantine government could not react at that time, it is reasonable to believe that al-Malik was still there until September of the same year (797). By that time Irene was well established as the sole ruler of Byzantium and realized that she had to cope with the situation in Asia Minor. According to Theophanes, the Empress Irene sent two clergymen, Dorotheos, an abbot from Chrysoupolis, and Constantine, the chartophylax of St. Sophia, as delegates for peace. The envoys failed to achieve a peace agreement,<sup>2</sup> and thus we find the Arabs in Asia Minor during the following year (798) too.

In that year, however, the situation became even worse for imperial prestige. It appears that small Arab forces under various ambitious lieutenants again invaded Byzantine territory and acted independently. We hear from Theophanes that al-Malik's forces reached Malagina, a city of Bithynia, where Stauracius' horses were stabled. The horses and the imperial baggage train were taken away.<sup>3</sup> No opposition seems to have been provided by the Byzantines. Another Arabic army campaigned against Lydia and got away with many captives, while only a detachment of Arabs managed to defeat the combined armies of Opsikion and the Optimates, under the Patrician Paul, Count of Opsikion.<sup>4</sup> In the same way as at Malagina, the Arabs took away the baggage train of the imperial army. Finally, we hear from Ṭabarī that in the year A.H. 182 (22 February 798 to 11 February 799) an

- 
1. Ancyra, especially mentioned by Ṭabarī, seems to have been the capital or the main city of Galatia. It belonged to the theme of Boukelarioi; on this city see C. Foss, 'Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara' in D.O.P., 31 (1977), pp.27-88, especially p.77.
  2. Theophanes 1, p.473: "οὐ χέρονε δέ:"
  3. ibid.
  4. ibid.



Arab detachment under <sup>C</sup>Abd al-Rahmān, the son of al-Malik, reached Ephesus.<sup>1</sup> Under these circumstances, we would expect the Empress Irene to have made another appeal for peace with the Caliphate. A peace treaty, however, is reported only by Mas<sup>C</sup>ūdī, who asserts that after Irene had become the sole ruler of the Empire "elle entretint avec lui (Rashīd) des rapports pacifiques, et il lui envoya des présents",<sup>2</sup> (she maintained peaceful relations with him, and he sent her presents). But, apart from Mas<sup>C</sup>ūdī, no other source reports such a peace treaty or an agreement for payment of any tribute to the Arabs. It can only be inferred from the fact that neither Greek nor Arabic sources record raids from either side during the years 798-802.<sup>3</sup> This silence is the main, though not the only ground, which

- 
1. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.) p.741. On this expedition cf. Brooks (ibid. note 126) where two possibilities are put forward: the first that it was the same campaign which Theophanes ascribes to al-Malik (κατὰ λθρον ἕως Ἄνδρίας) and the second that Arab authors some times were confused between Ephesus and Arabissos.
  2. Mas<sup>C</sup>ūdī, Le livre... (op.cit.) p.228; M. Canard (La prise d'Heraclée et les relations entre Hārūn al-Rashīd et l'empereur Nicéphore 1<sup>er</sup>, Byz., 32, 1962, p.346, note), relies on this passage to suggest that Irene agreed to pay a tribute to Hārūn, but it hardly provides conclusive evidence.
  3. Ya<sup>C</sup>kūbī, who reports one raid per year on the part of the Arabs during that period, is an exception. It would seem, however, that this Chronicler does so out of a habit and, in any case, neither Hārūn himself, nor any of his close relatives were involved in these expeditions. Referring to the character of these raids, J.B. Bury, (E.R.E., p.251, note 2) calls them perfunctory. Michael the Syrian is another author, who also records two Arabic raids during Irene's sole reign. In the first one (no exact dates are provided) Aetius won a victory against the invaders, but in the ~~year~~ following year he was defeated by the Arabic forces. Michael indirectly dates Aetius' defeat some time in the year 802 and assumes that it caused Irene's fall and the elevation of Nicephorus I to power (J.B. Chabot, Chronique..., op.cit., iii, p.12). This report by Michael is of particular significance, because he himself is a reliable source and because, up to a certain extent, he used a common source with Theophanes.



has led most scholars to assume that in the year 798 Irene agreed to pay a tribute to the Arabs. The other reason, is the famous letter, which is supposed to have been sent to Hārūn by the Byzantine Emperor some time during Nicephorus I's first year in office.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, whatever the arrangements made, it is clear that during the last four years of Irene's sole reign (798-802) the Byzantine Empire enjoyed a period of comparative tranquility in its relations with the Caliphate.

### 3. Byzantium's Eastern Borders in 802

Before we enter the details of the conflicts which occurred during Nicephorus' reign, it would be useful to try and plot the frontier line which had separated the two Empires since 798. That was the year in which the Arabs were spread over all Asia Minor and Irene was probably forced by circumstances to purchase peace with them by paying a yearly sum to the Caliphate. It would seem that the Arabs, at least at that time, were not really interested in annexing parts of Byzantine territory to the Caliphate. Thus, the main line of frontiers between Byzantium and the Arabs remained more or less stable.

The borders were shaped by a natural barrier, that of Taurus-Antitaurus range, which runs through the area from Cilicia to the Euphrates. Crossing these mountains there were two main passes. The first one is the famous Cilician Gates<sup>2</sup> in the southern part of the range and the second was

---

1. For a discussion on the letter, see in this section below, pp.261-63.

2. For a detailed description, cf. W.M. Ramsay, 'The Historical... (op.cit.), pp.349-56.



sited near Adata, on the road connecting Caesarea and Arabissos.<sup>1</sup> The Cilician Gates, known from ancient times, were decisive for the raids undertaken either by the Byzantines against Syria, or by the Arabs, as they started their campaigns from the well fortified cities of Tarsos, Adana and Anazarbos.<sup>2</sup> The second pass was to be used by the Byzantine forces, when setting out from Caesarea to invade Mesopotamia,<sup>3</sup> or by Arabic army starting out from Germanicia or perhaps Melitene.

It has been said that Hārūn took great care of the frontier line and fortified several of its key places, such as Germanicia, Anazarbos and Tarsos.<sup>4</sup> It would be easy to see that such measures served two purposes: to secure the Caliphate against a Byzantine invasion, and at the same time to serve as garrisons for a number of troops, which in the case of Tarsos reached 8000.<sup>5</sup> It is very likely that these forces participated in the raids against Byzantine territory.

- 
1. J.B. Bury (E.R.E., p.244) locates Adata on the road between Germanicia and Melitene, but it seems more probable that this city-fortress dominated the road between Caesarea and Germanicia and it was sited somewhere fairly close to Arabissos. As we shall see below (p.280) Adata was attacked by the Byzantine forces in 807 and Hārūn himself went there in order to take care of the fortress and to post a lieutenant at the pass of Adata for its defence. It appears that Adata was one of the most remote western outposts of the Arabic frontier line. Bury himself (E.R.E. p.244) admits that it was frequently attacked by the Byzantines. For the location of Adata, see also J.G.C. Anderson, 'The Campaign of Basil I Against the Paulicians in 872', in Classical Review X (1896), pp.138-9; and H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, 'L'Asie Mineure...' (loc.cit.), p.4, map.
  2. For these places see W. Ramsay, The Historical... (op.cit.) pp.349-56 and 386-87.
  3. J.B. Bury, E.R.E. p.244. The possible routes in the area have been discussed by J.G.C. Anderson, 'The Road System of Eastern Asia Minor with the Evidence of Byzantine Campaigns' (with map) in J.H.S., XVII (1897), p.28.
  4. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., pp.244-45.
  5. ibid., p.245.



Furthermore, in the year 796 Hārūn al-Rashīd took up residence at Rakka, an event which, if it was not caused by, at least coincided with a certain upsurge of activity by the Byzantines along the borders.<sup>1</sup> Although that year was already the Caliph's tenth in power and, disliking Baghdād, he had in the meantime established his residence in one or two other places, it appears that Hārūn chose Rakka as his chief residence, 'probably because of its proximity to the Byzantine frontier, where he was planning great things'.<sup>2</sup> Such a view conflicts with that of W. Muir, who believes that the Caliph set up his court at Rakka 'ostensibly to hold disloyal Syria in check'.<sup>3</sup> Although there is probably some truth in Muir's opinion, the fact that Hārūn had left all the internal affairs in the hands of the Barmakids<sup>4</sup> suggests that considerations of foreign policy were uppermost in his mind. Moreover, one needs to remember that even before becoming caliph in 786, Hārūn had already led raids against Byzantine territory. It is, therefore, likely that from his experience at that time, Hārūn was convinced that a strengthening of the western frontier of the Caliphate was necessary. With a view to this end he established in the border area a new province, the <sup>c</sup>Awāsīm, 'whose resources were to be devoted to frontier warfare'.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it must be added that Hārūn al-Rashīd was the first of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs to

- 
1. M.A. Shaban, Islamic History 2, A.D. 750-1055, (Cambridge 1976), p.31.
  2. H. Kennedy, The Early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (Totowa, N. Jersey 1981), p.120.
  3. W. Muir, The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall, (Oxford 1892, Reprint 1975), p.476.
  4. For a discussion on the abilities and the role played by the Barmakids family, cf. H. Kennedy, The Early... (op.cit.), pp.116-20.
  5. H. Kennedy, The Early... (op.cit.), p.130.



become interested in and to organize naval warfare.<sup>1</sup> Should his choice of Rakka as his main residence, therefore, not be seen as a measure, which corresponded to Caliph's lively interest on Byzantine affairs? In any case, what seems to be of more importance is that with Hārūn moving to Rakka, the line of Arabic fortresses between Tarsos and Lykandos, was stabilized, running, for the most part, along the eastern side of the Taurus-Antitaurus mountains. (See map on next page.)

On the other side of the range there was another line of fortresses, which underpinned Byzantine control of the area. This line extended from Sebasteia in the north-east, close to the borders with Armenia, to Heracleia in the south-west, close to the Cilician Gates. The main fortresses located between these two ends of the line, seem to have been Caesarea, Kyzistra<sup>2</sup> and Tyana. We are not told whether Irene and Constantine VI took any measures to strengthen this line of fortresses. Nicephorus does not seem to have had the time to fortify the eastern outposts, because, at least during his first year in power, he was absorbed by internal affairs.

Thus, it would appear that the Taurus-Antitaurus mountains served as a sort of 'no man's' land between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate. There was, however, one fort, which was of crucial importance at least as far as the control of the Cilician Gates is concerned. That was the fortress of Loulon,<sup>3</sup> located very close to Poḍandos and dominating the road between Tyana and Heracleia as well as the narrow pass of the Cilician Gates. Control of this fort had passed to and fro from Byzantine to Arab,<sup>4</sup> but, at the turn of the eighth century it seems to have been under Arabic control. It hardly needs to be said that it was mostly around these two lines of fortresses<sup>5</sup> that the main conflicts between Byzantium and the Caliphate in the early ninth century took place.

---

1. On this, see in this section, below, pp. 276 and 281.

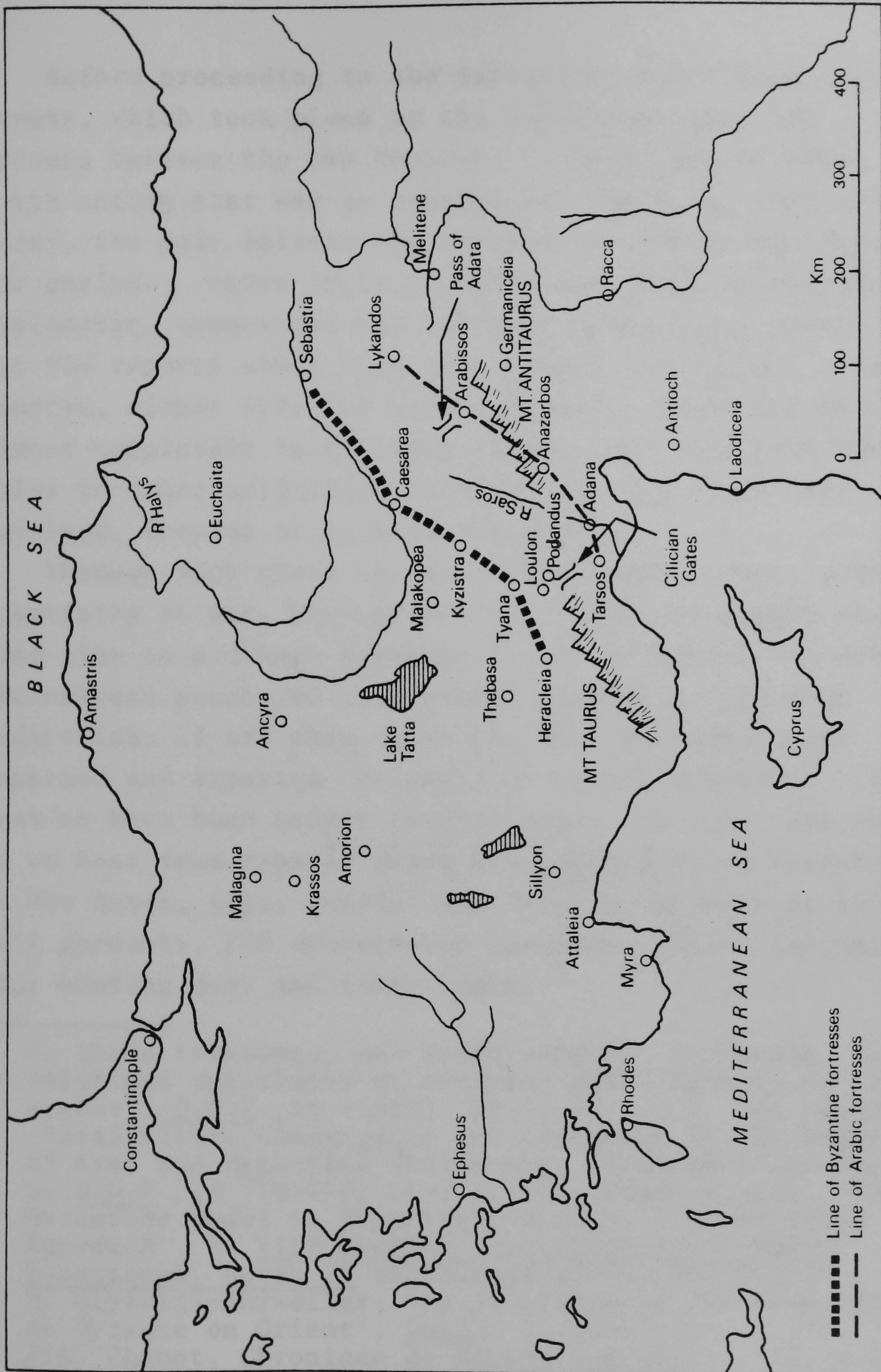
2. Not to be confused with Heracleia Kybistra.

3. For its identification cf. W. Ramsay, The Historical... (op.cit.), pp. 351-52.

4. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p. 245.

5. For their importance cf. Fr. Hild, Das Byzantinische Strassen-System in Kappadokiën, (Vienna 1977).







Before proceeding to the narration on the main military events, which took place at the borders or near the borders between the two Empires, it would be, perhaps, worth noting that war in general was the main, but, by no means, the only interaction between the two worlds during our period. Other sorts of relations, such as political, diplomatic, commercial and cultural continue to exist,<sup>1</sup> but the reports about them are usually very vague. The sources, either Greek or Arabic dedicate their accounts almost completely to military events and, even when they refer to other activities in which the two sides were involved, they do so as mere anecdotes.

Through such clues we hear, for example, that, although constantly at war, Nicephorus I and Hārūn al-Rashīd found some time to exchange presents.<sup>2</sup> As M. Canard has noticed the objects exchanged as presents provide a very good indication, if not hard evidence, for the commodities imported and exported by and from either country.<sup>3</sup> They seem to have been mainly textile goods, perfumes and jewellery.<sup>4</sup> As we hear from Ṭabarī, Hārūn al-Rashīd sent to Nicephorus in 806 dates, figs, raisins and treacle, as well as 100 silk garments, 200 embroidered garments, twelve falcons, four hunting dogs and three horses.<sup>5</sup>

- 
1. On these relations, see among others: M. Canard, 'Les relations politiques et sociales entre Byzance et les Arabes', D.O.P., 18 (1964), pp.35-56; G.E. von Grunebaum, 'Parallelism, Convergence and Influence in the Relations of Arab and Byzantine Philosophy, Literature and Piety', in D.O.P., 18 (1964) pp.91-111; Th. Papadopoulos, 'The Byzantine Model in Frontier History: A Comparative Approach', in VIX<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Études Byzantines, Actes II (Bucharest 1975), 415-19; H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, 'La frontière et les frontières de Byzance en Orient', ibid., I, 209-211.
  2. J.B. Chabot, Chronique de Michel (op.cit.), III, p.16; Bar Hebraeus, (op.cit.), p.121.
  3. M. Canard, 'Les relations...' (loc.cit.), p.54.
  4. ibid., p.49.
  5. Ṭabarī, in Brooks 'Byzantines...' (loc.cit.), p.746.



From another source<sup>1</sup> we have the information that at an unspecified time, Nicephorus asked the Caliph to send him the Arab poet Abû'l-<sup>c</sup>Atâhija, whose poetry the Byzantine Emperor was very fond of. The Caliph was very keen to do Nicephorus a favour, but the poet himself refused to emigrate to Constantinople. After that refusal, partly disappointed, Nicephorus engraved two verses by that poet on the doors of his palace and on the main gate of the capital.<sup>2</sup> Even if the narration of the Kitâb al-Aghâni is mere legend, it does point to the existence of some kind of cultural relations between the two Empires during the period in question. These relations, of course, were further developed during the reigns of the Emperor Theophilus and the Caliph Mutassim. Moreover, there were always individuals, sometimes of high rank, willing to cross the border and seek their fortune on the other side. According to Greek reports, an engineer of Arabic origin played a decisive role in the capture of Mesembria by Krum in 812.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Byzantine dissidents we should mention Tatzatius, the strategos of Boukellarion theme, who in 782 went over to the Arabs, because of his hatred against Stauracius,<sup>4</sup> Elpidius, patrician and strategos of Sicily, who in the same year acted in the same way as Tatzatius (although for different reasons);<sup>5</sup> Thomas the Slav who did

---

1. Kitâb al-Aghâni, in M. Canard, ('Les relations... loc.cit.), p.36, n.5.

2. On this story cf. M. Canard: 'Quelques "à côté" de l'histoire des relations entre Byzance et les Arabes', in Studi medievali in onore d. Giorgio Levi Della Vida, Rome 1956, pp.103-104.

3. Theophanes 1, p.498; I. Zonaras, Annales ... (op.cit./3, p.315).

4. Theophanes 1, p.456.

5. Theophanes 1, p.455; Michael the Syrian (op.cit./vol.3, pp.9, 15 and 16). On the date and the circumstances in which Elpidius flew to the Arabs, see above, Chapter 2, p.82.



did the same thing at an unspecified date<sup>1</sup> and Manuel, who crossed the borders twice, to the Arabs and then back again, during Theophilus' reign.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, ordinary people settled near the frontiers, would be expected to have communicated with each other, to have exchanged commodities, ideas, views, etc.

#### 4. The Conflicts

The quiet period which seems to have marked the relations between Constantinople and Raḡka at the turn of the eighth century, ended some time during the year 803 when both Greek and Arabic sources report growing friction which led to a resumption of hostilities.

For the worsening of the relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate, the Arabic sources blame the new Byzantine Emperor, who is supposed to have sent a letter to Hārūn al-Rashīd,<sup>3</sup> letting him know that the new government at Constantinople was determined to adopt a tougher stand against the Caliphate, than the Empress Irene had done.<sup>4</sup> Although their authenticity is dubious, it is worth citing here both Nicephorus' initial letter and Hārūn's reply. The Byzantine Emperor wrote:

---

1. Theophanes Continuatus, C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1838), p.51.

2. *ibid.*, pp.118-20.

3. Nicephorus I's letter, as well as Hārūn's reply can be found in: Gibbon's A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, (Fourth edition, London 1906), Ch.52; G. Weil, Geschichte der Kahlifen, Mannheim 1846-62, II, p.159, and Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūti, History of the Caliphs (transl. by H.S. Jarrett) Calcutta 1881, p.296.

4. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (*loc.cit.*) p.743; the poet A'bdu'r Raḡman-b-Yusuf, in Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūti's (op.cit.) p.296 and Mas'ūdī, Le paires d'or (op.cit.), II, p.337. Mas'ūdī however asserts that the correspondence was initiated by Hārūn and not by Nicephorus.

'From Nicephorus, King of the Greeks, to Hārūn, King of the Arabs. Irene had parted with the castle and contented herself with the pawn. She had paid you moneys, the double of which you should have paid to her. It was but a woman's weakness. Wherefore, return what you have taken, or the sword shall decide.'<sup>1</sup>

To this letter the Caliph replied immediately:

'From Hārūn, Commander of the Faithful, to Nicephorus, dog of the Greeks. I have read your letter, son of an unbelieving mother. The answer is for your eye to see, not for your ear to hear.'<sup>2</sup>

As we can easily see in Nicephorus' hypothetical letter, the Byzantine Emperor, not only stopped the payment of a tribute to the Arabs agreed by Irene, but he demanded the refund of what the Caliph had so far received. The letter is reported only by Arabic sources<sup>3</sup> and presupposes the existence of a state of peace and the payment of tribute in 802. As we have implied, a peace treaty was concluded during the second half of 798. It would seem that a letter like that may be the key to the solution of the crucial problem, concerning the relations between the two countries at the turn of the eighth century. Therefore, it is worth recapitulating the evidence for both, the possible peace treaty of 798, and the letter, which is supposed to have been sent to Hārūn by Nicephorus I in 803.

The Greek sources mention almost nothing either about the treaty or about the letter.<sup>4</sup> The Arab chroniclers do

---

1. Jalāl al-Din al Suyūti, History of the Caliphs, (op.cit.) p.296.

2. ibid.

3. Michael the Syrian (ed. J.B. Chabot, op.cit., vol.III, p.16) also says that Nicephorus wrote an insulting letter to Hārūn.

4. The only letter reported by a Greek source is the one quoted by George the Monk and dated by the same chronicler in 806. It can be found in C. de Boor's edition, Lipsiae 1904, p.773. Although it is again a letter sent by the Emperor Nicephorus I to the Caliph Hārūn, its content is quite different to the content of the letter quoted by the Arab sources.



not report any peace treaty under the year 798 either.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the information about it, is derived ~~mainly, if not~~ exclusively from Nicephorus' dubious letter.

It is true that the letter speaks clearly about the existence of a peace treaty and of a tribute paid to the Arabs in 802. But how reliable is the letter? E.W. Brooks, relying mainly on Theophanes' silence, regards both letters (the one by Nicephorus and Hārūn's reply) as 'spurious' and as 'an Arab invention'.<sup>2</sup> Most modern scholars have carefully avoided committing themselves as to the authenticity of the letters. Nevertheless, they all seem to have taken it for granted that Irene had signed a peace agreement and had agreed to pay tribute to the Arabs, probably after the successful Arabic invasions in the year 798. It would appear, however, that the two issues, i.e. the first concerning the peace treaty of 798 and the second the letters of 803, are closely connected and, therefore, one has either to accept or to reject both of them. We can easily see that a relation of cause <sup>and</sup> effect exists in the case under consideration. In other words, if such a humiliating peace had been signed in 798, then we would normally have expected Nicephorus to have reacted by adopting an intransigent policy towards the Arabs, either immediately after his elevation in 802, or some time in the course of the year 803.

---

1. Mas<sup>c</sup>ūdī, Le livre... (op.cit.), p.227, forms perhaps an exception. In a rather general statement, which is not under a definite year, he says the following about Irene: "c'est grâce à elle que la paix fut maintenue entre les Grecs et les kalifes el-Mehdi, el-Hadi et el-Réhid", (thanks to her peace between the Greeks and the Caliphs al-Mahdī, al-Hādī and al-Rashīd was maintained).

2. E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs...' (loc.cit.), p.743.

To go back to the year 798, one must say that the situation in the whole Asia Minor at that time was more or less chaotic. As we have already seen above (p.253) Theophanes himself reports several Arab invasions which had penetrated the country and had reached the west coast of the peninsula at Ephesus.<sup>1</sup> The central government of Constantinople could not react dynamically and effectively. It would seem that the only way in which Byzantium could have driven the Arabs out of Asia Minor, would have been by signing a peace treaty and by agreeing to pay a tribute, probably imposed by Hārūn as a condition for the peace. The lack of any report provided by Greek sources concerning this peace agreement should not surprise anybody. Since these sources speak, almost unanimously, in favour of the Empress Irene, we would not expect them to have reported events, which impugned Irene's capacities and abilities to cope with external threats. Coming to the reign of Nicephorus I, the same Greek authors would certainly have been very reluctant to record the new Emperor's uncompromising attitude towards the Caliphate.

At any rate, it appears that Nicephorus did not accept the fait accompli, with which he was confronted at the time of his accession. People are ready to pay for their own mistakes, but not willing to accept responsibilities for their predecessors' failures. There was no way of continuing the payment of any tribute agreed by the Empress. Such a humiliation went far beyond any possibility of forbearance. Nicephorus' reaction is found to tally with two of his most notable characteristics: a) His proud character and b) His great concern for money.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.469; Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.) p.741.



The new Emperor of Constantinople found a way of making his intentions clear to the Caliph. Whether this was done by sending an embassy, or just by refusing to meet Hārūn's claim for the yearly tribute, is not of vital importance. Nevertheless, it would seem reasonable to believe that there must have been some correspondence between the two Empires after Nicephorus had come into power. Under the current circumstances, such a correspondence would have started sometime in the early summer of 803. It appears that the first six months or so of Nicephorus I's reign passed quietly, and the Emperor spent most of his time dealing with internal issues. He needed to secure himself in office against possible rivals. We are not told whether Nicephorus I handled the economic and fiscal situation of the Empire immediately after his accession, but the possibility that some preliminary work was undertaken in that direction too, cannot be ruled out. Such considerations do not provide any exact date of the controversial correspondence between Nicephorus and Hārūn but there is, nevertheless, one event which, being of crucial importance itself, can also shed some light into our problem. This event is the rebellion of Bardanes Turcus, which broke out on 19 July 803.<sup>1</sup> It is almost certain that Bardanes' uprising prevented the Emperor Nicephorus I from confronting the Arabic forces which invaded the eastern provinces of Byzantium during the month Sha<sup>c</sup>ban (25 July-22 August) of the same year.<sup>2</sup> If these two datings are accurate - and there is no reason why we should not accept them as correct - and, if one remembers that according to Tabarī, Hārūn al-Rashīd marched against Heracleia

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.479.

2. Tabarī, in Brooks... (loc.cit.), p.743.

immediately after he received Nicephorus' letter,<sup>1</sup> then the correspondence between the two men must have started some time in late spring or early summer (probably in May) of the year 803. To suggest that the letters were exchanged as part of post-campaign negotiations, during which Nicephorus refused to accept Hārūn's terms, would be against the information provided by the sources. It is more reasonable to accept the order of the events provided by the Arab authors and to believe that Hārūn al-Rashīd took Nicephorus' stand as a provocation, which led to the commencement of hostilities between the two Empires.

Among the first events - if we are to believe Ṭabarī - which marked the hostilities between the two countries during Nicephorus I's reign, was Hārūn al-Rashīd's raid against Heracleia.<sup>2</sup> Bardanes' rebellion, already in course, might have made things much easier for the Arabs. It appears very likely that they took advantage of the internal trouble of the Byzantine Empire and at the end of July or the beginning of August they invaded Cappadocia. The expedition was led by Ḳāsim, son of the Caliph and prefect of ḲAwāsim,<sup>3</sup> who besieged and blockaded Koron.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Ṭabarī, in Brooks... (loc.cit.), p.743.
  2. ibid.; for the location of Heracleia cf. W. Ramsay, The Historical... (op.cit.), p.339, where it is stated that Heracleia-Kybistra was part of Cappadocia all the time.
  3. M. Canard, 'Byzantium and the Muslim World to the Middle of the Eleventh Century', C.M.H., vol.4a, p.707. On the province of ḲAwāsim, cf. in this section, above, p.256.
  4. For its identification cf. W. Ramsay, The Historical... (op.cit.) p.355. J.F. Haldon and H. Kennedy ('The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the eighth and ninth Centuries: Military Organization and Society in the Borderlands', in Sbornik Radova, 19, 1980, p.86) locate Koron north of Tyana and point out that it was the military headquarters of Cappadocia.



This last campaign is mentioned by both our main Arabic sources, that is to say by Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī and Ṭabarī, though with slightly different details. In Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī's report neither the time, nor the destination of the raid is provided. He does, however, add the names of al-Malik, the son of Ṣāliḥ, and Ibrahim, the son of Uthman,<sup>1</sup> which are mentioned beside that of Ḳāsim, probably as senior advisers of the young prince during the expedition.

Ṭabarī asserts that al-Ḳāsim's ambitions extended farther than Koron. He sent one of his lieutenants, al-Abbas, the son of Ga'far, against the fort of Sinan,<sup>2</sup> which was also taken after a short defence.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, al-Ḳāsim's intention does not seem to have been the annexation of these two forts to the Caliphate.

H. Ahrweiler's remarks on the character of the Arabic raids: 'L'action militaire arabe prend sur terre la forme de "guérilla" et de "razzia"',<sup>4</sup> seem to apply to this case too.

Now, what was Nicephorus' reaction, if any, to the Arab incursions? Since the two main events of the summer of 803 intermeshed in one way or another, it seems that there was not much Byzantine opposition against the invader. Normally it was the armies of the Asiatic themes (τὰ περατικὰ θέματα), which should have confronted the Arabs, but the Emperor Nicephorus seemed to have lost control of these forces. They were commanded by the powerful monostrategos Bardanes, whose rebellion they unanimously backed and who directed them, not against the Arab invaders, but against the capital itself. Although

---

1. Ya<sup>c</sup>Ḳūbī, in Brooks... (loc.cit.), p.744.

2. For a possible location cf. E.W. Brooks, 'The Arabs in Asia Minor, from Arabic Sources', in J.H.S., 18 (1898), p.205.

3. Ṭabarī in, Brooks (loc.cit.), p.742.

4. H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, 'L'Asie Mineure...' (loc.cit.), p.7.

the Emperor had realized the difficulty of the whole situation in time, there was not much he could do. It would have been considered very risky, to say the least, if he had transferred the rest of the thematic army and the tagmata to Asia Minor in order to fight against the Arabs at that time. In such a case the Emperor Nicephorus would perhaps have handed the whole army to the ambitious monostrategos and, more importantly, he would have left the capital itself undefended. Furthermore, even if the rest of the army and at least the tagmata had remained loyal to the Emperor, there was always the huge risk of initiating a civil war, the consequences of which would have been nothing less than a complete disaster for Byzantium. Nevertheless, some action was undertaken on the part of the Byzantines against the invaders. That action, although not reported directly, took place at an unspecified time and it ended in victory for the Byzantine army. Such an assumption is based on Ṭabarī, who asserts that, when at the end of the campaign season of 803 the two sides came to terms, three hundred and twenty Arab prisoners - we are not told when and where they had been captured - were released.<sup>1</sup> In any case, since the number is not big, the incident cannot be very important either. After that arrangement al-Kāsim retired in peace back to Arabic territory. It was probably already late autumn and, therefore, no further operations were expected by either side.

It appears that the Byzantine Emperor himself did not undertake any campaign against the Arabs until the end of 803.

---

1. Ṭabarī, in Brooks... (loc.cit.), p.742. It is worth noting that Ya<sup>c</sup> Kūbī dates the release of these prisoners in 804 (A.H. 188). However, as Brooks ('Byzantines...' loc.cit. p.744, note 150) has pointed out, Ṭabarī's dating (803) fits better into the whole context of the internal events of the Caliphate.



Whether Hārūn led an expedition against imperial territory, remains disputable. This is because, among the sources which cover our period, it is only Ṭabarī who records such an event. According to him, when Rashīd received the letter of Nicephorus, he himself marched immediately ('the same day')<sup>1</sup> and reached the gates of Heracleia. The Byzantine Emperor, being occupied by Bardanes' rebellion and frightened by the Caliph's raid, sought for peace and agreed to pay a tribute imposed by Hārūn as a condition for it. Thus Heracleia escaped capture and remained under Byzantine control. However, when Rashīd had retreated to Rakka,<sup>2</sup> Nicephorus broke the agreement and refused to pay the tribute. As a result of that refusal, the Caliph came back, notwithstanding the severe winter and invaded Byzantine territory once again.<sup>3</sup>

Bury's interpretation of this story relies very heavily on Ṭabarī's original text. Thus he argues that, because he was too busy trying to suppress Bardanes' rebellion, the Emperor Nicephorus concluded a humiliating peace treaty with the Arabs in 803 and undertook the obligation to pay a tribute to Hārūn.<sup>4</sup>

However, there are certain points, which should make us very reluctant to accept Ṭabarī's account as far as the personal expedition of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 803 is concerned.

In the first place, his account of these events is suspiciously close to his account of the events of 806. The only difference which can be spotted in the two passages is that in 803 Hārūn stopped his march in front of Heracleia's

---

1. Ṭabarī, in Brooks... (loc.cit.), p.743.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

4. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.250.

gates, while in 806 he besieged and conquered the city-fortress. Otherwise, both accounts tell us that Rashīd marched personally against the fortress of Heracleia, that Nicephorus was frightened and proposed to pay a tribute, if Hārūn would withdraw, that the Byzantine Emperor failed to honour his agreement and that the Caliph came back to punish him very late on in the winter and under severe weather conditions. This last detail should make us particularly suspicious.

As we shall see below, nobody so far has challenged the credibility of the sources in regard to the events of 806. The accounts provided by all sources, Greek and Arabic for that year coincide, so that there is no doubt that they tell us the truth. But to believe that exactly the same events took place in 803 too, is out of question. If they did, then two other major questions will remain unanswered: a) As a result of the treaty, which is supposed to have been signed by the two sides in the summer of 803, Hārūn himself retreated to Raḳka. However, in the meantime - and definitely after the hypothetical treaty had already been signed - al-Ḳāsim, his son, went on attacking and conquering places, well inside Byzantine territory. If such a peace treaty had been agreed, one might have expected Rashīd to order his son to withdraw from hostilities too. Because otherwise al-Ḳāsim would also have been blamed for violation of a peace agreement. b) An expedition of the Caliph himself, which penetrated Byzantine territory, a peace treaty and a tribute imposed by the Arabs, all these were too important to have been ignored by the Greek sources especially Theophanes. To this last point, nevertheless, we must add an alternative reservation: since we follow the line that Theophanes does not record events favourable to the Emperor Nicephorus I, if he can help it,



then a failure on the part of Hārūn to capture Heracleia, might be omitted as reflecting too much credit on Nicephorus. In other words, it might be suggested that the Caliph may have attacked Heracleia in 803 too and was forced to withdraw not because he compelled the Byzantine Emperor to accept his terms and to pay tribute to the Caliphate, but because he failed to capture it. This is, of course, quite possible, but our sources do not provide much help in that direction either. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to say that there are no good grounds for accepting the existence of an expedition by Hārūn against Heracleia in 803. To sum up, it might be suggested that, because of Nicephorus' refusal to continue the payment of any tribute, hostilities resumed - though not on a large scale - in 803, but neither the Caliph nor the Byzantine Emperor participated in any expedition personally in that year.

In the following year (804) it was the Arabs again who began hostilities. It is worth noting that from this year onwards, the conflicts between the two Empires are recorded by the Greek sources too. However, what is perhaps more important than this, is that the accounts given by the Arab chroniclers, on the one hand, and those provided by the Greek authors, on the other, cover, more or less, common ground and can, therefore, be matched with less difficulty.

During that year the Byzantine hold on Asia Minor was still weak. This means that Hārūn did not need to undertake a personal expedition. He could still rely upon his capable lieutenants. According to Ṭabarī, this time it was Ibrahim, the son of Gabriel, who conducted the summer raid entering Byzantine territory through the pass of

Al Safsaf.<sup>1</sup> Ṭabarī does not tell us how deeply into Asia Minor Ibrahim penetrated, but on this there is some valuable information given by Theophanes<sup>2</sup> and Cedrenus.<sup>3</sup> According to these two chroniclers, Nicephorus was worried by the fact that the Arabs had reached as far as Phrygia.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in August he himself led an expedition against them. The two armies clashed at Krassos,<sup>5</sup> where the Byzantines were defeated and the Emperor himself was lucky to escape being captured. Ṭabarī reports that Nicephorus I received three wounds,<sup>6</sup> but Theophanes considered a narrow escape more humiliating than a wound received in the battle. In any case, one needs to be suspicious about Ṭabarī's source, not only because a triple wound of the Byzantine emperor would have been very well reported by other sources too, but also because of the huge numbers given by him in regard to the imperial losses. There is, of course, very little doubt that this conflict was a disaster for the Byzantine forces. However, to believe that they lost 40,700 men and 4,000 beasts of burden, as Ṭabarī's source of information suggests, is out of question. Ṭabarī himself does not appear to have been very keen to accept these numbers. That is probably the reason why he is very careful in the way he records them.<sup>7</sup>

---

1. W. Ramsay, (The Historical..., op.cit., p.354, note), identifies it as Sideropalos, but J.B. Bury (E.R.E., p.245, note 3) seems to believe that it was the same as Loulon.

2. Theophanes 1, p.481.

3. G. Cedrenus, Historiarum Compendium (Bonn 1839) II, p.33.

4. George the Monk also reports the Arabs in Phrygia (Amorium), but under the year 805 (De Boor, op.cit. pp.772-73).

5. Cedrenus, however, does not locate the battle specifically. For the location of Krassos in Phrygia, see map, p.258.

6. Ṭabarī, in Brooks... (loc.cit.), p.744.

7. ibid. It reads: 'as (it) is recorded'.



In April of the next year (805) the Caliph found himself forced to leave for Persia, in order to deal with some internal disturbances. There he spent the whole summer and autumn.<sup>1</sup> According to Theophanes, the Byzantine Emperor took advantage of Hārūn's absence and restored several fortresses in Central and Eastern Asia Minor. Among them Ancyra, Thebasa and Andrassos are singled out. Nicephorus I even took the offensive by sending a detachment to Syria, which - we are told - did not achieve anything.<sup>2</sup> This, however, means that the Cilician Gates and the fortress of Loulon, places which at the turn of the eighth century were under Arabic control, changed hands but only for a few months during the years 805-806. Because at the beginning of the year 806 the Caliph determined to crush the imperial forces once and for all and gathered together a huge army. Theophanes speaks about 300,000 soldiers, collected from Syria and Palestine and Libya.<sup>3</sup> The source on which Ṭabarī's narration is based, raises the number of regularly paid soldiers to 135,000. To these men, Ṭabarī comments, 'the camp-followers and volunteers and those who were not registered'<sup>4</sup> must be added. No matter how inaccurate the numbers given by both chroniclers are, one thing remains sure: the Arabic army of 806 was huge and at its head was Rashīd himself, full of self confidence. It appears that this campaign was intended as a triumphal procession - a propaganda exercise designed to impress his subjects. The Caliph meant it to be a great success. He entered Byzantine

---

1. M. Canard, 'La prise...' (loc.cit.), pp.355-56.

2. Theophanes (1, 481), who reports the expedition, asserts that the Byzantines lost a great number of men.

3. ibid., p.482.

4. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.745.

territory on 11 June<sup>1</sup> from the Cilician Gates and made his way to the city-fortress of Tyana. This stood very close to the north entrance of the Cilician Gates and, more important, commanded the main road from Caesarea to Heracleia. Both our main sources for these events, Theophanes and Tabarī, seem to agree that Rashīd spent some time at Tyana. According to Tabarī, he encamped there,<sup>2</sup> while according to Theophanes he even built a mosque.<sup>3</sup> If Theophanes' report is accurate, then such an action on the part of the Caliph can be taken to mean that he intended to annexe a part of south-eastern Cappadocia to the Caliphate and consequently Hārūn's activities there were not after all that innocent. Because, the building of a mosque is usually associated with conquest.

From there Hārūn dispatched his lieutenants against other strong Byzantine fortresses of eastern Asia Minor. Thebassa,<sup>4</sup> Malacopea,<sup>5</sup> Sideropalos and Andrassos all came under Arabic control.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime the Caliph himself concentrated his efforts on the siege of Heracleia which, as Theophanes reports, was very strongly fortified.<sup>7</sup> We do not know for how long Heracleia was besieged, but according to Tabarī it was captured sometime between 20 August and 17 September.<sup>8</sup> What appears to be of more significance,

---

1. Tabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.745.

2. ibid.

3. Theophanes 1, p.482: "καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς Τύανα ἠκοδόμησεν οἶκον τῆς βλασφημίας αὐτοῦ."

4. Tabarī's Dabsa. Ibn al-Athir's Dalsa or Dabsah cf. J.G.C. Anderson, 'The Road-System...' (loc.cit.), p.32.

5. Tabarī's Malakubija, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.745.

6. Theophanes 1, p.482.

7. ibid., "τὸ τοῦ Ἡρακλέως κάστρον ὀχυρώτατον πάνυ ὑπάρκον"

8. Tabarī, in Brooks, (loc.cit.), p.745.



is that with the fall of Heracleia,<sup>1</sup> the south-western part of the line of the imperial fortresses in eastern Asia Minor was completely destroyed and the Arabs now dominated the region. From Heracleia a strong detachment of Arabic forces<sup>2</sup> was sent as far as Ancyra,<sup>3</sup> destroyed the city and came back. Thus the <sup>work of</sup>restoration done by Nicephorus in the previous year proved to have been in vain. Although the Emperor Nicephorus I campaigned in person, he could do little but accept a fait accompli. Therefore, he sent an embassy of three churchmen<sup>4</sup> to seek for peace.

It hardly needs to be emphasized that, victorious, Hārūn 'imposed' his conditions. According to Theophanes, he asked for a yearly tribute of thirty thousand nomismata, plus three nomismata which were considered a personal ransom for the Emperor himself and another three for his son Stauracius.<sup>5</sup> That last amount of six nomismata, especially mentioned by Tabarī too, was probably supposed to symbolize the subjection and humiliation of the Byzantine Emperor to the will of the Caliph, and the latter seemed to have found this idea of subjection very attractive indeed.

- 
1. As M. Canard ('La prise...' loc.cit. p.378) has pointed out, the fall of Heracleia in 806 served very much as an inspiration for the contemporary Arab poets who, excited by Hārūn's achievement, composed a great number of verses in order to commemorate his victory.
  2. Theophanes (I, p.482) raises their number to sixty thousand soldiers.
  3. George the Monk (De Boor op.cit., p.773) says Amorium and dates it in 805.
  4. Theophanes I, p.482; these were: Michael, metropolitan of Synada, Peter, abbot of Goulaion (Sylaion?), and Gregory, the Oikonomos of Amastris.
  5. Theophanes I, p.482; Tabarī (Brooks, loc.cit. p.746) provides us with different numbers. He says that the peace was agreed for a yearly sum of fifty thousand dinars, of which four were for the Emperor and two for Stauracius.



Another condition imposed by Hārūn, was that the Byzantines should not try to restore the fortresses, which had been dismantled by the Arabic forces. The great concern of Rashīd about these fortresses leads us to suspect that they were not just fortified places, but, in a way, they were or they could be used as garrison quarters.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Hārūn was probably afraid that such places, if they were well fortified, could later be used as the starting points for expeditions directed against Arabic territory.

At any rate, Nicephorus can be blamed for inconsistency. When the Caliph retreated to Raḳḳa, the Byzantine Emperor took advantage of his absence, broke the compact and restored and fortified the forbidden places. As a result of it, Hārūn sent his forces back to Byzantine territory and retook Thebasa.

From Theophanes<sup>2</sup> we hear that Rashīd in his turn also broke the peace with regard to Cyprus,<sup>3</sup> where he sent a fleet, the men of which destroyed the churches and took many captives. Tabarī mentions two Arabic attacks against Cyprus in the course of the year 806. The most important of them was the one led by Humaid. The Arab chronicler asserts that the admiral took sixteen thousand captives, whom he brought to Rafica, near Raḳḳa.<sup>4</sup> One bishop, who was among the captives, provided two thousand dinars as a ransom, and thus they were freed.<sup>5</sup>

---

1. On the garrison quarters, or fustāt, cf. J.B. Bury, (E.R.E., p.244), where he argues that the institution had been introduced by the Omayyads and was continued under the early 'Abbāsids.

2. Theophanes 1, p.482.

3. On the neutrality of Cyprus see R. Jenkins, 'Cyprus between Byzantium and Islam, A.D.688-965', in Studies Presented to D.M. Robinson, 11, St. Louis 1953, pp.1006-1014.

4. E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines... (loc.cit.)', p.745, note 163.

5. Tabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.745.



Before prolonging our narration of the military events of the year 807, in which, as we will see, Nicephorus I took the offensive, the apparent ease with which the Byzantine Empire was able to recover from the disasters of 806, needs some kind of explanation.

As it has already been indicated above,<sup>1</sup> our sources record mainly, if not exclusively, military events, and, therefore, one is only left with more or less general considerations to provide a solution to this 'perennial' mystery. Because there is so little hard evidence, the best we can do is to take these hints into account and combine them with events and circumstances.

In the first place, one has to keep in mind that the sources which covered the events of 806, are almost all biased against Nicephorus and favourable to Hārūn. This can be taken to mean that they exaggerate the achievements of the Caliph during that particular year. Secondly, the fall of Tyana and Heracleia in 806 should not be taken to mean that Byzantine resistance in the eastern provinces was totally paralyzed. The Byzantine army was still in possession of other strongholds in the area, ready to act again, as we will see, in the course of next year.

Furthermore, the character of the expeditions and the campaigns organized and launched by either side during these years, is, in a way, peculiar. From our main Arabic chronicler we hear that among the terms of the peace treaty between the Arabs of Hārūn - at the time successor-designate to the throne - and Irene in 782, there was one, according to which the Byzantines undertook the obligation to provide the Arabic army with guides - while campaigning in Byzantine

---

1. In this section, p.259.

provinces! - and with markets along the main roads, from where the invaders could buy their own provisions.<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, quite an unusual agreement, but M.A. Shaban suggests that it also applied to the Byzantine army, when marching into the enemy's land.<sup>2</sup> Under such circumstances the wars between the two countries took on a peculiar character. It became more of a formality; a procession, one might almost say.

Moreover, the characters of the two leaders themselves need to be examined thoroughly. What were they? Were they only warlike, or did they respect each other, and was a sort of mutual understanding built up? Apart from Ṭabarī, on whose record we have already spoken above,<sup>3</sup> the exchange of gifts between the Emperor Nicephorus I and the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, is reported by another three sources, though not contemporary. The first of them is Leo Grammaticus who reports that at an unspecified time Nicephorus sent his ambassadors with presents to Hārūn who was already campaigning and proposed peace negotiations. The Caliph, responding favourably to the proposals, in his turn, sent presents to the Byzantine Emperor and returned in peace admiring Nicephorus' prudence.<sup>4</sup> A very similar report is provided by George Cedrenus,<sup>5</sup> who in this case does not copy Theophanes. Our third source is BarHebraeus, who, referring probably to the first year of Nicephorus' reign, records that the two leaders, whilst they were encamped, 'by means of envoys and dispatches, were conversing and listening to each other. And ultimately they came to an

---

1. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.738.

2. M.A. Shaban, Islamic History 2 (op.cit.), p.25.

3. In this section, p.259.

4. Leo Grammaticus, Chronographia, in C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1842), pp.203-04.

5. Georgius Cedrenus (op.cit.) 2, p.33.



agreement and they sent gifts to each other, and each returned to his own country'.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the accuracy of these reports, it would seem that their essence must be taken seriously. In reference to the events of 806, W. Buckler suggests that by the end of 806 'the relations between Nicephorus and Hārūn were already restored to friendliness'<sup>2</sup> and that 'the coincidence of the sending of gifts to Nicephorus in 806 and the movements of Isaac raise the question whether it was not the gifts first meant for the Byzantine Emperor that ultimately reached Charles'.<sup>3</sup>

Such considerations prompt some further remarks on Nicephorus' diplomacy and 'Diplomatic Service'. It appears that this Emperor had created a good diplomatic network which managed to deal successfully with very difficult situations. One of the three participants in the Byzantine embassy to Hārūn in 806, was Michael, Metropolitan of Synada, who seems to have spent very little time in his bishopric indeed. Most of his life he was travelling either to the West - we have already seen him negotiating with the Franks three times - or to the Caliphate, bound to solve complex problems caused by the frequent wars between the Byzantine Empire and its rival in the east. Michael and his companions were probably successful in carrying out the peace negotiations with Hārūn late in 806 too. Another issue in which the Byzantine diplomats under Nicephorus I would seem to have been also successful, was the controversy over the Holy Places, where the Christian population had been under Arabic rule. As we hear from

- 
1. Bar Hebraeus, The Chronography.. (op.cit.), p.121.
  2. W. Buckler, Hārūn... (op.cit.), p.46.
  3. ibid.; on the gifts brought by Isaac to Charlemagne cf. in this chapter section under the title: Byzantium and the West, p.222. . Buckler's remarks, however, on the destination of these gifts, do not seem to reflect much truth, because, as we have seen, Isaac reached the West with Charlemagne's presents, already in 801, i.e. one year before Nicephorus' accession to the imperial throne.



a Latin source,<sup>1</sup> Charlemagne was more than happy to be recognized as 'protector' of that area. Normally, however, this was a role that the Byzantine ruler considered his own. One might be entitled to believe that Hārūn al-Rashīd had been willing, at least at the beginning of his caliphate, to grant the right of 'protection' of the Holy Land to Charlemagne. Though our sources do not shed much light on that particular problem it would appear that Nicephorus I's 'Diplomatic Service' managed to keep these lands under Byzantine rather than Frankish 'protection'. In brief the year 806 saw an escalation of Arab activities against the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire, but without any clear cut success.

In 807 the Byzantines were somehow successful. They won back control of the vital Cilician Gates and they defeated the Arab lieutenant Yazīd. Rashīd himself abstained from the action, but he stayed on the frontier line, at Adata. When he heard that the Cilician Gates had fallen to the imperial forces, he posted <sup>C</sup>Abd Allāh, the son of al-Malik, at the pass of Adata to block it against a possible Byzantine raid.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the Caliph was right in his predictions. Ṭabarī, to whose detailed account we owe our knowledge about the events, says that the Byzantine army came, but they retreated as they could not go through the pass. Thus, the northern pass of the Taurus-Antitaurus range remained under Arabic control.<sup>3</sup>

Another Arabic source, the Kitāb of al-<sup>C</sup>Uyum, speaks about two clashes which occurred during the same year (807). In the first one the imperial army was very successful. The Arab leader Yazīd was among those killed.

---

1. Annales Altahenses Majores, M.G.H., Scriptorum, vol.20, p.783.

2. Ṭabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.747.

3. ibid.



In the second, however, Nicephorus himself suffered a severe defeat. The Arabic forces this time were under Marthama, the son of A<sup>C</sup>yan.<sup>1</sup> Tabarī confirms that a summer raid under this leader took place in 807, but he does not say anything about its results.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, it does not look very likely that the Emperor Nicephorus himself was involved in a campaign in Asia Minor that year. Theophanes reports him as being occupied with an expedition against the Bulgars and with the plot against him which broke out while they were at Adrianople, on their way to Bulgaria.

A naval attack against Rhodes under Humaid in 808 seems to have been of considerable importance. The admiral captured the city, but he did not have any success against the fortress. Humaid, nevertheless, got away with much booty, but as he touched Myra, a storm lost him several ships.<sup>3</sup>

Hārūn al-Rashīd died in the following year (809) and Nicephorus started being more and more pre-occupied with the wars against the Bulgars. The only serious event between Byzantium and the Caliphate, which, we are told, happened after Hārūn's death, is the defeat of Leo, the strategos of the Armeniac theme and future Emperor Leo V, at Euchaita in February 811. This time the Arabs got away with the soldiers' pay (πόσα), which was 1,300 pounds of gold.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that less than one and a half years later (August 812) the same Leo, who in the meantime had been promoted and transferred to the theme of Anatolikon, defeated an Arabic army under Thābit.

---

1. In Brooks (loc.cit.), p.747.

2. Tabarī, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.747.

3. Theophanes (1, 483) who is our only source of information about the attack, attributes the storm to a miracle performed by St. Nicolas, whose tomb was at Myra. Surprisingly the Arab chroniclers ignore the naval expedition of Humaid in 808.

4. Theophanes 1, p.489.

According to Theophanes Leo killed 2,000 Arab soldiers and captured some horses and weapons.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle among Hārūn's sons for the succession of the throne after his death lasted four years and was decided by the long siege of Baghdād and the execution of Amin (813).<sup>2</sup> During these four years Byzantium could not benefit from these internal divisions within the Caliphate because it was under threat itself. After the Emperor Nicephorus I had fallen in the disastrous battle of 26 July 811, Krum, the Khan of the Bulgars devastated Mesembria and Develtus. The new Emperor Michael I could do very little to stop further Bulgarian raids and threats against Thrace, Macedonia and the capital itself. Rather frightened by the situation, Michael I ordered the transfer of some forces from Asia Minor into Europe,<sup>3</sup> and thus not only was he not able to benefit from the anomalous internal situation of the Caliphate, but, at least temporarily, he weakened the eastern frontiers of Byzantium still further. However, luckily for him and for his two successors, hostilities between Byzantium and the Caliphate were not resumed until about 830. It hardly needs to be said that such a period of peace would profit both countries.

##### 5. General Assessment

Among Byzantium's neighbouring countries, it was only the Arabs who, at the time of Nicephorus' elevation to the throne in 802, could be seen as an immediate threat to Constantinople.

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.497. Ya<sup>c</sup>Kūbī (in Brooks loc.cit. p.747) also records a raid conducted by Thabit in 812, but only as a perfunctory one. Nothing is said about Leo's victory.

2. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.251.

3. Theophanes 1, p.500.



The Bulgars seemed to have been devoted completely to internal affairs, trying to reorganize their state after the death of Cardam, while the Franks of Charlemagne represented a political and diplomatic threat rather than a military one.

One could count several reasons why the Empire's rivalry with the Arabs was of crucial importance in 802. To begin with, Nicephorus probably inherited a situation in Byzantium's relations to the Caliphate, which could be characterized as unacceptable. Secondly, there were troubles along the eastern frontier by 803, so that Nicephorus was not given the time to secure himself on the throne and settle internal disturbances. In reference to that, one needs only to remember that by 802 Hārūn al-Rashīd had already been in power for sixteen years, well established and not challenged by anyone else in the Caliphate. Furthermore, the constant Arabic raids against Asia Minor could result, if nothing else, in the loss of imperial border posts, blocking, in this way, the Byzantine route to Syria. Finally, it appears that the Byzantine Emperor was aware of Hārūn's friendly terms with Charlemagne and his readiness to recognize the Frankish Emperor as 'protector' of the Christians living in the Holy Land. In fact Einhard suggests that something more than a protectorate was involved: referring to a Frankish delegation sent to Hārūn at an unspecified time, Charlemagne's biographer asserts us that the Caliph, 'not only granted them all they asked, but also allowed that sacred place of our salvation to be reckoned as part of the possessions of the Frankish King'.<sup>1</sup> It would seem,

---

1. A.J. Grant (edit and transl.) Early Lives... (op.cit.) p.29.

however, that such a major concession on the part of Rashīd could hardly be kept secret from Nicephorus and, if that was the case, then an angry Byzantine reaction against the Caliph would have been fully justified. Under these circumstances, it can be argued that the Arabs represented not only the most immediate, but also the most serious threat to Byzantium, and, from what we have seen so far, it can hardly be denied that the Emperor Nicephorus took this threat from the Arabs equally seriously.

During the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century, the Arabs undertook more attacks against Byzantine territory than the imperial army did against them. The victories achieved by the Arabic forces also outnumbered those of Byzantium. It can be argued that at certain times, during the period in question, conditions seemed to have been ideal for the Arabs to push their frontiers further west, at the expense of Byzantine territory. Nothing is more surprising than the ease|with which they could penetrate deeply into Asia Minor and reach places like Ancyra, Krassos, Malagina, and even Ephesus. However, as has been stated above, these raids were directed towards certain cities and fortresses and aimed mainly to a show of power, to plundering and to *slave raiding*. M.A. Shaban, nevertheless, believes that 'because of the strongholds on both sides of the frontiers, acquiring booty was so difficult that it was only attempted in exceptional circumstances'.<sup>1</sup> Shaban's argument, though partly correct, appears to overstate the case. What happened at Euchaita in February 811,<sup>2</sup> points, more or less, to the opposite

---

1. M.A. Shaban, Islamic History, (op.cit.), 2, p.25.

2. On this event, see above, p.281.



conclusion. At any rate, no invaders are reported to have stayed at places captured by either side, for long periods of time. The raids were launched mainly in spring or in early summer, so that the invaders had enough time to withdraw before the winter.

These remarks, nevertheless, by no means imply that Hārūn underestimated the situation or neglected the security of the borders with Byzantium. His particular interest in the Byzantine Empire was underlined partly by his removal to Rakka, but mainly by the establishment of the <sup>c</sup>Awāsim province, of which we have already spoken. If he undertook several raids against Byzantium, it was exactly because he respected the Byzantine Empire as a powerful neighbour and wanted greater security. In other words, it would seem that, in Hārūn's mind, the best defence against an enemy, was to take the attack to the enemy, and this appears to have been the policy adopted by the Caliph. Thus during Nicephorus' reign several places in Asia Minor had to go through some really very bad experiences, such as devastations, lootings, plunderings, captivities, etc. However, 'injuries' like these easily healed, especially because a rather long period of peace followed. What was more vital for Byzantium was that in 811 the frontier line between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate was the same as it had been in 802. In order to achieve this, Nicephorus was forced to keep himself busy for long periods of time, dealing mostly with the relations between Byzantium and the Caliphate and fighting in the fields, both of war and of diplomacy.

The hostilities between them, which slowed down in 807, stopped almost entirely with the death of Hārūn in 809. In reference to this event and to the war between his two sons for the succession, a tenth century Arabic

source, the Kitāb al' Makāfa'a (the Book of Recompense), 'a collection of historical anecdotes of an ethical character',<sup>1</sup> makes the following remarks:

'When the news was brought to King Nicephorus of the death of Hārūn, he made that day a festival for the Greeks. Then he made a still greater festival on the day that he was informed of the outbreak of war between Muḥammad al-Amin and al-Ma'mūn.<sup>2</sup>

No matter how reliable such an anecdote can be, it reflects, perhaps, the truth that the Emperor Nicephorus turned his attention to the Bulgars only at a time when he had already secured his eastern frontiers.

---

1. B. Lewis, 'An Arabic Account of a Byzantine Palace Revolution', in Byz., 14 (Brussels 1939), p.383.

2. ibid.



## C: BYZANTIUM AND THE BULGARS

The state of relations between Byzantium and the Bulgars at the turn of the eighth century is best described as obscure. At first sight there seems to have been no immediate threat from the Bulgars when Nicephorus ascended the throne in 802. No conflicts between them and the Empire are reported to have taken place during Irene's sole reign (797-802).<sup>1</sup>

The history of relations between Byzantium and the Bulgarian Kingdom at the time in question suffers from an absence of information about the internal history of Bulgaria during this time. Therefore, one might wonder whether it is not this lack of evidence which made things look easier along the north-western borders of the Empire than on its eastern frontier.

Although apparently peaceful relations between Byzantium and the Bulgars continued during Nicephorus' first five years in power (until 807), this should by no means be taken to mean that the rivalry between the two countries ceased to exist during our period. Two factors point in the opposite direction: first, one needs only to remember that the first Bulgarian Kingdom had been set up (681) in the north-eastern corner of the Balkan peninsula, an area which was not situated that far from Constantinople itself. It is worth noting that before the Bulgars, other tribes, the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, for instance, had

---

1. On the basis of this lack of clashes, J.B. Bury, (E.R.E. p.339) suggests that the Empress Irene had submitted to the payment of an annual tribute to the Bulgars. To my knowledge, such a tribute is not attested by any of our sources.

tried to settle in the same areas. The Byzantines eyed their settlement in these lands with alarm. Though losing an emperor (Valens) they finally succeeded in pushing them westwards. All this effort shows quite clearly that Constantinople considered these lands as imperial territory. Now, if this was true for the late fourth century, one can see no reason why it should not have applied to the beginning of the ninth century too. The Byzantine Empire was forced to recognize the existence of the newly created state and trade relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium were established as early as the reign of Theodosius III (715-17).<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria's proximity to Constantinople, nevertheless, produced a constant state of unease in the relations between the Byzantine Empire and its neighbour.

Furthermore, it appears that relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria at the time under consideration, cannot be examined properly without taking into account the Slavic presence in or around the same area. The Emperor Nicephorus' sensitivity and great interest in Slavic affairs hardly need to be emphasized. It is in the light of this that the wars with the Bulgars of Krum have to be considered.

Modern historians<sup>2</sup> almost unanimously blame Nicephorus for having triggered off conflict between Byzantium and Bulgaria.<sup>3</sup> They are right, but only up to a certain point,

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.497.

2. See for example, J.B. Bury: E.R.E., p.340; S. Runciman: The First..., p.52; D. Obolensky: 'Byzantium and its Northern Neighbours, 565-1018', in C.M.H., 4, pt.1, p.490; R. Browning: Byzantium and Bulgaria (op.cit.), p.49.

3. Unfortunately our knowledge of the internal history of Bulgaria from 797-807 is very limited. We are also ignorant of Krum's background and of the date of his accession to the Bulgarian throne. However, as S. Runciman (The First..., p.51) puts it properly: 'more important than his birth were his ambitions and his ability'. For the various forms of his name see also S. Runciman (ibid., note).



because they seem to have oversimplified the whole situation along the north-western borders of the Byzantine Empire and to have overlooked certain facts. To begin with, we would expect Nicephorus to have scrutinized the crucial events and developments which had been taking place in central Europe. The main event was the complete destruction of the Avars and the way Krum had benefited from it. He had managed to extend his domination to the West as far as the eastern bank of the river Theiss, where he confronted the Franks of Charlemagne. Krum had also crossed the Carpathian Mountains, joined together the two Bulgarias, succeeded Cardam, and had established himself at Pliska.<sup>1</sup>

All this must have awoken in Nicephorus concern about the future of the north-western provinces of Byzantium. Krum was in a position to challenge Byzantium's control of the Thracian lands. But perhaps more important was the question of who was going to control the Slavs. This was one of the key problems of the era. As is well known, they had spread widely and were occupying different districts extending from Cape Matapan to the Danube. The semi-autonomy they enjoyed allowed them to preserve a sense of a distinct identity, regardless of the race or place where their various tribes had settled. This became especially obvious at the turn of the eighth century and appears to have inspired the Slavs to seek for complete autonomy from the Byzantine Empire. They rose against Byzantine lordship in 799 with Acamer as their leader.

---

1. On Pliska, see: I. Dujčev's observations in B.Z., 50 (1957), p.546; F. Dölger's observations in B.Z., 51 (1958) p.485; V. Besevliev: 'Zur Geographie Nordost-Bulgariens in der Spätantike und im Mittelalter', in Linguistique balkanique, 4, (1962), pp.57-80; S. Michailov, Pliska, die Hauptstadt des ersten Bulgarischen Reiches, Berlin 1960.

M.D. Graeber, by suggesting that 'Acamer was not breaking with Byzantium, but seeking a more influential role within the Empire',<sup>1</sup> presents a different opinion. However, a closer examination of the sources as well as more careful attention to the whole context and the framework of the circumstances surrounding it, would lead us to the conclusion that elements of Slavonic independence can be traced in Acamer's uprising too. They acted in the same way in 807 when they besieged Patras. Furthermore, from the anonymous author of a chronicle we hear that Slavs were recruited by Krum and fought against the imperial forces in Nicephorus' last and fatal battle of 811.<sup>2</sup> In short, the Slavs were a race 'on whose fidelity no reliance could be placed'.<sup>3</sup> It hardly needs to be emphasized that Byzantium always considered the Sclaveniae (the districts where the Slavs had settled) as Byzantine territory. It would seem that both, Nicephorus and Krum, were competing for control over the Slavs. The Byzantine Emperor would have liked very much to assimilate them and even to use them against the Bulgars, while Krum sought to enlarge his army by enrolling Slavs. He may also have envisaged the annexation of the Sclaveniae. If this was Nicephorus' assessment of Krum's plans, then the Byzantine Emperor's aggressive policy should not come as a surprise. The day by day enlargement of the new Bulgaria had to be checked. Bulgarian influence over the Slavs had also to be countered. The Emperor Nicephorus preferred to be accused of almost

- 
1. M.D. Graeber, The Role of the Slavs Within the Byzantine Empire, 500-1018, Rutgers University Ph.D. 1975, p.92.
  2. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique byzantine de l'an 811', in T.M. 1, (1965), p.212.
  3. J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.342.



anything but negligence of the threat from the Bulgars. The war against Charlemagne was more or less a matter of prestige. The Bulgars were a far more serious matter. Byzantine interests along the northern borders needed to be safeguarded. Therefore an expedition against Bulgaria would prove to be more or less a matter of time.

In reference to the year that Nicephorus opened hostilities with the Empire's northern neighbours, one might be tempted to link Arabs and Bulgars by asking the simple question: Did the Byzantine Emperor only attack Bulgaria when he had secured his eastern frontier? Though the war against the Caliphate does not seem to have fully stopped before the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd (809), hostilities along the eastern borders of Byzantium had apparently slowed down from the year 807. It is certainly of some interest to know that Theophanes does not record any clashes between the Byzantines and the Arabs during that particular year. Events which Arabic sources report as having taken place in 807, though of minor importance, are not, of course, totally insignificant. Nevertheless, although there is one source pointing to the opposite conclusion,<sup>1</sup> it seems rather unlikely that the Byzantine Emperor was personally involved in the war against the Arabs in 807. Now, if that fact is combined with the information, which we have from Theophanes, that in this year Nicephorus embarked upon an expedition against the Bulgars,<sup>2</sup> one might be entitled

---

1. Kitab al-'Ugum, in Brooks (loc.cit.), p.747.

2. Theophanes I, p.482. Actually Nicephorus' campaign against the Bulgars is the only military event recorded by Theophanes under the year 6299 (Sept. 806-August 807). Keeping in mind that during the previous year the Emperor had occupied himself with the election of a new patriarch and mainly with the campaigns against Hārūn al-Rashīd on the eastern front, we cannot date Nicephorus' expedition against the Bulgars earlier than the spring of 807.



to argue that the Byzantine Emperor did not open hostilities with Krum before some kind of stability had been achieved along Byzantium's eastern borders.

The Emperor Nicephorus soon discovered that there was opposition to his expedition against the Bulgars. The campaign was still at its very beginning. The Byzantine forces had only reached Adrianople, when the Emperor learnt that the troops were conspiring against him. Although Nicephorus managed to put the plot down, he did not proceed to his intended destination. The means he had used to cope with the conspirators were severe and, therefore, he could not expect the soldiers' morale to be high enough to fight against the Bulgars. Thus, he found it wiser to return to Constantinople.

But, regardless of the end of the expedition, what was Nicephorus' real intention, when he started that campaign? Was it to provoke his rivals and force the two countries in a war with unknown consequences? It sounds a bit odd. It would be more reasonable to suppose that the Byzantine Emperor only wanted to use the expedition of 807, in order to demonstrate imperial strength, to visit the Byzantine garrisons along the northern frontiers and assure them about his support in the difficult times which might come. Such an expedition was not intended to provoke the Bulgars. It was more a matter of anticipating Bulgarian activity against the strong line of fortresses of which the key points were Develtus, Adrianople, Philippopolis and Sardica (the modern Bulgarian capital Sofia).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it appears that by setting out to invade Bulgaria in 807 the Emperor Nicephorus wanted to anticipate, or at least to eliminate, Bulgarian influence over the Slavs of the area. We are not told

---

1. D.M. Lang, The Bulgarians (London 1976), p.51;  
S. Runciman, The First... (op.cit.), p.53.



whether or not Krum had it in mind to attack Byzantine territories, even before Nicephorus' initiative. One thing, nevertheless, becomes clear; a pretext for assault had now been given to him, if that was what he was waiting for. Surprisingly, the Khan does not seem to have reacted immediately. He needed some time, in order to assess the situation and to choose the route of his attack. Pliska, his capital, was situated quite close to the Black Sea and for this reason, perhaps, we would have expected Krum to adopt a route through Thrace for his attack against Byzantine territories. But the semi-circular line of the fortresses there was too strong and thus Krum did not risk an assault against any of these garrisons or a march past them.

However, it has to be emphasized that these fortresses had been built, in order to serve as a barrier against the Balkan Bulgars and they had probably fulfilled this purpose so far. But by now, thanks to Krum, Bulgaria was no longer the little neighbouring country <sup>which</sup> Byzantium used to know. It had grown in size and it had stretched into the western Balkans. This meant that it now possessed a much longer border with Byzantium, which Krum could probe for its weak points.

On his side Nicephorus seems to have been equally careful. He had realized that the Strymon valley might be used by Krum as a gate to the south and therefore, in order to defend the district against a possible attack through the valley, Nicephorus had transferred some men<sup>1</sup> there from the other themes, in order to help the local army to keep

---

1. Theophanes (1, 485) speaks about "ταξάτοι ἄρχοντες," which in this case should be translated 'officers'. Needless, however, to say that it was military units and not only officers those who had joined the army of Strymon.



this approach closed to the Bulgars. There is no way of knowing whether 'the support of much of the Slav population'<sup>1</sup> was another factor which led the Khan to choose this route for his attack, as R. Browning believes. In any case, it looks as if Krum had already adopted a very effective war strategy, that of the sudden attack, and, at an unexpected time, he led his 'guerrillas' against the Byzantine units at Strymon. The attack was very successful for the Khan. The Bulgars defeated the Byzantine army, killing its strategos and many of his subordinates and taking with them 1100 pounds of gold, destined for the army pay (autumn 808),<sup>2</sup> as well as the baggage and perhaps the equipment of the local theme. In connection with this attack some points need to be made. First, it becomes obvious that Krum did not intend, at least at that time, to extend his territory. After the quick but very successful assault, he withdrew. It would seem that at this stage Krum did not have at his disposal as many soldiers as he needed for a real war against Byzantium. Therefore, he had probably already thought about recruiting soldiers among the Slavs. For this purpose, as we shall see, he needed money and, therefore, his attack against the Byzantine army at the moment the soldiers at Strymon were going to have their pay given, was not perhaps a mere coincidence. That such a point of view is not groundless is demonstrated by the anonymous author of the chronicle, who together with Theophanes refers to the Byzantine disaster of 811. The chronicler asserts that the Bulgars, before

- 
1. R. Browning, Byzantium and Bulgaria, (op.cit.), p.49.
  2. J.B. Bury, (E.R.E.), p.340, was the first one to have dated that assault in 808. He seems to have given a good reason for his dating. It has to be noticed here that the attack of the Bulgars was successful, because it took the Byzantine army by surprise. However, the facts that people from the other themes were still there and that the soldiers had not been given their pay yet, but they were about to get it, do not allow us to adopt Runciman's dating 'late in the winter, so late that no attack seemed likely' (S. Runciman, The First... op.cit., p.53).



launching their sudden and successful attack against the imperial army, had recruited Avars and Slavs. The Greek word  $\mu\iota\theta\omega\theta\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$ ,<sup>1</sup> used in this occasion, implies any sort of payment, i.e. wages, salaries, etc., and that payment, of course, needed to be made in cash. That would lead us to the conclusion that, although the Bulgarian economy in itself had little place for money, there were cases in which Krum probably needed cash. Apart from the recruitment or perhaps the temporary employment of soldiers from among the Slavs, money might have been needed for another purpose too: taking it for granted that Krum had decided to achieve something against Byzantium, then he would have to start capturing cities and fortresses; in order to do this he would need siege engines and to acquire these he needed ready cash. Furthermore Krum would have needed money in order to pay the craftsmen who were about to design or to build the siege engines. One can assume that these craftsmen were not of Bulgarian origin. Theophanes records the case of a certain Euthymius or Eumathius, of Arabic origin, who was an expert in siege engines. According to the chronicler, Euthymius having become a Christian was recruited into the Byzantine army under the Emperor Nicephorus.<sup>2</sup> If we believe Theophanes, then it was the Emperor's meanness which forced Euthymius to go over to the Bulgars. We find him playing an important role in the capture of Mesembria by Krum in 812.<sup>3</sup>

The second point arises from a more careful examination of Theophanes' account of the people who were killed by the Bulgars at Strymon. The chronicler, who is our only source, states that Krum massacred many people ( $\pi\omicron\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\nu\ \lambda\alpha\omicron\upsilon\ \nu$ ),

---

1. I. Dujcev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212.  
2. Theophanes 1, p.498.  
3. ibid.

without making any distinction between soldiers and civilians. The word  $\lambda \alpha \acute{\omicron} \varsigma$ , of course, does have a general meaning and covers both categories of people. It is, however, of interest to see that the same chronicler, recording the capture of Sardica by the Khan, which happened only a few months later, and referring to the people, who again were killed by the Bulgars, does not use the general word  $\lambda \alpha \acute{\omicron} \varsigma$  but the more specific ones  $\sigma \tau \rho \alpha \tau \epsilon \acute{\upsilon} \mu \alpha \tau \alpha \rho \omega \mu \alpha \tau \iota \kappa \acute{\alpha}$ , (Roman army). We cannot, of course, take this slight difference of terminology in the record of Theophanes as an indication that Krum, during his assault at Strymon, killed mainly civilians rather than soldiers, but it appears very likely that a number of governmental officials were included among Krum's victims. Theophanes' description is very precise at this point. He differentiates between the soldiers and the lower civilian officials of the theme ( $\lambda \alpha \acute{\omicron} \varsigma$ ), its higher dignitaries ( $\acute{\alpha} \rho \chi \omicron \nu \tau \epsilon \varsigma$ )<sup>1</sup> and the officers ( $\tau \alpha \zeta \acute{\alpha} \tau \omicron \iota \acute{\alpha} \rho \chi \omicron \nu \tau \epsilon \varsigma$ ) of the army, which had been sent from the rest of the themes, in order to secure the Byzantine control of the area.<sup>2</sup>

But Theophanes' rather exact description goes into more details and seems to be of further significance. The chronicler asserts that the strategos himself - we are not told of which theme - was among those killed by the Bulgars.<sup>3</sup> All these can be taken to mean that the area of Strymon had concentrated the Emperor Nicephorus' attention and as we have already seen the valley of Strymon

- 
1. For the internal structure of the themes see J.B. Bury: Imperial Administrative System... (op.cit.), pp.36-119.
  2. The presence at Strymon of an army, which perhaps belonged to other themes, should not be confused with the transfer of people from other themes into this area, which had not yet taken place.
  3. Theophanes 1, 485.



formed an independent military unit, probably a Kleisoura as early as the reign of Justinian II, (685-695). Nicephorus was clearly aware of the strategic importance of the region.

The success of the Khan *in the Strymon valley* gave him self-confidence. The Byzantine army was not, after all, invincible. Nevertheless, at this stage Krum was not concerned about annexing other provinces to his kingdom, since Bulgaria at that time was large enough for its population. He tried to strengthen and secure Bulgaria rather than extend it. However, it hardly needs to be said, that at the same time Krum was very keen on causing some more damage to the Byzantine army. Therefore the Khan thought about another place, against which he could launch his second attack. The further away from Constantinople this place would be, the better for Krum, since it would have been more difficult for the Byzantine army to send help. Sardica was one of the four fortresses, which formed a barrier against Bulgarian invasions in the south and south-west.<sup>1</sup> S. Runciman suggests that they had all been refurbished by Constantine Copronymus.<sup>2</sup> Krum did not risk a march southwards past these fortresses, but early in the spring of 809, before Easter,<sup>3</sup> he marched against Sardica 'which seems at this time to have been the most northerly outpost of the Empire towards the Danube'.<sup>4</sup> The details of the attack are mostly unknown, but it looks as if Krum surrounded the city with his army and besieged it.

---

1. For the other three, cf. above, p.292.

2. S. Runciman, The First... (op.cit.), p.53.

3. Theophanes de Boor, I, 485; Bonn I, 753.

4. Bury, E.R.E., p.341. See also R. Browning (Byzantium... op.cit., p.49) where the author infers that among the four fortresses of the line mentioned above, Sardica was the principal one.



We are not told anything about the period of that siege, but it does not seem to have been a long one. The Khan, realizing that the fortress was too strong to be taken by assault, employed fraud and deceit<sup>1</sup> and thus managed to conquer the place. The slaughter which followed was even worse than the one at Strymon a few months previously. Theophanes records that a total number of six thousand soldiers were killed, plus a certain number of civilians. It seems that Sardica had been an 'irritant' in Krum's eyes and thus he now wanted to get rid of it once and for all. The fortifications were destroyed and the town itself was probably burned.<sup>2</sup>

When the government in Constantinople was informed about the events at Sar<sup>4</sup>ica, it was already too late.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Nicephorus acted immediately. On Tuesday<sup>4</sup> before Easter (April 3) the Emperor left the capital very determined to punish the Bulgars. Whether Nicephorus had been preparing a campaign against the Bulgars, already before the events at Sardica, is something we are not told. Judging, however, from the Emperor's immediate reaction to the bad news, such an interpretation does not seem to be totally unfounded. After all, because of the winter, Byzantium could not respond any earlier to the blow against the Empire delivered by the Bulgars at Strymon. Furthermore,

---

1. Theophanes 1, 485, : "...δόλω καὶ λόγῳ"

2. Bury, E.R.E., p.341.

3. This makes us believe that the siege of the town was very short, so short that no help could reach them, either from Constantinople itself, or from a nearby fortress, let us say Phillippopolis.

4. Runciman (The First..., p.53) says Thursday, but Theophanes, by saying "τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἑβδομάδος τοῦ ἑωτηρίου πάθους" is specific enough. Furthermore, if it was Thursday, then Nicephorus would not have had enough time to reach Pliska before or at Easter day, as he finally did (Theophanes 1, 485). Even five days (from Tuesday to Sunday) seem to be a very short time for covering the distance between the two capitals.



the prestige of the Empire and of the Emperor was at stake, so that Nicephorus could not have remained indifferent to such a disaster. It would seem that, before leaving the capital, Nicephorus already knew about Sardica, not only about its siege, but about its destruction too. Therefore, there was no need for him to march towards the north-west; nothing was left to be saved there. Thus, he made his way northwards, towards Pliska, Krum's capital. Nicephorus did not choose this route only because he was aiming at a pure counter-attack. A transfer of the main scene of the operations to Thrace was considered to be of great advantage for Byzantium, not only because the Byzantine line of the outposts there was much stronger, but also and mainly because the Byzantine fleet could sail northwards along the coasts of the Black Sea and give its support and help to supply the fighting army. The Emperor wanted to arrive at Pliska,<sup>1</sup> before Krum's return from Sardica. As he did not come across any resistance, it did not take him long to reach the Bulgarian capital and as the city seems to have been almost undefended, the Byzantine Emperor celebrated Easter at the court of the Bulgarian Khan.<sup>2</sup> Nicephorus plundered

- 
1. Surprisingly Browning (Byzantium... op.cit. p.49) dates this expedition in the autumn of 809, probably by mistake.
  2. Theophanes 1, 485. For this event see F. Dvornik, Les Slaves Byzance et Rome au IXe siècle (Paris 1926), p.36, where the author interprets Theophanes' account in a way that, I am sure, would have delighted Theophanes himself. F. Dvornik, following Theophanes, argues that Nicephorus was lying, when he sent a message to Constantinople, letting the senate know about his success at Pliska. Moreover Dvornik speaks about a certain defeat of Nicephorus by Krum, somewhere near Pliska, an account, however, which is definitely not reported by any source. If such a defeat had taken place, Theophanes would not have hesitated to exploit it for further decrying of Nicephorus. J.B. Bury (E.R.E., p.341, note) is of exactly the opposite opinion



the city and was about to proceed to Sardica, determined to rebuild the fortress. At that time a few survivors from Sardica's garrison came to join the main imperial forces. The Emperor, however, did not welcome them; on the contrary, he threatened to punish them and refused to accept the survivors' apologies. As a result, scared by the Emperor's threat and stubbornness, they went over to the Bulgars.<sup>1</sup> Theophanes, who criticizes the Emperor this time for his lack of consideration and foresight, mentions especially a certain Spatharius Eumathius,<sup>2</sup> whose knowledge on mechanics and warfare was to be properly exploited by the Bulgars in the years to come. In any case

---

to that of Dvornik, and S. Runciman (The First..., p.54, note) has given a good explanation why Bury is right. Both Bury and Runciman see a certain malevolence in Theophanes' casting doubt on Nicephorus' arrival at Pliska. However, regardless of Theophanes' bias against Nicephorus, one might be entitled to argue that in this very case the chronicler's report can be justified. He says (I, p.485) that the Emperor left the capital on Tuesday of Holy Week and perhaps in his calculation the distance between Constantinople and Pliska was too long to be covered in five days by a campaigning army. We do not know where exactly the then Bulgarian capital was located, but S. Runciman (The First..., p.56, note) estimates the distance between Marcellae and Pliska to some seventy miles. To these, of course, the distance between Constantinople and Marcellae, which does not seem to have been shorter, must be added.

1. Nicephorus' indignation was partly justified by the grief he felt as a consequence of the disaster at Sardica, but what made him even more angry was the way in which the fortress fell into the hands of Krum. The Emperor must have felt that, under normal circumstances, a garrison of 6,000 men could have defended a well constructed fortress for a few days, until the main forces would have arrived from Constantinople. Whether, however, these men who survived the attack were to be blamed for the fall of Sardica, remains, of course, very doubtful.
2. Theophanes de Boor I, p.485. See, however, Bonn ed. I, p.753, where the Spatharius is given the name Euthymius.



this whole event was not considered by Nicephorus significant enough to alter his original plan and thus he marched directly towards Sardica. Surprisingly, the two armies failed to meet each other somewhere between Pliska and Sardica. A possible explanation for this is that Krum's army was probably very much outnumbered by the Byzantine forces and thus the Khan carefully avoided meeting Nicephorus at this stage. This does not mean that Nicephorus' task of rebuilding the place became easier. The soldiers' negative reaction to his plans has already been discussed at length. They refused to co-operate, so that the Emperor did not finally have Sardica rebuilt. He returned to Constantinople to punish the ringleaders of the protest.

The two-year period from May 809 to May 811 was a quiet one, at least as far as the Byzantine-Bulgar relations are concerned. No conflicts between Byzantium and its northern neighbours are mentioned during this time. Whether the lack of events was the result of a mere coincidence or of some agreement between the two sides, we are not told. Nevertheless, a hint that a peace treaty or a truce was made is provided by a Greek-Bulgarian inscription.<sup>1</sup> It records that by resuming the war against the Bulgars in 811, Nicephorus failed to keep the oaths he had taken ("τοὺς ὅρκους ἔληθμόνησε"). However, no matter how reliable the inscription itself is, the lack of support from

---

1. The inscription was found in Hambarly (Kazyl or Kyzyl-Agatch) and was firstly published by the brothers Skorpil in the: Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich - Ungarn, 1892, pp.98-99. On the importance and the period to which the inscription refers, see: H. Grégoire, 'L'empereur Nicéphore le Chauve et Kroum "premier" de Bulgarie', in Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres de l'Académie de Belgique, 20 (1935), pp.261-72.

another source, hardly allows us to put forward such a theory. If a peace treaty or a truce had been agreed between the two rivals, then Theophanes would have been the first one to know about it and he certainly would not have missed an opportunity to criticize Nicephorus for his untrustworthiness.

Unfortunately we have little information concerning Krum's activities during these two years. He was probably given the time to rebuild Pliska, to organize his country better and to provide it with legislation.<sup>1</sup> For his part Nicephorus, during the two years 809-811, dedicated himself almost completely to the Balkan affairs. It was during this time (winter 809-810) that the Emperor ordered the transfer of population from the rest of the themes into the Sclaveniae. The many-sided considerations behind that transfer have been stressed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Here only one general comment need be made: that transfer was designed to serve the imperial interests equally against Slavic and against Bulgarian aspirations.

Meanwhile Nicephorus prepared the expedition of his life. Determined to crush the Bulgarian power once and for all, he created a huge army. The eastern borders of the Empire

---

1. For Krum's legislation see Suidas (ed. Ada Adler) 1, pp.483-84; the author records that after having destroyed the nation of the Avars, Krum asked a few prisoners who had survived the destruction, what had been, according to their opinion, the cause of their complete defeat. Their reply numbered several reasons: First of all the hatred between each other, secondly the collusion between the thieves and the judges, thirdly drunkenness, then bribery and lastly venality in the commerce, which turned them against each other. The author reports that after that, Krum aimed at legislation which would protect his people from all these malignities, which had killed the Avars. (See also G. Kazarow: 'Die Gesetzgebung des bulgarischen Fürsten Krum', in B.Z., XVI (1907), pp.254-57).

2. On this measure see the chapter on domestic policies, section under the title: Reconquest of Greece, pp.129-37.



had been quiet since 807.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this, the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd (809) and the battle for the succession among his sons, gave the Byzantine Emperor an excellent chance of bringing Asiatic forces into Europe. The army of the Anatolikon theme with Romanus as their strategos certainly participated in the expedition,<sup>2</sup> and it is possible that the Armeniac theme forces were also available.<sup>3</sup> Theophanes gives us the impression that Nicephorus even forced poor people to provide themselves with some very basic army equipment, such as sticks and slings<sup>4</sup> and to join the army, but there must be a lot of exaggeration in the chronicler's words. This is, perhaps, another 'edition' of the so-called second 'vexation', recorded by Theophanes elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

From a second source, which covers only the expedition of Nicephorus in the year 811, we hear that teenage sons of the archons, those who had reached the age of fifteen, participated in the campaign, in the ranks of the Hikanatoi, a bodyguard for the Emperor's son Stauracius.<sup>6</sup> The Emperor's third grandson Nicetas, the future patriarch Ignatius, though only ten years old at that time, had been enrolled in the same body and had been appointed by his grandfather as their domestic,<sup>7</sup> but it does not become clear

- 
1. M. Canard, 'Byzantium and the Muslim World to the Middle of the Eleventh Century' in C.M.H., 4, pt.1, p.708. See, however, Theophanes (1, 489), where an episode between Leo, the strategos of the Armeniac theme and future Emperor Leo V and the Arabs, is recorded. On that incident, see above, the section on the Arabs, p.281.
  2. Theophanes 1, 491.
  3. Bury, E.R.E., (op.cit.), p.343.
  4. Theophanes 1, 490: "ἑφενδόναίς καὶ ράβδοις ὤπλιτομένους".
  5. ibid., p.486.
  6. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique... (loc.cit.)', p.210.
  7. His life, by Nicetas - David Paphlagon, in Migne, P.G., 105, col.489.

from the texts whether or not he took part in the expedition. Nicetas' father, however, the Emperor's son-in-law and future Emperor Michael I, was certainly present.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, as far as Nicephorus' forces are concerned, we are not given any numbers. The only thing that we can be sure of, is that they certainly outnumbered Krum's army.

Some time in May 811, Nicephorus left the capital, full of self-confidence. We do not know the exact route the Emperor followed, but he surely marched through Thrace. While the Byzantine army was at Marcellae, on the frontiers,<sup>2</sup> two events happened. The first was the appeal of Krum for peace. But it was revenge and victory that Nicephorus was seeking. Thus he totally rejected any proposal for peace. He had, of course, his reasons for believing that no reliance could be placed on Krum's words.

The second event, which according to Theophanes was considered as a bad omen for Nicephorus, was the desertion of the Emperor's faithful servant Byzantius, who went over to Krum, taking with him 100 pounds of gold and an imperial costume.<sup>3</sup> At first sight, this might be seen as a plot against Nicephorus from within his own household. However, as the desertion of Byzantius seems to have been an isolated occurrence, not matched by other events, such a conclusion would be going beyond the evidence.

Theophanes gives us July 20th as the date when Nicephorus crossed the borders and entered Bulgaria.<sup>4</sup>

---

1. I. Dujčev: 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.210.

2. An approximate location of Marcellae is provided by the Patriarch Nicephorus in his Opuscula Historica, ed. de Boor (Lipsiae 1880), p.66, where it reads "φρούριον δὲ τοῦτο πλησιέτατα Βουλγάρων κείμενον."  
See also Theophanes 1, p.470.

3. Theophanes 1, 490.

4. ibid.



However, keeping in mind that the crucial battle, according to the same chronicler, took place on the 26th<sup>1</sup> of the same month, we believe that Theophanes must be somewhat inaccurate: the Emperor left the capital in May and by the time he reached Marcellae had covered roughly two thirds of the distance between Constantinople and Pliska. If Nicephorus, though marching through his own territory, spend about two months to cover that distance, it seems unlikely that everything after that happened in so few (six!) days.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore the fact that, after the capture of his capital, Krum found time to employ "Ἀβάρους καὶ τὰς πέριξ Σκλαβονίας"<sup>3</sup> confirms that Theophanes has given us the wrong date for the Emperor's entry into Bulgaria. As I. Dujčev has pointed out, it is most probable that Nicephorus left Marcellae sometime in June<sup>4</sup> or in early July, so that he had enough time to choose his route through a hostile country.<sup>5</sup> What was the route? Theophanes records that the 'bragging coward' of an emperor (that is to say Nicephorus) followed a risky way through virtually impassable places. This may be taken to mean that at least at this, still early stage of his expedition,

- 
1. See also I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' p.212, where the 23rd of July is given as the date of the disaster.
  2. S. Runciman (The First..., p.56, note) assumes that the 20th of July is in fact the date when Nicephorus entered the Bulgarian capital and not the date when he passed the frontiers, as Theophanes records. Bury (E.R.E., p.343) is almost of the same opinion, by suggesting that 'on the 20th of July the Romans approached the capital of Krum'.
  3. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' p.212.
  4. It is very likely that we are faced here with a mistake made in the copying of Theophanes; in other words, one of the copyists might have copied an λ instead of an ν and thus we are given Ἰουλίου instead of Ἰουνίου; conjectural, though possible.
  5. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...', p.221.

Nicephorus was forced to make detours, in order to avoid traps. If he had not, Krum would probably have attacked the imperial army much earlier than he actually did.

Our sources do not make it clear, where the Bulgars provided their first opposition to the invaders. We are not told how close to the Bulgarian capital 'the first conflicts',<sup>1</sup> mentioned by Theophanes, took place. In any case, since his appeal for peace at Marcellae had been rejected, Krum probably made his plans. We would expect him to have compared the numbers of his troops with those of the imperial army and to have found himself in a very weak position. More importantly, defensive war did not fit the Bulgars of Krum at all. From what we have seen so far, (e.g. at Strymon and Sardica) Krum had organized and trained his soldiers mainly for offensive war. Therefore, it is very likely that the Khan himself with the main part of his army did not oppose Nicephorus' invasion. Whether frightened or acting deliberately,<sup>2</sup> he fled to the mountains. Before doing so, Krum left some of his forces behind with the aim of hindering Nicephorus' progress towards the interior of Bulgaria and of defending Pliska.<sup>3</sup> The two sources which mention the troops do not differ much in the numbers they give us: the anonymous chronicler estimates the soldiers to have been not more than twelve thousand 'έως δώδεκα χιλιάδας',<sup>4</sup> while the anonymous hagiographer of St. Nicolas raises the number up to

---

1. Theophanes 1, 490: "μετὰ τὰς πρώτας συμβολάς?"

This can be taken as an indication that other conflicts followed.

2. The anonymous chronicler (I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' loc.cit. p.210) says 'deliberately', "ὡς θῆθεν μὴ δυνάμενοι ἀντιβῆναι" ('as if they could not provide any opposition').

3. Theophanes (1, 490) does not speak directly about such a garrison, but we can infer it from his words, concerning a victory of Nicephorus, "οὐ τῷ κατενοδοῦντι θεῷ τὰ τῆς νίκης ὑπέγραψεν." See also Krum's appeal to Nicephorus, while the latter was at Pliska: 'Look, you have conquered. Take everything that pleases you, and go in peace'.

4. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.210.



'fifteen thousand, perhaps more, perhaps fewer'.<sup>1</sup> Though not stated categorically, it would appear that these 'selected'<sup>2</sup> soldiers were left by Krum in order to garrison Pliska.<sup>3</sup> Judging from what finally happened, one might be allowed to say that this garrison was deliberately sacrificed by Krum. As they did not have any chance against the obviously much larger forces of Nicephorus, they were killed to a man.<sup>4</sup> Were these twelve or fifteen thousand Bulgarian soldiers the only ones whom Nicephorus came up against? The anonymous chronicler speaks of another fifty thousand, whom the Byzantine forces also beat and killed.<sup>5</sup> I. Dujčev takes it for granted that the anonymous chronicler is right and assumes that Krum had organized two zones of defence: the first one (12,000-15,000 men) was put somewhere in the narrow passes and the second (50,000 men of slightly fewer) had undertaken the task of saving the capital itself.<sup>6</sup> However, Dujčev's reconstructions seem to be a bit hypothetical. The number of fifty thousand men is too impressive to be adopted as precise. It may only be a way of suggesting that, once installed at Pliska, the Byzantines carried out some mopping up operations in the neighbourhood, the scope of which was grossly exaggerated. At any rate, either at Pliska itself or in its surrounds, Krum appears to have lost a considerable number of soldiers. This explains

- 
1. L. Clugnet, 'Histoire de S. Nicolas, soldat et moine' (three versions), in Revue d'Orient Chrétien, 7 (1902), p.325. The main aim of the Vita is not, of course, to give us details about Bulgar-Byzantine conflicts, but to stress the point that the Saint, he alone, was saved from the disaster of 811, because three times he resisted some woman's advances.
  2. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.210.
  3. ibid., "εἰς φυλακὴν τοῦ τόπου".
  4. ibid.
  5. ibid.
  6. ibid., pp.225-26.

perhaps the desperate situation, the Khan was faced with. In his effort to gather some forces for his final assault - still to follow - Krum is reported to have asked for help even from women, whom he equipped as soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the plundering which followed the capture of Pliska, a difference in the accounts provided by our two main sources, should not be allowed to go unnoticed.

Theophanes records that the Emperor locked up Krum's treasure aiming at keeping everything for himself.<sup>2</sup> The anonymous chronicler, however, says almost exactly the opposite. According to this more reliable source, the Emperor found much booty, and started sharing it out among his soldiers. A list was even kept of the articles and the money given to each of them.<sup>3</sup> Although this detail is out of keeping with Nicephorus' famed stinginess, reported by the same source too later on,<sup>4</sup> it would seem that, whether he liked it or not, Nicephorus had this time to give the booty to his soldiers. What had happened two years previously at Sardica,<sup>5</sup> taught the Emperor a lesson: that he had to be more generous to his soldiers than he used to be, at least in regard to their rights to booty.

We are not told how many days Nicephorus stayed at Pliska. The anonymous chronicler implies that it was his intention to build a city there, to which he wanted to give his name. Theophanes records that Krum made another appeal to Nicephorus, this time for a peaceful withdrawal.<sup>6</sup> The

---

1. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212.

2. Theophanes 1, 490.

3. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212. Another difference, this time between the account given by the anonymous author of the chronicle and what we read in the Suidas dictionary about Krum's legislation, might also be spotted. According to the first source, Nicephorus found Krum's storehouses full of wine, although according to the latter, the consumption of wine is supposed to have been prohibited by the Khan (even the plantation of vines was forbidden) after he destroyed the Avars. (On this cf. above, in this section p.302 note 1).

4. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.216: "μικρολόγος τε καὶ φιλάργυρος καθ' ὅπερ βολάν".

5. On that event cf. above, pp.108-10.

6. For Krum's words, see above, p.306, note 3.



appeal was, of course, rejected. Both sources state that Nicephorus was overtaken by his pride. In the meantime discipline among the army was very loose. Nicephorus probably reached the false conclusion that he had destroyed the whole Bulgarian army and consequently that there would be no more resistance against his lordship.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, whatever Nicephorus' estimations were, a certain lack of basic precautions on the part of the imperial army has to be stressed. Therefore Krum started being hopeful of having another chance to attack the Byzantine army. The vital thing was that a part of the Bulgarian forces was still safe and ready to act under more auspicious circumstances. Moreover, while Nicephorus was plundering Krum's palace (αὐλή), the Khan was enlarging his army by recruiting<sup>2</sup> Avars and Slavs.

Finally, sometime between the 23rd and 26th July, the Emperor decided to leave Pliska. Before leaving, however, he burned the whole city which was probably made of wood.<sup>3</sup> We cannot be sure whether Nicephorus left Pliska with the intention of marching towards Sardica or simply to return to Constantinople. One of the sources at our disposal speaks of the first possibility.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he wanted to go there, in order to rebuild the city-fortress, a task which had remained unfinished since his visit there two years earlier in 809.<sup>5</sup> But then, it is well known that the imperial forces, shortly after their departure from Pliska, were trapped in a narrow pass and no defile can be spotted

- 
1. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212: "νομίμας ὅτι ἐξήλειψεν πᾶσαν τὴν Βουλγαρίαν."
  2. ibid.
  3. ibid.; J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.343.
  4. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212.
  5. On this, see above, in this section p.301.

on the road from Pliska to Sardica, which at least at that time went along the northern side of the Haemus-Balkan Mountains and through Nicopolis, on the south bank of the Danube.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, one needs to remember that Nicephorus left Constantinople some time in May<sup>2</sup> and this, of course, means that by the end of July he had already been away from the capital for more than two months. It hardly needs to be emphasized that such a period of absence from Constantinople might be considered as too long from an emperor, who appears to have been always afraid of plots which might be hatched against him at any time. Finally a possibility that Nicephorus would have liked to celebrate his great victory over the Bulgars in the Byzantine capital itself, cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it seems more reasonable to suggest that the imperial forces made their way back to Constantinople. But it is well known that not long after he had left Pliska, Nicephorus fell victim to a well organised counter attack by the Bulgars. Whether the Byzantine soldiers set out in pursuit of the Bulgarian army or simply to return to Constantinople we are not told. It is more likely that Nicephorus did not follow the Bulgars who had escaped in the mountains, but was trapped by them on his return journey.<sup>3</sup>

The exact place where the Byzantine army was encircled by the Bulgars cannot be precisely located. Among those who have tried to,<sup>4</sup> S. Nedev seems to have given good

- 
1. S. Nedev, 'Razgromut a Nikofor i Genik prez 811 g'. in Voenno-Istoricĕski Sbornik, 46 (1977), pp. 115-22. the article is in Bulgarian, but Mrs B. Strewé from the Slavic department of Hamburg University translated it for me into German. To her I am indebted.
  2. Theophanes 1, p.489.
  3. R. Browning, Byzantium... (op.cit.), p.49.
  4. The Pass of Verbitsa as the actual battlefield has been adopted by J.B. Bury (E.R.E., p.344) and S. Runciman (The First..., p.57 note); C. Jirecek (Geschichte der Bulgaren, Prague 1876, pp.45-6 and Die Heerstraße von Beograd nach Konstantinopel, Prague 1877, pp.149-50) assumed that the battle took place at the Pass of Veregave, while F. Dvornik (Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IX siècle, Paris 1926, p.37) suggested the plain between Karnobat and Sumen.



reasons why the clash must have taken place in the Veselinovsky Pass, i.e. in the narrow place, through which the road from Kulnovo to Veselinovo passes.<sup>1</sup> St. Nedev has visited the area, produced two relatively convincing maps and his description of the place fits very well into what our two main sources have to say about the location of the disaster. The anonymous chronicler, for example, describes the pass as being so narrow at one of its ends that the Bulgars blocked it simply by wooden palisades. He also tells us that a river ran along the bottom of the defile. The place that best corresponds to this description is to be found just to the east of Smiadovo, where the stream Brestova joins the river Camčija. (See map on page 313.)

By the time that the Byzantine army entered the defile, the Bulgars had already blocked its south exit, which is much narrower than the northern one. When Nicephorus realized the desperate situation in which he had put the imperial army, it was already too late to save the day. He is reported to have said: 'Had we had wings, we could not have escaped complete destruction'.<sup>2</sup> But the Bulgars had prepared another surprise for the Byzantine army: a night attack launched on the 26th July.<sup>3</sup> Theophanes records that it was Saturday<sup>4</sup> night and this means that it was the night from Friday to Saturday. S. Runciman assumes that the great battle took place on the 26th/27th<sup>5</sup> which

---

1. St. Nedev, 'Razgromut...' (loc.cit.), p.127.

2. Theophanes 1, 490.

3. The anonymous chronicler (I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' loc.cit. p.212) dates it on the 23rd and F. Dvornic (Les Slaves... op.cit. p.37) on the 25th July. Most of the modern historians, however, have adopted the date provided by Theophanes, i.e. the 26th. After all, the 26th was a Saturday. Therefore the anonymous chronicler by suggesting that the great battle took place on the 23rd 'which was Saturday', is mistaken.

4. Theophanes 1, 491: "τῆς νυκτὸς τοῦ σαββάτου"

5. S. Runciman, The First..., p.56, note.

is the Saturday-Sunday night. But if that was the case, then Theophanes would have said "τῆ νυκτὶ κυριακῆς" and not "τῆ νυκτὶ σαββάτου", simply because the Byzantine day started in the evening (at six o'clock in the evening). Furthermore, that it was Saturday morning is stated by our anonymous chronicler too:  
 "Ἰαφάουτος σαββάτου!"<sup>1</sup>

The Byzantines did not expect an assault before dawn.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the details of the attack and of the massacre which followed, escape us. According to the anonymous narration, which is at this point more detailed than the one by Theophanes, not all the thematic armies were faced with the attack of the enemies. On the contrary, encamped at a certain distance from each other, they did not even notice that another part of the army was under attack. The Bulgars had reconnoitred the area the day before. Thus, not surprisingly, it was the forces around the Emperor,<sup>3</sup> which were attacked by the heathen. The men around Nicephorus managed to defend themselves for a while, but were soon overcome and finally massacred. Nicephorus himself was killed and Stauracius gravely wounded. According to the same source, news of this disaster prompted the rest of the army to flee. On their way to escape they soon encountered a muddy river. The river was at the beginning not passable, but after a while it was filled up with drowned Byzantine soldiers and horses. These bodies now made ~~the~~ the river easy to be crossed by the rest of the army!

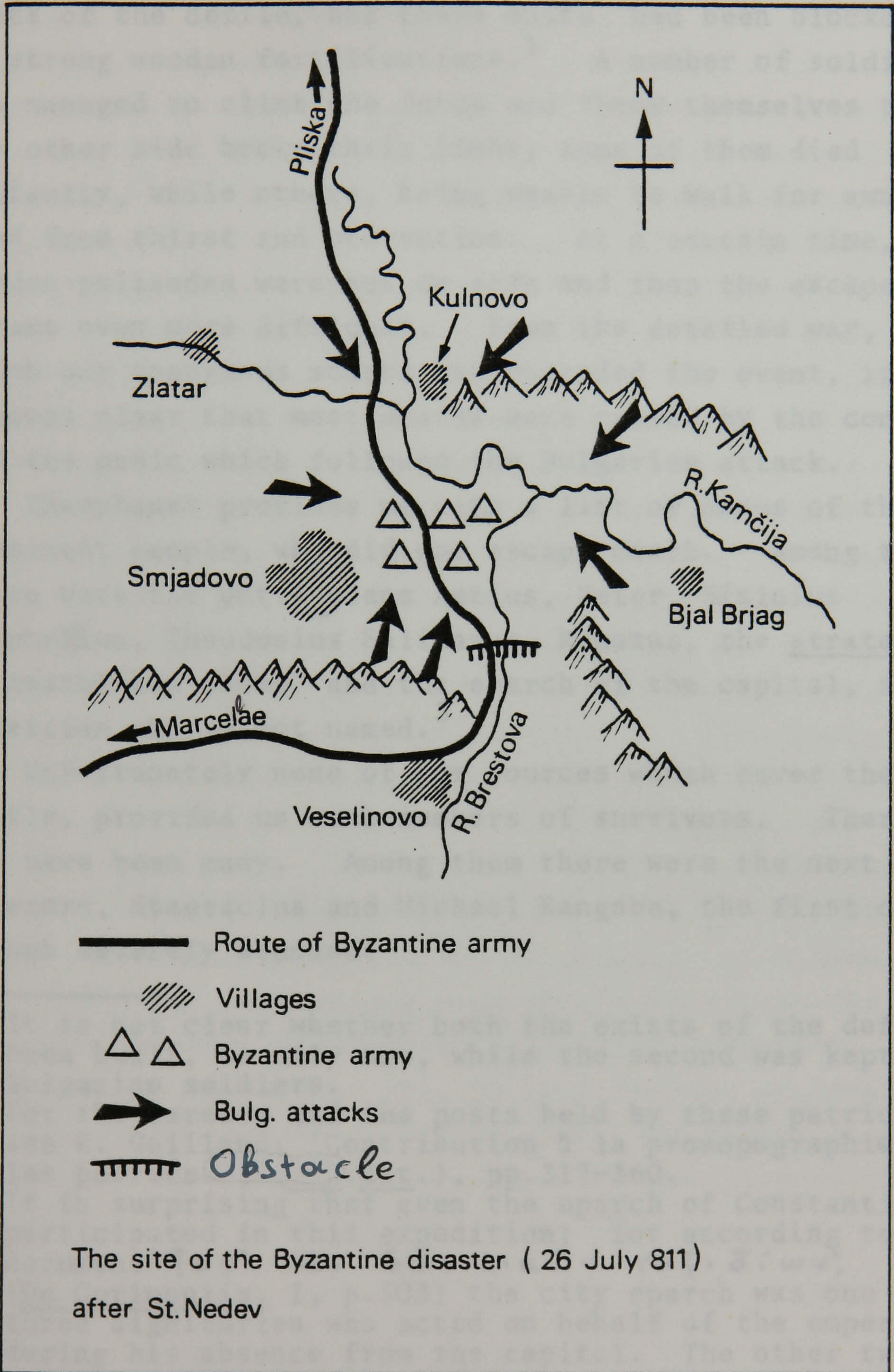
---

1. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.212.

2. Theophanes 1, p.491: "πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας"

3. Anonymous, op.cit., p.214: "μόνον γὰρ εἰς τὸ βασιλικὸν  
 φοββάτου ἐπέτηγον"







However, for the majority of them, the safe crossing over the river did not mean anything. They reached the exits of the defile, but these exits had been blocked by strong wooden fortifications.<sup>1</sup> A number of soldiers who managed to climb the fence and throw themselves to the other side broke their limbs, some of them died instantly, while others, being unable to walk far away, died from thirst and starvation. At a certain time, the wooden palisades were set on fire and thus the escape became even more difficult. From the detailed way, in which our anonymous source has recorded the event, it becomes clear that most deaths were caused by the confusion and the panic which followed the Bulgarian attack.

Theophanes provides us with a list of names of those prominent people, who did not escape death. Among them there were the patricians Aetius, Peter, Sisinius Triphyllus, Theodosius Salibaras, Romanus, the strategos of Anatolikon theme<sup>2</sup> and the eparch of the capital, a patrician who is not named.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately none of our sources which cover the fatal battle, provides us with numbers of survivors. There can not have been many. Among them there were the next two emperors, Stauracius and Michael Rangabe, the first one though severely wounded.

- 
1. It is not clear whether both the exists of the defile had been built, or only one, while the second was kept by Bulgarian soldiers.
  2. For the careers and the posts held by these patricians see R. Guiland, 'Contribution à la prosopographie.. les patrices', (loc.cit.), pp.317-360.
  3. It is surprising that even the eparch of Constantinople participated in this expedition; for according to the document 'Περὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν ταξιδίων', (De Cerimoniis, 1, p.503) the city eparch was one of the three dignitaries who acted on behalf of the emperor during his absence from the capital. The other two were the praepositus and the magister. The eparch's participation in the campaign of 811 can be considered as another indication that the Emperor Nicephorus was probably terrified of plots against him hatched in the capital while he was away.



Apart from the complete massacre of the Byzantine army, the imperial prestige was gravely shaken too. Since the year 378, no Roman emperor had fallen in battle. Krum exploited Nicephorus' death in a rather barbaric way: he decapitated the corpse and exposed the Emperor's head on a stake. After a few days the skull was covered with silver and <sup>the</sup> Khan used it for toasts with his boyars.

The relic of the Byzantine army reached Adrianople, where the heavily wounded Stauracius was proclaimed emperor by the Patrician and Domestic of the Schools Stephen.<sup>1</sup> Stauracius spoke to the army against his father,<sup>2</sup> probably denouncing the late Emperor's strict economic and fiscal policies. But the health of the young Emperor was worsening day by day and by the time he was brought to the capital, his death had become much closer. As Stauracius himself was childless, his brother-in-law Michael Rangabe, the husband of Nicephorus' daughter Procopia, who had escaped the disaster unharmed, remained the closest, if not the only, heir to the Byzantine throne. The young Emperor knew that and was thinking about depriving Michael of his eyesight.<sup>3</sup> As for the throne, it would either pass to the Empress Theophanô, or a democracy would be established,<sup>4</sup> with a collective leadership. But the idea of another Irene on the throne strengthened the candidature of Michael, dispelling the hesitations even of the Patrician and Domestic Stephen, Stauracius' last loyal supporter. Thus on the first of October 811, Michael Rangabe was proclaimed emperor by the senate. Before that, the Patriarch Nicephorus demanded from Michael a written promise that as emperor he would not restore Iconoclasm.<sup>5</sup>

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.492.

2. ibid.

3. ibid., p.493.

4. ibid., p.492.

5. ibid., p.493.

Luckily for the Byzantines Krum did not take advantage of his military superiority immediately after his great victory in July 811. Thus the succession to the throne could be solved without any external disturbances. In fact it was not before the spring of next year, i.e. 812, that the Khan attacked the imperial fortress of Develtus, a Black Sea coastal city at the head of the gulf of Burgas. It seems that by the time the hesitating Emperor undertook a campaign against the Bulgars ( 7 June),<sup>1</sup> it was already too late to save Develtus. Its inhabitants, including its bishop, were transferred by the conquerors to somewhere in the interior of Bulgaria. However, no matter how bitter a setback, the fall of Develtus was not the only misfortune that befell the Emperor Michael I, for it produced a mutiny among the soldiers of the Opsikion and Thracian themes. By spreading money and promises Michael managed to put the uprising down, but the Bulgars, who in the meantime had heard about it, exploited the situation by undertaking in their turn, campaigns against various parts of Macedonia and Thrace. Krum met scarcely any opposition. Theophanes mentions a series of cities and fortresses such as Anchialus, Berrhoea, the Thracian Nicaea, Probaton, Philippopolis, Philippi and Strymon, abandoned by their inhabitants and defenders, just because they were terrified of the Bulgarian threat.<sup>2</sup> One needs only to remember that it was only recently that the Emperor Nicephorus had transferred, at least to some of these places, population from the Asiatic themes of the Empire.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Theophanes 1, 495.

2. ibid., p.496.

3. On the transfer, cf. above, pp.129-37.



But as in the previous year, Krum did not try to take advantage of all this. Surprisingly enough, in September 812, the Khan sent Dragomer, an ambassador with a Slavic name,<sup>1</sup> to the Byzantine Emperor, asking for peace.

As our sources do not shed any light on the matter, it is very difficult to say why Krum proposed peace at a time when he certainly had the upper hand. G. Cankova-Petkova suggests that the Bulgarian leader asked for peace, because he had estimated that the circumstances were suitable for achieving a recognition of the Bulgarian state by the Byzantines.<sup>2</sup> S. Runciman believes that Krum wanted 'to consolidate carefully his every step'.<sup>3</sup> To this second interpretation which seems more likely than the first one, can be added that the peace proposals of Krum were dictated by the general impression that Byzantium was an empire, not easily disposed of.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, one needs to remember that even at this very difficult juncture (August 812) Leo, the strategos of the Anatolikon theme and the future Emperor Leo V, had managed to defeat the Arabs somewhere in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> Krum probably heard about Leo's achievement and it could be that he was afraid that the Byzantines were about to transfer forces from the eastern provinces of the Empire into Europe, in order to fight against the Bulgars. To suggest that the Khan proposed peace, simply because he was a peace-maker by nature,<sup>6</sup> would be an oversimplification.

---

1. S. Runciman, The First..., p.59.

2. G. Cankova-Petkova, 'Deux contributions à l'histoire des rapports bulgare-byzantins au IXe siècle', Byzantinoslavica, 37 (1976), p.37.

3. S. Runciman, The First..., p.59.

4. Th. Korres, 'Relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria during the reign of Michael I Rangabe' (in Greek), Byzantina-Metabyzantina, 11, (Thessalonica 1982), p.148.

5. Theophanes 1, p.497.

6. G. Cankova-Petkova, 'Deux contributions...' (loc.cit.), p.36 sq.

But Krum's conditions for the proposed peace agreement are also of interest. He suggested that the peace treaty which had been signed almost one century ago (716) between Tervel and Theodosius III should be renewed. Meleona in Thrace would be given to the Bulgars as well as red hides and robes worth thirty pounds of gold. Trade relations were to be reopened, but merchants were to be officially authorized by the two governments. Finally Krum demanded the return of prisoners and refugees.<sup>1</sup> These proposals were accompanied by the threat that, unless they were met, he would attack Mesembria.<sup>2</sup>

The imperial council gathered to discuss Krum's proposals. According to Theophanes among his terms, it was only one which was considered unacceptable, at least by some of the Emperor's advisers. They argued that Bulgar deserters ought not to be returned, and their argument appeared strong enough, so that the Emperor Michael I rejected the peace treaty.<sup>3</sup> Although it was already the middle of October, the Khan, true to his word, appeared in front of the well fortified city of Mesembria. Again the Byzantines did not react immediately. Perhaps they did not believe that Mesembria would be easily conquered. After all the Bulgars, up to that time, lacked engineering skill and equipment suitable for such cases. Thus, instead of sending troops to help the besieged city, the Emperor Michael I Rangabe again asked his advisers to reconsider Krum's proposal for peace, this time under the pressure of the recent development at Mesembria. The imperial council met on the first of November. The metropolitan bishops of Nicaea and Cyzicus together with

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.497.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.



Theodore, the abbot of Stoudios, and the Patriarch Nicephorus, are known to have participated in it.<sup>1</sup> As Theophanes asserts, it was Theodore with some other 'bad advisers'<sup>2</sup> who opposed a possible peace agreement, and their opinion again proved stronger. But on 4 November news reached the capital that Mesembria had fallen to the Bulgars. It appears that the deserter Eumathius<sup>3</sup> had provided invaluable help to his new master in the capture of this coastal city. The bitterness produced by the fall of Mesembria was all the greater because, as a result, thirty-six syphons through which the most secret invention of the Byzantines, the 'Greek fire', was delivered, together with quantities of 'Greek fire' itself, fell into the hands of the Bulgars. In addition, various articles of luxury were looted by the soldiers of Krum.<sup>4</sup> After this great achievement the Khan destroyed the fortifications and returned to Pliska.

Michael was forced to undertake some action against the Bulgars. Early in spring of 813 he ordered the Asiatic themes to be transferred to Thrace. The Emperor himself at the head of the tagmata joined the thematic army in May. In a clash, which took place on 22 June somewhere between Adrianople and Versinicia, the imperial forces, though outnumbering the Bulgars by ten to one,<sup>5</sup> were again defeated. John Aplaces the strategos of Macedonia, who opened the battle, suddenly realised that he was fighting alone, while the rest of the army led by the Anatolikon troops deserted the battlefield and fled back towards Adrianople in panic. Thus Krum did not have any difficulty in annihilating the

---

1. Theophanes 1, p.498.

2. ibid.

3. On Eumathius cf. above in this section, p.295.

4. Theophanes 1, p.499.

5. Scriptor Incertus, 'De Leone Armenio', C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1842), p.337.



troops of Aplaces and in pursuing the fleeing army. The whole matter had been a well staged treachery, organized probably by the Anatolikon regiments.<sup>1</sup> It was their strategos Leo the Armenian, who benefited. On his return to the capital, the Emperor Michael, greatly disappointed, resigned in favour of Leo, who was crowned emperor on 12 July 813.

For his part, Krum did not withdraw to his capital this time. Having left his brother to besiege Adrianople, he himself appeared in front of the walls of Constantinople on 18 July, i.e. only six days after Leo V's elevation to the throne.<sup>2</sup> Impressed by the strong fortifications, it seems, he did not risk an assault. He limited himself to a demonstration of power outside the Byzantine capital, plundering and destroying its rich suburbs on the European coast of the Bosphorus. When he asked the new Byzantine Emperor to allow him to fix his lance to the Golden Gate of the capital, the Khan met, of course, with Leo's refusal. After that Krum renewed his peace proposals, which had been rejected by Michael Rangabe. The terms must have been roughly the same, as in the previous year. But in the course of the negotiations for a peace agreement on the shore of the Golden Horn, the Byzantines tried to kill the Bulgarian leader. Having escaped the trap with slight injuries, Krum took revenge by capturing Adrianople,<sup>3</sup> and Arcadiopolis fell to the Bulgars later that winter.<sup>4</sup> A victory of Leo V over a Bulgarian detachment somewhere near Mesembria was some small compensation for the Byzantines. Finally, while

- 
1. Treachery is suggested by the contemporary sources either directly (Ignatius the Deacon, Vita Nicephori (loc.cit.) col.76CD) or indirectly (Scriptor Incertus, loc.cit., p.338; Theophanes Continuatus, C.S.H.B. p.14). J.B. Bury (E.R.E., pp.351-52) has discussed the strange battle of 22 June in detail. His convincing conclusion, with which S. Runciman (The First..., p.62, note) agrees, is that Leo the Armenian himself 'was in the plot, but played his cards so cleverly that nobody could prove anything against him, although there were the gravest suspicions'. (J.B. Bury, E.R.E., p.352, note).
  2. Theophanes 1, p.503.
  3. ibid.
  4. Scriptor Incertus, 'De Leone...' (loc.cit.), p.346.



preparing his greatest assault against the Byzantine capital, Krum died unexpectedly on 13 April 814.<sup>1</sup> As soon as he had secured himself on the throne (815), Omourtag, Krum's son and successor, rushed into a peace treaty with the Byzantines. The agreement was concluded some time in the winter of 815-16 and the peace agreed was bound to last thirty years. With this peace treaty a period of great tension between Byzantine and Bulgaria came to an end.

### General Assessment

The discussion on the relations between the Byzantine Empire and its northern neighbours during the Emperor Nicephorus' reign was taken a little further, i.e. until the death of Krum and the treaty of 815, because those years revealed a certain weakness of Bulgarian power in the same way in which the defeat of Nicephorus in 811 revealed its strengths: they were a people settled in a land, which they had made their own. This land was restricted to the area north of the Haemus-Balkan Mountains, which, it can be said, formed the frontier line between the two countries. Keeping these realities in mind, one might argue that it was odd that Nicephorus attacked the Bulgars in their strongholds. More than two years after Nicephorus' death, the Emperor Leo the Armenian also undertook an expedition against the Bulgars. But the route followed by the Byzantine army this time was entirely different from the one of Nicephorus. Leo V did not aim at Pliska. He and his soldiers marched northwards along the western coast of Black Sea in the direction of Mesembria. After beating a Bulgarian detachment there, they returned

---

1. Scriptor Incertus, 'De Leone...' (loc.cit.), p.348.

safely to Constantinople. Does this mean that Nicephorus had underestimated the risks involved in passing through the narrow defiles of the Haemus Mountains? Possibly so, but it is more an indication of how seriously he took the struggle with the Bulgars for control over the Slavs. It is probably this last point that urged Nicephorus to undertake and to carry out expeditions as far north as Pliska and Sardica. Moreover, Nicephorus seems to have never felt safe on the imperial throne. A spectacular victory over the Bulgars would secure his hold on power, and perhaps popularity among the army, something he desperately needed. He was unlucky. His confrontation with Bulgaria took place at a time when the latter was exceptionally strong. However, in a general assessment of Nicephorus and the Bulgars, it should be emphasized that the period 802-811 was very important for the European provinces of the Empire. The Emperor Nicephorus lost to the Bulgars in a crucial battle, which cost him his life. But, before that he had ensured that continental Greece remained Greek. It could so easily have become Slav, or even Bulgarian.



THE PORTRAITS OF NICEPHORUS

## THE PORTRAITS OF NICEPHORUS

In May 811, as the last thing before departing for the fatal campaign against the Bulgars, the Emperor Nicephorus ordered the General Logothete Nicetas to increase public taxes on churches and monasteries and to demand eight year back taxes on the homes of the dignitaries. As we have seen, these measures met with Theodosius Salibaras' objections who remarked that everyone was crying out against Nicephorus and his ministers, because of the recent measures. To these complaints Nicephorus replied: 'Theodosius, do not expect anything else from Nicephorus except what you see'.<sup>1</sup> Salibaras was high in the Emperor's favour and understood the necessity for these measures, but he was pointing out the unpopularity they produced. In other words, for other contemporaries of Nicephorus, the situation was quite different. They suffered as a result of Nicephorus' reforms and did not appreciate their necessity.

We began with this incident, because Nicephorus' fiscal and economic reforms seem to have been one of the targets for a severe criticism of his rule. This comes out in the pages of Theophanes, who expressed contemporary feelings even if the way he presents Nicephorus' reign is deliberately unfair. Almost every measure, reform or act of this particular Emperor was distorted by the biased monastic historian. Nicephorus' effort to bring order to the fisc was seen as avarice; his tolerance on religious affairs was

---

1. Theophanes 1, pp.489-90.



criticized as heresy; his order for the transfer of some population into the Sclaveniae was described as oppression and his reform on the recruitment of poor people into the army as a mere vexation. Furthermore he is said to have confiscated properties of his opponents, to have deprived the soldiers of their pay on certain occasions, to have blinded and even killed people deliberately. The Emperor's private life could not escape his opponent's severe criticism either. Thus Nicephorus is presented as irreligious and immoral; he is said to have broken up Theophanô's betrothal to someone else, in order to let her be the wife of his son Stauracius. In connection with Stauracius' wedding Theophanes implies that during the bride show, two candidates, prettier than Theophanô, were simply put aside for Nicephorus' own delectation. Theophanes also says that the Emperor used to 'sleep' together with his servants.

In order to evaluate these accusations, it is helpful to consider the words of Kolokotronis, that hero of the Greek war of independence. When he was asked why he was brought to trial and was twice imprisoned by the Greek government, he replied that children do not usually throw stones at an almond tree with no almonds on it. He meant, of course, that only those with achievements to their credit were worth accusing. Some of the accusations launched against Nicephorus might have contained elements of truth, but, even so, one can easily detect an abundance of exaggeration. Though there are some contemporary sources who occasionally admit his competence as a ruler, generally speaking, Nicephorus' reputation suffered because of Theophanes, who is the main source for his reign, but at the same time the main accuser of this Emperor, on every aspect of his rule.

But, it would seem that the bias with which the Confessor treated Nicephorus' reign, has also something to do with the standard according to which all these criticisms were made - a standard which seems to have been almost devoid of objectivity. In his treatment of Nicephorus, Theophanes is a polemicist, not a historian. In his effort to praise the reign of Nicephorus' successor Michael Rangabe, Theophanes concentrates his narration mostly around the donations which that Emperor lavished to the patriarch and to the priests of Hagia Sophia on certain occasions, as well as around the measures taken or attempted by Michael I towards a complete destruction of the Paulicians and the Athinganoi of eastern Asia Minor! Just as Constantine Porphyrogenitus deliberately blackened the name of the Emperor Michael III (842-67), in order to glorify the achievements of his grandfather Basil I (867-86),<sup>1</sup> so Theophanes denigrates the memory of Nicephorus I as a means of exalting Michael I. His intention is to provide a damnatio memoriae of Nicephorus. There were, of course, others, as we have seen, who approved of what Nicephorus was doing and a more favourable view of the Emperor filters through in our sources; ironically enough in Methodius' Life of Theophanes, for example. But it has come down in so fragmented a form that it is hardly possible to use it to test or balance Theophanes' portrait of Nicephorus. We have therefore to establish our own criteria against which Nicephorus' views, reforms and policies can be measured with greater objectivity.

We should start with what contemporaries considered to be the imperial ideal. A. Kazhdan has shown that the

---

1. R. Jenkins, 'Constantine VII'S Portrait of Michael III', in Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, Academie Royale de Belgique 5e série, XXXIV (1948), pp.71-77.



imperial ideal around 900 included 'piety and various civil values, often in the shape of the quartet - spiritual fortitude, righteousness, chastity and intelligence'.<sup>1</sup> The cardinal imperial virtue was at all times philanthropy.<sup>2</sup> Though the Emperor Nicephorus I fulfilled some of these qualities, such as piety, righteousness and intelligence, it appears that the way he ruled conforms better with a more pragmatic ideal, one better suited to a modern statesman. Is it, for instance, not considered as very essential for a prime minister of today to be well-informed about the situation of his country at home and abroad? If that was the first qualification needed, then it might be argued that Nicephorus did know the difficulties which the Empire faced at the time of his elevation to the throne in 802. According to the anonymous chronicler who covers the disaster of 811, Nicephorus was 'acute in grasping the essence of problems, especially of those connected with state affairs'.<sup>3</sup> But, one could object, to realize a problem does not mean much; to provide a solution for it would demand much skill, capacity and courage. In regard to these abilities of the Emperor Nicephorus, the answer is provided by Michael the Syrian who asserts that this Emperor was 'homme vigoureux et capable de gouverner'.<sup>4</sup> But, what exactly were these capacities of Nicephorus? First of all his experience as General Logothete provided him with a detailed understanding of the financial difficulties of the Empire and a general grasp of administrative problems

- 
1. A. Kazhdan, 'The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal' (a still unpublished paper given at the Byzantine Spring Symposium of Edinburgh, April 1983, p.15).
  2. D.J. Constantelos, Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare, N. Brunswick 1968, pp.43-61.
  3. I. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.216:
  4. Michael the Syrian, Chronique... (ed. J.A. Chabot, op.cit.) III, p.15.

including those of military organisation. His understanding of domestic policies was eminently practical and he sought to restore the effective authority of the imperial administration. He was not a soldier by training, though the fact that he came from Cappadocia, a border region, suggests that he must have had some acquaintance with military matters. He realised the importance of participation in campaigns at the head of his armies; only thus was there some hope of restoring the morale of the Byzantine armies which had been much damaged by their treatment during the reigns of Irene and Constantine VI. Perhaps the clearest proof of his aptitude for government, at least in Byzantium, was the success he had in suppressing a succession of plots and rebellions; and, what is more, without resort to bloodshed. Turning to his foreign policy, in his dealings with Raḡka, Aachen and Pliska, Nicephorus managed to preserve a balance between the needs of prestige and the realities of power, but all the time maintaining the vital interests of Byzantium. This was even the case with the Bulgars, because they were a threat to the security of the Greek provinces, which had only just been reincorporated into the Byzantine Empire. Nicephorus' involvement with the Bulgars would prove a disaster. Nor were there positive results gained in other areas of foreign policy. If Dalmatia and Venice remained within the Byzantine sphere of influence, the amount of control that Byzantium was able to exercise in these areas was increasingly restricted by the growth of local autonomy. The best that can be said is that after the Emperor's death in battle at the hands of the Bulgars, the Caliphate was in no position to exploit Byzantine weakness, but this can only be attributed in part to Nicephorus' policies.



More important was the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd (809) and the succession problems that ensued.

Nicephorus' death in 811 ushered in a period of political instability which lasted until the year 823, when Thomas the Slav's rebellion was finally suppressed. This was complicated by the revival of Iconoclasm in 815. This issue was only settled in 843 at the Feast of Orthodoxy, which proclaimed that icons were an essential part of christian worship. Abroad Byzantium was under considerable pressure from the Arabs from 824 until 863, from the loss of Crete to Spanish Muslims to Michael III's decisive victory over the Arabs at the battle of Bishop's Meadow.<sup>1</sup> For half a century after Nicephorus' death the Byzantine Empire experienced considerable difficulties at home and abroad. How far was Nicephorus to blame? He was to blame in the sense that his death left a political vacuum and opened up religious questions that a tolerant line of policy seemed set to solve. There is another side to this. Byzantium remained after his death, a basically sound economic, social and administrative concern. It is to his domestic policies, above all, that we must look, when trying to assess his achievement.

Nicephorus believed that the strength of the Empire depended upon a sound fiscal administration to support a strong army. The Empire's revenue was increased considerably, so that the necessary expenses could be met easily. It is generally recognized that his experience in fiscal and economic affairs helped him to introduce a series of reforms which gave the imperial government greater control over the economy. From what we are in

---

1. On this battle, see, G. Huxley, 'The Emperor Michael III and the Battle of Bishop's Meadow (A.D. 863)', in G.R.B.S., 16 (1975), pp.443-50.

a position to know it can be said that rulers who dare to take such measures, probably know well in advance that people are very sensitive about reforms of this nature and as a rule these measures usually result in a loss of popularity for those who introduced them. Therefore, few statemen have the bravery to sacrifice their own popularity for the welfare of future generations. Nicephorus was certainly one of these few. Because, even where rule is hereditary, tough fiscal measures and reforms will produce uprisings, rebellions and depositions. People are usually very reluctant in accepting economic and fiscal reforms, especially when these reforms do not produce immediate beneficial results. Nicephorus' measures, of course, brought immediate results, but few seem to benefit. Peasants were uprooted, monasteries lost some of their best estates and shippers were forced to borrow money at a high interest rate from the government. However, it would be fair to say that Nicephorus' fiscal and economic reforms strengthened the Byzantine economy in the long term and formed the basis for the prosperity witnessed later in the course of the ninth century. The most striking thing is the rapid increase of coinage, particularly bronze and copper issues, that were in circulation in the provinces.<sup>1</sup> Considerable numbers from the reigns of Michael II (820-29) and Theophilus (829-42) have been discovered, for example at Corinth,<sup>2</sup> which was the main Byzantine base, along with Patras, for the reconquest of the Peloponnese. In other words, the growing amount of coinage in circulation should in this case be connected with the recovery of the Peloponnese, initiated under

---

1. On this increase, cf. D.M. Metcalf, 'How Extensive Was the Issue of Folles During the Years 775-820?' in Byz., 37 (1967), pp.270-310.

2. D.M. Metcalf, 'Corinth in the Ninth Century: the Numismatic Evidence', Hesperia, 42 (1973), pp.180-251.



Nicephorus. There seems little doubt that economic revival in the Byzantine Empire was connected with the amount of money being pumped out by central government to the provinces. What Nicephorus' reforms achieved was to concentrate large revenues in the capital, which could then be distributed to the provinces, most clearly through the theme organization. We see this working under Nicephorus with the large amounts of money that went to the themes: 1100 pounds of gold went to Strymon, which at that point was still a Kleisoura and 1300 pounds of gold went to the Armeniac theme. Nicephorus' reforms worked together. His fiscal measures increased the imperial revenues, but he did not hoard this wealth in a miserly fashion. Instead he distributed it through the provinces. In the short term this would have had relatively little effect, but it provided a long term basis for the revival of the Byzantine economy.

The army, always a cornerstone of Byzantine strength, naturally attracted the Emperor Nicephorus' attention. With the change in the system of recruitment of new soldiers he introduced, Nicephorus ensured that the Empire would have the necessary number of troops, properly equipped and available for action at any time. With the extension of the principle of village fiscal solidarity to the recruitment, the numbers of soldiers serving in the Byzantine armies were decisively increased. This is in line with Treadgold's conclusions.<sup>1</sup> We may not fully agree with his calculations about the size of the Byzantine armies, because almost all figures given in medieval sources are impressionistic and **have** to be treated

---

1. W. Treadgold, Byzantine State Finances... (op.cit.) pp.107-08.

with caution. It is obvious, however, that the impression that Ibn Khurdadbeh, writing about 850, wished to leave, was of the vast size of the Byzantine armies of his day.<sup>1</sup>

Nicephorus' consistent efforts in gaining control over the Slavs of Greece need also to be praised. It has already been indicated elsewhere that the Slavs, either by themselves or in alliance with the Bulgars, had become a major threat to the Byzantine Empire. The transfer of population into the Sclaveniae together with the creation of new themes in or close to these areas, seem to have been the proper means towards a successful policy with regard to the problem of the Slavs.

Finally, there is the question of whether Nicephorus stood closer to iconodules or to iconoclasts. It would, perhaps, be safe to say that he was a broad-minded believer, who did not wish 'to make windows into men's souls'. His tolerance towards all religious parties and movements should be seen as an effort to achieve unity among the various religious tendencies of the populace. He was withall a pious man, who fasted and prayed regularly.<sup>2</sup> The monks, nevertheless, thought that they had good reasons to complain, because the Emperor imposed, reimposed or increased taxation on churches and monasteries and took steps towards the secularization of monastic properties. Pragmatist as he was, Nicephorus realised that he could not be at the same time very tolerant of monastic properties and a rigorous advocate of the Empire's fiscal strength. These two ideals do not tally at all. Without any hesitation he chose to pursue the second. Furthermore the Emperor

---

1. Ibn Khurdadbeh, edit. and transl. by M.J. de Goeje in Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, VI (Leyden 1889), pp.84-85.

2. Bar Hebraeus, Chronography (ed. E.A.W. Budge, op.cit.) p.121.



appears to have come out against the custom of dedicating golden and silver offerings to churches and monasteries and also to have expressed the view that these items should be used only for the welfare of the populace.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that such practical views on issues considered as purely religious, are almost unique in the Middle Ages. Consciously or not, Nicephorus was trying to limit the amount of treasure tied up in the 'dead hand' of the monasteries. This was vital if he was to increase the amount of money in circulation.

Nicephorus I was not born in the purple. Coming from a provincial town of Asia Minor, he followed a career as a civil servant. Perhaps circumstances favoured his elevation to the imperial throne, but from the moment he established himself there, he exercised his own policies. Though his reign was turbulent because of internal disturbances, Nicephorus found the time, the courage and the strength to work for a solution of the Empire's immediate and long term problems. In his effort to build a strong and lasting imperial economy, the Emperor took some measures which might be seen as tough. But then, tough against whom? It is definitely of some interest to know that Theophanes denounces these fiscal reforms, not as a representative of the lower class population, but as a champion of the dignitaries! It is also significant that Theodore of Stoudios, a personality who under Nicephorus suffered imprisonment and exile, honestly admitted that with this Emperor in office, the affairs of state had been put into order.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, not all his policies were altruistic, but they all aimed at one of the following targets:

- 
1. Theophanes 1, p.489: "καὶ τὰ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἱερὰ κοινοῦσθαι ἄξιον ἐδοχματίσθη."
  2. Theodore of Stoudios, Epist. I, 16, (loc.cit.), col.960AB.

- 1) the strengthening of the fiscal administration and central control over the economy,
- 2) the strengthening and effectiveness of the army and the navy,
- 3) a lasting solution of the issue of the Slavs and
- 4) harmony among ecclesiastical and paraecclesiastical forces.

Nicephorus' weakness was that he was not as good a soldier as an administrator. His record as a general was poor. His troops never liked him and he had difficulty controlling them. He was easily misled by temporary success on the battlefield. His failure in 811 to take some basic precautions while campaigning brought disaster to the Byzantine army and a premature end to his own reign and life.

There is not much point in speculating as to what would have happened if Nicephorus had survived in 811. One thing, nevertheless, remains certain. The less than nine year period of his reign was not long enough for his policies and reforms to take effect. Their success can only be measured in the long-term. But it can hardly be denied that in the short term he had, the Emperor Nicephorus was able to identify and tackle most of the basic problems facing the Empire. No department of state or sector of imperial interest was left neglected. Indeed he proceeded to take measures in fields which his predecessors, and his successors too, rarely thought about, let alone dared to tackle. It appears that a determination to rule effectively marked his reign. His understanding of what constituted effective rule was forged during his time as a civil servant. He placed the concerns of the Byzantine administration at the heart of government, in much the same way as that other civil servant who became emperor, Anastasius (491-518).



Apart from these two almost no civil servants were raised to the imperial dignity at Byzantium. It is interesting that both their reigns were stamped with the pragmatism of the bureaucrat. The sources at our disposal, no matter how biased or impartial some of them are, reveal a sound ruler. The more we read our texts the more we get the impression that Nicephorus was a dynamic and capable emperor. He concentrated in his hands every sort of power, but it seems that as a result the imperial machine worked properly. He had the ability to control all departments of the state in a more or less harmonious way. His prudence became a by-word.<sup>1</sup> There were dangers, of course. After his death there was nobody with the ability to take his place at the centre of affairs.

Nicephorus was perhaps unique among Byzantine emperors in that he attempted a concerted reform of most aspects of Byzantine government. Change in the imperial administration, as J.B. Bury long ago observed, was the result of a 'gradual series of modifications'.<sup>2</sup> It was usual to improvise and adapt the machinery of government rather than to carry out any thorough-going reform. Nicephorus' reforms may have laid the foundations for Byzantium's period of greatness for the middle of the ninth century, but they also earned him great unpopularity. His obvious sense of humour can hardly have helped. We have only to remember the unfortunate candlemaker whom Nicephorus invited to the palace. He forced him to declare his wealth. It amounted to 100 pounds of gold. These Nicephorus immediately confiscated with the words: 'Why bother yourself with such a burden? Come dine with me and take 100 nomismata and go away satisfied'.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Dujčev, 'La chronique...' (loc.cit.), p.216: "φρόνιμος".

2. J.B. Bury, The Imperial Administrative System... (op.cit.), p.20.

3. Theophanes 1, pp.487-88.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. PRIMARY SOURCES

Annales Altahenses Majores in M.G.H., Scriptorum vol.20, pp.772-824.

Annales Mettenses Priores in M.G.H., Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in Usus Scholarum Separatim Editi, vol.10, (Hannover 1979).

Annales Regni Francorum, ed. in M.G.H., Scriptorum, vol.I, Hannoverae 1826.

Anonymous, Περὶ Νικηφόρου τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ πῶς ἀφίησι τὰ κῶλα ἐν Βουλγαρίᾳ  
edit. by I. Dujčev, 'La chronique Byzantine de l'an 811', in T.M., 1 (Paris 1965), pp.205-54.

Ashburner, W., The Rhodian Sea Law, Oxford 1909.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Farmer's Law', in J.H.S., 30 (1910), pp.85-108.

Bar Hebraeus (Gregory abû'l-Faris), Chronography (edit. and English translation by E.A.W. Budge) Oxford 1932, Reprinted, Amsterdam 1976.

Bécs, N., 'Τὸ περὶ τῆς κτίσεως τῆς Μονεμβασίας χρονικὸν, αἱ πηγαι καὶ ἡ ἱστορικὴ σημαντικότης αὐτοῦ'  
in Byzantis, 1 (1909), 57-105.

Caroli Magni, Epistola ad Nicephorum imperatorem, in M.G.H., Epistolae, vol.IV, pp.546-48.

Cedrenus, G., Historiarum Compendium, in C.S.H.B. (Bonn) 1839.

Concilia, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, ed. by J.B. Mansi, Paris and Leipzig 1901-27.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris de Cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae I, ed. J.J. Reiske (Bonn), 1829.

- \_\_\_\_\_, De Thematibus, ed. by A. Pertusi, (Studi e Testi 160), Vatican 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_, De Administrando Imperio, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, Engl. Transl. R.J.H. Jenkins, Dumbarton Oaks 1949, second edit. 1967.
- Dandolo, A., Chronicon Venetum in M.R.I.S., vol 12 (new edit. by G. Carducci, V. Fiorini and P. Fedele (Bologna 1958)), pt.1.
- Diplomata Karolinorum in M.G.H., Diplomata Karolinorum, 1 Hannover 1906.
- Einhard, Einardi Vita Karoli Imperatoris, in M.G.H., Scriptores Rerum Germanic, N.S., vol.25.
- Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, Two Lives of Charlemagne (translation and introduction by L. Thorpe) Middlesex 1969.
- Genesius, J., Regnum Libri Quattuor, Berlin 1978; also in C.S.H.B. Bonn 1834.
- George, The Monk, Georgii Monachi Chronicon, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig 1905.
- Gketakos, M., Ὁ ἐν Νέα Ἐπιδαύρῳ ἱερός ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Μιχαὴλ τῶν Συννάδων. Athens 1954.
- Clugnet, L., 'Histoire de S. Nicolas, soldat et moine' (three versions) in Revue d'Orient Chrétien, 7 (1902), pp.319-30.
- Glycas, M., Annales in C.S.H.B. (Bonn) 1836.
- Grant, A.J., Early Lives of Charlemagne, (An English translation of the Lives of Charlemagne by Einhard and Notker the Stammerer) New York 1966.
- Jaffé, P., (editor), Regesta Pontificum Romanorum ab condita Ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum 1198 Berolini 1851.
- Johannes Venetus, Cronaca Veneziana, ed. Monticolo in Fonti per la storia d'Italia, IX (1890).
- Jus Graecoromanum, ed. by J. and P. Zepos, second edit., Athens 1962.



- Khurdadbeh, Ibn. (Arab Geographer) ed. and transl.  
M. de Goeje, Leyden 1889 in Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, vol.6.
- Kurtz, F., Annales Regni Francorum, inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Lauri *Magenses* Majores et Einhardi, post editionem G.H. Pertzii, Hannoverae 1895.
- Kurtz E. and F. Drexl, Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora II (Milan 1941).
- Lampros, S.P., 'Τὸ πρὸς τῆς κτίσεως τῆς Μονεμβασίας χρονικόν,' in his Ἱστορικὰ Μελετήματα, (Athens 1909), pp.37-105.
- Lemerle, P., 'La chronique improprement dite de Monemvasie: le contexte historique et légendaire', in R.E.B., 21 (Paris 1963), pp.5-49.
- Leo Grammaticus, Chronographia in C.S.H.B. (Bonn) 1842.
- Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Romanae ed. by L. Duchesne, in 2 vols., (Paris 1886-92) Reprinted in 3 vols. (Paris 1955).
- Manasses, C., Breviarium Historiae Metricum ed. Becker in C.S.H.B. (Bonn) 1837.
- Mac<sup>C</sup>ūdi, Murūd̄j al-Dhahab (The Meadows of Gold), edit. and translation into French (Les proueries d'or) by G. Barbier de Meynard (Paris 1861-77) in 9 vols.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Kitāb al-Tanbīh (The Book of the Warning). French Translation (Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision) by B. Charra de Vaux, Paris 1897.
- Michael II, Emperor, Letter to Louis the Pious, in M.G.H., Legum sectio III, Concilia, vol.2, pt.1 (Leipzig 1900).
- Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, ed. by J.B. Chabot, Chronique de Michel le Syrien, (4 vols.), Paris 1899-910.
- Monumenta Carolina, Epistolae Carolinae, ed. by Ph. Jaffé, Berolini 1864-73.
- Narratio de sanctis patriarchis Tarasio et Nicephoro, ed. in P.G. 99, cols 1849C-1854D.

Nicephorus, The Patriarch, Epistola ad Leonem, in Migne, P.G. vol.100, cols 169-200.

\_\_\_\_\_, Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Opuscula Historica (ed. by C. de Boor, Leipzig 1880).

Nikodemos Ho Hagiorites, Megas Synaxaristes (in Greek) Athens 1868.

Notker, The Stammerer, Vita et Gesta Karoli Magni, in M.G.H., Scriptores Rerum Germanic, N.S. vol.12.

Rau, R., Quellen zur Karolinischen Reichsgeschichte, Darmstadt 1955.

Scriptor Incertus De Leone Bardae, ed. in C.S.H.B. (Bonn), 1842.

Skorpil, Brothers (edit.), 'The Inscription of Hambarly' (Kazyl or Kazyl-Agatch), in Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn, 1892, pp.98-99.

The Synodicon Vetus, ed. and transl. by J. Duffy and J. Parker in C.F.H.B., 15 (Washington D.C. 1979), pp.128-29.

Synopsis Chronica, ed. by K. Sathas in Mesaiônîkê Bibliothêkê, vol.7.

Tabarî, in E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids' pt.I in E.H.R., 15 (1900), pp.728-47, pt.II in E.H.R., 16 (1901), pp.84-92.

Theodore of Stoudios, Sancti Patris nostri et confessoris Theodori Studitarum abbatis Oratio funebris in Platonem ejus patrem spiritualem in P.G., 99, cols 803A-849A.

\_\_\_\_\_, Sancti Patris nostri et confessoris Theodori Catechesis funebris in matrem suam, in P.G., 99, cols 883A-902B.

\_\_\_\_\_, Epistolae, Liber Primus, in P.G., 99, cols 903-1116B.

Theophanes, Chronographia (ed. Bonn, in C.S.H.B. Bonn 1839-41, in 2 vols).

\_\_\_\_\_, Chronographia (ed. by C. de Boor, Lipsiae 1885, in 2 vols.).



- Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. Becker, (Bonn) 1838.
- Turtledove, H., The Chronicle of Theophanes, (An English translation of the original source) Philadelphia 1982.
- Van de Vorst, 'Un panégyrique de S. Théophile le Chronographe par S. Théodore Studite' in A.B., 31 (1912), pp.11-23.
- Vita of St. Euthymius, The Young, L. Petit, (edit.), 'Vie et office de Saint-Euthyme le Jeune' in Bibliothèque Hagiographique Orientale, vol.5, (1904), pp.14-51.
- Vita of St. Euthymius of Sardis, J. Guillard, 'Une oeuvre inconnue de Patriarch Méthode: La vie d'Euthyme de Sardes' in B.Z., 53 (1960), pp.36-46.
- 
- \_\_\_\_\_, A. Papadakis, 'The Unpublished Life of Euthymius of Sardis: Bodleianus Laudianus Graecus 69' in Traditio, 26 (1970), pp.63-89 (text 68-89).
- Vita of St. George of Amastris, ed. by V. Vasilievskij, in Russkovizantijskija issledovanija, 2 (Petropoli 1893), pp.1-73.
- Vita St. Gregory the Decapolite, F. Dvornic, La vie de Saint Grégoire le Decapolite et les Slaves Macedoniens au IXe siècle, Paris 1926.
- Vita St. Hilarioni Junioris in A.A.S.S., June 1, cols 758-60.
- Vita of St. Ignatius, patriarch of Constantinople (by Nicetas David the Paphlagonian) in P.G., 105, cols 488-573.
- Vita of St. Ioannicius, in A.A.S.S., Nov.II, cols 325-71.
- Vita of St. John, Bishop of Gotthia, A.A.S.S., Propylaeum Novembris, Brussels 1902, cols 772-74.
- Vita St. John the Merciful, ed. H. Gelzer, 'Leontios' von Neapolis, Leben des heiligen Johannes des Barmherzigen, Erzbischofs von Alexandrien', in Sammlung ausgewählter Kirchen und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften, 5, Freiburg und Leipzig 1893.
- Vita of Saint John, Abbot of Kathara, in A.A.S.S., Propylaeum Novembris, (Brussels 1902), cols 631-34.

- Vita of St. Methodius the Patriarch, in A.A.S.S. June, II, cols 961-68.
- Vita of St. Nicephorus of Medikion, ed. by F. Halkin 'La vie de Saint Nicéphore fondateur de Medikion en Bithynie (+813)' in A.B., 78 (1960), pp.396-429.
- Vita of St. Nicephorus the Patriarch, Ignatii Diaconi Vita Nicephori, ed. C. de Boor, in: Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica. Accedit Ignatii Diaconi Vita Nicephori, Leipzig 1880, pp.139-217.
- Vita of St. Nicetas, by the Monk Theosterictus, in A.A.S.S., April I, cols 253-66.
- Vita of Nicetas the Patrician, ed. D. Papachrysanthou, 'Un confesseur du second iconoclasme. La vie du patrice Nicetas (+836)' in T.M., 3 (1968), pp.309-51 (text pp.325-51).
- Vita of St. Peter of Atroa, ed. by V. Laurent, La vie merveilleuse de Saint Pierre d'Atroa, Brussels 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. by V. Laurent, La vita retractata et les miracles posthumes de Saint Pierre d'Atroa, Brussels 1958.
- Vita Philareti, ed. by M.H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, 'La vie de S. Philarète', in Byz., 7 (1934), pp.85-170.
- Vita of St. Plato of Sakkoudion in A.A.S.S., April I, 46-54, III, 39-46.
- Vita Tarasii, ed. by I.A. Heikel, Ignatii Diaconi, Vita Tarasii, archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani, in Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae, 17 (1889), pp.395-423.
- Vita A (B,C) Theodore of Stoudios,  
 A, Vita... Theodori praepositi Studitarum, P.G. 99, cols 113A-232B.  
 B, Vita... Theodori abbatis monasterii Studii a Michaele monacho conscripta, P.G., 99, cols 233A-328B.  
 C, V. Latyšev, 'Vita S. Theodori Studitae in codice Mosquensi Musei Rumianzoviani no.520' in V.V., 21 (1914) 255-304 (text 258-304).
- Vita Theophanis (ed. by C. de Boor in Theophanis Chronographia, vol.II, Lipsiae 1885, pp.3-12).



- \_\_\_\_\_, by Nicephorus skevophylax of Vlachernai  
(ed. by C. de Boor in Theophanis Chronographia,  
vol.II, Lipsiae 1885, pp.13-27).
- \_\_\_\_\_, (ex menologio codicis Bibliothecae  
Messinensis transcripta) in C. de Boor, Theophanis  
Chronographia vol.II, Lipsiae 1885, p.30.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ex officio festi ejus diei desumpta in  
editione Theophanis Parisina (in C. de Boor,  
Theophanis Chronographia, vol.II, Lipsiae 1885,  
pp.28-30).
- \_\_\_\_\_, copied from a codex of the monastery of  
Koutloumousion on Mount Athos and edit. by  
M.I. Gedeon in the periodical of the Greek Philological  
Association of Constantinople, (ο ἐν Κωνσταντινί φιλολογικὸς εὐλόγιος)  
vol.26, (Constantinople 1896).
- Vita of St. Theophanes by the Patriarch Methodius, (ed.  
by D. Spyridonos in Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος, 12  
(Constantinople 1913), pp.95-96 and 113-65.
- Vita of St. Theophylactus of Nicomedia, A. Vogt,  
St. Théophylacte de Nicomedie' in A.B., 50 (1932),  
pp.67-82 (text 71-82).
- Wattenbach, W., Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter,  
New edit., Weimar 1953, Heft 2.
- Ya<sup>C</sup>Kūbī, in E.W. Brooks, 'Byzantines...' E.H.R. 15 (1900),  
pp.728-47.
- Zonaras, J., Annales, ed. in C.S.H.B. (Bonn) 1897.

B. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahamse, D.F., Hagiographic Sources for Byz. Cities 500-900, Ph.D. 1967 - Michigan University.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Transformation of the Saint in the Early Medieval Byzantium' Byzantine Studies, vol.2, pt.2 (1975), pp.122-31.

Alexander, P., 'Secular Biography at Byzantium' in Speculum, 15 (1940), pp.194-209.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople, Oxford 1958.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Church Councils and Patristic Authority. The Iconoclastic Councils of Hieria (754) and St. Sophia (815)' in Harvard Studies in Classical Philosophy, 63 (Cambridge, Mass. 1958), pp.493-505a.

Amann, E., L'époque carolingienne, The 6th volume in Histoire de l'Église (publiée sous la direction de Angustin Fliche and Victor Martin), Paris 1937.

\_\_\_\_\_, Théodore le Studite, D.Th.C., 15 (Paris 1946), cols. 287-98.

Amantos, K., 'Οἱ Σλάβοι εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα' B.N.G.J., 17 (1944), pp.210-21.

Anastos, M.V., 'Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule', C.M.H. vol.4, pt.a (Cambridge 1966), pp.61-104.

Anderson, J.G.C., 'The Campaign of Basil I Against the Paulicians in 872 A.D.' in Classical Review, 10 (1896), pp.136-40.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Road-System of Eastern Asia Minor with the Evidence of Byzantine Campaigns in J.H.S., 17 (1897), pp.22-44 (with a plate).

Angelov, D., 'Die gegenseitigen Beziehungen und Einflüsse zwischen Byzanz und dem mittelalterlichen Bulgarien' in Byzantinoslavica, 20 (1959), pp.40-49.



Antoniadis-Bibicou, H., Recherches sur les douanes à Byzance, Paris 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_, Études d'histoire maritime de Byzance, a propos du "thème de Caravisiens", Paris 1966.

Astruc, Ch., 'Les sources grecques pour l'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure', T.M., 4 (1970), pp.1-126.

Audisio, G., Harun ar Rashid, Caliph of Baghdad, New York, 1931.

Banescu, N., 'Les frontières de l'ancien État Bulgare', in Mémorial Louis Petit (Bucarest 1948), pp.4-14.

Barnard, L.W., 'Byzantium and Islam. The interaction of two worlds in the Iconoclastic Era', in Byzanti noslavica, 36 (1975), pp.25-37.

Barracclough G., The Medieval Papacy, London 1968.

Baumstark, A., Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur Bonn 1922.

Beck, H.G., 'The Greek Church in the Epoch of Iconoclasm', in: Handbook of Church History, vol.III, ed. by H. Jedin and J. Dolan (N. York 1969).

\_\_\_\_\_, Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte (Geschichte der orthodoxen Kirche in Byzantinische Reich), Göttingen 1980.

Beševliev, V., 'Zur Chronographia des Theophanes', in B.Z. 27 (1927), p.35.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Eine neue quelle über die Niederlage des Byzantinischen Kaisers Nikephoros I in Bulgarien 811', Godišnik Univ. Sofia, 33 (1936), part 2, pp.1-7.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Zur Geographie Nordost-Bulgariens in der Spätantike und in Mittelalter' in Linguistique balkanique, 4 (1962), pp.57-80.

\_\_\_\_\_, Die protobulgarischen Inschriften, Berlin 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Les cités antiques en Mésie et en Thrace et leur sort a l'époque du Haut Moyen Age' in Etudes Balkaniques, (1966) part 5, pp.207-20.

- Blake, R.P., 'Note sur l'activité littéraire de Nicéphore 1<sup>er</sup> Patriarche de Constantinople', in Byz., 14 (1939), pp.1-15.
- Bon, A., Le Péloponnèse Byzantin jusqu' en 1204, Paris 1951.
- Boor, C.de, 'Zur Chronographia des Theophanes' in Hermes, 25 (1890), pp.301-07.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Zu Theophanes' in B.Z., 1 (1892), pp.591-93.
- Brand, C.M., 'Two Byzantine Treatises on Taxation', in Traditio, 25 (1969), pp.35-60.
- Brătianu, G.I., Études byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale, Paris 1938.
- Bréhier, L., La Querelle des images VIII<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècles (Paris 1904).
- \_\_\_\_\_, Les Institutions de l'Empire Byzantin (vol.2 in his Le Monde Byzantin), Paris 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La situation des chrétiens de Palestine à la fin du VIII siècle et l' établissement du protectorat de Charlemagne', in Le Moyen Age, 21 (1919), pp.68-75.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Charlemagne et la Palestine', in R.H., 157 (1928), pp.277-91.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'L'Investiture des patriarches de Constantinople au moyen âge' in Studi e Testi (Miscellanea G. Mercati III), 123 (1946), pp.368-72.
- Brock, S.P., 'Syriac Sources for Seventh-Century History' in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2, (1976) pp.17-36.
- Brockelmann, C., Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur, Weimar 1898-902.
- Brooks, E.W., 'The Arabs in Asia Minor (641-750) from Arabic Sources', J.H.S., 18 (1898), pp.182-208.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Chronology of Theophanes 607-775' in B.Z., vol.8 (1899), pp.82-97.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'On the Date of the Death of Constantine the Son of Irene', in B.Z., IX (1900), pp.654-57.



- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids', in E.H.R., 15 (1900) 728-747 and 16 (1901), pp.84-92.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Arabic Lists of the Byz. Themes' J.H.S., 21 (1901), pp.67-82.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Sources of Theophanes and the Syriac Chroniclers, in B.Z., XV (1906), pp.578-587.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Struggle with the Saracens (717-867)' in C.M.H. vol.IV, pp.119-138.
- Brown, P., 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Roman Society', in Journal of Roman Studies, 71 (1971), pp.80-101.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy', E.H.R., 88 (1973), pp.1-34.
- Browning, R., Byzantium and Bulgaria, London 1975.
- Bryer, A. and J. Herrin (edit.), Iconoclasm, (Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975), Birmingham 1977.
- Buckler, W., Harun al Rashid and Charles the Great, Cambridge Mass., 1931.
- Bullough, D., The age of Charlemagne, London 1965.
- Bullough, D.A., 'Europae Pater: Charlemagne and his Achievement in the Light of Recent Scholarship', E.H.R., 85 (1970), pp.59-105.
- Bury, J.B., 'Charles the Great and Irene', Hermathena 8 (1893), pp.17-37.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Zu einer Stelle der Chronik des Theophanes' in B.Z., 6 (1897), p.508.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'An Unnoticed Ms. of Theophanes' in B.Z. 14 (1905), pp.612-13.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Treatise De Administrando Imperio', in B.Z., 15 (1906), pp.517-577.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogenetos' in E.H.R., 22 (April and July 1907) pp.209-227, 417-439.

- \_\_\_\_\_, Constitution of the Later Roman Empire,  
Cambridge 1910.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Naval Policy of the Roman Empire',  
in Centenario della Nascita di Michele Amari,  
Volume Secundo (Palermo 1910), pp.21-34.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth  
Century with a Revised Text of the Kletorologion of  
Philotheos, New York, 1911.
- \_\_\_\_\_, A History of Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall  
Irene to the Accession of Basil I (802-867),  
London 1912.
- Cameron, A., Circus Factions, Oxford 1976.
- Canard, M., 'Quelques "à côté" de l'histoire des relations  
entre Byzance et les Arabes' in Studi medievali in  
Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida (Roma 1956),  
pp.98-119.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La prise d'Héraclée et les relations entre  
Hârûn al-Rashid et l'empereur Nicéphore I<sup>er</sup>', in  
Byz., 32 (1962), pp.345-79.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Les relations politiques et sociales entre  
Byzance et les Arabes', in D.O.P., 18 (1964),  
pp.35-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzantium and the Muslim World to the Middle  
of the Eleventh Century, in C.M.H., vol.4, pt.1,  
pp.696-735.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzance et les musulmans du proche Orient  
(Variorum Reprints), London 1973.
- Cankova-Petkova, G., 'Deux contributions à l'histoire des  
rapports bulgarobyzantins au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle',  
Byzantinoslavica, 37 (1976), pp.36-45.
- Cassimatis, G., Les intérêts dans la législation de  
Justinien et dans le droit byzantin, Paris 1931.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La dixième "vexation" de l'Empereur  
Nicephore', in Byz., 7 (1932), pp.149-60.
- Chabot, J.B., Littérature Syriaque, Boucard 1934.



Chadjinicolaou-Marava, A., Recherches sur la vie des esclaves dans le monde byzantin, Athens 1950.

Charanis, P., 'Coronation and its Constitutional Significance in the Later Roman Empire', in Byz., XV (1940-41), pp.49-66.

\_\_\_\_\_, Nicephorus I, the Savior of Greece from the Slavs (810 A.D.), Byzantina-Metabyzantina, 1 (1946), pp.75-92.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'On the Question of the Slavonic Settlements in Greece During the Middle Ages', in Byzantinoslavica 10 (1949), pp.254-58.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlement in Greece, in D.O.P., 5 (1950), pp.141-66.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'On the Slavic Settlement in the Peloponnesus' B.Z., 46 (1953), pp.91-103.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Ethnic Changes in the Byz. Empire in the Seventh Century', in D.O.P., 13 (1959), pp.25-44.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byz. Empire' in Comparative Studies in Society and History, 3 (1961), pp.140-154.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Observations on the History of Greece During the Early Middle Ages', in Balkan Studies 11, pt.1 (Thessalonica 1970), pp.1-34.

Chrysanthopoulos, E., 'Περὶ τοῦ χρονικοῦ τῆς Μονεμβασίας', in E.E.B.S., 21 (1951), pp.238-53.

Christophilopoulou, A., 'Ἐκλογή, ἀναγόρευσις καὶ στέψις τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ αὐτοκράτορος', in Πραγματεῖαι Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν, 22, Athens 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Ἡ οἰκονομικὴ καὶ δημοβιονομικὴ πολιτικὴ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Νικηφόρου Α'.' Εἰς μνήμην Κ. Ἀμάντου, Athens 1960, pp.413-31.

Classen, P., 'Romanum gubernans imperium' (Zur Vorgeschichte der Kaisertitulatur Karls der Großen) in Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters, 9 (1951-52), pp.103-21.

- \_\_\_\_\_, Karl der Große, das Papsttum and Byzanz,  
Karl der Große, persönlichkeit und Geschidite,  
Düsseldorf, 1968.
- Constantelos, D.I., Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare, New Brunswick 1968.
- Constantinescu, N.A., 'Réforme sociale au réforme fiscale? Une hypothèse pour expliquer la disparition du servage de la glèbe dans l'empire byzantin', in Bull. Section Hist. Acad. Roumaine, XI, 1924, pp.94-100.
- Cvijic, J., La péninsule balkanique: géographie humaine Paris 1918.
- Cyriacides, St., Βυζαντινὰ Μελέται: Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ Thessalonica 1947.
- Dain, A., 'Le partage du butin de guerre d'après les traites juridiques et militaires' Actes, VI<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Études Byzantines (Paris 1950) 1, 347-52.
- Danstrup, J., 'Indirect taxation at Byzantium' in Classica et Mediaevalia, 8 (1946), pp.139-67.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The State and Landed Property in Byzantium to C 1250' in Classica et Mediaevalia, 8 (Copenhagen 1946), pp.222-62.
- Dvornik, F., Les Slaves Byzance et Rome au IX<sup>e</sup> Siècle, Paris 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La lutte entre Byzance et Rome à propos de l'Illyricum au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle' in Mélanges Ch. Diehl, 1 (1930), pp.61-80.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance, Byzantinoslavica, Supplementa, 1 Prague 1933.
- Delehay, H., 'Stoudion-Stoudios', A.B., 52 (1934), pp.64-5.
- Devreesse, R., 'Une Lettre de S. Théodore Studite relative au synode moechien (809), in A.B., 118 (1950), pp.44-57.
- Diehl, C., Études Byzantines, Paris 1905.



- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Une Bourgeoise de Byzance au VIII siècle' in Figures Byzantines 1, Paris 1948, pp.111-32.
- Dobschütz, E. Von, 'Nicephorus', in Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 14 (1904), pp.22-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Methodios und die Studiten', B.Z., 18 (1908), pp.41-105.
- Dölger, F., 'Das Kaiserjahr de Byzantiner' in Jahrbuch der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1949, Heft 1, pp.21-38.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der fränkisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9 Jahrhunderts' in his collected studies: Byzanz und Europäische Staatenwelt, Ettal 1953, pp.282-369.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Beiträge zur byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung, besonders des 10 and 11 Jahrhunderts Hildesheim 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Zur Ableitung des Byzantinischen Verwaltungsterminus θέμα in his Paraspora, (Ettal 1961), pp.231-40.
- Dunlop, D.M., Arab Civilization to A.D. 1500, London 1971.
- Dunn, M., 'Evangelisation or Repentance? The re-christianisation of the Peloponnese in the Ninth and Tenth Centures', in Studies in Church History, 14 (1977), pp.71-87.
- Duval, R., La littérature syriaque 2nd vol. in the series: Anciennes littératures chrétiennes, Paris 1907.
- Ehrhard, 'Nicephorus', in Wetzer und Welte, Kirchenlexikon, 2nd edit., IX, pp.249-59.
- Eleopoulos, N., Ἡ Βιβλιοθήκη καὶ τὸ Βιβλιογραφικὸν Ἐργαστήριον τῆς Μονῆς τῶν Στουδίου, Athens 1967.
- Evangelides, T.E., Ἡ Μονὴ τῆς Συριακῆς ἢ τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀγροῦ, Athens 1895.
- Fallmerayer, J.P., Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea Stuttgart 1830, Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms 1965.

- Ferluga, Z., 'Sur la date de la creation du thème de Dyrrachium' in: Actes du XII<sup>e</sup> Congr. Intern. des Etudes Byzantines, Beograd 1964, pp.83-92.
- Finley, G., History of the Byzantine Empire, London 1853.
- Folz, R., Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique medieval, Paris 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Coronation of Charlemagne (translated from the French by J.E. Anderson), London 1974.
- Foss, C., 'Late Antiquity and Byzantine Ankara' in D.O.P. 31, (1977), pp.27-88.
- Ganshof, F.L., 'The Imperial Coronation of Charlemagne Theories and Facts' Glasgow University Publications LXXIV 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Carolignians and the Frankish Monarchy (London 1971).
- Gardner, A., Theodore of Studium, his Life and Times, London 1905.
- Garsoian, N., 'Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation' D.O.P., 25 (1971), pp.85-113.
- Gasquet, A., L'empire byzantin et la monarchie franque. Originally published 1888, reprinted, New York 1972.
- Gass, 'Nicephorus', in Herzog and Plitt, Real-Enzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, second edit., X (Leipzig 1882), pp.537 sq.
- Gaston, Z., Histoire de l'Église Byzantine, Paris 1954.
- Gelzer, H., Georgii Cyprii descriptio orbis Romani, Lipsiae 1890.
- Gibbon, E., The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Fourth edit., London 1906.
- Gill, J., 'St. Theodore the Studite Against the Papacy?' in Byzantinische Forschungen, 1 (1966), pp.115-23.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'An Unpublished Letter of St. Theodore the Studite' in O.Ch.P., 34 (1968), pp.62-69.



- Glykatzki-Ahrweiler, H., Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin au IX<sup>e</sup>-XI<sup>e</sup> siècles, in Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique, 84 (1960), pp.1-109.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'L'Asie Mineure et les invasions Arabes', R.H., 227 (1962), pp.1-32.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzance et la Mer, Presses Universitaires de France (Bibliothèque byzantine. Etudes, V), Paris 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_, L'ideologie politique de l'empire byzantin, Paris 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La frontière et les frontières de Byzance en Orient', in XIV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Études Byzantines, Actes, I (Bucharest 1975), pp.209-11.
- Gabrieli, Francesco, 'Greeks and Arabs in the Central Mediterranean Area', in D.O.P., 18 (1964), pp.57-65.
- Guillard, J., 'L'hérésie dans l'empire Byzantine des origines au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in T.M., 1 (1965), pp.299-324.
- Graebner, M.D., The Role of the Slavs Within the Byz. Empire, Ph.D. 1975, Rutgers University, the State University of N. Jersey (New Brunswick).
- Gregoire, H., 'Les sources épigraphiques de l'histoire Bulgare', in Byz., 9 (1934), pp.745-80.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'L'empereur Nicéphore le Chauve et Kroum "premier" de Bulgarie' in Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres de L'Acad. de Belgique, 20 (1935), pp.261-72.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Le "scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio"' in Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres de l'Academie royale de Belgique, vol.11-12 (1936), pp.420-36.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Un nouveau fragment du "scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio"' in Byz., 11 (1936), pp.417-427.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Un édit de l'empereur Justinien' in Byz., 17 (1944-45), pp.119-24.

Grumel, V., 'L'année du monde dans la Chronographie de Theophane' in E.O., 33 (1934), pp.396-408.

\_\_\_\_\_, Le Patriarchat Byzantin. Serie 1: Les Regestes des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople vol.1: Les actes des patriarches, fasc II: Les Regestes de 715 à 1043 (Chalcedon 1936).

\_\_\_\_\_, Traite d'études Byzantines, I La chronologie Paris 1958.

Grünebaum, G.E. von, 'Parallelism, Convergence and Influence in the Relations of Arab and Byzantine Philosophy, Literature and Piety', in D.O.P., 18 (1964), pp.91-111.

Guilland, R., 'Études sur l'histoire administrative de l'empire byzantin. Les titres auliques des eunuques: Le protospathaire' in Byz., 25-27 (1955-7) II, pp.649-711.

\_\_\_\_\_, Recherches sur les institutions byzantines, 2 vols, Berlin 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Contribution à la prosopographie de l'empire Byzantin: les patrices du règne de Leon III l'Isaurien (717-741) au règne de Michael II (820-829), in Byz., 40 (Bruxelles 1970), pp.317-60.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Curopalate' in Byzantina 2, (Thessalonica 1970), pp.187-249.

Haldon, J.F., Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army C 550-950: A Study on the Origins of the Stratiotika Ktemata, in Sitzungsberichte der Österr. Akad. der Wiss., phil-Hist. Klasse, Nr.357, Wien 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_, and H. Kennedy, The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Century: Military Organization and Society in the Border-lands, in Zborhik-Radova, 19 (1979), pp.79-116.

Halphen, L., Études Critiques sur l'histoire de Charlemagne, Paris 1921.

Hazlitt, W.C., The Venetian Republic, London 1915, Reprint New York 1966, (two vols.).



- Head, C., 'Physical Descriptions of the Emperor in Byzantine Historical Writing' in Byz., 50 (1980), pp.226-40.
- Heldmann, K., Das Kaisertum Karls der Grossen, Weimar 1928.
- Hemmerdinger, B., 'Συρμαιογραφείν,' in Byz., 37 (1967, paru 1968), pp.75-81.
- Herrin, J., 'Aspects of the Process of re-Hellenisation in the Early Middle Ages', Annual of the British School at Athens, 68 (London 1973), pp.113-26.
- Hirsch, F., Byzantinische Studien, Leipzig 1876.
- Honigmann, E., Die Ostgrenze des Byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071, (Corpus Bruxellense Historiae Byzantinae as 3rd volume of Vasiliev's Byzance et les Arabes, Bruxelles 1935.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Le Synecdemos d'Hièroklès et l'opuscule géographique de George de Chypre (Bruxelles 1939).
- Huxley, G., 'The Emperor Michael III and the Battle of Bishop's Meadow (A.D. 863)', in G.R.B.S., 16 (1975), pp.443-50.
- Jaeger, W., 'Eine Dublete in der Briefsammlung des Theodoros Studites' (Anhang) in Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, (Sitzung der philosophisch-historischen Klasse, XXVI (1930), pp.586-94.
- Jalāl Al-Din Al-Suyūti, History of the Caliphs (translated by H.S. Jarrett) Calcutta 1881.
- Janin, R., 'Nicéphore de Constantinople', D.Th.C., 11 (Paris 1931), cols,452-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_, La Géographie ecclesiastique de l'empire byzantin, 3 vols., Paris 1969.
- Jenkins, R., 'Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III' in Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques Académie Royale de Belgique, 5e série XXXIV (1948), pp.71-77.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Cyprus Between Byzantium and Islam A.D. 688-965' in: Studies presented to D.M. Robinson II (Washington University St. Louis 1953), pp.1006-1014.

- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Classical Backbround of the Scriptoros post Theophanem' in D.O.P., 8 (1954), pp.11-30.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'A Note on Nicetas David Paphlago and the Vita Ignatii', in D.O.P., 19 (1965), pp.241-247.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries A.D. 610-1071, London 1966.
- Jirecek, C., Geschichte der Bulgaren, Prague 1876.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Konstantinopel, Prague 1877.
- Jorga, N., Formes Byzantines et Réalités Balkaniques, Paris 1922.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Medallons d'histoire littéraire byzantine', in Byz., 2 (1925), pp.237-298.
- Kaegi, W., 'The Byzantine Armies and Iconoclasm' Byzantinoslavica 27 (1966), pp.48-70.
- Kaegi, W.E., 'Some Reconsiderations on the Themes (seventh-ninth centuries)' in Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft., 16 (1967), pp.39-53.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzantine Military Unrest 471-843, Amsterdam 1981.
- Karayannopoulos, J., 'Contribution au problème de thèmes byzantins', L'Hellenism Contemporain, 10 (1956), pp.455-502.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Die Entstehung der byzantinischen Themenordnung', Byzantinisches Archiv 10 Munchen 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Πηγαὶ τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Ἱστορίας, second edit. Thessalonica 1971.
- Kazarow, G., 'Die Gesetzgebung des Bulgarischen Fürsten Krum', B.Z., 16 (1907), pp.254-57.
- Kazhdan, A., 'The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal' (A still unpublished paper given at the Byzantine Spring Symposium of Edinburgh, April 1983).
- Kennedy, H., The Early Abbasid Caliphate, Totowa, N. Jersey, 1981.



Khalidi, T., Islamic Historiography: The Histories of Mas'ūdī, New York 1975.

Korres, T., 'Relations Between Byzantium and Bulgaria During the Reign of Michael I Rangabe (in Greek) Byzantina-Metabyzantina, II, (Thessalonica 1982), pp.143-56.

Kougeas, St., 'Ἐπὶ τοῦ καλουμένου χρονικοῦ τῆς Μονεμβασίας', in Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων, 9 (1912), pp.473-80.

Krumbacher, K., 'Zur Chronik des Theophanes' in Hermes, 23 (1888), pp.626-28.

\_\_\_\_\_, Geschichte der Byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum ende des Oströmischen Reiches, second edit., München 1897.

Kurtz, E., 'Zum Leben des hl. Theophanes von Methodios', in B.N.G.J. 5, (1926-27), pp.390-96.

Lang, D.M., The Bulgarians, London 1976.

Lauchert, F., 'Zur Textüberlieferung des Georgios Monachos' in B.Z., 4 (1895), pp.493-513.

Laurent, V., 'Méthode de Constantinople', D.Th.C., 10 (1929), col.1597-1606.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'La date de l'érection des métropoles de Patras et de Lacédémone', in R.E.B., 21 (1963) pp.129-41.

Lemerle, P., Philippe et la Macédonie orientale, Paris 1940.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Invasions et migrations dans les Balkans depuis la fin de l'époque romaine jusqu'au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', R.H., 211 (1954), pp.265-308.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance: les sources et problèmes', in R.H., pt.1, vol.219 (1958), pp.32-74 and 254-284 and pt.2, vol.220 (1958), pp.43-94.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'L'histoire de Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après de sources grecques', in T.M., 5 (1973), pp.1-144.

- Leroy, D.J., 'La vie quotidienne du Moine studite' Irénikon, 17 (1954), 1st trimestre, pp.21-50.
- Leroy, J., 'La réforme studite', Il monachesimo orientale (actes du congrès tenu à l'Institut Pontifical Oriental du 9 au 12 Avril 1958), Orientalia Christiana Analecta 153, 201-206.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Studitisches Mönchtum, Graz-Wien-Köln 1969.
- Lewis, A., Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean, A.D. 500-1000, Princeton 1951.
- Lewis, B., 'An Arabic Account of a Byzantine Palace Revolution' in Byz, 14 (1939), pp.383-86.
- Lichtenstadter, I., 'Arabic and Islamic Historiography' in The Muslim World, 35 (1945), pp.130-31.
- Lilie, R.J., 'Die byzantinsche Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber', (Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 22 München 1976).
- Lopez, R.S., 'The Role of Trade in the Economic Readjustment of Byzantium in the Seventh Century', in D.O.P., 13 (1959), pp.67-85.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and I.W. Raymond, Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World, New York - London (Columbia University Press), 1961.
- Lot, F., Ch. Pfister and L. Ganshof, Histoire du Moyen Age vol.1 (Les destinées de l'Empire en Occident) Paris 1928.
- Lübeck, K., 'Die Patriarchenwahl in der griechisch-melkitischen Kirche', in Theologie und Glaube, VI (1914), pp.730-40.
- Mango, C., 'The availability of Books in the Byz. Empire, a.d. 750-850', in Byzantine Books and Bookmen (Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium 1971), pp.29-46.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La culture grecque et l'occident au VIII siècle', in Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'alto Medioevo, XX (Spoleto 1973), pp.683-721.
- \_\_\_\_\_, I. Ševčenko, 'Some Churches and Monasteries on the Southern Shore of the Sea of Marmara', in D.O.P., 27 (1973), pp.235-77.



- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?'  
in S.R., 18 (Beograd 1978), pp.9-17.
- Manojlovic, G., 'La composition de "De administrando Imperio"',  
Deuxième Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines,  
Belgrade 1927.
- Margoliouth, D.S., Lectures on Arabic Historians, New York,  
1972.
- Marin, E., De Studio coenobio constantinoplitano,  
(Paris 1897).
- Marin, l'abbé, Saint Théodore (759-826), Paris 1906.
- Martroye, F., 'Chronologie de Theophane' in Bulletin de  
la Société nationale des Antiquaries de France,  
(1910), pp.292-95.
- Martroye, M.F., 'L'origine du curopalate' in Melanges  
offerts a M. Gustave Schlumberger, (Paris 1924),  
pp.79-84.
- Maslev, St., 'Die staatsrechtliche Stellung der  
byzantinischen Kaiserinnen', Byzantinoslavica, 27  
(1966), pp.308-43.
- Metcalf, D.M., 'How Extensive Was the Issue of Folles  
During the Years 775-820?', Byz., 37 (1967),  
pp.270-310.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Corinth in the Ninth Century: the  
Numismatic Evidence', Hesperia, 42 (1973), pp.180-251.
- Michailov, S., Pliska, die Hauptstadt des ersten  
bulgarischen Reiches, Berlin 1960.
- Miller, D.A., The Byzantine Tradition, New York 1966.
- Miller, D.H., 'Byzantine-Papal Relations During the  
Pontificate of Paul I: Confirmation and Completion  
of the Roman Revolution of the Eighth Century',  
B.Z., 68 (1975), pp.47-62.
- Millet, G., 'L'origine du logothete général', in  
Mélanges d'histoire du Moyen Age offerts à  
M.F. Lot, 1925, pp.563-73.
- Monnier, R., 'Etudes de Droit Byzantin: L'Ἐπιβολή  
(suite), IV De l'Ἐπιβολή après Justinien (suite),  
B De l'Ἐπιβολή depuis Nicéphore Genicus  
jusqu' à Basile le Macédonien 1) Les vexations de  
Nicéphore Genicus', in Nouvelle Revue Historique de  
Droit Français et Étranger, 19 (1895), pp.59-103.

- Moravcsik, G., 'Ἡ χειρόγραφος παράδοσις τοῦ De Administrando Imperio', E.E.B.S., 7 (1930), pp.138-54.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'L'edition critique du "De administrando imperio"', Byz. 14, (1939), pp.353-60.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzantinoturcica, (second edit.), Berlin 1958.
- Morrisson, C., 'La découverte des trésors à l'époque byzantine', T.M. 8, (1981), pp.321-43.
- Muir, W., The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall, Oxford 1892. New York Reprint 1975.
- Nelson, J.L., 'Symbols in Context: Rulers' Inauguration Rituals in Byzantium and the West in the Early Middle Ages', Studies in Church History, 13 (Oxford 1976), pp.97-119.
- Nestor, I., 'La pénétration des Slaves dans la péninsule Balkanique et la Grèce continentale', in Revue des Études Sud-Est Europeennes, 1 (Buccarest 1963), pp.41-67.
- Nedev, St. T., 'Razgromut a Nikifor I Genik prez 811g' Voенно-istoričeski; Sbornik, 46 (1977), pp.115-27.
- Nicholson, R.A., A literary History of the Arabs, Cambridge 1930, Reprint 1969.
- Norwich, J.J., Venice, The Rise to Empire, London 1977.
- O'Connell, P.S.J., 'The Letters and Catecheses of St. Theodore Studites', in O.Ch.P., 38 (1972), pp.256-59.
- Ohnsorge, W., Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter, Hildesheim 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Abendland und Byzanz (Collected Studies), Darmstadt 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Konstantinopel und die Okzident (Collected Studies), Darmstadt 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Ost-Rom und der Westen (Collected Studies), Darmstadt 1983.
- Oikonomidès, N., Les Listes de Préséance Byzantines des IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles, Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris 1972.



Ostrogorsky, G., 'Theophanes', in Paulys Real Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, 10, pp.2127-2132.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Die Chronologie des Theophomes in 7 und 8 Jahrhundert', in B.N.G.J. 7 (1930), pp.1-56.

\_\_\_\_\_, and E. Stein, 'Die Krönungsurkunden des Zeremonienbuches', in Byz., 7 (1932), pp.185-233.

\_\_\_\_\_, History of the Byzantine State, Transl. by Joan Hussey, second edit., Oxford 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_, Byzanz und die Welt der Slaven, Darmstadt 1974.

Papadopoulus, Th., 'The Byzantine Model in Frontier History: a Comparative Approach' in XIV<sup>e</sup> Congres International d'Études Byzantines, Actes II (Bucharest 1975), 415-19.

Pargoire, J., 'Saints iconophiles' in E.O., IV (1900-901), 347-56.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Saint Théophane le chronographe et ses rapports avec Saint Théodore Studite' in V.V. 9, (1902), pp.31-102.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Saint Méthode et la persécution', in E.O. 6 (1903), pp.183-91.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Saint Méthode de Constantinople avant 821' in E.O., 6 (1903), pp.126-31.

\_\_\_\_\_, L'Église Byzantine de 527 à 847, Paris 1905.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Saint Joseph de Thessalonique', in E.O., 9 (1906), pp.278-88 and 351-56.

Henry, P., III, Theodore of Studios, Byzantine Churchman, Ph.D., Yale University 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Moechian Controversy and the Constantinopolitan Synod of January A.D. 809' Journal of Theological Studies, N.S. vol.XX, pt.2, October 1969, pp.495-522.

Pertusi, A., 'La formation des Thèmes Byzantines', in Berichte zum XI intern Byzantinischen Kongress, München 1958, I, pp.1-40.

- Pigulevskaja, N., 'Theophanes' Chronographia and the Syrian Chronicles', Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft, 16 (1967), pp.55-60.
- Rajovic, M., 'La région du Strymon et le thème de Strymon' (in Serbo-Croat with a summary in French), in S.R., 5 (1958), p.7.
- Rambaud, A., L'empire grec au dixième siècle, Paris 1870, Reprint, New York 1964.
- Ramsay, W.M., The Historical Geography of Asia Minor in the Royal Geographical Society: Supplementary Papers, vol.IV, London 1890.
- Ringrose, K.M., Saints, Holy Men and Byzantine Society, 726 to 843, Ph.D., Rutgers University, New Brunswick 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Monks and Society in Iconoclastic Byzantium', B.S., vol.6, pt.1-2 (1979), pp.130-51.
- Rosch, G., "Ὀνομα Βαβυλείας", Wien 1978.
- Rosenthal, F., A History of Muslim Historiography, Leiden 1952.
- Runciman, S., A History of the First Bulgarian Empire, London 1930.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Empress Irene the Athenian' in Medieval Women, Oxford 1978, pp.101-18.
- Salaville, S., 'La primauté de Saint Pierre et du Pape d'après saint Théodore Studite (759-826)', in E.O., 17 (1914), pp.23-42.
- Santoro, A.R., Byzantium and the Arabs During the Isaurian Period 717-802. (Ph.D. 1978, Rutgers University, the State University of N. Jersey, New Brunswick.)
- Saunders, J.J., A History of Medieval Islam, London 1972.
- Schramm, P.E., 'Die Anerkennung Karls des Grossen als Kaiser', in Historische Zeitschrift, 172 (1951), pp.449-515.
- Schwarzlose, K., Der Bilderstreit. Ein Kampf der griechischen Kirche um ihre Freiheit, Gotha, 1890.



- Serruys, D., 'Les actes du concile iconoclaste de l'an 815', in Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire, 23 (1903), pp.345-51.
- Ševčenko, I., 'Hagiography of the Iconoclastic Period', in Iconoclasm (Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. University of Birmingham, March 1975, ed. by A. Bryer and J Herrin), Birmingham 1977, pp.113-31.
- Shaban, M.A., Islamic History: a New Interpretation, vol.2, A.D. 750-1055, Cambridge 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Abbāsid Revolution, Cambridge 1979.
- Shboul, A.M.H., Al-Mas'ūdī and his World, London 1979.
- de Somogyj, J., 'The Development of Arabic Historiography', in Journal of Semitic Studies, 3 (1958), pp.373-87.
- Speck, P., Kaiser Konstantin VI, München 1978.
- Stiernon, D., 'Notice sur S. Jean Higourmène du monastère de Kathara', in R.E.B., 28 (1970), pp.111-27.
- Straley, D.S., Perspective and Method in Early Islamic Historiography: A study of Al-Tabari's Ta'rikh al Rusul wa'l-Mulūk. Edinburgh University, Ph.D. Thesis 1977.
- Sullivan, R.E., The Coronation of Charlemagne, (Problems in European Civilization Series) Boston 1959.
- Tinnefeld, F.H., Categorien der Kaiserkritik in der Byzantinischen Historiographie, Munchen 1971.
- Toynbee, A., Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World, London 1973.
- Treadgold, W.T., 'The Revival of Byzantine Learning and the Revival of the Byzantine State' in Amer. Hist. Review, 84 (N.5 December) 1979, pp.1245-1266.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Notes on the Numbers and Organization of the Ninth Century Byzantine Army', G.R.B.S. 21, 3 (1980), pp.269-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries, New York 1982.

- Ullmann, W., A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages, London 1972.
- Van de Vorst, C., 'En quelle année mourut S. Theophane?', A.B., 31 (1912), pp.148-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'La translation de S. Théodore Studite et de S. Joseph de Thessalonique', in A.B., 32 (1913), pp.27-62.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Les relations de S. Théodore Studite avec Rome', A.B., 32 (1913), pp.439-447.
- Vasmer, M., Die Slaven in Griechenland, Berlin 1941.
- Vasiliev, A.A., 'An Edict of the Emperor Justinian II, September 688', in Speculum 18 (1943), pp.1-13.
- \_\_\_\_\_, History of the Byzantine Empire, Second English Edition, Oxford 1952.
- Visser, A.J., Nikephoros und der Bilderstreit. Eine Untersuchung über die Stellung des Konstantinopeler Patriarch Nicephoros innerhalb der ikonoklastischen Wirren, (Haag, 1952).
- Wäschke, H., Studien zu den Ceremonien de K. Porphyrogenitos Zerbst 1884.
- Weil, G., Geschichte der Kahlifen, Mannheim 1846-62.
- Wortley, J., 'Legends of the Byzantine Disaster of 811' Byz., 50 (1980), pp.533-62.
- Wright, W., A Short History of Syriac Literature, London 1894.
- Zakythinos, D., Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Ἑλλάδι, Athens 1945.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Le theme de Cephalonie et la défense de l'occident', in L'Hellénisme Contemporain, 8 (1954), pp.303-312.