



## Summary :

On July 19, 803 the themes of Thraceseion, Opsikion and Boukellarion rebelled against Emperor Nikephoros I and proclaimed Bardanes emperor. Bardanes, the so-called 'Turk', was then the general of the theme of Anatolikon. The rebellion was suppressed on September 8, 803 and Bardanes was tonsured a monk; in December of the same year he was blinded.

## Date

July 19 - September 8, 803

## Geographical Location

Region between Amorion and Chrysopolis

## 1. Historical context

Following the overthrow of Empress [Eirene](#) by [Nikephoros, logothetes tou genikou](#), and his accession to the throne (October 31, 802), an austere fiscal policy was implemented aimed at multiplying the income of the Byzantine Empire through increased taxation. For this reason tax exemptions that had been introduced by Eirene on ecclesiastical and monastic properties, trade and the claiming of inheritance were repealed. The so-called [kapnikon](#) was expanded so as to apply to the [paroikoi](#) of monasteries and charitable foundations, while estates belonging to the Church were annexed, without removing the Church's obligation to pay taxes on these. Nikephoros I's financial reforms and his neutral stance vis-à-vis the issue of [Iconoclasm](#), contrary to Eirene's zealous iconophile policy, caused the gradual disgruntlement of monastic and ecclesiastical circles, as well as that of large estate owners, whose interests were directly undermined. The general feeling of discontent towards the new emperor was also shared by the low ranking soldiers of the [themes](#), who were complaining that they did not receive their statutory pay.<sup>1</sup>

In this negative for Emperor Nikephoros climate, [Bardanes](#), the so-called 'Tourkos' (Turk), attempted his rebellion; he enjoyed wide support, as he was seen by all the above-mentioned groups as a person that could address their grievances. Bardanes, who belonged to the class of the landowners and was an iconophile,<sup>2</sup> held the office of [strategos](#) of the [theme of Anatolikon](#). At the same time he had also been appointed [monostrategos](#) of the five themes of Asia Minor, to ensure greater efficiency in the waging of Byzantine [military operations](#) against the Arabs in a period when the tension between the two enemies had intensified following Nikephoros' refusal to continue paying the annual tribute that was agreed between Empress Eirene and [caliph](#)-Mahdi in [782](#).<sup>3</sup> This further improved Bardanes generally successful political profile, already since Empress Eirene's reign, and it served well his personal ambitions to ascend to the imperial throne.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the circle of the landed nobility and high-ranking military officials, Bardanes was particularly popular among the army, because of his fairness in the distribution of loot. The Byzantine armed forces saw in Bardanes a person who could ameliorate their condition; thus, either following a plan, or of their own accord, they finally rebelled against Nikephoros I. It is less likely that the aim of the rebellion was the restoration of imperial legitimacy, which had been overturned with Eirene's overthrow.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. The rebellion of Bardanes Tourkos

### 2.1. The outbreak of the rebellion

On July 19, 803<sup>6</sup> the armed forces of four out of the five themes of Asia Minor (those of [Thraceseion](#), [Anatolikon](#), [Opsikion](#) and [Boukellarion](#)) rebelled against Nikephoros I and proclaimed Bardanes, the then [strategos](#) of the theme of Anatolikon, emperor. This took place probably in the theme of Anatolikon and more specifically in its capital, the city of [Amorion](#),<sup>7</sup> where the Byzantine forces were rallied probably in order to launch a military offensive against the Arabs. Only the [theme of Armeniakon](#) remained loyal to the emperor, probably because of its customary policy of not siding with the theme of Anatolikon in times of internal strife,<sup>8</sup> or because



its troops had not had enough time to join the rest of the armed forces;<sup>9</sup> it is also possible that Bardanes had participated in the crushing of the rebellion in the theme of Armeniakon in 793, and the memory of this event discouraged the thematic army from siding with him.<sup>10</sup>

Having been placed in charge of the rebellious army, Bardanes moved north and, following the [road](#) that leads to [Nicomedia](#), he reached Chrysopolis, opposite the capital of [Constantinople](#). There he set up camp for eight days, hoping that his rebellion would attract supporters and cause unrest against the emperor in Constantinople.<sup>11</sup> His hopes were disproved, however, and the reception he received was rather lukewarm; as a result he was forced to return empty handed to [Malagina](#), an important military supply post in the area of the theme of Opsikion, expecting to find support from the troops stationed there. The emperor, however, had in the meantime dispatched his forces against Bardanes. At this crucial turning point he was abandoned by two of his closest associates, the future emperors [Leo the Armenian](#) and [Michael Traulos](#), who defected to the imperial camp. Of those in his close circle only [Thomas the Slav](#), the later iconophile [rebel](#), remained loyal to Bardanes to the end.

## 2.2. Suppression of the rebellion

This negative turn of events, following Bardanes' failure to secure wider support, was compounded by the treachery of his close associates, leaving him with very limited options. In order to avoid a bloody clash with the imperial army, but also before it became too late for himself, he decided to renounce the rebellion and surrender himself, requesting of the emperor the appropriate assurances for his personal safety. The negotiations were conducted through Joseph, abbot in the monastery of Katharoi, and they were successful. More specifically, Nikephoros sent Bardanes a document, signed by the then [Patriarch of Constantinople](#), [Tarasios](#), and several [senators](#), with which he reassured him and his collaborators that no punishment was to be imposed on them following their surrender. This document was accompanied by the emperor's golden cross, which conferred every possible formal validity on it. Convinced of Nikephoros' benign intentions, on September 8, 803 Bardanes Tourkos left his army at Malagina and travelling through [Nicaea](#) and the northern coasts of Lake Ascania, he reached the monastery of Herakleios, in [Cius](#) of [Bithynia](#).<sup>12</sup> From there he boarded a ship sent by the emperor, destined to the monastery that Bardanes himself had earlier established on the island of Proti. While he was still aboard that vessel he was tonsured a monk, taking on the name Savvas, an act which formally signals the end of the rebellion.

## 3. Consequences

Immediately after the suppression of the rebellion, Emperor Nikephoros removed Bardanes from the position of *strategos* of the theme of Anatolikon and *monostrategos* of the themes of Asia Minor, while he also confiscated part of his personal property.<sup>13</sup> Soon after, in December of 803,<sup>14</sup> a group of soldiers from [Lykaonia](#) landed on the island of Prote and blinded Bardanes. The order to blind him probably originated from the emperor himself,<sup>15</sup> although later, under pressure by Patriarch of Constantinople Tarasios and the [Senate](#), Nikephoros publicly declared that he had no personal involvement in the matter.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the leader of the rebellion, however, the emperor also punished those that supported him: he arrested the *stratego*i of the four themes that helped him, while he refused to pay the soldiers of the themes for one year. He also banished [Euthymios, metropolitan of Sardis](#), Eudoxos, [metropolitan of Amorion](#) and [Theophylaktos, metropolitan of Nicomedia](#), to Pantellaria (off the coasts of Sicily) for they had supported the rebel. On the contrary, he generously rewarded the two partners of Bardanes that finally sided with him: Nikephoros appointed Leo the Armenian *tourmarch* of the *Foederati* and Michael *komes tes kortes* of the theme of Anatolikon, while he also gave to both residences in Constantinople. Furthermore, three years later Nikephoros restored the abbot Joseph to his clerical office, from which he had been removed because he had blessed the marriage of Emperor Constantine VI with his mistress, Theodote. On the surface this was a reward for the help Joseph had offered in dealing with Bardanes' rebellion. In truth Nikephoros thus imposed his will dynamically in the area of ecclesiastical law.

Apart from the immediate consequences of this rebellion on the lives of its protagonists, it also impacted somewhat the empire's military readiness: in a period when the Arabs had resumed their raids into the eastern provinces, Nikephoros was unable to focus on



beating them back effectively, being preoccupied with dealing with internal challenges to his rule.<sup>17</sup> Yet these consequences were rather limited, given that Bardanes rebellion never deteriorated into a full-fledged civil war, being suppressed after only two months and without any bloody battles. At any rate, precisely its short duration reveals that it rather failed to appeal to the majority of the Asia Minor troops.<sup>18</sup>

1. Kaegi, W. E., *Byzantine Military Unrest 471-843* (Amsterdam 1981), p. 245.
2. Κουντούρα-Γαλάκη Ελεονώρα, "Η επανάσταση του Βαρδάνη Τούρκου", *Σύμμεικτα* 5 (1983), p. 207-211, sees in Bardanes a representative of the landowners, who rebels to defend his class' rights.
3. According to this treaty, the annual tribute owed by the Byzantines to the Arabs amounted to 70,000 (or 90,000) *denarii*.
4. The Byzantine forces mention that Bardanes, accompanied by Leo, Michael and Thomas the Slav and before expressing any intentions to rebel, visited a monk close to Philomelion, famous for his prophetic powers, and revealed his plans to him. It is said that the monk not only foresaw the final failure of the rebellion, but also the future of his three followers. For the various versions in the sources see Μαυρομάτη-Κατσουγιαννοπούλου Σ., «Η επανάσταση του στρατηγού Βαρδάνη στις σύγχρονες και μεταγενέστερες αφηγηματικές πηγές», *Βυζαντινά* 10 (1980), pp. 220-224. Kaegi, W.E., *Byzantine Military Unrest 471-843* (Amsterdam 1981), p. 245, uses this reference to suggest Bardanes' early aspirations to imperial power. Nivais, P. E., *The Reign of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus I (AD 802-811)* (Ιστορικές Μονογραφίες 3, Athens 1987), p. 62, on the contrary, notes that this is probably a subsequent fabrication to describe Leo V and Michael II's ascent to the throne, and therefore provides no reliable evidence on which to base any hypothesis.
5. According to Treadgold, W. T., *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford 1988), p. 131, Bardanes alleged that he was acting on behalf of the deposed Empress Eirene, when, notwithstanding his unwillingness to participate in a rebellion against Nikephoros I, his troops proclaimed him emperor.
6. Hollingsworth, P. A., "Bardanes Tourkos", *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1 (New York - Oxford 1991), p. 255, dates this event to July 18.
7. Turner, D., "The origins and accession of Leo V (813-820)", *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990), p. 174 believes that the rebellion broke out at Malagina, basing this on the fact that the Byzantine sources use the verb 'υποστρέφειν' (which he translates as 'he returned to whence he set off') to describe Bardanes' move from Chrysopolis, where he was right after the outbreak of his rebellion, to Malagina.
8. Kaegi, W.E., *Byzantine Military Unrest 471-843* (Amsterdam 1981), p. 246.
9. Turner, D., "The origins and accession of Leo V (813-820)", *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990), p. 174; Treadgold, W. T., *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford 1988), p. 131.
10. Βλυσίδου Βασιλική - Κουντούρα Ελεονώρα - Λαμπάκης Σ. - Λουγγής Τ. - Σαββίδης Α., *Η Μικρά Ασία των θεμάτων. Έρευνες πάνω στην γεωγραφική φυσιογνωμία και προσωπογραφία των βυζαντινών θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας (7ος-11 ος αι.)* (Ερευνητική Βιβλιοθήκη 1, Αθήνα 1998), p. 209.
11. During Bardanes' stay at Chrysopolis the death of Empress Eirene became known on the island of Lesbos (she succumbed to an illness on August 8, 803); according to Treadgold W. T., *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford 1988), p. 132, this negated Bardanes an excuse for his rebellion, i.e. the pretence that he was defending the deposed Eirene.
12. Turner, D., "The origins and accession of Leo V (813-820)", *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990), p. 176, mentions that the abbot at the monastery of Herakleios obeying Emperor Nikephoros' command, did not allow Bardanes to remain there or become tonsured a monk.
13. Treadgold, W. T., *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford 1988), p. 132.
14. Treadgold, W. T., *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford 1988), p. 134, dates the blinding of Bardanes to 804.



15. Κουντούρα-Γαλάκη, Ελεονώρα, "Η επανάσταση του Βαρδάνη Τούρκου", *Σύμμεικτα* 5 (1983), pp. 213-214, believes that Nikephoros' implication in this is certain. On the contrary, Treadgold, W. T., *The Byzantine Revival 780-842* (Stanford 1988), pp. 134-135, thinks it is possible that the Lycaonians acted on their own accord, for Bardanes had been neutralized and there was no reason for the emperor to incite animosity against himself by ordering his opponents' blinding.
16. Turner, D., "The origins and accession of Leo V (813-820)", *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990), p. 176.
17. Niavis, P. E., *The Reign of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus I (AD 802-811)* (Ιστορικές Μονογραφίες 3, Athens 1987), pp. 203-207.
18. Βλυσίδου Βασιλική - Κουντούρα Ελεονώρα - Λαμπάκης Σ. - Λουγγής Τ. - Σαββίδης Α., *Η Μικρά Ασία των θεμάτων. Έρευνες πάνω στην γεωγραφική φυσιογνωμία και προσωπογραφία των βυζαντινών θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας (7ος-11ος αι.)* (Ερευνητική Βιβλιοθήκη 1, Αθήνα 1998), p. 51.

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	<b>Κουντούρα-Γαλάκη Ελεονώρα</b> , "Η επανάσταση του Βαρδάνη Τούρκου", <i>Σύμμεικτα</i> , 5, 1983, 203-215



	<b>Turner D.</b> , "The origins and accession of Leo V (813-820)", <i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i> , 40, 1990, 171-203
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## Glossary :

	<b>caliph</b>
	The supreme religious and political authority of Muslims, considered successor of Muhammad (Arabic: khalifa = deputy). He was the head of the Caliphate, the religious state of the Arabs.
	<b>Foederati</b>
	<b>Late Antiquity:</b> Originally allies of the Roman Empire, of barbaric origin, to whom settlement on imperial territory was allowed in exchange for providing military service; later on, in the 6th C., the term designated distinguished military units. <b>Byzantium:</b> from the 7th C. onwards, <i>Foederatoi</i> (from the lat. <i>foederati</i> ) was the name of the oldest tourma of the theme of Anatolikon.
	<b>kapnikon</b>
	A hearth tax, first attested in the sources in the early 9th C. as a tax imposed on the dependant peasants. Its name derived from «kapnos» (smoke), as it was levied on each family unit, considered as a hearth.
	<b>komes tes kortes</b>
	Συμπληρώστε την περιγραφή στην γλώσσα μετάφρασης
	<b>logothetes tou genikou</b>
	Συμπληρώστε την περιγραφή στην γλώσσα μετάφρασης
	<b>monostrategos</b>
	A term used in Byzantine sources to denote a theme's general when the latter, apart from leading his own troops, also took command of neighbouring themes, either to better organise defence in a broad front or to conduct offensive operations under a unified command.
	<b>paroikos</b>
	(Byz.) Dependent peasants, usually on estates of large landowners or on ecclesiastical estates.
	<b>senator, the (1. Roman, 2. Byzantine)</b>
	1. A Roman body of men that originally advised the king and then the consuls; Heredity was not the only means of joining the senate and "new men" or <i>novi homines</i> could become part of it; Augustus revised the senate and left the body with less power and bolstered hereditary claims as a means to enter the senate; it continued to make laws and conferred powers on new emperors. 2. Member of the senate. The senate, a roman institution transferred from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I during the Byzantine period was an advisory body whose rights and responsibilities were not clearly defined. It was consisted of imperial officers coming from the upper and were ranked according to hierarchical levels: viri illustri (perfectus praetoriae and the magister), viri spectabiles (proconsul, vicarius and the comes), viri clarissimi (consul praetoriae) and viri perfectissimi (praeses and duces). Since the 6th c. AD a new title was established for the upper officers (viri gloriosi). The years that followed officials were entitled to officers regardless their position as senators or if they were about to be admitted to this body.
	<b>strategos ("general")</b>
	During the Roman period his duties were mainly political. Office of the Byzantine state's provincial administration. At first the title was given to the military and political administrator of the themes, namely of the big geographic and administrative unities of the Byzantine empire. Gradually the title lost its power and, already in the 11th century, strategoi were turned to simple commanders of military units, responsible for the defence of a region.
	<b>tourmarch</b>
	Civilian and military commander of a <i>tourma</i> , subdivision of a <i>theme</i> .

## Sources

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## Quotations

### The rebellion of Bardanes Tourkos

Βαρδάνης δέ, ὁ πατρικίος καὶ στρατηγὸς τῶν Ἀνατολικῶν, τὸ ἐπίκλην Τοῦρκος, ἀνηγορεύθη βασιλεὺς ὑπὸ τῶν περατικῶν θεμάτων. ὅς γε τοῦτο πολλὰ παρητήσατο, διαδράσαι δὲ μὴ δυνηθεὶς, βία κατελθὼν ἐν Χρυσοπόλει, εἶτα φοβηθεὶς τὸν Θεόν, μήπως δι' αὐτοῦ γένηται σφαγὴ Χριστιανῶν, λαβὼν παρὰ Νικηφόρου λόγον ἀπαθείας νυκτὸς λάθρα τοῦ λαοῦ ἤλθε πρὸς τὴν μονὴν Ἡρακλείου ἐν τῷ Καταβόλῳ καὶ παρευθὺ γέγονε μοναχός. ἐρχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ σταλέντος βασιλικοῦ χελαντίου ἐν τῇ Πρῶτῃ νήσῳ εἰς τὸ μοναστήριον αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἦν αὐτὸς προκατασκευάσας, τυφλοῦται, Λυκαόνων τινῶν τοῦτο ὑπὸ γνώμῃ τοῦ βασιλέως ποιησάντων. διὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ ὑποκρίσει ὡς δῆθεν λύπη συσχεθεὶς πάντας μεθ' ὄρκων ἐπληροφόρει ἀναίτιον εἶναι τοῦ τοιοῦτου δράματος.

Wahlgren, S. (ed.), *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 44/1, Berlin-New York 2006), p. 205.26-37.

### An account of the rebellion of Bardanes Tourkos by a contemporary Byzantine chronographer

τῇ δὲ ἰθ' τοῦ Ἰουλίου μηνός, ἡμέρα δ', ὥρα α', Βαρδάνης, ὁ πατρικίος καὶ στρατηγὸς τῶν ἀνατολικῶν, ὁ ἐπίκλην Τοῦρκος, ἀνηγορεύθη εἰς βασιλεία ὑπὸ τῶν περατικῶν θεμάτων ὅστις πολλὰ παραιτησάμενος διαδράσαι αὐτοὺς οὐκ ἴσχυεν. καὶ κατελθὼν ἕως Χρυσοπόλεως καὶ περιπολεύσας ἡμέρας ἧ' καὶ μὴ δεχθεὶς ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως ὑπέστρεψεν ἕως τῶν Μαλαγίνων. φοβηθεὶς δὲ τὸν θεὸν καὶ λογισάμενος, μήποτε δι' αὐτὸν σφαγὴ γένηται Χριστιανῶν, ἀποστείλας πρὸς Νικηφόρον καὶ λαβὼν λόγον ἐνυπόγραφον ἐξ ἰδιοχείρου αὐτοῦ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ταράσιος, ὁ ἀγιώτατος πατριάρχης, καὶ πάντες οἱ πατρικιοὶ καθυπέγραψαν, ὥστε ἀβλαβῆ αὐτὸν διατηρηθῆναι καὶ ἀζήμιον καὶ πάντας τοὺς σὺν αὐτῷ, τῇ ἡ' τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου μηνός ὥρα μεσονυκτίου λάθρα διαδρᾶς κατήλθεν ἐν τῇ Κίῳ τῆς Βιθυνίας εἰς τὴν μονὴν τοῦ Ἡρακλείου, καὶ εὐρῶν τὸ ἀπολυθὲν χελάνδιον τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἀπεκάρθη καὶ ἐνεδύσατο στολὴν μοναδικήν, καὶ εἰσελθὼν ἐν αὐτῷ ἀπῆλθεν ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ λεγομένῃ Πρῶτῃ, ἐν ἣ ὀικοδομήσας ἦν μοναστήριον, οἰόμενος ὅτι αἰδεσθήσεται τὸν φοβερὸν λόγον, ὃν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ παραλογιστῆς Νικηφόρος, καὶ οὐ μὴ βλάψῃ αὐτὸν ἐν οὐδενί. ὁ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν γυμνοὶ αὐτὸν τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀφορμῆς δραξάμενος πάντας τῶν θεμάτων τοὺς ἄρχοντας καὶ κτήτορας, τινὰς δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς βασιλίδος πόλεως, ἠχμαλώτευσεν, τὸν δὲ στρατὸν ἅπαντα ἀρόγευτον εἶασεν.

De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), pp. 479.15-480.3.

### Bardanes Tourkos is blinded

ὁ δὲ μηδέποτε ἐν μηδενὶ φυλάξας ἀλήθειαν Νικηφόρος Λυκαόνάς τινας, ἢ Λυκανθρώπους, ὁμογνώμονας καὶ ὁμόφρονας ἀποστείλας εἰς τὴν Πρῶτην ἐκέλευσε νυκτὸς ἐπιβῆναι τῇ νήσῳ καὶ τὸν προρρηθέντα ἐκτυφλώσαι Βαρδάνιον, ὡς δῆθεν ἀγνοοῦντος αὐτοῦ, καὶ μετὰ τὸ δράμα προσφυγεῖν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. τούτου δὲ γεγονότος ὃ τε πατριάρχης καὶ ἡ σύγκλητος δεινῶς ἤλγησαν καὶ πάντες οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν. ὁ δὲ παρανομάτατος βασιλεὺς Νικηφόρος ὄρκους τοὺς ἐν τέλει Λυκαόνας, τὸ δοκεῖν, ἐπέζητει ἀνελεῖν, ἀμύνασθαι σχηματιζόμενος, ὁ πάντα κατ' ἐπίδειξιν ἀεὶ, καὶ μηδὲν κατὰ θεὸν πράττων. ἦν γὰρ αὐτῷ μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν παρανομιῶν καὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον τῆς γνώμης ἐξαιρέτον ἰδίωμα, δι' οὗ καὶ πρὸ τῆς βασιλείας πολλοὺς ἠπάτησε. πλὴν γελοιώτατος ἦν τοῖς εἰδόσιν ἀκριβῶς τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα, ὥστε κάκεινον ἀναιδεῖα πολλῇ ζεζοφωμένον τὸ μαρῶτατον αὐτοῦ πρόσωπον ἀεὶ, τότε ἀπρόοιτον γενέσθαι ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ζ' <ἐπὶ> τοῦ βασιλικοῦ κοιτῶνος δολίως κλαυθμυριζόμενον, ἐπεὶ καὶ φυσικῶς αὐτῷ γυναικῶδη προσῆσαν δάκρυα, ἃ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν φαύλων καὶ ψευδοχρηστοῖς προσεῖναι πέφυκεν. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔλαθε τοὺς πολλοὺς.

De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), pp. 480.15-481.1.



## An account of the rebellion of Bardanes Tourkos by a subsequent Byzantine chronographer

χαίρειν οὖν εἰπὼν τοῖς ἐκείνου λόγους, τῆ ἔννεακαιδεκάτῃ τοῦ Ἰουλίου μηνὸς τῆς ια' ἰνδικτιῶνος κατὰ τοῦ βασιλεύοντος Νικηφόρου χεῖρα συναθροίσας πολλήν, καὶ τὰ ὑφ' ἑαυτὸν τέσσαρα θέματα τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ λόγους ὑπαγαγόν, τῶν Ἀρμενιῶν χωρὶς (οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπεῖξαν αὐτῷ), τῆς ἐπαναστάσεως ἄρχεται. ἐμίσει μὲν οὖν τότε τὸν Νικηφόρον τὸ ὑπήκοον τῷ βάρει πιεζόμενον τῶν δημοσίων τελῶν, ὃ γέγονέ πως καὶ ἀφορμὴ καὶ σύνδρομον ἐκείνῳ τῆς ἐπαναστάσεως· γέγονε δέ τι καὶ ἕτερον αἴτιον. ὡς γὰρ κατὰ τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν ὁ Βαρδάνιος ἠνδραγάθησεν καὶ τῆς γενομένης πολλῆς λαφυραγωγίας δικαίᾳ προνοίᾳ πεποιήκε τὴν διανομήν, κατάλληλα τοῖς ἀγωνιζομένοις ἐν πολέμῳ ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ πρόσωπον τὰ ἄθλα προθεῖς, ἔδοξε καὶ βασιλείας τούτοις ἄξιος μεταλαχεῖν. ὅθεν ἀναρρηθεὶς δημοσίᾳ φωνῇ βασιλεύς, καὶ πολλῶν ἄλλων ἀπολαύσεων τε καὶ γερῶν ἐκ τοῦ δήμου καταξιωθείς, ὡς καὶ ναὸν ἐπ' ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἀνεγείραϊ τε καὶ κατασκευάσας, τὴν ἐπὶ Νικομήδειαν φέρουσιν ἤει ὁδόν. ἀλλ' ἀποχρῶσαν καὶ ἐφάμιλλον ὁ βασιλεύων Νικηφόρος δύναμιν ἐκστρατεύσας, καὶ περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος δύσελπιν ποιήσας αὐτὸν τῷ πληθῆτι τῶν ἀντιπαρattoμένων, ἔπεισεν αὐτὸν συγγνώμην φθάσαντα ἐξαιτήσασθαι. ἄρτι μὲν γὰρ Λέων ἄρτι δὲ καὶ Μιχαὴλ ἀπορρυνέντες πρὸς βασιλέα, ἄθλον ὁ μὲν τὴν φοιδεράτων καὶ βασιλικὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ζήνωνος καὶ τὸν Δαγισθέα, ὃ δὲ τὴν τῆς κόρτης κόμητος ἀρχὴν καὶ τοῦ Καριανοῦ οἶκον ἀπενεγκάμενοι. οὐκ ἀγαθὰ φρονεῖν αὐτὸν περὶ ἑαυτοῦ πεποιήκασιν. ὅθεν αὐτῷ τε καὶ τῷ λαῷ συγγνώμην αἰτούμενος ἐκ βασιλέως μέχρι τῶν Μαλαγίνων ὑπέστρεφεν· κάκει τοὺς τῆς ἀπαθείας λόγους δεξάμενος καὶ τὸ χρυσοῦν σταυρίδιον, ὃ παρὰ τοῦ Νικηφόρου φορούμενον αὐτῷ ἀπέσταλτο πρὸς ἀσφάλειάν τε καὶ πίστωσιν, πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Ἡρακλείου μονὴν νύκτωρ, τὸν Θωμᾶν μόνον συγκινδυνεύοντα ἔχων, ἀπέφυγεν, τὸν τῆς κεφαλῆς κόσμον ἀφαιρῆσαι σπουδάζων. καὶ ὁ μὲν τῆς μονῆς προσετώς τοῦτο δρᾶσαι τοῦτον οὐ συνεχώρει· αὐτὸς δὲ τῆ ἡ περιεζώννυτο σπάθη τὸν πλόκαμον αὐτοῦ ἀφελών, καὶ πενιχρὰν ἐσθῆτα ἀμφιασάμενος, εἶχετο τῆς πρὸς τὴν Πρώτην νῆσον πορείας, ἔνθα δὴ τούτῳ κτήμα καλῶς πεπονημένον ἔστη, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκεῖ μένειν περιορισμένον ἐπέτρεψεν. ἐκεῖσε γοῦν περαιωθείς, καὶ τὰς συνήθεις εὐχὰς καὶ τὸ τῶν μοναχῶν θεῖον σχῆμα δεξάμενος, μετωνομάσθη Σάββας, ἀγῶνας ἀσκητικῶς πολλοὺς ἐνδεικνύμενος. οὐ πολὺ τὸ ἐν μέσῳ, καὶ τινες τῶν ἐκ τῆς Λυκαονίας αὐτῷ ἐπιθέμενοι καὶ ποιήσαντες ἔρημον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, γνῶσει καὶ εἰδήσει τοῦ βασιλεύοντος, τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ προσφεύγουσι θεῖῳ καὶ μεγάλῳ ναῷ· καὶ τέλος εἶχεν καὶ ἡ πρόρρησις τοῦ τὸ Φιλομίλιον ἐνδαιτωμένου μονάζοντος. ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνος μὲν ὡς εὐεργέταις αὐτοῖς ἐπευξάμενος τῆς σκληροτέρας εἶχετο ἀγωγῆς, οἶνον τε καὶ ἰχθύων καὶ ἐλαίου ὀλοσχερῶς ἀπεχόμενος, γυμνήν τε αἰεὶ φέρων τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ πόδας, κἂν εἴ τις σφοδρότερος ἐγεγόνει χειμῶν. ἔτι δὲ μονοχίτων διετέλει, τῷ θέρει μὲν δερμάτινον χιτῶνα ἀμφιεννύμενος, τῷ χειμῶνι δὲ τρίχινον περιβαλλόμενος. ἐξῆ δὲ οὐ σιτίων, κριθῆς δὲ ἀλεύρω ἐγκρυφίαν ποιῶν. καὶ οὕτω παρέπεμπε τὸν ἑαυτοῦ βίον, διαρκέσας ἕως ὁ Λέων τῆς βασιλείας ἐγένετο ἐγκρατής. ἀποκαρῆναι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σύμβιον Δομνίκαν ἅμα θυγατρὶ καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ παισὶν ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ οἴκῳ ἐποίησεν, μετωνομάσας αὐτὴν Ἀθανασίαν, ἅπαντα δηλαδὴ τὸν πλοῦτον διανείμας πτωχοῖς.

Bekker, I. (ed.), *Theophanes Continuatus* (CSHB, Bonn 1838), pp. 8.12-10.19.

### John Skylitzes describes the incident with the monk foretelling the fate of Bardanes Tourkos

ἄνθρωπος τις τῶν ἄγαν διαφανῶν Βαρδάνιος τὸννομα, Τοῦρκος τὴν προσηγορίαν, ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς συγκλήτου τελῶν, πατρικίῳ τετιμημένος καὶ δομέστικος τυγχάνων τῶν σχολῶν τῆς ἀνατολῆς, αἰεὶ τυρρανίδι μελετῶν ἐπιθέσθαι καὶ τῆς βασιλείας, εἰ δύναίτο, γενέσθαι ἐγκρατῆς καὶ ἐναντίοις διὰ παντὸς βαλλόμενος λογισμοῖς καὶ φλεγόμενος μὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ τῆς βασιλείας ἔρωτος, δεδιώς δὲ καὶ φρίσων πρὸς τὸ τοῦ συμπεράσματος ἀδηλον, ἐπεὶ περὶ ἐπύθετο κατὰ τὸ Φιλομίλιον ἐγκλειστόν τινα εἶναι μοναχὸν ἀρετῆς τε εἰς ἄκρον ἑλληκότα καὶ προλέγειν τὰ μέλλοντα φήμην ἔχοντα, ἐγνώκει δέον εἶναι κοινώσασθαι τούτῳ τὸ βούλευμα καὶ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δέξασθαι κρίσιν. σκεψάμενος δ' οὕτως καὶ σκηψάμενος κυνηγέσιον μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τε λαβὼν τὸν Λέοντα, δι' εὐπρέπειάν τε προσώπου καὶ γενναῖον κατάστημα καὶ τὸ πολλοῖς ἐμπρέψαι πολιτικοῖς προτερήμασιν ὑπηρετοῦντά τε αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν ἵπποκόμων κατάρχοντα, σὺν τούτῳ δὲ καὶ Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἐξ Ἀμωρίου τὸν τραυλόν, ὃν προεῖπομεν, καὶ τινα πρὸς τούτοις Θωμᾶν ἔλκοντα μὲν τὸ γένος ἐξ Ἀρμενίων, τὴν οἰκισιν δ' ἔχοντα κατὰ τὴν λίμνην τοῦ Γαζουροῦ, τὸ παρεπόμενον αὐτῷ πολὺ πλῆθος ἐν τινὶ τόπῳ προσμένειν παραγγείλας, αὐτὸς μετὰ τῶν εἰρημένων ἀνδρῶν τὸν φωλεὸν καταλαμβάνει τοῦ μοναχοῦ, πρὸς ἐκείνον τε μόνος εἰσελθὼν κοινοῦται τὰ τῆς μελέτης. καὶ ὁ μοναχὸς τούτων ῥηθέντων αὐτῷ εὐθύς τε ἀπέτρεπε τῶν δεδογμένων καὶ διεμαρτύρητο, ὡς, εἰ μὴ πεισθεὶς ἀπόσχοιτο τοῦ σκοποῦ, τὸ τε φῶς τῶν οἰκειῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀποβαλεῖται καὶ περιουσίας ἔκπτωσιν ὑποστήσεται. τούτων ῥηθέντων ὁ στρατηγὸς ἀθυμίᾳ τε κατεσχέθη πολλῇ καὶ μικροῦ δεινὸν καὶ αὐτῶν ἐξεστηκῶς ἐγένετο τῶν φρενῶν. ὁμῶς τῆς συνήθους ἀποδοθείσης εὐχῆς, καὶ μέλλοντος ἀπαίρειν ἤδη τοῦ στρατηγοῦ, καὶ τοῦ ἵππου, ᾧ ἐπωχεῖτο, διακομισθέντος, οὐ τὸν μὲν χαλινὸν κατεῖχεν ὁ Μιχαὴλ, τὴν δὲ δεξιὰν τῆς ἐφεστρίδος βάσιν ὁ Θωμᾶς, ὃ δὲ Λέων ἀνεβάσταζεν ἀναβαίνοντα τὸν ἵππον τὸν στρατηγόν, προκύπτων ἐκ τῆς θυρίδος ὁ μοναχὸς καὶ ἄνωθεν κατιδὼν τοὺς ἀνδρας ὑποστρέφειν ἐκέλευε τὸν Βαρδάνιον. ὃ δὲ μετὰ περιχαρείας ἐδέξατο τὴν ἀνάκλησιν καὶ θάπτον ἢ λόγος ἀποβάς τοῦ ἵππου εἴσεισι δρομαῖος πρὸς τὸν μονάζοντα, προσδοκήσας καταθύμιόν τι ἀκούσεσθαι. ἔγγιον δὲ τοῦτον ἄλιν παραστησόμενος «σοὶ μὲν, ὦ στρατηγέ»,



ἔφη ὁ μοναστής, «καὶ πάλιν συμβουλευώ καὶ παραινώ, μηδ' εἰς ἐνθῦμιον ὄλωσ ἀγαγεῖν τὰ βεβουλευμένα, ἢ μὴν εἰδέναι, ὡς πῆρωσίς τε ὀμμάτων καὶ οὐσίας ἀφαίρεσις ἔψεται σοι. οἱ δὲ τρεῖς ἄνδρες οἱ κομίσαντές σοι τὸν ἵππον, ὃ τε μετεωρίσας σε ἐποχεῖσθαι μέλλοντα πρῶτος, καὶ ὁ τὸν χαλινὸν δὲ κατέχων δεύτερος ἐπιλήψεται τῆς βασιλείας, καὶ ὁ τρίτος ὁ τὴν τοῦ δεξιοῦ σου ποδὸς βάσιν κατέχων ἐπιτεύξεται μὲν ἀναρρήσεως, οὐ μὴν γε καὶ βασιλείας, ἀλλ' οἰκτίστῳ θανάτῳ καταστρέψει τὸ ζῆν». τοῦτων ἀκούσας ὁ Βαρδάνιος ἐν γέλῳ τὰ λελεγμένα ἐτίθετο καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ μοναχῷ μετέπιπτεν ὑπολήψεως, ἀντὶ θεοπρόπου καὶ τῶν μελλόντων προβλεπτικοῦ γόητα τοῦτον ἀποκαλῶν καὶ μηδενὸς τῶν ἔσεσθαι μελλόντων προγνωστικόν, συλλογιζόμενος, ὡς εἰκός, ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν προσώπων ποιότητος καὶ κακίμων τὴν πρόρρησιν, εἰ ὁ μὲν ἀνὴρ πατρικίος καὶ ἐξ τῶν τῶν δομestikῶν θρόνον κεκαθικῶς καὶ πλείστην ὄσσην δύναμιν περιεζωσμένος καὶ γένους λαμπροῦ καὶ οἰκίας ἐπιφανοῦς ἀστοχήσει τοῦ ἔφετου, ἄνδρες δὲ ἀφανεῖς καὶ θητεύοντες καὶ μηδ' εἰπεῖν ἔχοντες, ἐξ οἴων ἔφυσαν τῶν προγόνων, εἰς τὸ βασιλεῖον ἀναχθεῖεν ὕψος. οὕτω δὲ διαπαίξας καὶ μυκτηρίσας τὰ λεγόμενα ἐπάνεισι πρὸς τὴν οἰκίαν ἀρχὴν καὶ τοῖς συνωμόταις διαλεχθεὶς ἀνταίρει χεῖρα κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως (Νικηφόρος ἦν ὁ ἀπὸ γενικῶν τὰς ἡνίας τότε τῆς βασιλείας ἰθύνων) χεῖρά τε οὖν ὡς πλείστην ἀθροίσας καὶ βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθεὶς περὶ Βιθυνίαν στρατοπεδεύεται. καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἄρτι τὴν κίνησιν τοῦ Βαρδανίου μεμαθηκῶς ἀξιόχρεων αὐτῷ ἐπαφίησι δύναμιν. συρράξει δὲ μελλόντων ἀλλήλοις τῶν στρατευμάτων συγγνώμην ὁ Βαρδάνιος ἔξαιτεῖ καὶ ἀμνηστίαν κακῶν, ἦν αὐτῷ ἐνωμότως ὁ Νικηφόρος παρεσχικῶς ἐν τῇ νήσῳ Πρώτῃ εἰς τὸν ἐκεῖσε φιλοπονηθέντα αὐτῷ ἀγρὸν ὑπερόριον τίθησι. χρόνος οὐ πολὺς, καὶ στρατιῶταί τινες ἐκ Λυκαονίας εἴτ' ἐξ οἰκίας ὀρμῆς, εἴτε καὶ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀφανῶς ἐπισκήψαντος, ἐπιθέμενοι τῷ ἀγρῷ τὸν Βαρδάνιον ἐκτυφλοῦσι καὶ τῇ μεγάλῃ τοῦ θεοῦ προσφεύγουσιν ἐκκλησίᾳ. Λέων δὲ καὶ Μιχαὴλ καὶ Θωμᾶς, ὡς ἔφαμεν, τῷ Βαρδανίῳ διακονοῦντες, τῆς στάσεως ἀναφθείσης τῷ βασιλεῖ προσεχώρησαν Νικηφόρῳ, ὧν ὁ μὲν Λέων τοῦ τῶν φοιδεράτων ἡγεμῶν ἀνεδείχθη τάγματος, Μιχαὴλ δ' ὁ τραυλὸς τὴν τοῦ κόμητος κόρτης ἀρχὴν ἐγχειρίζεται, Θωμᾶς δὲ καὶ μέχρι τέλους τὴν πίστιν τῷ οἰκίῳ δεσπότη τῶν διέμεινεν.

Thurn I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (CFHB 5, Berlin-New York 1973), pp. 9.90-11.61.

## Chronological Table

October 31, 802: Nikephoros I ascends to the imperial throne

July 19, 803: The troops of Asia Minor rebel and proclaim Bardanes Tourkos emperor

August 8, 803: The exiled Empress Eirene dies on Lesbos

September 8, 803: Bardanes Tourkos' rebellion is suppressed

late in 803: Bardanes Tourkos is blinded