

The Sicilian expedition of Constantine IV.

According to Theophanes, after the murder of Constans II in 668 and the usurpation of the Armenian Mzhez the young son of Constans, Constantine IV, sailed to Sicily with a large fleet, overthrew the usurper, and put him to death together with his father's murderers; and the narrative of Michael the Syrian, who follows the same source, varies from this only by omitting the detail that he came 'with a great fleet' and by substituting 'those who made him emperor' for 'his father's murderers'. The other Greek writers, George the Monk and his interpolator, the so-called Leo Grammaticus, Theodosius, Cedrenus, and Zonaras give the same account with slight variations, and all except George add that the patrician Justinian was put to death and his son Germanus castrated, and Cedrenus further adds that the emperor brought his father's body back with him.

On the other hand the author of the life of Adeodatus in the *Liber Pontificalis* gives a wholly different account. According to this writer, upon the rebellion of Mzhez the army of Italy from Istria and Campania and other forces from Africa and Sardinia came to Syracuse, the usurper was killed, many of his officers were beheaded, and their bodies and the head of Mzhez himself taken to Constantinople; but there is no word about the emperor having been present or about any force whatever having come from the east: indeed the presence of the emperor seems to be excluded, for, if he had been present, it is not easy to see why the bodies and the head should have been sent to Constantinople. As these events, which occurred during the pontificate of Vitalian, are ascribed to that of Adeodatus, the life of this pope cannot be a strictly contemporary notice; but the statements as to the quarters from which the forces came show that the author was well acquainted with the details of the expedition. Duchesne has pointed out that the lives from Adeodatus to Conon seem to be the work of one man¹), who must therefore be supposed to have been written under Sergius (687—701)²), and a man writing

1) *Liber Pontificalis* I p. CCXXXII.

2) He supposes the lives to have been written one by one, but gives no reason for this, and the error mentioned above seems decisive against it.

20 years afterwards might well have forgotten the exact date of these events, but could not have forgotten the fact that the emperor himself came with a great fleet from Constantinople.

But not only is the eastern account contradicted by a contemporary author at Rome, but it is in itself exceedingly improbable. Constans had brought a large army with him to the west, and from the same passage in the *Liber Pontificalis* we know that the 'exercitus orientalis', by which at least the bulk of the Anatolic troops must be meant, was in Sicily at the time of his death, and the Saracen war was raging in Asia Minor: yet we are required to believe that the young emperor left his capital and took a great armament with him to Sicily. 'Μετὰ πλείστης ναυστολίας' may indeed be dismissed as a mere flourish; but, as he would certainly not have entrusted himself among the rebels without an overwhelming force and could not be sure of the support of the western armies, it must, if the expedition took place at all, represent the actual fact. The difficulty becomes still greater when we try to fix the date of the supposed expedition. The *Liber Pontificalis* places the murder of Constans on 15 July, 669, an impossible date, in which either the month or the indiction must be wrong. If it was in Sept. 668, as is generally supposed, the possibility of an expedition in 668 falls to the ground at once; and, even if it was in July 668, we know from the Acts of the 6th Synod that Constantine assumed the consulship not earlier than 17 Sept., and he must therefore be presumed to have been still in Constantinople at that date, nor indeed would it have been possible for the necessary preparations to be made before that time, while a seaexpedition in the autumn would be almost without example. Moreover the rebellion of Shabur, the ally of the Arabs, is placed by Theophanes in 668¹⁾, and it is incredible that the emperor should have turned his back on the dangerous rival at his gates and gone to combat the usurper in distant Sicily. If therefore the expedition took place at all, it must have been in 669.²⁾ But in this year Theophanes places the campaign of Yazid³⁾, during which an attack was

1) The text of Mich. has AS 977 = 666; but, like Theoph., he calls it the 26th of Constans, and according to the chronology elsewhere used by him the 26th of Constans = AS 979.

2) Theoph. places it in the indictional year 668/9.

3) He records it with Shabur's rebellion under AM 6159 (667/8); but this is only to avoid breaking the narrative, and he cannot mean to place both in one year; see Wellhausen in Nachr. d. Kön. Ges. d. Wiss. zu Göttingen phil.-hist. Cl. 1901 p. 424. For Mich.'s date see above n. 1. Theoph. and Mich. bring the Arabs to Chalcedon only.

made upon Constantinople; and to the arguments in support of the correctness of this date advanced by Wellhausen¹), who has treated the chronology in detail, I may add two more which show that it could not have been later. It is clear from Theophanes and Michael that the campaign of Yazid followed immediately upon the rebellion and death of Shabur, while at the beginning of Shabur's rebellion Constantine is described by both these writers as 'the emperor's son', from which it follows that the rebellion was not later than 668, or the campaign of Yazid than 669. Again it was stated at the Synod of 680 that the patriarch Thomas (17 Apr. 667—15 Nov. 669)²) was prevented from communicating with the Pope by the Saracen blockade³); and, though this need not be strictly true, the statement could not have been made if the attack had not taken place during his episcopacy. As therefore Elijah of Nisibis and Al Ya'kubi also place the campaign of Fudhala, who according to Theophanes accompanied Yazid, in 669, and no authority except Al Mas'udi gives an earlier year, the accuracy of the date can scarcely be disputed. That Constantine should have gone with an armament to Sicily during the attack upon his capital is in itself incredible; but we are not compelled to depend upon inferences, but have the positive testimony of the Maronite Chronicler⁴), who relates, obviously from an eye-witness, certain details of the siege, that he was directing the defence in person. Unfortunately the beginning of the narrative, which contained the date, is lost, and the fact that the next event is dated in 664 affords some presumption that the author dated the attack upon Constantinople not later than 663: but no attack at this date is known from any other source, the event may easily have been related out of chronological order, and the mention of Yazid makes it clear that the writer is speaking of the campaign which other writers assign to 669.⁵) If it be contended that the Sicilian expedition occupied a very short time, and that the emperor returned in time to take part in the defence, it must be answered that the preparations for the attack, and probably something in the nature of a naval blockade⁶), were going on during the previous year, and that the *Continuatio Isidori Byzantia Arabica*

1) Ibid. p. 422 ff.

2) See B. Z. VI p. 47.

3) Mansi XI p. 576.

4) Chron. Min. (Corp. Script. Christ. Orient.) p. 72.

5) The fact that he calls Constantine 'the emperor' can hardly be pressed.

6) In the Acts of the 6th Synod the *παράστασις* is said to have lasted 2 years, and a great naval expedition in 668 is mentioned by Al Tabari.

says that the attack lasted 'per omne verum tempus' and the besiegers then retired. If on the other hand it be maintained that he started after the raising of the siege¹⁾, we have to suppose that preparations for the expedition were going on during the Arab attack: moreover the Arabs suffered no defeat and obviously meant to renew the attempt on the first favourable opportunity, which the departure of the emperor and his fleet would provide. This last objection is equally valid against any later date, nor can the revolt in Sicily be supposed to have lasted so long.

The internal improbability of the Sicilian expedition having been thus established, it remains to examine the external authority for it. In a previous article²⁾ I have tried to show that the matter common to Theophanes and Michael is ultimately derived from a Syriac chronicler who wrote soon after 746: but in this portion of history this writer seems to have followed a Greek source; for Michael states that the rebel Shabur was surnamed 'frsytgn (Apresithgen?)³⁾, which clearly represents the *περσογενής* of Theophanes; and the fact that Theophanes has the correct form makes it most probable that he here uses the Greek author directly. As it seems likely that the same man who preserved the conversation between Mu'awiya and the two envoys also preserved the conversations recorded in the story of Leo and Maslama⁴⁾, there is some ground for thinking that this author wrote not earlier than 717, and his knowledge of Arab affairs makes it probable that he wrote either in the caliph's dominions or on the frontier: he is therefore not likely to have known much about events in Sicily. If it be objected that the other Greek writers by recording the treatment of Justinian and Germanus show that their original had some other authority before him who mentioned the expedition, I answer that this is by no means certain. If he found it stated in Theophanes or his source that Constantine went to Sicily, and in another authority that Justinian was put to death, he would combine the two and ascribe Justinian's death to the direct action of the emperor on the spot. The statement as to the origin of the name Pogonatus (the incorrectness of which I have tried to show in the following article⁵⁾) will then be an invention of his own, and the assertion

1) He was in CP in Dec., for the patriarch Thomas d. 15 Nov., and John was ordained in Nov. or Dec. (B. Z. VI p. 48).

2) B. Z. XV p. 578 ff.

3) Ed. Chabot II p. 451 (transl.).

4) Theoph. AM 6208.

5) P. 460 ff. To this article I must also refer for the bearing upon this question of the source of the reign of Justinian II postulated by Patzig.

of Cedrenus that Constantine brought his father's body back, which is not found in the other writers, will be an obvious inference from the fact that Constans was buried at Constantinople. The external authority is therefore wholly insufficient to stand against the silence of the *Liber Pontificalis* and the extreme difficulty of finding any time for the expedition; and the origin of the story is not difficult to discover. The first writer who recorded it found it stated that Constantine overcame Mzhez, and, not understanding that 'qui facit per alium facit per se' supposed that the emperor went to Sicily in person.

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Addendum.

Michael (p. 455 transl.) has what appears to be a duplicate account of the expedition as follows: "A cette époque Iwannis, fils de Mizizius, se souleva contre Constantinus. Il était déjà en révolte depuis 7 mois, quand l'empereur marche contre lui et le tue, en Sicile même." If the two accounts are derived from independent original sources, the fact of the expedition must be accepted, whatever the difficulties may be; but it is equally possible that they come from one source through different channels. The passage is however important as giving a date for the overthrow of Mzhez, Febr. or Apr. according to the date at which we place the death of Constans. If it was in Apr., it is clearly impossible to reconcile the expedition with the emperor's presence at Constantinople in the spring; if in Febr., it is just chronologically possible to do this, but we still have to face the other difficulties stated above.

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