

Who was Constantine Pogonatus?

Constantine IV, great-grandson of Heraclius, is commonly known as Pogonatus, a name which is first found in the common source of the so-called Leo Grammaticus, Theodosius, the interpolator of the Chronicle of George, Zonaras, and Cedrenus, is unknown to Theophanes and Nicephorus, and does not occur in the original work of George, unless the headings at the beginning of each reign are to be attributed to the author himself. Of the authors above mentioned all except Cedrenus give an origin for the name by saying that it was given him on account of the newly-grown beard with which he came back from his Sicilian expedition. Now stories as to the origin of nicknames are generally untrustworthy (the case of Constantine Copronymus is a well-known example), and this particular story is especially suspicious. The fact that he grew a beard at a time of life when he would naturally be expected to grow one is a very inadequate reason for calling him 'the bearded': if he was described by this name at all, it must surely have been either because the wearing of any beard was unusual or because there was something peculiar about his beard. As nearly all the emperors at this period are represented on the coins as bearded, the first alternative may be at once dismissed, and we have only to consider the second; and in this the coins do not give us much help, for in all but two, of which the ascription to Constantine IV seems doubtful¹), he has only a beard similar to that which is found on the coins of all the succeeding emperors down to Leo IV, as well as on those of Phocas and some of Heraclius and Constans. As the beards on the coins are probably to a great extent conventional²), the absence of anything special about the beard there attributed to him does not in itself prove that he had not a beard of unusual size or shape: but it is impossible to look through the coins of this period without noticing that there is an emperor who has a most remarkable beard; and that is the father of Constantine IV, the emperor whom we know as

1) Sabatier XXXVI 14, 17.

2) See B Z. XII p. 544.

Constans II. Heraclius indeed has a long beard on some of his coins; but it is hardly to be compared with that of Constans, and Heraclius was a much older man. Although the beards on the coins may be often conventional, it is incredible that such an unusual beard would have been attributed to Constans if there were not something in nature to justify it; while, if Constans had such a beard as this, his successor must have had a wonderful beard indeed if it was sufficient to procure him a nickname, and it is strange that no trace of such a beard should be found on the coins. There are certainly, as I have said, two coins attributed to him in which he has a fairly long beard; but I see no reason why these should not be given to Constans. Since then we find that the evidence for the ascription of the name Pogonatus to Constantine IV is found in one authority only, and that the bearded emperor on the coins is not he but his father, there is some reason for thinking that a confusion has taken place. In the absence of direct evidence this could hardly amount to more than a strong suspicion; but there is in fact a passage, strangely neglected by historians, in which the name Pogonatus appears to be actually applied to Constans. In the list of imperial tombs given by Constantine Porphyrogennetus occurs the following¹): *ἕτερος λάρναξ Προικονήσιος Κωνσταντίνου Παργωνάτου. ἕτερος λάρναξ ἀπὸ λίθου πρᾶσινον Θεσσαλικοῦ, ἐν ᾗ ἀποκεῖται Φαῦστα ἢ γυνὴ Κωνσταντίνου Παργωνάτου. ἕτερος λάρναξ Σαγαρινός, ἐν ᾗ ἀποκεῖται Κωνσταντίνος, ἔγγων Ἡρακλείου, υἱὸς Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Παργωνάτου.* Now the wife of Constantine IV was not Fausta, but Anastasia, and he had no son named Constantine: on the other hand Constans II had a son named Constantine, and his wife's name is not known from any other source. Certainly 'ἔγγων Ἡρακλείου' is inaccurate of Constantine IV, if 'ἔγγων' is to be taken in its ordinary meaning of 'grandson'; but this is in any case a difficulty, unless we substitute *πατῆρ* for *υἱός*, and we must suppose either that the word is not to be taken literally, or that the imperial author has forgotten the existence of Constantine III, whose tomb is not mentioned. If 'ἔγγων' is accurate, Constantine Pogonatus must be Constantine III; but his wife's name was Gregoria.²)

The anonymous author of the *De Sepulcris Imp. CP.*³), who generally copies Constantine, has seen the difficulty and altered the text accordingly. Knowing that the wife of Constantine IV was named

1) De Caer. II 42 (p. 644).

2) Niceph. p. 9. 6; 21. 21; Zon. XIV 18. 'Leo' and Cedrenus call her Anastasia.

3) Codinus ed. Bonn. p. 203 ff.

Anastasia, he has omitted 'ἡ γυνὴ Κωνστ. Παγωνάτου', and for 'Κωνστ. . . . Παγωνάτου' he has substituted 'Κώνστας ὁ υἱὸς Κωνσταντίνου, υἱοῦ Ἡρακλείου'. After this however he preserves the description of the tomb of Anastasia ('Ἐτέρα λάραξ ἑκατοντάλιθος Σαγγαρινή, ἐν ἣ ἀποκεῖται ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ), which has fallen out through homoeoteleuton between *Κωνσταντίνου* and *αὐτοῦ* in Constantine's text; but the name 'Ἀναστασία, which was no doubt given by Constantine, was omitted by the anonymous author because he supposed the wife of Constans to be meant. It would seem therefore that by 'Constantine Pogonatus' Constantine VII understood not Constantine IV, but Constans II; and, as the evidence of the coins points strongly in the same direction, we may conclude that this was the original application of the name. The reason for the transference would be that this emperor was commonly known by the short name of Constans, and, the fact that his real name was Constantine having been forgotten, the name 'Constantine Pogonatus' was popularly supposed to belong to his son. We are also now enabled to state that the name of Constans' wife was Fausta. John of Nikiu (p. 582) tells us that he was betrothed to the daughter of Valentine; and, as he goes on to say that she was thereupon proclaimed Augusta, the marriage must have immediately followed; but her name is not mentioned.

It may indeed be objected that Patzig¹⁾ has shown strong reasons for believing that the author used by 'Leo', Theodosius, Cedrenus, Zonaras, and the interpolator of George wrote during the first reign of Justinian II (685—695), in which case his testimony on the point is decisive. To discuss this question at length lies altogether outside the limits of this article, nor does it fall within the scope of my work to make the necessary investigations; but I must point out that any supposition that the matter common to these writers at this period of history comes from an author of about 690 does not explain the facts: for all of them in relating the castration of Germanus add the description 'τοῦ πατριάρχου', which cannot have been written before 715; and, even if we might believe this the addition of some early copyist, the fact remains that the incident would not have been recorded unless Germanus had been already a well-known man. I see therefore no necessity for believing that the ascription of the name Pogonatus to Constantine IV comes from an author who wrote under his successor.

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1) Joh. Antiochenus u. Joh. Malalas. Leipzig 1892.