

# Philippicus, Anastasius II and Theodosius III

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THE CRITICAL PERIOD between the overthrow of Justinian II in A.D. 711 and the elevation of Leo III in 717 saw a succession of three men briefly occupying the throne of Byzantium: Bardanes or Vardanes (Philippicus), Artemius (Anastasius II) and Theodosius (III). Some minor chronological problems are presented by their reigns.

## Philippicus

Philippicus was the son of a *patricius*, and he had been exiled under Tiberius III (Apsimarus) for reporting a dream in which he became Emperor (Theoph. 372). His predecessor, the Emperor Justinian II, was deposed as a result of being defeated in a battle at the twelfth milestone from Constantinople by forces supporting the claims of Philippicus. The date was 4 or 24 November 711.<sup>1</sup> Justinian's head was cut off and his body thrown into the sea. Thus November 711 could be regarded as the date of Philippicus' accession. But he had actually been acclaimed Emperor somewhat earlier in that year, at Kherson by the armed forces operating there in 711 (Theoph. 379; Niceph. 46). This could affect calculations of the length of his reign.

The date of Philippicus' deposition is given as the Saturday eve of Pentecost, apparently in his second year (Theoph. 383; Niceph. 49). This would be 3 June 713. Unfortunately, Theophanes (386) proceeds to give Philippicus a reign of 2 years 9 months. Reckoning back from the eve of Pentecost in 713 would bring us to about September 710, which is an impossible date for Philippicus' accession, whatever type of calculation be adopted. To count back from the eve of Pentecost in 714 (26 May) would produce an acceptable date for Philippicus' acclamation, *viz.* about September 711. But the 714 date can be ruled out. Nicephorus (49) clearly puts Philippicus' deposition in his second

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Grierson, *DOPapers* 16 (1962) 50f, 62.

year. And a letter of the deacon and librarian Agathon, a contemporary of Philippicus, dates his fall to the Saturday eve of Pentecost in the 11th indiction (=712/3), *i.e.* 3 June 713.<sup>2</sup> Grierson notes additionally that “no coins (of Philippicus) later than Year 2 are known”<sup>3</sup>: which, though not conclusive, is strong enough as a confirmation.

The *Chronicon Altinate et Gradense*,<sup>4</sup> which gives 24 November for the death of Justinian II, states that Philippicus reigned “*ann. unum et dimidium.*” This is very close to an exact reckoning: 24 November 711–3 June 713 is 1 year 6 months 10 days. The Mozarabic Chronicle of 754 also has the reign of Philippicus lasting one year and a fraction, though the fraction it offers, one-fourth, cannot be right;<sup>5</sup> indeed the information on Byzantine matters in this Hispanic chronicle tends to be rather imprecise.

Michael the Syrian (2.479, transl. Chabot) puts Philippicus’ uprising in 1022 (*i.e.* before 1 October 711) and his accession in 1023, *i.e.* between 1 October 711 and 30 September 712. This accords with the date of November 711. Michael gives the reign a duration of 2 years 6 months. Like Theophanes’ 2 years 9 months, this is too long. It looks as if there may have been a conflation of reckonings: in Michael’s case, that the reign lasted 2 years *or* 1 year 6 months (*cf.* the *Chron. Altin. et Grad.*, above); in Theophanes’ case, that it lasted 2 years (*cf.* Theoph. 383, *διετοῦς χρόνου*) or a more precise figure of 1 year 9 months. If so, Theophanes’ indication could suggest that the time of the original proclamation of Philippicus was about September 711. A reference to the month of October in Theophanes (378) and Nicephorus (45), when, supposedly, a storm utterly destroyed the fleet returning from Kherson and caused enormous casualties, seems to be misplaced; much too large a number of events (including the proclamation of Philippicus) is then placed between October and November. It would make more sense if October was the month when Philippicus himself sailed with the fleet from Kherson to Constantinople. Justinian was far away in northern Asia Minor at that time (Niceph. 47). Hence the delay before the final dénouement in November.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum . . . collectio* 12 (Florence 1766) 189ff (193f).

<sup>3</sup> *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* II.2 (Washington 1968) 664.

<sup>4</sup> *Fonti per la storia d’Italia* 73, ed. R. Cessi (Rome 1933) 108.

<sup>5</sup> MGH AA 11.356; J. Gil, *Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum* I (Madrid 1973) 36.

Mainly following the guidance of Theophanes and Nicephorus, then, we can sketch out the chronology as follows:

#### CHRONOLOGY OF PHILIPPICUS

711	(September?)	Vardanes (= Philippicus) acclaimed Emperor at Kherson.
	(October?)	Philippicus sails from Kherson to Constantinople.
	November (4 or 24)	Justinian II defeated and killed.
712		Philippicus, as a Monothelete, anathematizes the Sixth Ecumenical Council.
		Philippicus drives Armenians from Byzantine territory.
		Bulgarian raid against Thracian Bosphorus and outskirts of Constantinople.
		Arab raids into Pontus and Pisidia.
713	(—)	Arabs capture Pisidian Antioch.
	February 28	Earthquake in Syria.
	May 11	Philippicus celebrates birthday of Constantinople.
	June 3	Philippicus blinded, deposed and exiled.
(714?)	January 20	Philippicus dies ( <i>Chron. Altin. et Grad.</i> 108). <sup>6</sup>

### Anastasius II

Anastasius, whose original name was Artemius, had been First Secretary under Philippicus. The date of his accession was the day of Pentecost, the day after Philippicus' blinding (Theoph. 383; Niceph. 49; cf. Agathon in Mansi 12.193f): therefore 4 June 713.

A coin (*folles*) issued at Ravenna bears the legend ANNO III and is attributed to Anastasius by Grierson (*Catalogue* 2.2.683 no.23) and also by Morrisson,<sup>7</sup> although the Emperor's name seems almost illegible. If the identification is right, Anastasius' reign must have continued past 4 June 715. The *Chronicon Altinate et Gradense* (108f) at first sight militates against this, since it appears to date his deposition and exile, after a reign of two years, to 1 June (715). But as in the case of Philippi-

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Grierson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 51f; *id.*, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.3) (where correct 30 to 20 January).

<sup>7</sup> C. Morrisson, *Catalogue des monnaies byzantines de la Bibliothèque Nationale* II (Paris 1970) 444 (with n.1.).

cus, the chronicle is probably giving the day of Anastasius' *death*, in a later year. We happen to know from Theophanes (400) that he was put to death in 719.

Theophanes (386) rather surprisingly gives Anastasius a reign of only 1 year 3 months, though he dates the election of the Patriarch Germanus to 11 August in the second year of Anastasius; this would already be the 15th month. He quotes a passage from the original document of appointment (*κιτατόριον μεταθέσεως*), which lends his account the appearance of authenticity (384f). It is noticeable, however, that at the end of his quotation we read simply *ἐπὶ Ἀρτεμίου βασιλείῳ*, with no regnal year. The other index of date mentioned by Theophanes—the 13th indiction—points to 11 August 715, which would be in Anastasius' *third* year. Nevertheless, it is possible that the indiction number is erroneous. If it were the case that Germanus was appointed in August 715, his transfer from the see of Cyzicus would have occurred in the absence of the emperor and with a rebel fleet besieging Constantinople (see below); this seems an unlikely combination.

Theophanes' figures for the reigns of Philippicus and Anastasius (386) add up to four years exactly: that would fit the period November 711 to November 715. Michael (2.479) provides a figure which is quite plausible for Anastasius' reign, *viz.* 2 years 5 months. Reckoned from 4 June 713, this, too, would bring us to November 715. And we do need a date in 715 as late as this so as to give time for the events of the year. In brief, Anastasius had intelligence that a Saracen fleet was proceeding from Alexandria to Phoenix, so he ordered a naval expedition to muster at Rhodes. Then the Opsicians revolted and sailed back from Rhodes to Constantinople, which they besieged for *six months* (Theoph. 385; Niceph.51). This clearly takes us at least to the late autumn of 715. Even if the fleet dispersed from Rhodes as early as May, the siege of Constantinople must have lasted into November.

#### CHRONOLOGY OF ANASTASIUS

713	June 4	Artemius (= Anastasius) acclaimed Emperor at Constantinople.
	June 10	Theodorus Myaces, plotter against Philippicus, blinded and exiled.
	June 17	Georgius Bouraphus, plotter against Philippicus, blinded and exiled.

713/4		Arabs raid in Galatia etc. Anastasius makes extensive preparations for defending Constantinople against the Arabs, while negotiating with Caliph Walid.
714	August 11 (or 715?)	Germanus, Metropolitan of Cyzicus, elected Patriarch of Constantinople.
715	Spring	Anastasius orders fleet to Rhodes against Saracen fleet proceeding to Phoenix. At Rhodes, Opsicians revolt against Anastasius.
	ca May	Theodosius III acclaimed Emperor at Adramyttium. Anastasius withdraws to Nicaea.
	ca May–November ca November	Theodosian rebels besiege Constantinople. Rebels enter Constantinople. Germanus taken to Nicaea to persuade Anastasius to capitulate. Anastasius surrenders, abdicates and becomes a monk.
719	June 1	Anastasius put to death as plotter against Leo III.

### Theodosius III

The elevation of Theodosius to supersede Anastasius has a somewhat whimsical appearance in Theophanes (and to a lesser extent in Nicephorus following the same source). “When the malefactors arrived at Adramyttium, being leaderless they found there a local man named Theodosius, a receiver of public revenues, non-political and a private citizen. They urged him to become Emperor. He, however, fled to the hills and hid. But they found him and forced him to accept acclamation as Emperor” (Theoph. 385; cf. Niceph.51, with the same description, ἀπράγμονά τινα καὶ ἰδιώτην). The *Chronicon Altinate et Gradense*, however, offers a detail which throws a different light. It says that after Theodosius was deposed by Leo, he became a cleric, “*etiam et episcopus Ephesi*” (109). Now a certain son of Apsimarus, bishop of Ephesus, is mentioned (abusively) in Pope Gregory II’s first letter to Leo III (ca 726–729)<sup>8</sup> as one of the Emperor’s religious

<sup>8</sup> Cf. L. Bréhier in Fliche-Martin, *Histoire de l’Église V* (Paris 1947) 452.

counsellors:<sup>9</sup> ἐκείνου ἤκουσας τοῦ παρανόμου μώρου Ἐφέσου τοῦ υἱοῦ Ἀψιμάρου καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων αὐτοῦ. And Theodosius, son of Apsimarus, bishop of Ephesus, is noted by Theophanes (427) and Nicephorus (65f) as a leading figure at Constantine V's Iconoclastic Council in 754.<sup>10</sup> It is scarcely possible to imagine that Theodosius, former emperor, who became bishop of Ephesus after 716, and Theodosius, son of Apsimarus (former emperor), who became bishop of Ephesus by 729 and continued in office to 754, are two different persons. It is possible, of course, that the *Chronicon Altinate et Gradense* made a mistake in identifying the former Emperor Theodosius (who certainly did become a cleric) with the bishop of Ephesus; but not easy to see how this could have come about.<sup>11</sup> The identification does serve to make sense of the action of the rebels in 715. They did not pick an imperial candidate at random, as Theophanes and Nicephorus would suggest. They chose the son of the Emperor Tiberius III (Apsimarus), who had himself been raised to the purple by a mutinous fleet returning from abroad in 698 (Theoph. 370; Niceph. 40) and had reigned without mishap until overthrown by the resurgent Justinian II in 705 (Theoph. 375; Niceph. 42).

As we saw in studying the chronology of Anastasius II, the date when Theodosius was acclaimed by the fleet at Adramyttium must have been about May 715; and his displacement of Anastasius about November 715. His coins show that his reign lasted into a second year (Grierson, *Catalogue* 2.2.687 no.6).

The sources attribute scarcely any activity to Theodosius, concentrating on the doings of the strategos of the Anatolican theme, the patricius Leo, who refused to acknowledge his sovereignty (Theoph. 386f).

Theodosius eventually abdicated in favour of Leo, who acceded on 25 March of the 15th indiction, i.e. 717 (according to Theophanes 412,

<sup>9</sup> Mansi 12.959ff (967f); cf. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* I (Rome 1739, repr. Graz 1964) 139; Jaffé-Wattenbach, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*<sup>2</sup> I (Leipzig 1885) 253 (2180); cf. F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches* I (Munich/Berlin 1924) 34 (279), 35 (291). The fact can stand, even if the letter is a subsequent composition.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*<sup>2</sup>, transl. Hussey (Oxford 1968) 172.

<sup>11</sup> Grierson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 53, thinks it was Theodosius' son who became bishop of Ephesus, but does not explain why the bishop of Ephesus is called 'son of Apsimarus' instead of 'son of Theodosius'. It seems probable that Theodosius' son was scarcely more than a boy in 717.

with an exact calculation of the length of Leo's reign).<sup>12</sup> The *Chronicon Altinate et Gradense* seems to say that Theodosius was deposed on 24 July: *mense Iulii die xxiii proiectus est Theodosius, qui et Adramitinus, ex imperio a Leoncio Isauro et effectus clericus cum filio suo, etiam et episcopus Ephesi, et mortuus est ac sepultus in templo Sancti Phylippi, in antiqua urbe iuxta portum, faciens mirabilia in sepultura. regnavit ann. 1* (109). Grierson has proposed to reconcile the different dates by taking 25 March as the date of Leo's first proclamation and 24 July as the date of Theodosius' deposition (*Catalogue* 2.2.684). But in Theophanes' account Leo's insurrection takes place during the winter 716/7. "Maslama descended into Asia and wintered there, and 'Umar wintered in Cilicia. The strategos (Leo), taking with him the Emperor's son . . ., came to Chrysopolis. Theodosius, learning what had happened and taking counsel with the Patriarch Germanus and the Senate, received from Leo through the Patriarch a guarantee of indemnity and an undertaking to preserve the Church untroubled; on this understanding he transferred to him the imperial power. Theodosius and his son became clerics and passed the rest of their lives in peace" (Theoph. 390).<sup>13</sup>

A more likely explanation of the date 24 July is that it is the date of Theodosius' death: *i.e.* it should be taken with *mortuus est*, not *proiectus est*. We saw that 20 January in the case of Philippicus was likewise the date of his death, not his deposition, and that the same probably applied to the date 1 June for Anastasius II. The phenomenon is the

<sup>12</sup> 24 years 2 months 25 days, from 25 March 717 to 18 June 741. The *Chronographicon Syntomon* attributed to Nicephorus (*Opusc. Hist.* 100) gives 25 years 3 months 14 days, which is plainly incorrect in each figure (though Grierson, *op.cit.* [*supra* n.3] III.1 225f, uses it to cast doubt on Theophanes' dates). It is worth noting that the chronicle named by Mommsen the *Continuatio Isidoriana Byzantia-Arabica* (more properly a continuation of John of Biclarum) was contemporary with the reign of Leo III, and confirms Theophanes against 'Nicephorus' by stating that Leo reigned 24 years (*MGH AA* 11.356; repeated in the *Chronicle of 754*, *ibid.* 359; Gil, *op.cit.* [*supra* n.5] I 13 and 38); and Nicephorus himself gives Leo 24 years in the *Historia Syntomos* 59. The accurate date for Leo's accession shows up the error made by historians working primarily from Arabic sources, who have Maslama's siege of Constantinople starting in August 716 instead of 717: *e.g.* the influential J. Wellhausen, in *GöttNachr* 1901, 440–42; M. Canard, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche-Orient* I (London 1973) 81; P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*<sup>10</sup> (London 1970) 203; J. B. Glubb, *The Empire of the Arabs* (London 1963) 169, 177; R. Mantran, *L'expansion musulmane* (Paris 1969) 132 (but *cf.* 39); yet the right chronology is already in L. Caetani, *Chronographia Islamica* V (Paris 1912) 1210. *Cf.* R. Guiland, *Études byzantines* (Paris 1959) 109ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Cf.* Cedrenus 787f, who adds that Theodosius died in Ephesus and was buried in the Church of St Philippus and, according to some locals, performed miracles there (*cf.* *Chron. Alt. et Grad.* 109).

result of the fact that all three emperors died at a time later than their deposition.

#### CHRONOLOGY OF THEODOSIUS III

715	<i>ca</i> May	Theodosius (son of Apsimarus) acclaimed Emperor at Adramyttium by rebels of the fleet.
	<i>ca</i> November	Theodosius enters Constantinople. Anastasius abdicates.
716		Expedition of Maslama into Asia Minor.
	Winter	Leo proceeds to Nicomedia, captures Theodosius' son, comes to Chrysopolis, negotiates with Theodosius through the Patriarch of Constantinople.
717	March 25	Theodosius abdicates, enters the clergy.
	By <i>ca</i> 729	Theodosius, son of Apsimarus, bishop of Ephesus, counsellor of Leo III.
754	February 10– August 8	Theodosius, son of Apsimarus, bishop of Ephesus, leading figure at Iconoclastic Council.
	After 754 July 24	Theodosius dies and is buried at Ephesus.

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