Leo IV the Khazar

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Leo IV *the Khazar* (Greek: Λέων Δ΄, *Leōn IV*) (January 25, 750 – September 8, 780) was Byzantine Emperor from 775 to 780 CE.

Leo was the son of Emperor Constantine V by his first wife, Irene of Khazaria (Tzitzak),[1] the daughter of a Khagan of the Khazars (thought to be Bihar). Crowned co-emperor by his father in 751 Leo then married Irene, an Athenian from a noble family, in December 769. In 775 Constantine V died, leaving Leo as sole emperor.[2]

On 24 April 776 Leo, following the precedent set by his father and grandfather, appointed his son, Constantine VI, co-emperor. This led to an uprising of Leo's five half-brothers, including *Caesar* Nikephoros, who had hoped to gain the throne themselves. The uprising was put down quickly, with the conspirators being beaten, tonsured, and exiled to Cherson under guard.[3]

Leo IV was raised as an iconoclast under his father but was married to Irene, an iconodule.[4][5] Realizing the division in his realm he pursued a path of conciliation towards the iconodules, previously declared heretical under imperial policy. Leo allowed monks, persecuted and deported under his father, to return to their monasteries, and he was anointed by some among the orthodox as "Friend to the Mother of God" for allowing monks to retain images of the Theotokos. In addition to the concessionary actions Leo also appointed an iconophile sympathizer, Paul of Cyprus, to the position of patriarch of Constantinople upon the death of the predecessor. At the end of his reign, Leo reversed his stance of toleration.[6]

Leo IV

Emperor of the Byzantine Empire



Gold *solidus* of Leo IV and his son Constantine VI (obverse), with busts of his grandfather Leo III the Isaurian and his father Constantine V in the reverse

Reign	25 March 775 – June 18, 780
Born	25 January 750
Died	8 September 780 (aged 30)
Predecessor	Constantine V
Successor	Constantine VI
Consort	Irene
Offspring	Constantine VI
Dynasty	Isaurian Dynasty
Father	Constantine V
Mother	Tzitzak (Irene of Khazaria)

Leo's reign coincided with that of the third Abbasid Caliph, Al-Mahdi, who invaded Byzantine lands on successive occasions from 777-780 before ultimately being repulsed by Leo's armies, led by generals such as Michael Lachanodrakon. Leo himself set out with his army against the Bulgars but died of fever while on campaign.[7][8]

Leo's death on 8 September 780 resulted in the ascension of his wife, Irene, to the throne. Theophanes the Confessor records that Leo IV died as a result of a fever brought on from the precious stones in a crown taken from the Hagia Sophia;[9] some scholars have indicated that upon his ascension to the throne Leo was already sick,[10] while others believe Leo was murdered by persons unknown, though Irene is suspected.[11] Constantine VI was the only son of Leo IV and succeeded him as emperor, ruling jointly with his mother, Irene.[12]

Notes

1. ^ http://www.roman-emperors.org/irenev.htm
2. ^ The Chronicle of Theophanes Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813): Tr. Harry Turtledove (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p 135-136.
3. ^ The Chronicle of Theophanes Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813): Tr. Harry Turtledove (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 137.
4. ^ Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries (A.D. 610-1071): Romilly Jenkins (Weidenfeld and Nicoloson, 1966), p 92.
5. ^ The Byzantine Revival: Warren Treadgold (Stanford University Press, 1988), p 5.
6. ^ Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries (A.D. 610-1071): Romilly Jenkins (Weidenfeld and Nicoloson, 1966), p 91.
7. ^ http://www.roman-emperors.org/leo4.htm#N_13_
8. ^ A History of Byzantium (second edition): Timothy E. Gregory (Blackwell, 2010), p 213.
9. ^ http://www.roman-emperors.org/leo4.htm#N_14_

10. ^ Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries (A.D. 610-1071): Romilly Jenkins (Weidenfeld and Nicoloson, 1966), p 90.
11. ^ The Byzantine Revival: Warren Treadgold (Stanford University Press, 1988), p 6.
12. ^ The Chronicle of Theophanes Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813): Tr. Harry Turtledove (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p 136, 140.

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- Garland, Lynda, Irene of Athens (http://www.roman-emperors.org/irenev.htm) , at roman-emperors.org
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Leo IV the Khazar **Isaurian Dynasty** **Born:** 25 January 750 **Died:** 8 September 780		
Regnal titles		
Preceded by **Constantine V**	**Byzantine Emperor** 775–780	Succeeded by **Constantine VI**

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