

Anthemius (praetorian prefect)

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Flavius Anthemius (*floruit* 400–414) was a high-ranking official of the late Roman Empire. He is notable as a praetorian prefect of the East and effective regent of the Eastern Roman Empire during the later reign of Arcadius and the first years of Theodosius II, during which time he supervised the construction of the first set of the famous Theodosian Walls.

Life

Anthemius was the grandson of Flavius Philippus, praetorian prefect of the East in 346.^[1] He rose to prominence during the reign of Arcadius, when he was appointed *comes sacrarum largitionum* ("Count of the Sacred Largesses") around or in 400 and later *magister officiorum* ("Master of the Offices") in 404.^[2] He occupied the latter position during the disturbances which followed John Chrysostom's final deposition from the patriarchate (Easter, 404). John's enemies demanded troops from him with which to disperse the crowd. At first he refused, but then yielded, declaring that they were responsible for the consequences.^[3]



Section of the Theodosian Walls, first constructed under the supervision of Anthemius

In 405 he was appointed Consul for the Eastern Roman Empire (with Stilicho as a colleague for the Western Empire) and after the death of the *Augusta* Eudoxia he succeeded Eutychianus in the same year as praetorian prefect of the East, becoming thus the second most powerful man in the Eastern Empire after the Emperor himself. On April 28, 406, he was elevated to the rank of *patricius*.^[4] The esteem in which he was held can be seen from Chrysostom's letter of congratulations to him on his appointment to the praetorian prefecture, saying that "the office was more honoured by his tenure than he by the office".^[5] During the remaining years of Arcadius' reign he ran the affairs of the Empire, continuing his predecessor's consistent anti-German policy and trying to maintain the autonomy and integrity of the Eastern Empire. This brought him into conflict with the all-powerful Stilicho, who desired to take back the prefecture of Illyricum and subordinate the Eastern Empire to the West. At the same time, Anthemius had to deal with the presence of Alaric I and his people in the Illyricum, and the continued insurgency of the Isaurians, who were devastating the southern provinces of Asia Minor.^[6] Furthermore, Anthemius passed a number of new laws against paganism, Judaism and heresy.

When Arcadius died in 408, his son and successor Theodosius II was an child of seven years. Anthemius assumed the regency, and showed remarkable talent. He initiated a new peace treaty with Sassanid Persia, and, thanks also to Stilicho's death, was able to restore harmony in the relations of the Imperial courts of Constantinople and Ravenna. He strengthened the fleet of the Danube, which protected the provinces of Moesia and Scythia, after the successful repulsion of an invasion in 409 by the Hunnic king Uldin.^[5]

He furthermore successfully regulated the grain supply of Constantinople, which came chiefly from Egypt and was under the authority of the urban prefect. In the past, shortages had occurred due to the lack of available ships, resulting in famines, the most recent one being in 408. In 409 therefore, Anthemius reorganized the grain transport and granted tax remits to the transporters, took measures to procure grain from elsewhere, and created

an emergency fund for the procurement and distribution of corn to the citizens.^{[7][8]} He also took measures to ensure the regular collection of taxes (409), but in 414, he also gave a tax remit of all arrears for the years 368-407.^[9]

The one work of Anthemius' that is still standing today is the main wall of the Theodosian Walls. In the early 5th century, Constantinople had begun to outgrow the bounds set by Constantine the Great, and so Anthemius initiated the construction of a new wall, about 1,500 m to the west of the old, which stretched for 6.5 kilometers between the Sea of Marmara and the suburb of Blachernae near the Golden Horn. The wall was finished in 413 and almost doubled the size of the city, a feat for which Bury called him "in a sense, the second founder of Constantinople".^[10]

In 414, Anthemius suddenly disappeared from the scene, and the regency was assumed by the *Augusta* Pulcheria, while the prefecture was assumed by Monaxius. His fate is unknown, but through his daughter's marriage to *magister militum* Procopius, he became grandfather to the later Western Emperor Anthemius. He was also the father of Anthemius Isidorus, Consul in 436.

Footnotes

- ↑ A dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology, entry on *Theodosius II* (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0104&query=head%3D%2318800>)
- ↑ Bury, p.155
- ↑ *Catholic Encyclopedia*
- ↑ *Codex Theodosianus*, Book IX, 34.10
- ↑ *^a ^b* Bury, Ch. VII
- ↑ Bury, p.159-160
- ↑ *Codex Theodosianus*, Book XIII, 5.32
- ↑ *Codex Theodosianus*, Book XIV, 16.1
- ↑ *Codex Theodosianus*, Book XI, 28.9
- ↑ Bury, p. 70

Sources

- ↑ John Bagnell Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* Vol. I, Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1923
- ↑ "Anthemius". *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. 1913.

<p>Preceded by</p> <p>Imp. Caesar Flavius Honorius Augustus VI, Aristaenetus</p>	<p>Consul of the Roman Empire</p> <p>405</p> <p><i>with Flavius Stilicho II</i></p>	<p>Succeeded by</p> <p>Imp. Caesar Flavius Arcadius Augustus VI, Flavius Anicius Petronius Probus</p>
<p>Preceded by</p> <p>Eutychianus (III)</p>	<p>Praetorian prefect of the East</p> <p>405–414</p>	<p>Succeeded by</p> <p>Monaxius</p>

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