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aus / from

Chiron

Ausgabe / Issue **35 • 2005**

Seite / Page **147–204**

<https://publications.dainst.org/journals/chiron/797/5147> • urn:nbn:de:0048-chiron-2005-35-p147-204-v5147.8

Verantwortliche Redaktion / Publishing editor

Redaktion Chiron | Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Amalienstr. 73 b, 80799 München

Weitere Informationen unter / For further information see <https://publications.dainst.org/journals/chiron>

ISSN der Online-Ausgabe / ISSN of the online edition **2510-5396**

Verlag / Publisher **Verlag C. H. Beck, München**

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Dynasty and Ethnicity: Emperor Leo I and the Eclipse of Aspar

There was absolute uproar at Constantinople in 471, sometime after June, when news spread of a bloodbath inside the imperial palace. The polygamous, long-serving and senior Roman general Aspar, together with two of his senatorial sons, was invited to a meeting of senators but stepped into an ambush. Aspar and his eldest son Ardaburius, an experienced general himself, were assassinated by the palace eunuchs on instruction from the emperor Leo I. Patricius, younger son by Aspar's second wife, was seriously wounded but managed to escape. He had only recently been married to the emperor's daughter Leontia, and designated as Leo's imperial successor by acquiring the title of *Caesar*. Ermanaric, Aspar's youngest son by his Gothic third wife, was absent from the city at the time.¹ For an emperor to move in such a fashion on his new son-in-law and chosen successor he must have been desperate. In 471 someone of Aspar's status as the most senior dignitary of the Roman state naturally had many allies at court and in the imperial capital. One of them, Ostrys, a military officer who was stationed in the city, attacked the palace and was surrounded by the guards but managed to escape, making off with Aspar's concubine. The emperor was rescued from any further danger by the timely arrival of two other key generals, his brother-in-law (Basiliscus) arriving from Herakleia and his other son-in-law (Zeno) arriving from Chalcedon.²

The murder of Aspar and his sons in 471 is normally portrayed as marking a decisive turning point in the fortunes of Roman imperial power in the fifth century.³ On the one hand, it removed the political domination of Aspar's family

¹ The essential records of these events, in order of composition, are Candidus, frag. 1 (466/7 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, Bibl. 79; Marcellinus, Chron. s. a. 471, MGH AA 11, 90; Jordanes, Romana 338; Procopius, Wars 3.6.27; Vict. Tonn. Chron. s. a. 470 (ed. HARTMANN, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 173a, 35 [12] = MGH AA 11, 188); Evagrius, HE 2.16; Chron. Pasch. 596.17–597.9 (DINDORF).

² Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.40 (294–5 THURN = 371.9–372.2 DINDORF); Theophanes AM 5964 (117.25–118.2 DE BOOR).

³ The most detailed modern accounts are: E. W. BROOKS, The Emperor Zenon and the Isaurians, EHR 8, 1893, 212–4; followed by O. SEECK, Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt 6, 1920, 369–71; J. B. BURY, History of the Later Roman Empire, 1923, vol. 1, 320; E. STEIN, Histoire du Bas-Empire 1, 1959, 361; W. ENSSLIN, RE 12, 2, 1925, 1947–62 s.v. Leo I. A sober dissenting voice was A. H. M. JONES, The Later Roman Empire, 1964,

which had extended for just on half a century, from the early 420s through the reigns of Theodosius II, Marcian and Leo I. On the other, it paved the way for a new but less comprehensive kind of domination from another quarter by consolidating the influence of Zeno and his ethnic allies. The 'butchery' of Leo is traditionally cast as the replacement of the 'German/Gothic faction' with the 'Isaurian faction'.⁴ Typically, BURY (n. 3) 316, 318, 320 concluded that the vanquishing of Aspar by Leo was 'an important act in the long struggle against the German danger in the East' and that it was 'the price which had to be paid for the defeat of the German generals who sought to appropriate the Empire'. This rather grandiose sentiment is echoed in the more recent contention that 'Leo had broken the Germans hold on the government. That delicate and difficult task had been necessary if the eastern empire was to prosper, and perhaps even if it was to survive' (TREADGOLD [n. 3] 155–6). On any reconstruction political developments in the years and months leading up to Aspar's murder were fast-moving and complex with many cross-currents of treachery. Even if the extant historical records were complete and abundant it would be challenging enough to establish precisely what was happening in the period from 457 to 471, and how to interpret it. A distinguished scholar once noted in passing, about this very period, that 'fortunately it is not our task to straighten out the confused chronology of those years'.⁵ In

224. The most authoritative recent works demonstrate the same interpretative pattern: A. CAMERON, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 395–600*, 1993, 30; W. TREADGOLD, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 1997, 150–6; A. DEMANDT, *Die Spätantike*, 1989, 185–7; and, albeit more nuanced, A. D. LEE, *The Eastern Empire: Theodosius to Anastasius*, in: *Cambridge Ancient History* 14, 2000, 45–9. The most cogent interpretation is to be found in R. SNEE, *Gregory of Nazianzen's Anastasia Church: Arianism, the Goths and hagiography*, DOP 52, 1998, 157–86.

⁴ The dated but influential study of BROOKS (n. 3) 212 claims that from the mid-460s 'there were two factions at the court of Constantinople, the Isaurian and the barbarian, which for convenience we may call the Gothic faction. For the next twenty years the history of the empire turns upon the struggle between these factions'. In an extended metaphor, G. OSTROGORSKY claimed that 'in its attempt to find relief from German pressure, the suffering empire had swallowed the Isaurian antidote. This worked, but it was an over powerful dose, and the body of the empire was correspondingly affected' (*History of the Byzantine State*, rev. edn., 1969, 63; cf. A. A. VASILIEV, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, vol. 1, 1958, 104: 'The Emperor decided to free himself of Germanic power and with the aid of a number of warlike Isaurians quartered in the capital killed Aspar and part of his family, dealing a final blow to Germanic influence at the court of Constantinople'). More recently, yet more subtly, this approach is echoed by A. DEMANDT, *RE Suppl.* 12, 1970, 771 s.v. *magister militum*: 'So wuchs unter Aspars Führung ein alanisch-germanischer Familienblock zusammen, dem ein römisch-isaaurischer unter Leo und Zeno gegenüberstand'. More specialised studies, focussed on Aspar and his individual career, are less extravagant but tend to both overestimate his role and to isolate him from the wider political context: L. R. SCOTT, *Byzantine Studies* 3, 1976, 59–69; G. VERNADSKY, *Südostforschungen* 6, 1941, 38–73.

⁵ O. J. MAENCHEN-HELFEN, *The World of the Huns*, 1973, 168 n. 837.

fact, the records are few, fragmentary and tendentious which explains the ensuing problems of confused chronology and the frustration of having to concede that 'a debate rages over the interpretation of meagre information'.⁶

This study sets out to examine the period from 457 to 471 by suggesting that, despite 'meagre information', there is need for a fresh interpretation including an attempt 'to straighten out the confused chronology of those years'. It is designed to bring into a single interpretative framework a range of recent research, but is focussed on a detailed reconsideration of certain key episodes: (1) the circumstances surrounding Zeno's uncovering of Ardaburius' treachery with the Persian king in 465, and its implications for Zeno's position and career; (2) Aspar's role in the failed campaign against the Vandals in 468; (3) the purpose and consequence of Zeno's appointment as *magister militum* for Thrace which must be dated to 469, not 467; and (4) the actions of Aspar and Leo during Zeno's absence from Constantinople, as *magister militum per Orientem* in Antioch, between mid-469 and mid to late 471. The misunderstanding of these episodes, exacerbated by the usual resort to simplistic and polarised factional explanations, has obscured the underlying developments and the shifting allegiances of generals and imperial officials. Recent research on the subsequent reign of the emperor Zeno has swung attention away from factional explanations. What once looked like a clash of Isaurian factions during Zeno's sole reign (474–91) turns out to be simply divisions between two families and their political allies.⁷ Was it factional or some other form of conflict which underpinned the various political goals and actions of generals and courtiers during the reign of Leo I? Was Leo's 'butchery' of Aspar and sons merely the culmination of a rivalry between two ethnic groups struggling to assert superiority at court?

1. *The Families of Aspar and Leo*

On the death of the emperor Marcian on 27 January 457 there was a hiatus. No immediate appointment was made to the vacant throne. The army did not clamour for any new emperor, the senate did not have a preferred candidate in waiting. Eleven days were to pass before another emperor was announced on 7 February. The unusually lengthy interlude suggests a power struggle. In any such struggle the dominant player would be the senior court general, Aspar. Certainly there were eligible candidates, foremost among them being Anthemius, the son-in-law of the previous emperor Marcian and grandson of an eminent courtier of Theodosius II. Indeed, it was widely anticipated Anthemius would be the new emperor. Perhaps he so hoped himself, although a later panegyrist

⁶ F.M. CLOVER, *Historia* 27, 1978, 174.

⁷ W.D. BURGESS, *Latomus* 51, 1992, 874–80; H. ELTON, *Byzantion* 70, 2000, 393–407 (important study).

politely excused his claim as lacking the necessary *cupido imperii* (Sid. Apoll. Carm. 2.210–2). Still, Anthemius was an experienced general, in fact sharing power at the time with Aspar who was the other court general (*magister militum praesentalis*) but the senior of the two.⁸ For whatever reason, Aspar would not countenance the elevation of Anthemius.⁹ The senate deliberated, so we are told, and the choice fell not on any living member of the imperial families of Theodosius or Marcian after all. Instead, it was resolved to make a new dynastic start.

Aspar could possibly have seized the throne for himself or for one of his sons, certainly for his eldest Ardaburius who was then *magister militum per Orientem*. At a church council in Rome thirty years later it was reported by the Gothic king Theodoric that Aspar was offered the throne by the senate in 457 but declined with the enigmatic observation that ‘I fear I would launch an imperial tradition’.¹⁰ Instead, he chose Leo, the *comes et tribunus Mattiariorum*, the tribune from a regiment of the *magister militum praesentalis* stationed at Selymbria (Silivri),¹¹ just a day’s march from Constantinople. It was an unusual choice. Leo does not appear to have had any prior imperial connections. He was of Bessan stock, born and raised in the Balkans and in his mid-fifties at the time.¹² Aspar, who was not

⁸ For Anthemius as *magister militum praesentalis*: DEMANDT (n. 4) 777. His tenure of this position is overlooked in the list of magistri in PLRE 2.1290.

⁹ PLRE 2.97, Anthemius 3, following SEECK (n. 3) 355–6.

¹⁰ Contained in the record of a council held in Rome in 501 (Acta synodorum habitatum Romae, 5, MGH AA 12, 425): *Aliquando Aspari a senatu dicebatur ut ipse fieret imperator, qui tale refertur dedisse responsum: timeo ne per me consuetudo in regno nascatur*. It is not clear exactly what Aspar had in mind on this occasion, nor whether it occurred after the death of Theodosius II when Marcian was chosen or after the death of Marcian, although the latter seems more likely (STEIN [n. 3] 353–4). He probably meant being an Arian above all (Procop. Wars 3.6.3; cf. DEMANDT [n. 4] 770 and R. VON HAEHLING, ‘Timeo, ne per me consuetudo in regno nascatur’: Die Germanen und der römische Kaiserthron, in: M. WISSEMAN (ed.), Roma Renascens: Beiträge zur Spätantike und Rezeptionsgeschichte, 1988, 97–103). The scene’s authenticity is unnecessarily doubted by W. E. KAEGI, Byzantine Military Unrest 471–843, 1981, 26 n. 33. Remembering that Theodoric was a virtual hostage at the imperial court throughout the 460s, there is every likelihood that he heard Aspar tell this story at first hand.

¹¹ Const. Porph. De caer. 1. 91 (411.4 REISKE). Leo was probably tribune of the *Matiarii seniores* rather than the *Matiarii iuniores* although it is not possible to be definite (cf. LAMMERT, RE 14, 2, 1930, 2322–3 s.v. Mattiarii; D. HOFFMANN, Das spätromische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum, vol. 1, 1969, 488; and M. SALAMON, Basiliscus cum Romanis Suis, in: Studia Moesiaca, L. MROZEWICZ – K. ILSKI [eds.], 1994, 188 n. 38). The regiment was one of the six *legiones palatinae* under Aspar’s command (Notitia Dignitatum Or. 6.42 [SEECK 17]).

¹² There are various different descriptors for Leo (references in PLRE 2.663, Leo 6). Together they point to someone from a military background and indicate geographical (Dacia, the province in Illyricum) rather than ethnic (Bessan) origin, even though the Bessi were a Thracian nation. In any event, to call someone ‘Bessan’ (or whatever) at this stage was arguably no different from modern descriptors to political leaders, those which refer to someone as being of ‘Hungarian background’, ‘Chinese origin’, ‘Russian descent’ and so on.

much older than Leo, must have had some close connection with him. Evidently Leo had once been in charge of Aspar's considerable estates, his *curator*,¹³ and was now heading up one of Aspar's main military units. He was a relatively senior and experienced military figure, no humble soldier plucked from obscurity as he has sometimes been portrayed.¹⁴ Perhaps Leo and Aspar had served together in the army over many years. Whatever inspired the choice, Leo was emperor because of Aspar and would naturally be expected to comply with Aspar's preferences and plans.¹⁵ Aspar's ultimate power was his capacity to manage the imperial succession as he had done on the death of Marcian in 457, having earlier played a key role in the elevation of his former *domesticus* Marcian following the death of Theodosius II in 450. If Aspar were to maintain and extend his considerable power and influence, however, it was essential to retain control of the succession.

The coronation of the new emperor took place with due ceremony on 9 February 457 and its conduct underlined the extraordinary power of Aspar. There are two surviving accounts of Leo's coronation: one is preserved in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' Book of Ceremonies;¹⁶ the other preserved as an interpolation in a 12th-century Hebrew manuscript (Paris. Hebr. 1280) but clearly deriving from a Greek original.¹⁷ Following his acclamation by the army at the Hebdomon

¹³ Theophanes AM 5961 (116.7–8 DE BOOR), Zonaras 13.25.35 (121.13–122.2 BÜTTNER-WOBST) with JONES (n. 3) 221.

¹⁴ E. g. R. BLOCKLEY, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 1992, 71; LEE (n. 3) 46: 'A relative non-entity of Balkan origin . . . the unknown Leo'.

¹⁵ Jordanes, *Romana* 335 (*Asparis patricii potentia*); Procop. Wars 3.5.7 ('Ἀσπαρος ἐς τοῦτο αὐτὸν καταστησάμενον); cf. 3.6.3; Priscus, frag. 19 (305/6 BLOCKLEY = Suda A 3803 (αὐτοκελεύστω γνώμη); Candidus, frag. 1 (464/5 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, Bibl. 79: τὴν βασιλείαν σπουδῇ Ἀσπαρος ἐγγχειροσθεῖς . . . τὴν ἀνάγκησιν διὰ τοῦ Ἀσπαρος Λέοντος); cf. ENSSLIN (n. 3) 1957 (Aspar as 'Kaisermacher'). He soon appears in the letters of Pope Leo as the 'illustrious patrician', a sort of co-ruler (Epp. 149.2, 150, 153.1), cf. O. SEECK, RE 2, 1, 1896, 608, s.v. Ardabur 2; DEMANDT (n. 4) 771; VERNADSKY (n. 4) 57 ('Mitherrscher').

¹⁶ Const. Porph. De caer. 1.91 (414.11–3 REISKE), derived from Peter the Patrician, with the remarks of S. MACCORMACK, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 1981, 243–6. Aspar's role is not analysed in R.-J. LILIE, *Die Krönungsprotokolle des Zeremonienbuchs und die Krönung Kaiser Leons I.*, in: *Dissertationunculae criticae. Festschrift für Günther Christian Hansen*, ed. C.-F. COLLATZ, 1998, 395–408 which seeks to separate the original account of Peter from later editorial accretions. It was Aspar's Arianism which made him an unsuitable person to crown the emperor, thereby establishing the precedent of patriarchal crowning (argued by W. ENSSLIN, *ByzZ* 42, 1942/6, 370).

¹⁷ This detailed but stylised account of an imperial coronation at Constantinople, but without ever naming the emperor or any of the officials, needs to be treated with due caution. It could merely be a composite and generic description. However, a case has been made for seeing it as the eye-witness record of a specific coronation, namely that of Leo I: DEL MEDICO, *ByzSlav* 16, 1955, 43–75 (text at 50–3, followed by detailed commentary). DEL MEDICO concludes (75) that this coronation account represents 'l'impression d'un homme de la rue, d'un juif perdu dans la foule des chrétiens et de païens qui assistaient au passage du cortège impérial'.

outside Constantinople Leo undertook a lengthy processional route through the city to the imperial palace. According to the Book of Ceremonies account there was a key role for Aspar in the ceremony. After an imperial costume change at the Helenianae palace not far inside the city Leo boarded the imperial carriage for the next part of the journey. Joining him in the vehicle was the 'foremost patrician' (ὁ πρῶτος πατρίκιος), Aspar at that time, who kissed the emperor's hand on boarding.¹⁸ When the imperial carriage reached the Forum of Constantine Leo alighted to greet the senate and the Prefect of the City before being offered the gold crown (*modiolus*) by the head of the senate (ὁ πρῶτος τῶν συγκλητικῶν), Aspar again.¹⁹ The remainder of this ceremony in the forum, the imperial palace and the hippodrome involved much reciprocal acclamation. Aspar was never far from the side of his new imperial protégé. It would have been obvious what the relationship was between the two. Still, it would be interesting to know how Aspar was portrayed in the mosaic depicting Leo's accession which was set up in the new headquarters of the Praetorian Prefect at Constantinople in about 470.²⁰

Aspar's power to make and, if required, unmake emperors in the 450s, which was so manifest during Leo's coronation ceremony, had developed as part of the consolidation and perpetuation of a new military aristocracy. The senatorial landowners of the fourth century had been forced to compete for influence and office with new generations of professional soldiers, many of them of barbarian origin who were soon passing their authority to the next generation.²¹ Aspar belonged to the most powerful of these new dynasties, the Ardaburii. Aspar's family, reportedly of Alan descent,²² emerged during the reign of Theodosius II and united almost all the eastern generals, irrespective of ethnicity, in a single house. His father Ardaburius was an outstanding general who had distinguished himself during the war against the Persians in 421/2 and who was connected by

¹⁸ Aspar is also called 'first patrician', that is the most senior of all the patricians, by Marcellinus (Chron. s. a. 471, MGH AA 11, 90: *Aspar primus patriciorum*).

¹⁹ Aspar was the most senior senator (*princeps senatus*), as noted by John Malalas, Chron. 14. 40 (371.10 DINDORF): Ἀσπαρά τὸν πατρίκιον, ὃς καὶ πρῶτον συγκλήτου ... cf. Chron. Pasch. 596.17–597.9 (DINDORF).

²⁰ John the Lydian, De mag. 2.20. The building, if not the mosaic itself, was commissioned by the Praetorian Prefect Constantine (PLRE 2.312–3, Constantinus 8) and named after the emperor.

²¹ A. DEMANDT, Chiron 10, 1980, 609ff.; P. HEATHER, Goths and Romans 332–489, 1991, 262.

²² SEECK (n. 15) 607 with, on the ethnic background, A. ALEMANY, Sources on the Alans. A Critical Compilation, Handbook of Oriental Studies 8.5, 2000, 82–4. It is possible, however, that Aspar's family was of African rather than Alan origin, cf. F. VATTIONI, Die Sprache 26, 1980, 191–4 (focussed on the Aspar mentioned by Sallust [Jug. 108.1: *quidam Aspar nomine*] as an envoy of Jugurtha, but not discussing the late Roman general of that name).

marriage to Plintha (cos. 419), an Arian Goth *magister militum praesentalis*, like Aspar, and the most powerful man at court.²³ Ardaburius was consul in 427 and in 434 his son shared the consulship with Ariobindus, a Goth who, like Aspar's father, had come to notice during the 'great war' with Persia and later acted as *magister militum per Orientem*.²⁴ Ariobindus became patrician and consul (434), then the father, grandfather and great-grandfather of consuls (461, 491, 506). He was, in effect, a Roman noble of the highest rank and status. So by the 430s we find the Roman generals fully integrated into political and social life at Constantinople. They held high office and celebrated it in the time-honoured Roman way. They sought to advance their family and their personal interests by strategic marriage alliances with other aristocratic families, both military and civilian. Generals of Gothic background did not constitute a self-styled faction or cabal with its own overriding ethnic agenda. Ethnicity was less important as a determinant of political behaviour than the competition for wealth, power and office-holding. Increasingly too, ethnicity was less significant than religion. Both Aspar and Ardaburius were Arians at a time when the eastern court moved to outlaw ecclesiastical and doctrinal dissonance.

Besides his three sons, Aspar had two daughters.²⁵ Although there is no indication of the identity of their spouses, we can be confident that he will have ensured they were favourably placed from his point of view. The same expecta-

²³ Sozomen, HE 7.17.14: δυνατότατος τότε τῶν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις γεγονώς. It is not known how Plintha achieved such influence and authority but presumably his military skill had originally shone out. Since the relationship between Plintha and Ardaburius is likely to have been by marriage we see instantly how two Roman generals united their families, as Roman aristocrats had always done. Plintha's daughter was probably Aspar's first wife and therefore the mother of the younger Ardaburius (O. SEECK, RE 2, 1, 1896, 606, s.v. Ardabur 1; VERNADSKY (n. 4) 44; cf. PLRE 2.892, Fl. Plinta), while Plintha's son Armatius had married a woman of great wealth and distinguished pedigree (Priscus, frag. 15.4 [299/300 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de Leg. Rom. 5, with PLRE 2.148, Armatius). Armatius had won honours in the 440s fighting in Africa but had died soon after. His aristocratic wife was then espoused, at the suggestion of the emperor Theodosius II himself, to Atila's secretary Constantius (PLRE 2.319, Constantius 7). Both Plintha and Ardaburius remained Arians even though the imperial court was intensifying its campaign against heretics at the time.

²⁴ On Ariobindus: PLRE 2.145–6, Fl. Ariobindus 2; DEMANDT (n. 4) 752–3. Aspar himself was already a *magister militum* too and continued the effective influence of his father (PLRE 2.164–9, Fl. Ardabur Aspar; DEMANDT [n. 4] 748ff.). His consulship was commemorated in a famous silver dish, now in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence where the consul Aspar is represented like any other senatorial aristocrat, seated between the effigies of Rome and Constantinople: K. PAINTER, The silver dish of Ardabur Aspar, in: E. HERRING – R. WHITEHOUSE – J. WILKINS (eds.), Papers of the Fourth Conference of Italian Archaeology, vol. 2, 1991, 73–9.

²⁵ Candidus, frag. 1 (464/5 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, Bibl. 79. That neither daughter is ever heard of otherwise may indicate that neither survived to marriageable age.

tion also fell on his son Ardaburius, depicted as a young Roman aristocrat on Aspar's consular dish in 434. It is therefore unlikely that he would have married Anthusa, a Cilician seer.²⁶ The silver chalice at Dumbarton Oaks which bears the inscriptions of Ardaburius and Anthusa is probably that of husband and wife. However, a different Anthusa is involved here. Indeed, it has been argued that she was the daughter of Illus, a leading but volatile figure in the reign of Zeno in the 470s and 480s.²⁷ In that case we would have testimony to the unification of a Gothic family and an Isaurian family at precisely the time when Goths and Isaurians are construed as fighting each other for imperial attention. Given the lengthy time the Ardaburii had enjoyed office and influence, it should hardly surprise that over a quarter of a century later, on the accession of Leo, their control was paramount. Aspar could hardly have been in a more powerful position than he was in 457.

By now Aspar had acquired a second, then a third, wife which brought him into relationship with the royal families of the Goths then located at different places on Roman soil. In particular, Aspar had married into the same family as Theodoric Strabo, leader of a large group of Goths which had been settled in Thrace since the 420s and with whom he had long had dealings. On Aspar's death in 471 Strabo reacted promptly and demanded the legacy of Aspar for himself. Exactly what this relationship was, and when Aspar married into the family of Strabo, are not certain. Our best guess is that he married the sister of Strabo's mother or father, Triarius, so that Strabo was Aspar's nephew by marriage, with their son Ermanaric being born around 445–450.²⁸ In other words,

²⁶ PLRE 2.100, Anthusa 1, with A. DEMANDT, *DOP* 40, 1986, 113–7. DEMANDT links the chalice to the story of Anthusa the cloud-seer told by Damascius (Photius, *Bibl.* 242. 69, ed. HENRY, 6.22–23) but to do so he has to make the unlikely assumption that Ardaburius took a leading part in the campaign against the Vandals in 468 (στρατιωτικὴν τινα ἀρχήν). A further difficulty with DEMANDT's identification of Ardaburius as the husband of the seer is that in describing the death of Aspar and sons no connection is made, as one might have expected, with Anthusa's husband: ἔπειτα τὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν Γότθων Ἀσπερα βασιλεὺς Λέων ἐδολοφόνησεν αὐτὸν καὶ παῖδας.

²⁷ R. SCHARF, *Byzantion* 63, 1993, 213–23 arguing that the Cilician seer was the spouse of the general Damonius (PLRE 2.344–5) and that Anthusa, daughter of Illus (PLRE 2.586–90), was the second wife of Ardaburius with a wedding sometime around 469/70. This looks problematic (as already observed by D. FEISSEL, *Mitteil. zur christl. Archäologie* 5, 1999, 15).

²⁸ HEATHER (n. 21) 255 n. 40 (mother); DEMANDT (n. 26) 114 (father). As for the date of the union between Aspar and the relative of Strabo, there is no direct indication. Since Ermanaric was the offspring of that union it might help to consider when he could have been born. The only possible clue is to speculate from the date of his consulship. A consul in 465, even the youngest son of the most powerful man in the state, is not likely to have been a mere child. If we assume Ermanaric was somewhere between 15 and 20 years old at the time, but recognising that he could have been younger or older than that, then he will have been born around 445–50.

Aspar formed an alliance with a high-ranking Gothic woman in the generation before Strabo's rise to power. Aspar obviously had long had dealings with the Goths and with the family of Strabo, their current leader. The alliance between Aspar and Theodoric Strabo was not newly confected during the reign of Marcian, or that of Leo, in order to bolster his authority with Gothic warriors. The Gothic *foederati* had formed part of the Roman army led by Aspar against Attila and the Huns in the 440s.

When Leo became emperor in 457 Gothic soldiers were already an integral part of the military establishment, but so were Isaurians. Like Illyrians, the inhabitants of Roman Illyricum, Isaurians were considered a particularly valiant and hardy people well disposed to army life and action. Like the Illyrians, they were disproportionately represented in the ranks of the Roman army and in its leadership wherever the army was stationed (ELTON [n. 7] 394). There were even specific Isaurian units in the army but they also included many individual soldiers from other backgrounds and cultures.²⁹ Nor were all Isaurian soldiers in those units. With so many soldiers of Isaurian origin it was inevitable that there should be a significant number of Isaurian officers. Even in the 440s there were Isaurians in the highest military and civil positions.³⁰ The most famous of them was the *magister militum* Zeno. This Zeno, like Aspar and Ariobindus, had acquired the highest offices and dignities in the Roman state as *consul* in 448 and patrician. Further, he had married a certain Paulina who was of sufficient wealth and aristocratic prominence to have a district of Constantinople named after her mansion (τὰ Παυλίνης). Her recently discovered pavement verse to her husband evokes a cultured partnership.³¹ Just as other such mansions attracted the owner's family and supporters, Paulina's may have become a centre for notable and aspiring Isaurians.³² So, while this general's later namesake Zeno may have become the most prominent of the Isaurian officers in the Roman army of the 460s he will not have been the only one. Nor was a Roman military officer of Isaurian background unusual by then.

Leo's elevation in 457 also opened up unforeseen opportunities for his own family and that of his wife Verina, although neither could boast an aristocratic or

²⁹ H. ELTON, *Warfare in Roman Europe AD 350–425*, 1996, 133, and id., *The Nature of the Sixth-Century Isaurians*, in: S. MITCHELL – G. GREATER (eds.), *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, 2000, 295.

³⁰ ELTON (n. 7) 396. One such is the *comes* Longinus who was sent to assist the bishop of Tyana in c. 450 (PLRE 2.687, Longinus 1), cf. N. LENSKE, *JESHO* 42, 1999, 426, 451–2.

³¹ S. ŞAHİN, *EA* 17, 1991, 155–63 (text at 156), with FEISSEL (n. 27) 9–11.

³² Explained in FEISSEL (n. 27) 9–11. Given the tight marriage connections of the military and civil office-holding families at this time, it is possible that this Paulina was either the daughter or sister of the *magister officiorum* Paulinus, the discredited intimate friend of Theodosius II (PLRE 2.846–7, Paulinus 8).

traditional office-holding household.³³ Leo's only family seems to have been a sister Euphemia whom he used to visit every week at Constantinople and who later dedicated a statue to her imperial brother,³⁴ while Verina had a brother Basiliscus³⁵ and at least one other sister. Their sister's husband, named Zuzus, appears to have been Thracian.³⁶ A younger relative whose career was to eventually prosper significantly was Armatus, possibly the son of Zuzus (PLRE 2.148–9, Armatus). In addition, in choosing to support Leo as emperor in January/February 457 Aspar had succeeded in terminating the entrenched dynasty of Theodosius. Yet, there were still strong claimants who might have expected to succeed Marcian, particularly (as already noted) the patrician Anthemius who was the husband of Marcian's daughter Euphemia (PLRE 2.96–8, Anthemius 3). Then there was Anicius Olybrius now the husband of Placidia, granddaughter of Theodosius II.³⁷ He was a distinguished senator at Rome but had fled to Constantinople in 455 to the protection of Marcian's court. There he awaited the return from exile in Vandal Africa of his wife Placidia and his mother-in-law Eudoxia Augusta, wife of the western emperor Valentinian III. Olybrius also had links with the other living Augusta resident in Jerusalem, namely Eudocia the wife of Theodosius II. The power and prestige of Anthemius, Olybrius and the Theodosian women, even in their absence from the imperial capital, could not be suppressed nor dismissed lightly.

For three generations Aspar had been at the centre of a series of developing marriage and other alliances. Opportunities had presented themselves, and he had exploited them. Aspar's authority relied on securing the throne for his favourite, as he had done in 450 and 457. It was a long-term venture not something to be considered only on the emperor's death. Theodosius II had no son, Marcian had no son. He did have a daughter but, as Marcian himself proved, the power of the throne could only devolve on men irrespective of the lineage, pres-

³³ SALAMON (n. 11) 187–8, and M. J. LESZKA, Empress-widow Verina's political activity during the reign of emperor Zeno, in: W. CERAN (ed.), *Mélanges d'histoire Byzantine offerts à Octawiusz Jurewicz à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire*, 1998, 128–36.

³⁴ *Patria* KP 2.31 (ed. PREGER, 2.167) with PLRE 2.422–3, Euphemia 3.

³⁵ PLRE 2.212–4, Fl. Basiliscus 2, with the detailed study of SALAMON (n. 11) 179–96. The exchange between KRAUTSCHICK and BRANDES concerning the relationship between Basiliscus and Odoacer is not conclusive: S. KRAUTSCHICK, *Historia* 35, 1986, 344–71; W. BRANDES, *Klio* 75, 1993, 407–37; S. KRAUTSCHICK, *Klio* 77, 1995, 332–8. Were two such prominent political leaders so closely related it is odd that such a central fact should not remain more prominently noticed even in the scanty records surviving from the period.

³⁶ PLRE 2.1207, Zuzus, with SALAMON (n. 11) 188–9.

³⁷ PLRE 2.796–8, Anicius Olybrius 6. Olybrius had made a special trip to Carthage to marry Placidia not long before Leo's accession according to the careful argument of CLOVER (n. 6) 192–4.

tige and influence of imperial women.³⁸ Since Leo had but a single daughter at his accession, the young Ariadne, it is the man in her later life who would be of prime importance. If, as an Arian, Aspar could not be emperor himself he could surely be the father of an emperor. This was Aspar's natural strategy for extending his influence and that of his family for the next generation. Rather than take any chance, Aspar made Leo pledge at his accession that the hand of his daughter Ariadne would be reserved for Aspar's son Patricius. Another new dynasty was to be forged.

2. *Aspar's Ascendancy, 457–465*

As customary, the new emperor took the consulship in the year following his accession (458) but in 459 this still prestigious and coveted honour was conferred on Aspar's son Julius Patricius (PLRE 2.842–3, Iulius Patricius 15). Aspar was already hoping for more, namely for Patricius to be named *Caesar* which would formally and publicly secure a right of succession, to be cemented by an already agreed marriage as soon as practicable with the emperor's daughter.³⁹ Yet, as Ariadne grew up, Leo procrastinated in the hope of keeping the throne within his own family. Meanwhile, Aspar and Ardaburius retained their military commands while another supporter of Aspar, Vivianus, became Praetorian Prefect of the East (PLRE 2.1179–80, Fl. Vivianus 2). The continuing influence of Aspar is also evident in the appointment of Dagalaiphus as consul for 461. Dagalaiphus was the son of Aspar's consular colleague in 434 Ariobindus. More significantly, the new consul was the husband of Aspar's only grandchild, Godisthea, the daughter of Ardaburius and Anthusa.⁴⁰ This strong link further bound the military elites together and equally reinforced the position of Aspar who remained in the ascendancy, asserting authority and influence in a way that had not been possible under Marcian. Even so, he did enjoy considerable influence under Marcian who, like Leo, had been his former employee. By the end of 462, the consulship of Vivianus, who was another likely nominee of Aspar, Leo was surrounded by Aspar's family and associates. However, his thoughts were already clearly focussed on his own succession.

³⁸ K. G. HOLM, *Theodosian Empresses. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, 1982, 1–5.

³⁹ BROOKS (n. 3) 210; cf. Zonaras 14.1 (122.3–5 BÜTTNER-WOBST), who claims that now that Leo was emperor Aspar was strongly urging him to appoint one of his sons as *Caesar* in accordance with his promise (κατὰ τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν). Patricius possibly rode beside Leo in the coronation procession in February which would have been a powerful public signal of imperial endorsement and expectation (suggested by DEL MEDICO [n. 17] 61 on the basis of the text in Paris. Hebr. 1280).

⁴⁰ PLRE 2.516, Godisthea, with DEMANDT (n. 26) 114.

Leo and Verina had two daughters, one (Ariadne) born before his elevation in 457 and one (Leontia) after, but they were anxious for a son.⁴¹ So anxious was Leo that in 462 (late July/August) he sought divine intervention through the holy man Daniel, perched on his column at Anaplus up the Bosphorus from Constantinople. Leo asked Sergius, the disciple of St. Simeon who had attached himself to Daniel, to advance his request. Verina conceived and an heir was born in the purple on 25 April 463.⁴² So relieved and pleased was Leo that he had the foundations laid for a third column for Daniel (v. Dan. Styl. 38). The young boy would grow up to be emperor after his father. The succession was now secure. There will have been considerable rejoicing and public ceremonial at Constantinople surrounding this rare announcement of an imperial birth, followed at some stage by the baby's baptism. Aspar's reaction to the news is not recorded. Giving birth to an heir also increased the prestige of Verina who was now entitled to the honour of *Augusta* and of having her own imperial coinage.⁴³ Five months later, however, the rejoicing and expectation were displaced by shock, sadness and the reassuring ritual of a princely funeral. The infant son of Leo *Augustus* and Verina *Augusta* had died. The horoscope cast on his birth gave him no chance.⁴⁴ Suddenly, dynastic uncertainty confronted Leo once more.

If Leo was never to have another son, as he presumably now realised, then his succession would have to be effected through one of his daughters after all. Ariadne and her younger sister Leontia instantly became important political prizes for ambitious aristocrats, although Ariadne had been long promised to Aspar's son. Aspar was still in control. An unmarried daughter was a potential empress, a new Pulcheria whose memory, authority and example were always

⁴¹ PLRE 2.667, Leontia 1, puts her birth after Leo became emperor. Since both daughters were tutored by the grammarian Dioscorus they must have been relatively close in age. Dioscorus would have been their tutor in the early to mid-460s (cf. R. A. KASTER, *Guardians of Language. The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, 1988, 272–3; PLRE 2.367–8, Dioscorus 5, and R. MATHISEN, *ByzF* 17, 1991, 209).

⁴² G. DAGRON, *AB* 100, 1982, 271–5. It may be that the young child was immediately created *Caesar* in order to designate his right of succession, that is, if there is any truth in the statement to that effect by Severus, patriarch of Antioch, in one of his letters (Letter 65 in E. W. BROOKS [ed./tr.], *A Collection of Letters of Severus of Antioch from Numerous Syriac Manuscripts*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 12, 1915).

⁴³ The coinage of Verina *Augusta* must have begun at this time as well (J. P. C. KENT, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 10, 1994, 101: 'early in the reign'), though she was not necessarily *Augusta* in 457 as an automatic entitlement on Leo's accession, as proposed by PH. GRIERSON and M. MAYS, *Catalogue of Late Roman Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, 1992, 170–1.

⁴⁴ Published in: F. CUMONT, *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* 8, 4, 224–5; republished in: D. PINGREE, *DOP* 30, 1976, 147–8. PINGREE erroneously argues that, fearing an imperial rival, this horoscope was cast for Zeno who was already betrothed to Ariadne by 463.

promoted by Leo and Verina (HOLUM [n. 38] 227–8). In choosing her consort, Ariadne could assert the authority and continuity of Leo's family through her imperial blood. Aspar was doubtless growing impatient and possibly reasserted his request for Patricius to be named *Caesar*. By now Leo had also to take account of the aspiration of the surviving Theodosians. Anthemius seems to have been co-operative enough. The stance of Olybrius, however, was less certain. His consulship in 464 may be interpreted as both a statement of recognition by Leo and a concession to his influence. Eudocia had died at Jerusalem in 460 but Eudoxia had returned to Constantinople with her daughter Placidia, wife of Olybrius in 462. She may have died herself soon after but the prestige of her family survived in the household of Olybrius and Placidia at Constantinople.

Olybrius' colleague as consul in 464 was the experienced general Rusticius, *magister militum per Thraciam*, now towards the end of his career. During the consulship of Olybrius and Rusticius, on the feast of St. Mamas (2 September), a massive conflagration broke out at Constantinople which destroyed large parts of the city and led to considerable disruption.⁴⁵ Aspar is credited with playing a conspicuous role in saving life and property during the blaze. By contrast, Leo took fright and relocated the imperial court up the Bosphorus near the shrine of St. Michael and a new palace was quickly established, presumably in an imperial villa at St. Mamas.⁴⁶ It was at precisely this time, perhaps earlier in the year (464) that the consul Rusticius died and was replaced as general in Thrace by the emperor's brother-in-law Basiliscus.⁴⁷ This appointment arguably marks the first step in the emergence of Leo's own family into positions of power and influence. It may also be construed as the first step in challenging the domination of Aspar by the promotion of officers more closely aligned to the interests and family of Leo. Aspar was unlikely to easily forego his long-established influence and his quest to bring the imperial succession within his own family. Accordingly, the following year (465) the consulship was held by his youngest son Ermanaric, while Aspar and Ardaburius still retained the central military commands which formed the basis of their power. Neither was anticipating the crisis which exploded that year.

⁴⁵ The fire is frequently dated to 465 (e.g. BURY [n. 3] 321; STEIN [n. 3] 358; SNEE [n. 3] 170) but actually occurred in September 464. For details: B. CROKE, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: Translation and Commentary*, 1995, 99; MICHAEL and MARY WHITBY (trs.), *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD*, 1989, 87 n. 285.

⁴⁶ For the fire and its aftermath: Candidus, frag. 1 (464/6 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, *Bibl.* 79; Zonaras 14.14–19 (124.5–125.10). On the topography of St. Mamas: R. JANIN, *Constantinople byzantine*, 1964, 473–4. Perhaps Leo had initially processed in propitiation to St. Mamas for relief from the inferno, but he stayed there for six months.

⁴⁷ Priscus, frag. 43 (350/1 BLOCKLEY) = Suda B 163; Theophanes AM 5956 (113.18–19 DE BOOR); Michael the Syrian *Chron.* 9.1; death of Rusticius: Zonaras 14.23 (125.24–126.1 BÜTTNER-WOBST); cf. SALAMON (n. 11) 180 n. 4. For the date, 464: DEMANDT (n. 4) 766f.; PLRE 2.212. G. M. BERSANETTI, *RPAA* 20, 1943/4, 335 and ENSSLIN (n. 3) 1953 say 463.

What happened, as we shall see in more detail below, was that in Constantinople a certain imperial functionary named Tarasis, or Zeno, produced for Leo some incriminating letters of Ardaburius which had come into his possession. A meeting of the senate (*conventus*) was called, presumably some time after March when Leo had returned to Constantinople from St. Mamas. Aspar, as the leading senator, was present but obviously not forewarned. Ermanaric, the consular brother of Ardaburius would also have been present. Ardaburius himself was at Antioch. When the letters were read out the emperor was horrified. Ardaburius' letters revealed that he was guilty of inciting the Persian king to launch an attack on Roman territory. Aspar appeared surprised but was astute enough to dissociate himself from his son's treacherous dealings, offering to concur in whatever action Leo saw fit to take. The emperor immediately dismissed Aspar's son from the position of *magister militum* and stripped him of the highest honour, the title of 'patrician'.⁴⁸ By any reckoning this was a huge setback for Aspar's ambitions and influence. Ardaburius was recalled to Constantinople in disgrace. If he had any defence to offer Leo it was obviously ineffectual.

Almost immediately, that is in 465, the balance of power within the court of Leo began to tilt away from Aspar. Ardaburius was replaced as general by Jordanes, the son of another high-ranking officer John the Vandal. As with the house of Ardaburius, Jordanes maintained the Arianism of his family until an encounter with Daniel, which may have paved the way for his new appointment (v. Dan. Styl. 49). Forsaking his Arianism also helped prise Jordanes loose from the patronage of Aspar. In any case, the emperor seized the opportunity to take Jordanes to Daniel for his blessing on the new general before he departed for Antioch (v. Dan. Styl. 55). So, Jordanes set off with the sanction of both the emperor and the holy ascetic. Following his revelation of the treachery of Ardaburius, Zeno was appointed *comes domesticorum* which gave him great authority

⁴⁸ V. Dan. Styl. 55. There is some uncertainty about the date. Daniel says 'about that time' without linking it to any other datable event, except to a windstorm which provoked the emperor's concern for Daniel's exposure. As Daniel's story proceeds, the Ardaburius episode occurs after the great fire (c. 45) of September 464 and about the time of the violent windstorm of the 'following year' (cc. 52-4) which would put it in 465, probably mid-late 465. Most often, however, it is dated to 466 (as in PLRE 2.136: 'probably in 466', most recently in R. LANE FOX, *The Life of Daniel*, in: M. J. EDWARDS - S. SWAIN, *Portraits. Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, 1997, 190, but only because the fire of the preceding year is placed in 465, not 464, although E. SCHWARTZ argued that by 'following year' the hagiographer meant the next indictional year beginning on 1 September 465 (*Publizistische Sammlungen zum Acacia-nischen Schisma*, Abh. Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss. N. F. 10, 1934, 180 n. 1). If that is so, then this event might be dated to the period 1 September-31 December 465 rather than necessarily having to be placed in the following consular year (from 1 January 466).

and prestige within the imperial household.⁴⁹ There he lived with his wife Arcadia and his young son, Zeno. If nothing else this position would have protected him more readily from any vengeful actions on the part of Ardaburius and his father. With the key armies of Thrace (Basiliscus) and the East (Jordanes) now under the command of Leo's appointees, not Aspar's, the emperor appears to have sought to further his newly-won advantage. In the first instance, he decided that the consulships for 466 would be held by himself and Tatian. Flavius Tatian was from a distinguished Lycian senatorial family and had been summoned to Constantinople by Marcian to be invested with the patriciate and the Prefecture of the City. By now, however, Tatian was a relatively old man for public life but he retained the favour of Leo having acted as his unsuccessful imperial envoy to the Vandals the previous year (464).⁵⁰ It was probably the announcement of Tatian's appointment as consul which aroused the indignation of the increasingly insecure Aspar (cf. ENSSLIN [n. 3] 1957).

Photius' summary of the first book of Candidus' history covering these years reports that Aspar and Leo were somehow brought into conflict over Tatian. According to Photius' synopsis, Candidus wrote 'about Tatian and Vivianus and how Aspar and the emperor differed concerning them, and what they declared plainly to one another and how for this reason the emperor befriended the Isaurian people in the person of Tarasicodissa . . .' (διὰ τοῦτο ἡταιρίσατο τὸ Ἰσαύρων γένος διὰ Ταρασικοδίσσα Ρουσουμβλαδεώτου . . .). What is at least discernible from Photius' précis is that the quarrel between Leo and Aspar over Tatian and Vivianus coincided with the promotion of Tarasis/Zeno and in fact helped advance it. In other words, by directly connecting (διὰ τοῦτο) the argument between Leo and Aspar with the appointment of Tarasis/Zeno, Candidus dated the episode after the great fire of September 464, so probably in 465 in the aftermath of the undoing of Ardaburius. In that case, an argument over consular appointments for the following year provides a plausible context.⁵¹ We cannot know exactly what transpired between Leo and Aspar but since Tatian was announced as consul for 466 it is a reasonable assumption that because he is mentioned as the cause of the disagreement, it was his appointment which precipitated the difference of opinion between the emperor and his overlord. In this event, mention of Vivianus would suggest that Aspar supported Vivianus as he had done previously. It may be that Aspar was now supporting him for a second consul-

⁴⁹ PLRE 2.1201, Fl. Zenon 7; A. LIPPOLD, RE 10A, 1972, 154, s.v. Zeno 17.

⁵⁰ Priscus, frag. 41.2 (346/7 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Rom. 11.

⁵¹ Otherwise this episode is dated to 459 with the notable exception of PLRE 2.1054, Tatianus 1: 'The reasons for his disappearance from the Fasti are obscure. Possibly he was a victim of Aspar'. While it is assumed here, and usually by others as well, that Candidus means a quarrel involving both Vivianus and Tatian it is possible that Photius' summary compounds two separate incidents years apart (cf. JONES [n. 3] 221).

ship in 466 before the treachery of Ardaburius was exposed. Consequently, Leo sought to use the disclosure in order to substitute Aspar's nomination with the unlikely but reliable Tatian, so an argument flared. On the other hand, it is possible that Leo acted first in appointing Tatian but that Aspar was opposed to this and put the case for Vivianus. Whatever the sequence, it seems most likely that in the latter part of 465 Aspar and Leo fell out over the appointment of a second consul for 466. Further, Photius' cryptic summary of Candidus' history implies by such strong discord that in the end there was no unanimity about the appointment so that the previous announcement of Tatian's consulship was withdrawn. Leo held the office alone in 466. All the most reliable eastern consular lists, as well as the inscriptions and papyri, record Leo as sole consul for that year. However, some remote western ones also include Tatian.⁵² What has evidently happened is that the consulship for 466 was originally announced as 'Leo and Tatian' and the news despatched abroad at the usual time, in the usual way and at the usual speed. Later, when the appointment of the elderly Tatian was withdrawn not all lists were brought up to date, especially those furthest away in Gaul. This interpretation has the benefit of explaining both the incident recorded by Candidus and the puzzling ambiguity over Tatian as consul in 466.

This was not the only disagreement between Leo and Aspar over an imperial appointment. Traces of two other clashes survive, probably deriving ultimately from the history of Priscus (directly or through Eustathius). In the first case the two fell out over the appointment of a City Prefect of Constantinople. The City Prefect had the important role of convening the senate. Aspar had insisted that the appointee be someone of like mind and Arian belief as himself (ὁμόδοξον αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁμόφρονα). Leo was clearly not going to countenance an Arian City Prefect, irrespective of his other qualifications for appointment, and privately made his own choice without consulting Aspar. The *magister militum* was furious and confronted the emperor directly. He tugged at the emperor's cloak exclaiming: 'Emperor, it ill befits the wearer of this garment to lie'. Leo was obviously indignant at being manhandled in such a fashion and replied sharply to Aspar, 'And it's not fitting that he should be constrained and driven like a

⁵² R. BAGNALL – A. CAMERON – S. SCHWARTZ – K. WÖRZ, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*, 1984, 466–7 suggest that Tatian was a western, not eastern, consul because the only extant traces of his consulship are western so that he may have been 'proclaimed alone at some point but never universally recognised, perhaps out of office early in the year' (ibid. 467). The records seem also to be consistent with the possibility that he was a proclaimed eastern consul but having had his proclamation revoked before entering on the consulship, and without a substitute being proclaimed, either eastern or western. That would also explain the expectation in Egypt of another consul still to be appointed (*et qui nuntiatus fuerit*). Egyptian scribes generally followed the early announcement of the consuls provided by the office of the Prefect of Egypt (ibid. 467–8).

slave either.⁵³ Zonaras reports the same exchange but in relation to an entirely separate incident, an argument over the appointment of Aspar's son as *Caesar* (Zonaras 14.1 [122–3 BÜTTNER-WOBST]). A similar conflict is certainly possible concerning the contentious issue of Leo's continued procrastination in naming Patricius as his *Caesar*. Serious differences with Aspar over religious policy were evident from the start of Leo's reign although Pope Leo (Epp. 149, 151) considered both the emperor and the 'illustrious patrician' strong advocates of resistance to the opponents of the Council of Chalcedon. Aspar later tried unsuccessfully to intervene with the emperor Leo over his concerted effort to accept the advice of the patriarch Gennadius and depose the bishop of Alexandria, Timothy Aelurus (the Cat), who had usurped the see and had his predecessor Proterius brutally killed.⁵⁴ Earlier, when Anatolius was patriarch of Constantinople, Aspar had taken the side of Amphilocius, bishop of Side, against Leo and successfully persuaded the emperor not to attack Amphilocius (Zach. Mit. HE 4.7). Leo was not turning out to be the compliant emperor Aspar had expected.

3. *The Emergence of Zeno, 465/6*

By the end of 465 Leo clearly felt in a stronger position for dealing with Aspar who still held the powerful position of senior *magister militum praesentalis*. Aspar was suddenly more vulnerable while Leo was in a position to effect more of his own appointments. That is the stage when Zeno was appointed as *comes domesticorum*. This important position in the imperial bureaucracy gave him responsibility for the protection of the imperial household and the emperor's own military staff. Exploring the background to this apparently unusual appointment is crucial to understanding the subsequent relationships between Leo and Aspar. Writing towards the end of the sixth century Evagrius tells us that Eustathius of Epiphaneia, much earlier in the century, had narrated how Leo came to promote Tarasis (later the emperor Zeno), and why the emperor singled him out (Evagrius, HE 2.15). Unfortunately, Eustathius' History has not sur-

⁵³ Cedrenus 607.17–8 (BEKKER). Speculation about which of Leo's City Prefects this was can only be limited, given the surviving documentation. One possibility is Dioscorus (PLRE 2.367–8, Dioscorus 5), the tutor of the emperor's daughters, another is Diapharentius (PLRE 2.358, Diapharentius). This passage of Cedrenus is conflated with that of Candidus in the detailed study of SCHWARTZ (n. 48) 179 n. 2, as well as by VERNADSKY (n. 4) 59–60, so that the argument between Leo and Aspar over Vivianus or Tatian becomes one about which one should be City Prefect. BROOKS (n. 3) 212 also links this episode not only with that described by Candidus but also to a law (Cod. Just. 1.3.26) which requires a further extension, that is, from a dispute about the City Prefecture to one about the Praetorian Prefecture.

⁵⁴ Theodore Anagnostes, HE Epit. 379 (106.18–9 HANSEN); cf. Theophanes AM 5952 (112.3–6 DE BOOR) and Evagrius, HE 2.9–11.

vived but there do survive two earlier accounts of how Tarasis/Zeno appeared to burst upon the scene at Constantinople: one contained in the history of Candidus, as preserved in Photius' summary, the other in the Vita of Daniel the Stylite. Both were written around the same time (late 5th/early 6th century) so that they are at least contemporary with Eustathius.

Candidus was in a position to be well-informed on the events he covers in the reigns of Leo and Zeno from 457 to 491 since he was secretary (ὑπογραφεύς) to the most powerful men in Isauria (τῶν ἐν Ἰσαύροις πλεῖστον ἰσχυσάντων), surely a reference to successive *comites Isauriae*, the highest-ranking Roman officials in the region stationed at Tarsus (JONES [n. 3] 609).⁵⁵ So too he will have been especially familiar with events in Isauria and with the reporting in Isauria of happenings elsewhere. In condensing a whole book of Candidus, covering the years 457 to 476, into a few sentences Photius directly links the disagreement between the emperor and Aspar over the appointment of Tatian as consul for 466 to Leo befriending the Isaurian people through Tarasis (Tarasicodissa): «He [Candidus] mentions Tatianus and Vivianus and relates how Aspar and the Emperor disagreed over them and what they said to one another. He tells how, as a result of this, the Emperor allied himself with the Isaurian people through Tarasicodissa, the son of Rusumbladeotus, whose name he changed to Zeno and whom he made his son-in-law after Zeno's former wife had died . . .».⁵⁶ This very compact sentence of Photius' précis of Candidus bears almost the entire weight of the thesis that Leo turned from dependence on a «Gothic faction» led by Aspar to dependence on an Isaurian «faction» led by Zeno. Writing in the distinctly anti-Isaurian climate after Zeno's death in 491 Candidus will have given close attention to explaining Zeno's emergence at Constantinople thirty years earlier. In fact, it is probable that the whole thrust of his history was a riposte to the Byzantiaka of Malchus which was patently hostile to Zeno and the Isaurians.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ U. ROBERTO, *Med. Ant.* 3, 2000, 685–727, esp. 726 (but relying on attributing the relevant extracts of John of Antioch in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *de insidiis* to a close copying of Candidus). Perhaps Candidus had been secretary to either or both of the known *comites Isauriae* during these years, Aetius in 479 (PLRE 2.20, Aetius 4) and Lilینگis in 491 (PLRE 2.683–4, Lilینگis); or perhaps he had some official connection with Illus, as proposed by A. LANIADO, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 15, 1991, 153–4). The *comes* Zeno whose epitaph has been found near Isaurian Seleucia may also be dated to this period (cf. FEISSEL [n. 27] 11).

⁵⁶ Candidus, frag. 1 (466/7 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 79: καὶ περὶ Τιτιανοῦ καὶ Βιβιανοῦ καὶ ὡς περὶ αὐτῶν διηγήθη Ἀσπαρ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς, καὶ οἷα εἰς ἀλλήλους ἀπεφθέγγαντο καὶ ὡς ὁ βασιλεὺς διὰ τοῦτο ἡταιρίσαστο τὸ Ἰσαύρων γένος διὰ Ταρασικοδίσσα Ρουσσυμβλαδεώτου, . . .).

⁵⁷ ELTON (n. 29, 2000) 295–8. For the anti-Zeno thrust of Malchus' history: B. BALDWIN, *DOP* 31, 1977, 91–107; R. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1, 1981, 80–5; LANIADO (n. 55) 147–50 and I. SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, 1989, 100–6.

Candidus was not saying that the emperor's new support for Zeno involved anything extra for Isaurians, nor that Isaurians would now be flooding into Constantinople under the emperor's personal patronage and protection. In hindsight, however, he was identifying the point where it now appeared that Isaurians had first emerged as a powerful influence at Leo's court. Thirty years later it could be construed that Leo had promoted Zeno as a way of rescuing the realm from the dominance of Aspar and his coterie, although it did not appear that way at the time.

The second document with information on Zeno's emergence at the court at Constantinople in 465 is the life of Daniel the Stylite. This Vita was written by one of Daniel's disciples and is based on what he saw and heard himself from Daniel and from elder disciples, including the original followers of Daniel. It brings together a series of incidents and episodes in typical hagiographical style. The chronology is incidental to the purpose of the work.⁵⁸ It runs as follows:

About that time a certain Zeno, an Isaurian by birth, came to the Emperor and brought with him letters written by Ardaburius, who was then General of the East; in these he incited the Persians to attack the Roman State and agreed to cooperate with them. The Emperor received the man and recognizing the importance of the letters he ordered a Council to be held; when the Senate had met the Emperor produced the letters and commanded that they should be read aloud in the hearing of all the senators by Patricius, who was Master of the Offices at that time. After the letters had been read the Emperor said, 'What think you?' As they all held their peace the Emperor said to the father of Ardaburius, 'These are fine things that your son is practising against his Emperor and the Roman State'. The father replied, 'You are the master and have full authority; after hearing this letter I realize that I can no longer control my son; for I often sent to him counselling and warning him not to ruin his life; and now I see he is acting contrary to my advice. Therefore do whatever occurs to your Piety; dismiss him from his command and order him to come here and he shall make his defence' (v. Dan. Styl. 55).

The Vita continues by explaining that Leo took Aspar's advice and proceeded to dismiss Ardaburius and summon him to the imperial capital, replacing him as *magister* with Jordanes.

This is all the documentation we now have concerning Zeno's role in the deposition of Ardaburius and its immediate aftermath. Before examining it more closely, it is necessary to look critically at how each of the elements of this episode have been constructed by modern scholars:

⁵⁸ For the chronology of the vita and its sources of information: H. DELEHAYE, AB 32, 1913, 225–7, and id., *Les Saints stylites*, 1923, XLIII–V, LIV–LVII. LANE FOX (n. 48) 185–200 demonstrates the problems of trying to interpret the chronology literally and as strictly sequential.

(A) *Leo deliberately decided to counteract the intolerable domination of the 'Germans' at court, led by Aspar, by inviting to Constantinople an Isaurian chief called Tarasis.*

The notion that the Isaurians, and Zeno in particular, were Leo's chosen policy instruments against Aspar and the Goths is encountered regularly, beginning with BROOKS (n. 3) 211–2: 'with the plan of an Isaurian alliance perhaps already in his mind ... Leo sent for an Isaurian chieftain, Tarasicodissa of Rousomblada and gave him his daughter in marriage'; followed by SEECK (n. 15) 609: 'Leo suchte in den Isaurern ein Gegengewicht gegen die Übermacht der Germanen', and BURY (n. 3) 317: 'he formed the plan of recruiting regiments from native subjects ... he chose the hardy race of Isaurian mountaineers'.⁵⁹ VERNADSKY (n. 4) 60 went further, offering the explanation that Leo chose Isaurians because they were the only national group not under the influence of Aspar. Others have broadly followed suit.⁶⁰ Most striking throughout all accounts is the frequently repeated catch-phrase which sums up this deliberate action – Isaurians and Zeno as 'counterweight'/'contrepoids'/'Gegengewicht' to Goths and Aspar.⁶¹ No less arresting is the consistent reference to Tarasis as a tribal chieftain from Isauria.⁶²

In other words, it is assumed that (1) Leo consciously sought to counteract undue Gothic influence at court by seeking out an ethnic counterbalance, (2) he knew, or knew of, Zeno and knew that of all the military and civil officers at his disposal Zeno was the perfect person to be the 'counterweight', (3) he knew Zeno would bring such a large contingent of Isaurians; and, (4) these Isaurians would strike fear into the hearts of the Goths. A recent summary of this whole thesis proceeds as follows: 'Leo now felt it prudent to seek a military counterweight to Aspar and his Gothic power base ... cautiously he began to put feelers out to the Isaurian mountain peoples of Asia Minor ... with lavish pro-

⁵⁹ Cf. SCHWARTZ (n. 48) 180: '... die militärische Macht des Reiches Zenon und seinen Isauriern anvertrauen wollte, um die germanische Gefahr zu bannen'.

⁶⁰ To take only the most recent examples: W. TREADGOLD, *Byzantium and its Army* 284–1081, 1995, 13; id. (n. 3) 160; CAMERON (n. 3) 30: 'Leo tried to counteract the German influence by recruiting heavily for the army among the Isaurians ...'; LEE (n. 3) 46: '... a longer-term plan designed to free himself completely from dependence on the Alan general ... Leo sought to counterbalance this by drawing on manpower from Isauria ...'. The emperor's imputed policy even meets with censure in GRIERSON – MAYS (n. 43) 161: 'Leo ... had a mind of his own, and with singular ingratitude set about reducing the power of the Germanic element in the army by recruiting Isaurians in their place'.

⁶¹ LIPPOLD (n. 49) 155; DEMANDT (n. 3) 187: 'Gegengewicht'; STEIN (n. 3) 356: 'contrepoids'; KÆGI (n. 10) 27: 'counterweight'; BURY (n. 3) 317: 'counterpoise'; BURGESS (n. 7) 875: 'Counter-force to Gothic power'.

⁶² BROOKS (n. 3) 213: 'Isaurian Chieftain'; STEIN (n. 3) 358: 'le chef isaurien'; KÆGI (n. 10) 27: 'the Isaurian chieftain'; TREADGOLD (n. 3) 152: 'Isaurian leader'; CAMERON (n. 3) 30: '[Zeno] was their chief'; B. D. SHAW, *JESHO* 33, 1990, 252: 'a typical powerful baron of the Isaurian mountains'.

mises, and much gold, he reached a secret agreement with one of the most powerful headmen, Tarasicodissa, . . . In return Leo promised to recruit Isaurian troops on generous terms, and raise Tarasicodissa to an exalted position. Tarasicodissa accepted readily, the raiding [by Isaurians] was ended, a rival chief easily suppressed, and Isaurian troops duly recruited.⁶³

Most of this narrative is pure fiction, it has to be said immediately. All that we know, and can say with confidence, is that Zeno was responsible for providing the evidence which convicted the *magister militum* of the East, Ardaburius, and that as a result of this conviction Zeno himself came to prominence and imperial favouritism. As the *Vita* (c. 55) of Daniel expresses it, «A certain Zeno . . . came to the emperor» (παράγινεται τις πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ὀνόματι Ζήνων). That is all. There is no evidence that Leo sought him out deliberately as part of a strategy to counterbalance Aspar's power, let alone to choose him as an ethnic leader. Further, there is no evidence that Zeno was summoned or came from anywhere outside Constantinople. That is not to say it is impossible. If he came from anywhere else it would have been from Antioch, the headquarters of Ardaburius as *magister militum* of the East. If Leo had decided to seek out Zeno as an Isaurian chieftain then the connection with the incriminating letters is not obvious. Indeed, it becomes less important. Yet, it is the very revelation of Ardaburius' correspondence with the Persian king which provides the context in which Zeno first emerges into public light.

To ask the compelling question how it was that Zeno was in possession of such confidential and high-level correspondence from a senior Roman general to the Persian king, points to the answer. To have the documentation he must either himself have been a close associate of Ardaburius or else had access to someone within the military headquarters at Antioch. Certainly, at some stage the incriminating documents originated at Antioch where Ardaburius had been located since 453. Rather than Zeno being a member of Ardaburius' permanent staff, having to explain himself on arriving in Constantinople, the more likely possibility is that he was actually based at Constantinople all along, at the court of Leo. In that case he would probably have been one of the *protectores domestici* who were actually part of the emperor's personal military staff under the command of the *comes domesticorum*. Numbers of *protectores* were also stationed on the staff of each of the generals of Illyricum, Thrace and the East but there they remained the emperor's men. Their role was therefore seen as a way of asserting and maintaining imperial control within each military command.⁶⁴

⁶³ S. WILLIAMS – G. FRIEL, *The Rome that did not fall: the Survival of the East in the Fifth Century*, 1999, 177.

⁶⁴ R. I. FRANK, *Scholae Palatinae. The Palace Guards of the Later Roman Empire*, 1969, 94–5 with the clarification of A. H. M. JONES, *JRS* 60, 1970, 228; J. HALDON, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 1984, 130–6; ELTON (n. 29, 1996) 101.

Sometimes too *protectores* could be sent on a special assignment to a particular general and report back to the emperor. For Zeno to have the secret and sensitive correspondence between Ardaburius and the Persian king, and to be held responsible for producing it at court without any prior warning, the most likely position he held at the time was either that of a *protector*, attached to the staff of the *magister militum* at Antioch, or more likely one of the *protectores domestici* at Leo's court. It may be that Leo had suspicions about Ardaburius and sent Zeno to Antioch to investigate and report back. Certainly Malchus is critical of Leo for his habit of using such tactics (Malchus, *Byzantiaka* frag. 3 [408/9 BLOCKLEY] = *Suda* Λ 267). Either that or, if Zeno was a *protector* attached to Ardaburius, he knew how to handle the incriminating letters which came his way. The emperor Leo later shared with the holy man Daniel his appreciation of the loyalty (εὐνοία) of Zeno (v. Dan. Styl. 55) which may indicate that Ardaburius had confidently attempted to involve Zeno in his treachery only to find that the *protector's* loyalty to the emperor prevailed.

Whichever position Zeno held in 465, there is not the slightest indication that he was already a favourite of Leo, nor that he was deliberately summoned to Constantinople to be a 'counterweight', least of all because he was an Isaurian chieftain as often claimed.⁶⁵ That too is mere myth. Certainly he was an Isaurian, at least by birth (τὸ γένος Ἰσαυρός), which is all that the *Vita* (c. 55) of Daniel says. There is no reason, however, to think he had followed a career any different from the many other Isaurians in the Roman army before him.⁶⁶ That Zeno was more or less immediately put in charge of the *protectores domestici*, joined other generals on a military campaign against the Goths in the following year (467), and was subsequently made *magister militum* himself (469), suggest someone of military background, a typical career Roman officer. He may have been no less typical in other ways too. His wife's name, Arcadia, suggests marriage into a local Constantinopolitan family. Local nobility is also implied in the fact that a statue of her stood for centuries in a prominent spot by the steps ascending to the Topoi, near the baths of Arcadius.⁶⁷ His whole family were long settled in the imperial capital and he was known as Zeno well before 465, so it would appear. His mother Lallis certainly lived there, while Zeno's brother Longinus was married to Valeria who was most likely another local dignitary's daughter.⁶⁸ The family of Tarasis/Zeno may have been associated with the house of the patrician Zeno, the consul of 448, and his noble consort Paulina. He was

⁶⁵ VERNADSKY (n. 4) 60 even assumes Zeno must be pagan so, along with changing his name, when he comes to Constantinople he has to be baptised.

⁶⁶ E. A. THOMPSON, *Hermathena* 68, 1946, 18–31; BURGESS (n. 7) 874–7; ELTON (n. 7) 396.

⁶⁷ *Patria* KP 2.27 (ed. PREGER, 2.164) with JANIN (n. 46) 312 and PLRE 2.130, Arcadia 2.

⁶⁸ PLRE 2.654, Lallis; 689–90, Fl. Longinus 6; 1141, Valeria.

part of a civilised provincial Isaurian elite which had emerged by the 5th century.⁶⁹ Changing his name to Zeno may well have resulted from such links of patronage. Indeed 'Zeno' was already the name of his own son by Arcadia and was to become that of his nephew as well.⁷⁰

(B) *Zeno brought with him a large contingent of his Isaurian followers who checked the dominance of the Goths.*

It is frequently claimed that not only was Zeno summoned to Constantinople from Isauria but that he also arrived with an ethnic army at his back.⁷¹ Whether he was already at Constantinople, or whether he travelled from his base in Antioch with the evidence against Ardaburius, it is neither attested nor likely that Zeno was accompanied by an Isaurian contingent, let alone one that was large enough to challenge and over-balance the forces and allies of the *magister militum praesentalis*, Aspar. Underlying this claim is the assumption that Zeno was a sort of ethnic leader or *comes foederatorum* and that he was sought out and summoned to Constantinople naturally bringing with him the native Isaurian band whose chief he was. There is simply no evidence at all for Zeno being either accompanied to Constantinople in 465 or having a large number of his fellow-Isaurians under command there. As already noted, Zeno was probably a court soldier of Leo, a *protector domesticus*. As such he was not responsible for leading large contingents, let alone Isaurians exclusively.⁷²

As testimony to the introduction of large numbers of Isaurians into Constantinople in the entourage of Zeno in 465/6 two comments by later historians are usually cited: (1) Procopius, *Anecdota* 24.17, where it is reported that from the time of the emperor Zeno the palace guards previously recruited among the Armenians were open to 'both cowards and wholly unwarlike men' (καὶ ἀνάνδρους καὶ ἀπολέμους οὖσι), and (2) Agathias, *Histories* 5.15.4, who claims that the

⁶⁹ LENSKI (n. 30) 450–2.

⁷⁰ PLRE 2.1198, Zenon 3 (nephew); Zenon 4 (son).

⁷¹ DEMANDT (n. 3) 186: 'Isaurierfürst ... mit großem Gefolge'; LIPPOLD (n. 49) 154–5: 'mit einem recht stattlichen Gefolge ... , um schon damit eine Art Gegengewicht zu dem ihn bedrückenden Aspar zu schaffen'; KAEGI (n. 10) 27: 'Leo in 466 had created a counterweight to Aspar by summoning the Isaurian chieftain Tarasicodissa to become head of a crack native corps of Isaurian guards'; CAMERON (n. 3) 30: 'Leo tried to counteract the German influence by recruiting heavily for the army among the Isaurians'; TREADGOLD (n. 3) 152: 'eager for allies against Aspar and his Germans, Leo summoned a company of Isaurians to Constantinople in 466'.

⁷² It is possible that something similar took place in the late 440s, but there is no need to assume comparable circumstances requiring comparable responses and consequences in 465/6, as proposed by THOMPSON (n. 66), but this is too schematic an interpretation of Zeno's role vis-à-vis the other generals of Theodosius II (noted by C. ZUCKERMAN, *T&MByz* 12, 1994, 175–6).

scholarii were once recruited from honourable veterans but «Zeno the Isaurian seems to have been the first to introduce the present practice by enrolling in these regiments, after his restoration, many of his fellow countrymen who, though they were men who had either not distinguished themselves on the field or had absolutely no military experience whatsoever, were nevertheless known to him in some other capacity and were his close friends». Neither Procopius nor Agathias is really focussing on the period when Zeno first came to prominence at Constantinople in 465/6. Procopius in fact does not even claim that Zeno recruited Isaurians in particular, just unworthy candidates by previous standards. Agathias, it is true, does claim that Zeno recruited fellow-Isaurians who had not necessarily had military experience. Yet, he does not date this policy on Zeno's part any earlier than «after his restoration to the throne» (μετὰ τὴν τῆς βασιλείας ἀνάκτησιν) that is after the end of 476, while Procopius' phrase «since the time Zeno succeeded to the throne» (ἐξ οὗ δὲ Ζήνων τὴν βασιλείαν παρέλαβε) surely means no earlier than the beginning of his sole reign in November 474. When Zeno set out from Isauria to reclaim his throne in 476 he was totally dependent on a large force of local Isaurian recruits (Theophanes AM 5969 [112.3–6 DE BOOR]). These loyal troops of limited experience must soon have been absorbed into the imperial army, thereby contributing to the notion of undue dependence on Isaurians.⁷³ It is this Isaurian presence in Constantinople after 476 that Procopius and Agathias lament, not that up to a decade earlier at the time of Zeno's appointment as *comes domesticorum*.

(C) Leo established a new imperial guard called *excubitores* and stacked it with the Isaurian followers of Zeno.

That Leo established a new corps of palace guards called *excubitores*, who were recruited from Isauria, depends on a brief reference by John the Lydian writing in the mid-sixth century, who says that «Emperor Leo, who was the first to establish the so-called *excubitores* as guards of the side-exits of the palatium, put into service only three hundred to accord with ancient custom».⁷⁴ Actually, there had long been a unit of *excubitores* forming part of the palace guard. As John also says elsewhere (De mag. 1.12), they were founded by the emperor Tiberius four centuries before. So Leo did not so much establish the *excubitores* as give them a specific new role and command structure.⁷⁵ It must have been an impor-

⁷³ Anonymus Valesianus, pars posterior 9.40: *in re publica [Zeno] omnino providentissimus, favens genti suae*; Ps. Joshua the Stylite, Chron. 12; cf. LENSKI (n. 30) 427–8.

⁷⁴ De mag. 1.16.3 (ed. and trans. A. BANDY, 30–1). For background: MARY WHITBY, *Historia* 36, 1987, 483–8.

⁷⁵ References in O. FIEBIGER, RE 6, 2, 1909, 1577 s.v. *Excubitores*, and R. GROSSE, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, 1920, 270 with B. CROKE, *Byzantion* 75, 2005, 1–35.

tant contingent because its leader, now entitled *comes excubitorum*, ranked high in the imperial structure.⁷⁶ Exactly what Leo intended by his new approach to the *excubitores*, how they were recruited, and who made up the 300 elite troops, are not known. That is, there is no extant testimony to this effect. That has not prevented the repetition of speculation and the automatic expectation that they must have been Isaurians. Further, the formation of the *excubitores* is directly linked to the arrival of Zeno at Constantinople and he is entrusted with responsibility for them.

The hesitation of BURY (n. 3) 318 – ‘we may conjecture that [the unit of *excubitores*] was recruited from stalwart Isaurians . . . called upon to oppose the Germans’ – has been dislodged by unqualified certainty.⁷⁷ For instance, there is BAYNES’ contention that the new guards ‘were doubtless the followers of the Isaurian κομῆς δομεστικῶν’,⁷⁸ while KÆGI (n. 10) 27 casts Zeno as ‘head of a crack native corps of Isaurian guards’ and FRANK (n. 64) 466 claims that at about this time ‘a new corps of palace guards appears, the *excubitores*, recruited among the Isaurians, and their formation must surely be placed in connection with the appointment of Zeno’. He even characterises them as replacing the ‘Arian Gothic’ *scholares* (204). Others are in similar vein.⁷⁹ It needs to be repeated, however, that it is simply not known how the *excubitores* were recruited and who made up the 300 elite troops. Isaurians were possibly among the new *excubitores*, along with those of other backgrounds, but all being Roman soldiers primarily. John the Lydian is the sole testimony to Leo’s palace guard reformation and he makes no mention of Isaurians. The point is that we have no reason for assuming that the *excubitores* were necessarily recruited from Isauria, or even mainly from Isauria. Least of all can they be construed as a contingent under Zeno’s command. They were in fact under the authority of a new officer called the *comes excubitorum*, whereas Zeno was *comes domesticorum*. Nor do we have any indication of when Leo set about reforming the *excubitores*. Indeed, there is no reason for it not to have been in the late 450s or early 460s, that is, well before Zeno appeared on the scene.

⁷⁶ JONES (n. 3) 658; TH. MOMMSEN, *Hermes* 24, 1889, 224–5 = *Gesammelte Schriften* 6, 1910, 233; FRANK (n. 64) 204–7; HALDON (n. 64) 136–41.

⁷⁷ STEIN (n. 3) 358 (Isaurians, Thracians and Illyrians); KÆGI (n. 10) 27; DEMANDT (n. 3) 187; WILLIAMS – FRIEL (n. 63) 177: ‘Tarasicodissa was appointed to command a new corps of 300 Isaurian palace guards, the *Excubitores*’.

⁷⁸ N. H. BAYNES, *EHR* 40, 1925, 399.

⁷⁹ VERNADSKY (n. 4) 60: ‘der Kern einer weit größeren isaurischen Einheit’; JONES (n. 3) 222: ‘With [Zeno’s] aid Isaurians were recruited in large numbers and stationed in the capital’; HALDON (n. 64) 127: ‘In the early period Isaurians predominated’; BURGESS (n. 7) 875; TREADGOLD (n. 3) 152: ‘first the emperor made Zeno a commander of the imperial guard, and strengthened his hand by creating the new guard corps of the *Excubitores*, three hundred strong, composed largely of Isaurians’.

(D) *Leo then made Zeno comes domesticorum and married him to his own daughter Ariadne.*

On the assumption that Leo sought out the Isaurian Zeno, summoned him to Constantinople along with his Isaurian war-band, then found that he happened to possess letters damaging to Ardaburius, the appointment of Zeno as *comes domesticorum* is seen as a sort of unlikely reward for outstanding special service. There is, however, a sounder way of approaching the appointment. If, as argued here, Zeno was a trusted member of the emperor's personal forces (*protectores domestici*) then it will have been a small step to place him in charge of his own company. He may already have been one of the ten senior *domestici* (*decemprimi*), or even its leader (*primicerius*). Either position carried considerable status and reward including the title of *clarissimus* (HALDON [n. 64] 135). As *comes domesticorum* Zeno received a promotion he might have expected one day. That he had successfully fulfilled a dangerous assignment for the emperor obviously enhanced his reputation and precipitated his promotion. However, it was not an unusual, unlikely or untimely advancement. Being promoted to *comes domesticorum* brought Zeno into the highest echelons of the imperial administration. It was the third ranking military post behind the *magistri militum* and involved the highest honorific title of *illustris*.⁸⁰ It also followed earlier military appointments and held the likelihood that he would be promoted to *magister militum* before long, as many of his predecessors had been. As *comes* Zeno was close to the emperor and had access to elite troops. That may go far towards explaining the enthusiasm of the Isaurian Candidus for the recognition suddenly achieved by a fellow Isaurian. To be entrusted with this position Leo must have felt that Zeno was qualified and trustworthy. Zeno is unlikely to have been appointed immediately after his evidence against Ardaburius, but he was probably made *comes* in late 465/early 466.

The appointment was also linked to a betrothal to the emperor's eldest daughter. There may have been some months between these two events. They are clearly separated in time in the Vita of Daniel (cc. 55, 65). While the appointment as *comes* may have been in late 465/early 466 the marriage appears to have taken place in mid-late 466. In any event, the marriage with Ariadne could not have taken place while Zeno's first wife Arcadia was still alive, so she must have died around this time. There is no hint of enforced divorce. Having been born in c. 425 Zeno was considerably older than his bride and was a very experienced soldier. As *comes domesticorum* and *illustris* Zeno was perfectly eligible to be betrothed to the emperor's daughter. Indeed, he was no less eligible than Aspar's son Patricius. Again, the marriage of Zeno and Ariadne was not necessarily an impossible or unlikely event which could only be explained by the emperor Leo's anxiety to secure the support of a large band of Isaurians to counteract the influence of the

⁸⁰ FRANK (n. 64) 65, 88–9 with B. PALME, *Eirene* 34, 1998, 98–116, esp. 108ff.

‘Gothic faction’ led by Aspar. Further, if Aspar had been holding out for a union between his son Patricius and Ariadne, his hopes were now finally dashed. Not only was she betrothed to someone else but to the very man who had caused the downfall and disgrace of Ardaburius (BROOKS [n. 3] 212). A child of Ariadne and Zeno would likely lock Aspar’s family out of the succession once and for all. He would be back in the same position he was in with the birth of Leo’s son four years previously, in 463. Aspar is unlikely to have simply accepted the situation. After all he was still the most senior general, senator and patrician. The emperor’s new son-in-law might soon be an equal or a more serious military rival.

Leo was now his own man. Yet, Aspar’s tenure of office was not affected. Leo had used Zeno’s information to properly strip Ardaburius of office for a crime of high treason. Nothing more. As quickly as possible, in the late summer of the same year (467), the first and only offspring of the marriage – Leo II – was born.⁸¹ The status of the infant son of Ariadne and Zeno, and the expectations he may have generated, are reflected in a contemporary image of gold and mosaic. It was located in a chapel constructed by Leo and Verina at Blachernai, to house a most important relic, the recently arrived robe (ἑσθῆς) of the Virgin Mary. The surviving tenth-century description of the image appears garbled, in a similar way to so many other later explanations of Byzantine monuments and works of art. The description says that the image depicted ‘Our Lady the immaculate Mother of God seated on a throne and on either side of her Leo and Veronica, the latter holding her own son, the young emperor Leo, as she falls before Our Lady the Mother of God, and also their daughter Ariadne’.⁸² The description goes on to explain that this young Leo succeeded to the throne on the death of his father Leo I. The writer of the description is confused. Leo II was the son of Ariadne not Verina (called ‘Veronica’).⁸³ While it

⁸¹ Jo. Mal. Chron. 14. 47 (299 THURN = 376.19 DINDORF), with more detailed discussion in B. CROKE, *ByzZ* 96, 2003, 559–75.

⁸² Cod. Par. Gr. 1447, fols. 257–8 printed in A. WENGER, *REByz* 10, 1952, 54–5. The translation is that of C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453*, 1972, rp. 1986, 35.

⁸³ If the child was actually named as ‘Leo’ in the image then the writer of this description, or the original observer, may have assumed on the basis of what he saw that the baby must be Leo II and that Leo II must therefore have been the son of Leo and Verina. If the child was not named then he may have assumed that it had to be Leo II. Another possibility, recently promoted (LANE FOX [n. 48] 189–90), is that the baby portrayed in this image was the otherwise unnamed male child of Leo and Verina and that the image was executed in the period just after his birth in April 463. Such an interpretation of the image is not self-evident, however. If it is meant to picture Leo’s family then Leontia who was born before the anonymous son is not mentioned, nor would the infant, who only lived for five months, be represented as ‘her own son the emperor Leo the Younger’. The son of Leo and Verina was never emperor in any sense, although he was obviously intended to be one day. Nor was his name necessarily Leo.

is impossible to date this event exactly it probably belongs in the late 460s or possibly later still.⁸⁴

The traditions around the translation of the Virgin's robe in its precious reliquary ascribe the initiative to Leo and Verina.⁸⁵ They clearly understood the relic's significance and potential source of protection. Here for the first time the Virgin came to dwell in her city, Constantinople. On the very reliquary they had inscribed, 'Having offered this honour to the Mother of God, they have secured the might of the Empire' (τῆς βασιλείας ἡσφαλίσαντο κράτος, WENGER [n. 82] 54; trs. MANGO [n. 82] 35). One part of the tradition also attributes the transport of the relic to two Byzantine aristocrats and generals named Galbinus and Candidus who are not otherwise known, at least if their names have been correctly preserved. Moreover, it is said that they were once close associates of Aspar and Ardaburius but had renounced their Arian beliefs before setting off for the Holy Land where they came across the Virgin's robe in the possession of a pious Jewess but tricked her out of it.⁸⁶ Irrespective of the veracity of this tradition, it does highlight the extent to which Aspar and Ardaburius could be isolated as Arians. Indeed, the Virgin's robe provided a new source of power and patronage not open to Aspar at all. Leo seems to have understood and exploited this advantage.

Much the same may be said for Leo's relationship with Daniel the Stylite. The emperor was too busy in 459 for an audience with Sergius the bearer of the tunic of the late holy man Simeon the Stylite (v. Dan. Styl. 22). At that time he preferred to petition Daniel through intermediaries (38, 41, 43), but before long he was prepared to journey directly to meet with him (44, 46, 48, 49). He even took Gubazes the king of the Lazi (51) and then all visiting dignitaries (54, 55, 57). By contrast, Eudoxia understood immediately the potential power of Daniel and unsuccessfully sought to appropriate it to herself. Daniel declined to be monopolised by her (v. Dan. Styl. 35). Leo evidently saw his association with Daniel as a source of special power and prestige which he increasingly utilised for his own benefit.⁸⁷ At one stage Leo feared that exposure to the elements

⁸⁴ Theodore Anagnostes, HE Epit. 397 (111.7–12 HANSEN); Cedrenus 614.5–7 (BEKKER); Zonaras 14.31 (127.5–8 BÜTTNER-WOBST). WENGER (n. 82) proposed 471–3.

⁸⁵ N. H. BAYNES, *The Finding of the Virgin's Robe*, in: *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays*, 1955, 240–7 and, *The Spiritual Defenders of Constantinople*, *ibid.* 257–8. The text is that of the *Oratio de S. Deipara* with Latin translation in PL 115.560–6.

⁸⁶ PL 115.565–6: *Dicebantur enim fuisse proximi genere Ardaburio et Aspari, qui illis temporibus in regia obtinuerunt tyrannidem*. If the brothers Galbinus and Candidus (*fratres genere*) were in fact generals (*qui curam gerebant exercitus*), their relationship to Aspar might stem from them having married Aspar's daughters. The names are not otherwise known unless one is a variant of Camundus, *magister militum per Illyricum* (PLRE 2.256, Camundus).

⁸⁷ D. MILLER, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 15, 1970, 207–12.

would lead to the premature demise of the holy man. In resisting Leo's proposed enclosure Daniel was reminded by the emperor: <... do not kill yourself outright, for God has given you to be fruitful on our behalf> (54). More importantly, Daniel was a source of power from which the Arian Aspar was excluded. Indeed, Leo's assiduous support for the translation of relics gave rise to a concentration of spiritual power and protection within Constantinople. As their promoter, he doubtless envisaged special blessings for himself and his family. Daniel's holiness became Leo's chief bulwark. Yet, monopoly of the power deriving from his association with relics, especially the Virgin's robe, and with holy men such as Daniel could not protect Leo from the more worldly machinations of Aspar.

4. *Huns, Goths and Imperial Policy, 466–8*

Relations between Leo and Aspar were further strained by the demands of managing relations with the Goths and Huns. In the late 450s and 460s Leo and his regime had to maintain the peace with the constituent nations which Attila, king of the Huns, had temporarily formed into such a dangerous confederation in the 440s. The demise of Attila in the early 450s had not meant the end of instability in the Danube region and the Balkans. As individual tribal groups emerged from the hegemony of the Huns in the 450s and 460s their interests soon confronted those of the Roman government. The so-called Amal Goths under their leader Valamer were settled in Pannonia secured by the residence in Constantinople of a young Gothic prince Theodoric. Other Gothic groups remained restless, while yet others beyond the Danube pressed closer to their settlements. The sons of Attila, meanwhile, struggled to keep some semblance of unity among their different war-bands. Occasionally open conflict erupted. Sometimes this involved the local Roman military forces. Marcian's son-in-law Anthemius loyally served Leo by repelling both the Gothic king Valamer and the Hun Hormisdac (references in PLRE 2.96–7, Anthemius 3). Immediately thereafter Leo had resolved the issue of any threat to his throne from Anthemius by appointing him as emperor in the West and sending him off to Rome. He will have been reminded of Anthemius' exploits against the Goths by the City Prefect Diaphrentius and the former City Prefect Dioscorus who both delivered panegyrics to the court on the reception of Anthemius' imperial image in Constantinople in 467.⁸⁸

In 466 hostilities erupted between the Sciri and the Goths, with neither having the capacity to prevail over the other. When they disengaged both the Sciri and the Goths decided to seek support from the Romans. Accordingly, they each

⁸⁸ Const. Porph. *De caer.* 1.87 (395.14–16 REISKE); Chron. Pasch. 597.16–18 (DINDORF).

sent envoys to Constantinople. Priscus reports that 'Aspar thought that they should ally with neither, but the Emperor Leo wished to help the Sciri. He sent letters to the general in Illyricum ordering him to send the appropriate help against the Goths'.⁸⁹ Aspar was overruled. The attack of the Sciri must have been against the Pannonian Goths of Valamer if the *magister militum per Illyricum* was mobilised on their behalf. Further, it was surely during this encounter with the Sciri that the Gothic king Valamer was thrown from his horse, captured and killed by the Sciri (Jordanes, *Getica* 276, *Romana* 347). Leo evidently saw here an opportunity to push the Amal Goths out of Roman territory altogether and thought it worthwhile to lend support to the Sciri. Aspar preferred neutrality either hoping they would cancel each other out, or else deliver victory to the Goths because of his sympathy for them (SCOTT [n. 4] 64). Whatever the reason, there was now another cause of aggravation between Aspar and Leo, not long after Ardaburius' disgrace.

The Huns, now led by Dengizich, sent a legation to Leo seeking a treaty and a trading post. As with the Pannonian Goths, the Huns' main concern was to secure sufficient land and income to feed their nation and to be able to defend its property from the depredations of neighbours. Starvation was just as threatening as any hostile war-band. Leo had stood up to the Amal Goths not long before, so the Huns might expect the same treatment. When Dengizich learned that Leo did not believe the Huns should ever have access to Roman trade, in view of the damage they had earlier inflicted on Roman territory, he proposed attacking the empire as a consequence. His brother Ernach, distracted by his own local conflicts, counselled to the contrary (Priscus, frag. 46 [352/3 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Gent. 18). Yet Dengizich's resolve eventually prevailed and he did threaten action. The Hun warlord kept to the bank of the Danube where he encountered a *comes rei militaris* Anagastes, son of Arnegisclus formerly *magister militum* of Thrace and fellow-general of Aspar in the 440s. Anagastes' inquiries were rebuffed. The Huns preferred to deal with Leo directly. Again they journeyed to Constantinople, again they threatened destruction if Leo did not grant them land and money. By now the emperor was quite amenable, so we learn from Priscus, and prepared to agree to the Huns' demands.⁹⁰ Leo's willingness to accommodate the Hun's request on this occasion may have been due to more pressing

⁸⁹ Priscus, frag. 45 (352/3 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Gent. 17. The date must be 466 because it occurs between Gobazes' embassy to Constantinople in 464/5 (frag. 44 [352/3 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Gent. 16; v. Dan. Styl. 51), and the Huns' embassy in 467 (frag. 46 [352/3 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Gent. 18), contra PLRE 2.515 (Gobazes) misdating the fire to 465 not 464. Also ENSSLIN (n. 3) 1953. Others have dated this conflict to 468/9, e.g. H. WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths*, 1988, 264 with 492 (n. 120).

⁹⁰ Priscus, frag. 48 (354/5 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Gent. 20. For Anagastes' position at the time: PLRE 2.75, Anagastes.

priorities, especially his planning for the war on the Vandals. However, it may also reflect the pressure of Aspar, fearful of the Huns encroaching on the domain of the Thracian Goths with whom he was so closely allied.⁹¹

Before long in 467 the Romans had become involved somehow or other against both the Goths and the Huns. Perhaps the Goths had aligned themselves with the Huns, now experiencing drastic food shortages because of the Roman blockade. As with so many of the encounters in this period between the Romans and both the Goths and Huns, there is no record of what must have been a significant military expedition, just its aftermath in the extract of Priscus preserved as a barbarian embassy.⁹² On this occasion the Huns and Goths were opposed not only by Anagastes, but also by the emperor's brother-in-law Basiliscus, then *magister militum* for Thrace, and the *comes rei militaris* Ostrys the Goth who was a close ally of Aspar. It was probably as part of this conflict that the recently disgraced Ardaburius vanquished the Gothic leader Bigelis.⁹³ The Huns petitioned the Roman generals for a quick settlement because they were desperately short of food. Rather than commit the emperor to an emergency agreement the commanders decided to refer the request to Leo. Meanwhile they guaranteed to keep the Huns properly fed, provided they broke into smaller groups each guarded by a Roman general. The Huns agreed to comply and their envoys set off for Constantinople. One of the groups contained a mixture of Huns and Goths, but mainly Goths, and was now under the watchful eye of what Priscus calls 'Aspar's men' (οἱ Ἀσπαροῦ). Exactly who these were is unknown. They were commanded by a certain Chelchal, a junior officer of Hun background, so would have been one of the units of the *magister militum praesentalis* deployed by Aspar as reinforcements for this campaign, or possibly even a unit of Aspar's *bucellarii* or private retainers (as suggested by MAENCHEN-HELFEN [n. 5] 168). Chelchal summoned the leaders of the Goths and explained that Leo

⁹¹ Argued by MAENCHEN-HELFEN (n. 5) 166.

⁹² Priscus, frag. 49 (356/7–358/9 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Gent. 21, with WOLFRAM (n. 89) 265, but dating to 469 rather than 467.

⁹³ Bigelis probably led one of the Gothic war-bands previously attached to Attila (PLRE 2.229, Bigelis). The victory over Bigelis is contained only in the statement of Jordanes that Ardaburius killed 'Bigelis king of the Goths' (Romana 338: *Bigelemque Getarum regem per Ardaburem Asparis filium interemit*, with BURY [n. 3] 335–7; VERNADSKY [n. 4] 63–7). There is no reason to doubt Jordanes' information, nor to doubt the role of Ardaburius in the death of Bigelis. He had been recalled in disgrace a couple of years earlier and will not have been in another senior command. He presumably was deployed to Thrace on behalf of his father Aspar, in a similar manner to the position held by Chelchal. It has been proposed that he was *magister militum per Illyricum* at the time which is not impossible but unlikely in the circumstances (SCHARF [n. 27] 216–9). There is no certainty about the date of this episode. Jordanes places it between Anthemius' coronation in Rome (March 467) and the Vandal expedition (summer 468), so 467 is most probable (cf. DEMANDT [n. 4] 767, and [n. 26] 115).

would not be dealing with them independently and would not give land to them but only to the Huns. Since the Goths do not have a treaty with the Huns, Chelchal continued, they would lose out. Trusting in the integrity of the Hun Chelchal, the Gothic leaders were infuriated by his information and turned on the Huns amongst them. Word spread to the other groups under guard and similar massacres ensued. «Aspar's men» destroyed those in their supervision but some Huns, including Dengizich, managed to escape (Priscus, frag. 49 [356/7 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Gent. 21). The Priscus extract does not say what eventuated at Constantinople with the Huns' envoys.

As *comes domesticorum* Zeno too played some role in one of these campaigns in 467, although he does not figure in the diplomatic extract from Priscus. In fact, his involvement has often been concealed by too literally following the chronology of the Vita of Daniel. In the words of the Vita (c. 66): «Now while the patrician Zeno was still absent at the war a male child was born to him by the Emperor's daughter and received the name of Leo». In the previous chapter (c. 65) which is narratively linked to this one the author had been describing Zeno's involvement in a military expedition in Thrace after he had become consul in 469. He goes on to explain how Zeno was ambushed and forced to flee to Chalcedon. The next chapter (c. 66) refers to Zeno still being at the war when his son Leo was born. Since there can be no doubt that Leo was born in 467, probably in August/September, the author has here confused the expedition into Thrace in 469 with another one at the time of Leo's birth in 467. So in 467 either Zeno was involved in the large campaign against the Huns and Goths which is most likely, or else in that against Bigelis. In either case he will have worked with troops under the normal jurisdiction of Aspar.

Ardaburius was also involved in these campaigns and it was possibly in this period that an episode recounted by Candidus belongs. Candidus notes only that Ardaburius once sought to «attach the Isaurians» to his cause (οἰκιστοποίησθαι τοὺς Ἰσαύρους), but that his attendant Martin tipped off Zeno (Candidus, frag. 1 [466/7 BLOCKLEY], with DEMANDT [n. 4] 765). Candidus does not say whether or not these Isaurians were soldiers although they probably were, nor that they were in the employ of Zeno. He does not date the episode either, but in Photius' summary it falls between Zeno's marriage to Ariadne (466/7) and the murder of Aspar and Ardaburius (471). So it was probably before 469 when both Ardaburius and Zeno were in Constantinople, while it is possible that by then Ardaburius had an Isaurian wife in Anthusa the daughter of Illus (as proposed by SCHARF [n. 27] 221–3). Ardaburius was trying to win over Isaurians not in order to undermine the Isaurian faction and promote the «Gothic faction» but because they were potential allies to be enticed to his side in a straightforward power struggle (ELTON [n. 7] 397). According to Candidus, Ardaburius was planning on using the Isaurians not against Zeno but against Leo (κατὰ βασιλέως).

Following the Gothic and Roman attacks on the Huns in 467, Dengizich king of the Huns remained at large in Thrace. Eventually he was run to ground and killed by the Roman general Anagastes. The defeat and death of the Hun king in battle was a considerable bonus for the Romans who had suffered humiliation at the hands of the Huns in previous years. For performing a feat which had so recently eluded a considerable part of the imperial army, Anagastes could look forward to acclaim and reward in the imperial capital as Dengizich's head was paraded through the city on a pole amid scenes of enthusiastic rejoicing.⁹⁴ All this took place in the latter months of 468, although it is normally dated to 469.⁹⁵ By this time in Constantinople various new political forces had come into play arising from the uncertain outcome of the Vandal expedition which had sailed for Africa early in the summer.

5. Basiliscus and the 'Fourth Punic War', 467/8

The imperial expedition against the Vandals in North Africa in 468 proved to be a major turning point in the now uneasy relationship between the emperor Leo and his senior general Aspar. The new western emperor Anthemius' departure for Rome in the spring of 467 was, according to Procopius (Wars 3.6.5), part of Leo's planned strategy for dealing decisively with the Vandals. Since Procopius' information probably originated with Priscus it should be deemed trustworthy. Consequently, Leo was engaged in detailed strategic planning for his mission against the Vandals as early as March/April 467. He would therefore have considered it essential in 467 to secure peace with the Goths and Huns along the Danube and in the Balkans. The appointment of Anthemius and the opening up of a more supportive relationship with the western court brought the Vandal regime at Carthage more centrally into the policy orbit of the eastern emperor. Apart from holding hostage the daughter and granddaughters of Theodosius II since 455, the Vandals continued to raid Roman territory annually, not just the

⁹⁴ Marcellinus, Chron. s. a. 469, MGH AA 11, 90; Chron. Pasch. 598.3–8 (DINDORF).

⁹⁵ It is dated to 469 because it is recorded in the chronicle of Marcellinus under that year. Marcellinus, however, dates events by both indictions (beginning in September) and consulships (beginning in January) which sometimes creates confusion or uncertainty where the dating systems overlap (cf. CROKE [n. 45] 54–5 and id., Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle, 2001, 173–5). On this occasion his source must have had the event in the 5th indiction (1 September 468/31 August 469) and assuming that it occurred in the latter part of the indiction he placed it in the consulship for 469, rather than 468. The dates are perfectly reconcilable by assigning Anagastes' conquest of Dengizich to the earlier part of the indiction instead. That is, the slaying of Dengizich and the public display of his head took place in Constantinople between 1 September and 31 December 468, in the consulship of Anthemius as recorded in the Chronicon Paschale 598.3–8 (DINDORF).

closest islands of Sicily and Sardinia but also the coasts of Italy, Greece and Egypt. Previous military challenges to the Vandals, such as that of Majorian in 460, had not succeeded. Leo resolved to defeat the Vandals and expel them from Africa. As noted by GAUTHIER, the eminent historian of North Africa, these campaigns could be construed as the 'Fourth Punic War'.⁹⁶ By now the imperial hostages had returned to Constantinople, at least Eudoxia and her daughter Placidia had returned in 462. Eudocia remained in Africa as the daughter-in-law of the Vandal king, Gaiseric. Having married his son into the imperial Theodosian house, Gaiseric became keen to prosecute the imperial cause of Eudoxia's other son-in-law, Olybrius, then living at Constantinople. Indeed, demand for Leo's support for Olybrius' claim may have been part of the settlement leading to the release of Eudoxia and her daughter.⁹⁷ Even if Leo tried to dissemble, his envoy Phylarchus was unsuccessful in dealing with Gaiseric in 462,⁹⁸ Tatian was not even accorded a hearing at Carthage in 464,⁹⁹ while Phylarchus failed again in 467 (Priscus, frag. 52 [360/1 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Rom. 13). The Vandals now preferred to fight.

At about this point, if not earlier, Leo too had determined to abandon diplomacy and turn to an all-out expedition for the following campaigning season. Ships and troops were organised and assembled from far and wide. A total of 1,100 ships formed the imperial armada against Gaiseric. These vessels carried more than 100,000 soldiers, Roman and otherwise, who were now in the imperial pay. The cost of the expedition was comparably enormous, as carefully computed by TREADGOLD (n. 60) 189–91. Whether or not some of these numbers were exaggerated by sixth-century writers keen to highlight the contrast with Belisarius' more modest expedition in the 530s,¹⁰⁰ it was still an immense fleet. Yet it was no larger than that in 440 actually led by Aspar to dislodge the Vandals just after they had occupied Carthage. Presumably all the ships and men gathered at the burgeoning docks of Constantinople and made preparations in the winter of 467/8, so they were ready to sail in the spring of 468.

The expedition had brought soldiers and sailors from everywhere, a most intense ethnic mix in what was already a polyglot capital. One such contingent may have been the *bucellarii* of the Gaul named Titus who deserted the service of the emperor for the company of the ascetic Daniel.¹⁰¹ Among those sailing to

⁹⁶ E.-F. GAUTHIER, *Genséric. Roi des Vandales*, 1935, 217–71.

⁹⁷ C. COURTOIS, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, 1955, 200.

⁹⁸ Priscus frag. 39 (342/3 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Gent. 14. Phylarchus' embassy to Gaiseric in 462 is overlooked in PLRE 2.884, Phylarchus.

⁹⁹ Priscus, frag. 41.2 (346/7 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Rom. 11. On Tatian: PLRE 2.1053–4, Tatianus 1, and W. ENSSLIN, *RE* 4 A 2, 1932, 2467–68, s.v. Tatianus 4.

¹⁰⁰ As suggested by COURTOIS (n. 97) 202; cf. GAUTHIER (n. 96) 255.

¹⁰¹ V. Dan. Styl. 60–1 with PLRE 2. 1122–3, Titus 1.

Constantinople in 467 to join the African expedition was a contingent from Isauria.¹⁰² They had lost several of their number en route at Rhodes. It was a bloody response to their aggressive behaviour towards the locals. Thereupon <they fled to their ships and came to Constantinople where they joined Zeno>. Even there the Isaurians were pelted with stones for harassing merchants in the market. The incident threatened to escalate but darkness brought calm. These Isaurians were transients, part of the growing expeditionary force, not <the first introduction of an Isaurian garrison into Constantinople [which] was probably directed against Aspar> (BROOKS [n. 3] 213). It was unruly behaviour like theirs which caused the emperor to legislate the following year to curb the actions of private retainers (*bucellarii*) and Isaurians among others.¹⁰³ Although addressed to the Praetorian Prefect of the East, Nicostratus, the law applies to everyone in both town and country (*omnibus per civitates et agros*). It was not designed to curb the influence of Isaurians or Goths in the imperial capital. The outcome of the Vandal expedition was probably still uncertain when this law was promulgated (28 August). Perhaps the reduction in armed forces in Constantinople and vicinity had caused these groups to suddenly flourish. At any rate, the Isaurians in the city were considered a problem.

To head up the complex and risky operation against the Vandals Leo chose his brother-in-law Basiliscus, appointing him as *magister militum praesentalis* (DEMANDT [n. 4] 777–8). This promotion was bound to unnerve Aspar irrespective of the outcome of the expedition. It would not be surprising if he actually opposed the appointment although there is no evidence to that effect. That Aspar declined to lead the expedition because of his reservations about its likely outcome is also disputable.¹⁰⁴ The foundation-stone of Aspar's power since the early 450s had been his tenure as senior *magister militum praesentalis*. Until this point he had shared the office with Anthemius and he might have been relieved at Anthemius' departure for the west, that is to say, if he had not been instrumental himself in the appointment to the western throne. In raising Basiliscus to the same position as Aspar in the course of transferring him from his post at

¹⁰² John of Antioch, frag. 206 (1) = FHG 4.616. This fragment is frequently assigned to 469 but can be safely dated on internal evidence to 467/8. It comes between Anagastes' murder of Ullibus <when Anthemius and Leo were emperors> (frag. 205 = Exc. de Ins. 89; cf. Zach. Mit. HE 3.12) and the revolt of Anagastes in 469 (frag. 206.2 = Exc. de Ins. 90). It also appears to best fit circumstances in 467/8 (DEMANDT [n. 4] 469, 766 contra LIPPOLD [n. 49] 155–6) rather than 469 (BROOKS [n. 3] 470). Since they came to Constantinople specifically to Zeno they must be there before he was absent, that is before mid-469.

¹⁰³ Cod. Just. 9.12.10 (28 August 468) with DEMANDT (n. 4) 767 and A. SCARCELLA, *La legislazione di Leone I*, 1997, 393–6.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. SCOTT (n. 4) 65: 'One can presume that Aspar could have had the command if he wanted it'.

Marcianople as *magister militum per Thraciam*, Leo was clearly signalling a change of policy towards Aspar and asserting his independent will. Even so, it appears that Ardaburius' disgrace was set aside momentarily so that his military ability and experience could be called on for the expedition.¹⁰⁵

The colossal imperial military force should have overwhelmed the Vandals. That it failed to do so was due to a range of factors. Above all, so it seems, the Vandals' superior knowledge of the wind patterns and geography of North Africa gave them the upper hand. The Roman fleet parked on the west coast of Cape Bon, about 60 km from Carthage, was unable to avoid the flaming Vandal fireboats propelled towards them by the onshore winds. The instant loss of such a large part of the expedition emasculated the imperial project.¹⁰⁶ The fleet retreated and its commander-in-chief Basiliscus returned to Constantinople in ignominy. He was forced to seek protection in Hagia Sophia until he was rescued by his sister Verina. Then he was redeployed to Herakleia for an unspecified period (Procopius, Wars 3.6.27; Nic. Call. HE 15.27 [PG 147.80C]). He was still in Herakleia in 471. The contemporary historian Candidus described, according to the skeleton summary of Photius, both the success and the setbacks (*εὐτυχήματα καὶ δυστυχήματα*) experienced by Basiliscus.¹⁰⁷ There is no mention of Aspar in Photius' summary of Candidus. There is, however, in the account of Priscus (as preserved in Procopius) where Basiliscus' motives for delaying the fight against Gaiseric and giving him the advantage are canvassed: 'either as a favour to Aspar as promised, or because he had sold the opportunity for money, or because he thought it the best course'.¹⁰⁸ There was obviously uncertainty at the time about what led to the destruction of most of Basiliscus' fleet. Later writers found they could do little but report the variety of views. Theophanes, probably drawing on Priscus too, attributes the disaster to either incompetence or treachery on the part of the general. Zonaras in the 12th century and Nikephorus in the 14th effectively follow their predecessors except that Nikephorus reports it all as part of an elaborate conspiracy in which Basiliscus threw in his lot with Aspar and Ardaburius against Leo but failed.¹⁰⁹

Hydatius, an exact contemporary, makes clear that Aspar and Ardaburius were under suspicion for supporting the interests of the Vandals.¹¹⁰ Given the confusion and contradictions in the extant documentation it is difficult to be

¹⁰⁵ Damascius, *vita Isidori* (apud Photius, Bibl. 242) with DEMANDT [n. 26] 115.

¹⁰⁶ GAUTHIER (n. 96) 255–7; COURTOIS (n. 97) 203.

¹⁰⁷ Candidus, frag. 1 (466/7 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, Bibl. 79. According to Cedrenus (614.1–2 BEKKER) the war with the Vandals continued down to 473/4.

¹⁰⁸ Procop. Wars 3.6.16, cf. Theodore Anagnostes, HE Epit. 399 (111.17–21 HANSEN).

¹⁰⁹ Theophanes AM 5961 (116.4–6 DE BOOR); Zonaras 14.1.24–5 (126 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Nic. Call. HE 15.27 (PG 153.80).

¹¹⁰ Hydatius, Chron. 241, s.a. 468 (121 BURGESS), cf. BROOKS (n. 3) 213 n. 21.

certain of the relationship between Aspar and Basiliscus and how it was hindered or promoted by the war against the Vandals. What is likely, to judge from Basiliscus' later behaviour, is that he did harbour his own ambitions for the throne. If Aspar had hoped still in 468 to secure a role for his son Patricius in the imperial succession, as appears to be the case, the ambition of Basiliscus had become an extra obstacle. Being now of comparable authority with Aspar made Basiliscus a positive threat. His failure against the Vandals can only have dented his standing and his prospects. It also removed him from the imperial presence. So it is not impossible that Aspar had been involved in events leading to exactly that result. He had a motive to undermine Basiliscus. On the other hand, Basiliscus may have been prepared to conspire with Aspar in order to secure Aspar's backing for his own imperial aspirations. Perhaps Basiliscus had promised Aspar he would be a more accommodating emperor than his brother-in-law. At least, that seems to have been the version which made most sense to Nicephorus nearly a millennium later.

While Aspar was not the only *magister militum praesentalis* he was still the only one at Constantinople. Leo was doubtless disappointed and frustrated at the failure of his Vandal expedition and its political and financial consequences. Aspar could say he told the emperor so.¹¹¹ Before the Vandal campaign in 468 it was said to be likely that Aspar <would plot against the Emperor Leo, who had given him offence> so that Aspar <was then fearful lest, if the Vandals were defeated, Leo should establish his power more securely> (Procopius, Wars 3.6.3–4 [from Priscus]). That is why Aspar was accused of undermining Basiliscus, namely to get back at Leo. His remaining hopes for his son's imperial marriage and succession were slipping away. Aspar himself seems to have felt the pressure first in the aftermath of the failed Vandal venture. Ambassadors who had been in Constantinople at the time reported back to the Suevi <that Aspar had been cashiered and his son executed after they had been discovered plotting with the Vandals against the Roman Empire>.¹¹² While they heard wrongly about Aspar's son the envoys were right to report that Aspar himself was under suspicion for his relations with the Vandals. In this tense situation Zeno remained at court as *comes domesticorum* and Leo possibly now regarded him as the imperial heir apparent, although only a promotion to *Caesar* would secure that. Meanwhile, as we have seen, the Huns' king Dengizich was once again threatening Roman authority and property in the Balkans and would have to be contained.

¹¹¹ Cf. GAUTHIER (n. 96) 263; STEIN (n. 3) 360.

¹¹² Hydatius, Chron. 241, s.a. 468 (121 BURGESS): *Asperem degradatum ad priuatam uitam, filium eius occisum, aduersum Romanum imperium sicut (indicati) detectique sunt, Vandalis consulentes*; with E. A. THOMPSON, Romans and Barbarians, 1982, 223–6.

6. *Anagastes' Rebellion and Zeno's Flight, 469*

Following the failed Vandal campaign, and Aspar's evident role in its failure, relations between the emperor and his senior general were on a final collision course. Their mutual struggle for dominance was aggravated by the revolt of Anagastes in the Balkans the following year. On the information brought forward by Zeno in 465, as we have seen, Aspar's son Ardaburius had been convicted of treason and was stripped of all official power and titles. Subsequently, Ardaburius, and no doubt Aspar too, nursed his grudge against Zeno and his imperial father-in-law and cast about for an opportunity to exact revenge. This appears to explain what immediately followed in the aftermath of the failure of the Vandal expedition and Aspar's exclusion of Basiliscus from court. Anagastes, now *magister militum* for Thrace,¹¹³ did not receive the official thanks and glory he expected from his victory over Dengizich late in 468. In fact, he was an epileptic and the thought of an epileptic consul dissuaded the emperor from appointing him for the following year (470). What is more, the consulship was later announced as belonging to Jordanes, then *magister militum* in the East. In the appointment of Jordanes, Anagastes felt particularly slighted because his own father Arnegisclus had been responsible for the death of Jordanes' father in 441. This is a sign that family feuds among the military nobility could be passed down from one generation to the next.¹¹⁴ From John of Antioch we discover that Anagastes then set about some sort of rebellion, and that Ardaburius was instrumental in provoking Anagastes' revolt just as he had attempted to do with the Persians in 465. In fact Anagastes eventually forwarded to Leo the incriminating correspondence from Ardaburius, just as Zeno had done in 465.¹¹⁵ What

¹¹³ There has been an element of uncertainty about Anagastes' position when he rebelled in 469. When he was part of the large-scale campaign against the Goths and Huns in 467 he held the position of *comes rei militaris* while Basiliscus was *magister militum per Thraciam* (Priscus, frag. 49 [356/7 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Gent. 21, with PLRE 2, 75, Anagastes, and 1292, fasti). When Basiliscus was transferred and promoted to *magister militum praesentalis* to lead the Vandal campaign it is not stated who replaced him in Thrace. On the mere assumption that Zeno succeeded Basiliscus in Thrace in 467/8, and that Anagastes was *magister militum per Thraciam* when he killed Dengizich, it is taken for granted that Anagastes succeeded a short tenure by Zeno, but on the mistaken assumption that Dengizich was killed in 469, not 468. The reality, so it would appear, is the exact reverse: Anagastes succeeded Basiliscus in 467 and Zeno was not appointed until he was consul in 469, as explained in the Vita of Daniel (v. Dan. Styl. 65 with SEECK, RE 1, 2, 1894, 2022 s.v. Anagastes).

¹¹⁴ John of Antioch, frag. 206 (2) = FHG 4.616. Anagastes' revolt is placed in 470/1 for no special reason, by BURY (n. 3) 319 and STEIN (n. 3) 360.

¹¹⁵ John of Antioch, frag. 206 (2) = FHG 4.616. There is no evidence to link the rebellion with 'the introduction of the Isaurians into Constantinople' (BROOKS [n. 3] 214).

is not so clear, though, is precisely what Ardaburius hoped to gain from provoking Anagastes into rebellion. The most obvious reason is that in facing a new threat on another front closer to home Leo would be obliged to put another army into the field probably under his loyal son-in-law Zeno. With Zeno out of the way, and especially with Basiliscus now biding his time at Herakleia, Aspar and Ardaburius could more easily expect to re-assert their position at court.

The fact that the rebellion of Anagastes took place in mid to late 469 after the announcement of Jordanes' consulship for 470 is most instructive. That was the very year in which the current consul Zeno was sent against some enemy in Thrace as recounted in c. 65 of the *Vita* of Daniel the Stylite. What has never been suggested, so it would appear, is that in 469 Zeno was not sent against some Hun or Goth disturbance in Thrace, as normally supposed, but against the rebellious general Anagastes. The account provided in the life of Daniel is a full one and deserves close consideration, but we must first focus attention on Theophanes' version of the year 469. Theophanes, probably depending on Priscus, reports that in that year the emperor Leo sent Zeno 'the general of the East' and his son-in-law to Thrace for some military purpose (ἐπὶ τινα χρεῖαν πολεμικήν) and ordered he be given a contingent of his own men for his assistance' (στρατὸν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων πρὸς συμμαχίαν), that is a contingent of the emperor's personal military forces or *protectores domestici* under the command of the *comes domesticorum*. Theophanes goes on to explain that in accordance with the instruction of Aspar some of the emperor's contingent who were supposed to be protecting Zeno were planning to take him captive. Zeno was tipped off, however, and escaped safely to Serdica. Thenceforth Aspar became an object of further suspicion to Leo, as explicitly stated by Theophanes (AM 5962 [116.37–32 DE BOOR]).

Strangely enough, Theophanes does not here indicate what enemy Zeno was sent to repel and it needs to be admitted that when Dengizich's last stand is consigned to its proper place in late 468 we have no evidence of any barbarian threat in Thrace precisely in 469.¹¹⁶ Nor is it clear why Zeno should be needed in Thrace if he was actually *magister militum per Orientem* at the time, as Theophanes states. A Thracian threat was, as had been the case in the two previous years, the responsibility of the local *duces* and the Thracian *magister militum*. Theophanes, very often inaccurate in these matters of nomenclature, may have meant to say that Zeno was *magister militum per Thraciam* at the time (cf. DEMANDT [n. 4] 767). In that post he would not be out of bounds in Thrace. Theophanes' evidence makes more sense when considered in conjunction with the more contemporary *Vita* of Daniel the Stylite (c. 65). There we learn that

¹¹⁶ The suggestion of BROOKS (n. 3) 215 that Zeno was sent against the Ostrogothic king Theudimer is only a guess and an unlikely one since the Ostrogoths were then campaigning against the Suevi on the Danube (Jordanes, *Getica* 278–80). These events belong, however, to 473 (HEATHER [n. 21] 264–5).

Zeno became consul (469) and 'shortly afterwards' (μετ' οὐ πολὺν χρόνον) when a barbarian disturbance broke out (ταραχῆς βαρβαρικῆς γενομένης) in Thrace Leo appointed him *magister militum per Thraciam* (στρατηλάτην τῆς Θράκης). It is clear from this passage that Zeno was appointed *magister militum per Thraciam* in the year of his consulship (469).¹¹⁷ Moreover, his precise task was to take charge of the threat emanating from some 'barbarian disturbance', ταραχή being the normal word for domestic rebellion or tumult in fifth-century usage,¹¹⁸ while βαρβαρική suggests that Anagastes had enlisted the support of local tribal groups or contingents. The Goth Ullibos who rebelled at this time may have originally played such a role. He is linked with Anagastes by John of Antioch (probably from Priscus) who labels both of them 'Scyths with a tendency to rebellion' although they were opposed to each other on this occasion.¹¹⁹ It was after killing Ullibos that Anagastes' revolt broke out in earnest. The vague description of the enemy given in both Theophanes and the Vita, combined with the fact that Zeno was appointed general in Thrace in exactly the same year as Anagastes revolted, points to the fact that Zeno was sent to Thrace to deal with the uprising of Anagastes. This then raises the question of Anagastes' precise status in 469.

The exact timing of Zeno's tenure as *magister* is important. It means that he was in Constantinople, not Marcianople, in 468 and into the campaigning season of 469. It was during this narrow but crucial period that Basiliscus was away on the Vandal expedition and was subsequently detained at Herakleia. Zeno's presence will have reassured Leo. Further consolation and advice was able to be provided by Leo's favourite holy man, Daniel the Stylite. The role of Daniel in events of 469 is that he was consulted by Leo and Zeno about the outcome of the expedition against Anagastes. He prophesied that a conspiracy would be formed against Zeno but that he would eventually escape unharmed (v. Dan.

¹¹⁷ V. Dan. Styl. 65. There is much unnecessary doubt and confusion about Zeno's positions in 469. BURY (n. 3) 318 thought Zeno was acting in Thrace as *magister militum praesentalis*. Not yet having the vita Dan. Styl., BROOKS (n. 3) 213 n. 17 was forced to believe that Zeno had been *magister militum per Orientem* since about 467. More radically, SCHWARTZ (n. 48) 183 with n. 3 places these events in Thrace in 471 and has Zeno relocated to Thrace from being *magister militum per Orientem* in 469/70. When the *magister militum per Thraciam* revolted in 469 the emperor immediately revoked his command and gave it to his son-in-law before despatching him to deal with Anagastes. This reconstruction has the added advantage of accounting for the odd fact that the newly appointed *magister militum* for Thrace should be forced to rely on a contingent recruited from the emperor's own force instead of the Thracian army he was being sent to command. The army was still with Anagastes.

¹¹⁸ T. E. GREGORY, *Vox Populi. Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.*, 1982, 10–1.

¹¹⁹ John of Antioch, frag. 206 (2) = FHG 4.616; Zach. Mit. HE 3.12 with A. F. NORMAN, CQ n.s. 3, 1953, 171–2 and P. SOTIROUDIS, *Untersuchungen zum Geschichtswerk des Johannes von Antiocheia*, 1989, 135–9.

Styl. 65). So the new *magister militum per Thraciam* Zeno set out for Thrace. At some stage the soldiers in the pay of Ardaburius (and Aspar) closed in but Zeno slipped away to Serdica (v. Dan. Styl. 65; Theophanes AM 5962 [116.26–31 DE BOOR]). The Vita goes on to say that Zeno eventually reached the ‘Long Wall’ and proceeded from there to Pylai, and some time later he reached Chalcedon (v. Dan. Styl. 65). The Vita does not say that he then proceeded to Constantinople, or anywhere else for that matter. Two items are of special significance here: (A) the role of Aspar and (B) Zeno’s escape route.

A. The role of Aspar

We have already observed that by 468 tension was building up between the family and supporters of Leo and Aspar’s family and supporters. Zeno’s role in the dismissal of Ardaburius in 465 and his marriage to Ariadne in 466, together with Basiliscus’ appointment against the Vandals in 467, served to erode further the long-standing influence of Aspar and his family. Now Ardaburius’ complicity in the revolt of Anagastes could only create even greater antagonism and tension at Constantinople. The fact that Ardaburius, and presumably Aspar too, was behind Anagastes leaves them open to the suspicion that they engineered the whole episode in order to extract Zeno from the court at Constantinople and thus place him in a vulnerable position by arranging his murder; while at the same time increasing their own access to, and influence over, Leo.¹²⁰ It was similar to the tactic which saw Basiliscus removed from imperial proximity the previous year.

If, as argued here, Ardaburius and Aspar encouraged Anagastes to revolt as a sure pretext for removing Zeno from Constantinople it is no less likely that it was Aspar who actually proposed Zeno’s appointment to Leo. When the carefully laid plans backfired, with Aspar and Ardaburius’ complicity revealed, Leo was powerless and isolated in the imperial capital. He could take no effective action against them. At the same time Zeno will hardly have considered it safe to return to Constantinople having narrowly avoided one attempt on the part of Aspar and Ardaburius to have him murdered. He would be best advised to keep well clear of the capital until events turned more favourably in his direction.

B. Zeno’s escape route

The position and whereabouts of Zeno between mid to late 469 and the murder of Aspar in 471 have never been clear, except that for much of this period he was *magister militum per Orientem* and therefore based in Antioch. By any account Zeno’s return route to Constantinople following the plot on his life was

¹²⁰ It is possible that Ardaburius’ failure with the Isaurians prompted him to seek out Anagastes (BROOKS [n. 3] 214). It should also be pointed out that there is no evidence for the romantic notion of VERNADSKY (n. 4) 68 that Aspar now planned the establishment of his own independent Danubian homeland of Goths, Alans and Antae.

a roundabout one. On the surface it appears that Zeno travelled from Serdica to the Long Wall, thence to Pylai and later reached Chalcedon. What is less certain is whether the 'Long Wall' he reached was the so-called Anastasian Long Wall 65 km west of Constantinople or that across the neck of the Chersonese. If the Anastasian wall was built *de novo* by Anastasius and therefore did not exist in 469 then it must have been the Chersonese Long Wall that was Zeno's departure point. If the Anastasian wall was built by 469, then it could be either wall.¹²¹ Irrespective of whether the Anastasian wall was already constructed in 469, it has been claimed that the Chersonese Long Wall cannot be the one mentioned in the *Vita* because: (1) Zeno had no need to avoid Constantinople since there he enjoyed the protection of his Isaurians; (2) he was appointed *magister militum per Orientem* en route back from Thrace so he would naturally have taken the fastest route to the East, necessarily bypassing the capital, and (3) he therefore did not need to cross to Asia as far south as the Chersonese. None of these claims is beyond question.¹²²

As for (1), Zeno had every reason to avoid Constantinople and the main Balkan highway leading there. The capacity to surround himself with an impregnable Isaurian retinue is severely over-estimated, as we have seen. Further, those who hoped to see him killed in the campaign against Anagastes, namely Ardaburius and Aspar, were in Constantinople with access to far more forces than Zeno. Having reached Serdica Zeno would have been ill-advised to take the route which brought him closest to the Goths of Aspar's nephew Theodoric Strabo. As for (2) and (3) Zeno was not appointed to the East while on the run in Thrace. Rather, it is more likely that he was appointed while waiting at Chalcedon for an opportune moment to return to Constantinople. Then he set off for Antioch taking with him from Chalcedon the monk Peter the Fuller. His ultimate destination when he reached the Long Wall was Constantinople which is why he did not cross to Lampsacus and continue on from there but sailed the length of the Marmara to reach Pylai then proceeded overland to Chalcedon.

¹²¹ The case in favour of the Chersonese wall was advanced originally in B. CROKE, *GRBS* 23, 1982, 57–78, *rp.* in: *id.*, *Christian Chronicles and Byzantine History*, 1992, but resting on the notion that the so-called Anastasian wall was not yet built. Strong arguments in favour of the Anastasian wall being built in the 440s, and therefore being the wall referred to in the *vita Danielis* were put by MICHAEL WHITBY, *Byzantion* 55, 1985, 560–83. Although research on the wall is proceeding it does not seem possible at this stage to determine absolutely whether Anastasius constructed a new wall or reconstructed one built in the late 440s although the former now looks more likely (cf. J. CROW – A. RICCI, *JRA* 10, 1997, 235–62, esp. 239, 260). Incidentally, the Chersonese wall has been located recently but has not yet been the subject of significant research.

¹²² WHITBY (n. 121) 563–7. Zeno was not sent against the Hun king Dengizich (so WHITBY 564) whom Anagastes had conquered the previous year but against Anagastes who had rebelled.

Consequently, a fuller consideration of the political context of the events surrounding the plot against Zeno in 469 suggests that his escape route must have taken him south from Serdica to link up with the Egnatian way east of Thessalonika. He then proceeded along it to the Long Wall at the Chersonese and then took a boat across to Pylai where the main highway through Asia Minor to Isauria and Antioch began. At Pylai he could decide whether to retreat to Isauria or return to Constantinople from the Asiatic side. In other words, Zeno carefully avoided the direct route from Serdica to Constantinople by way of Adrianople. All the same, if Zeno departed from the Anastasian Long Wall, and not the Chersonese Long Wall, the fact remains that he was avoiding the imperial capital for the time being.

It is normally assumed that at this juncture Zeno actually returned to Constantinople and was then appointed *magister militum per Orientem* before departing at leisure for Antioch (e.g. by BURY [n. 3] 319; LIPPOLD [n. 49] 157). Yet there is no testimony to this and it is unlikely in the circumstances. He was appointed while waiting at Chalcedon. There is, however, a curious turn of phrase in the chronicle of John Malalas which implies that Zeno actually travelled to Isauria at this time. In introducing Illus as an Isaurian, but friend and ally of Zeno, Malalas says that he 'had escorted [Zeno] back with a large force on his second return from Isauria (τὴν δευτέραν αὐτοῦ ἐπάνοδον ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰσαυρίας), after he had fled there from Constantinople while emperor'.¹²³ Having been driven out of Constantinople by Basiliscus in January 475, Zeno regrouped his family and allies in Isauria then began the campaign to return to Constantinople to reclaim his throne in 476. If that was his 'second return' from Isauria it begs the question of when was the 'first return'. From what is known of the career and movements of Zeno it can only have been when he was turned out of Europe by the troops of Aspar in 469. Malalas, at least in his extant form, does not mention Zeno's 'first return from Isauria' but it was doubtless his return after the murder of Aspar in 471. So, in effect, in the course of 469 Zeno entered a self-imposed exile journeying to Antioch by way of Isauria. If he were not appointed *magister militum* at Chalcedon then it may have been while he was in Isauria. What is certain is that in the same year he was involved as *magister militum per Orientem* in arranging for a rebellion in Isauria to be put down. He was not using 'Roman troops to consolidate his home in Isauria'.¹²⁴ The legendary Isaurian speedster Indacus had been operating from his fortress on the hill of

¹²³ Jo. Mal. Chron. 15.12 (309 THURN = 385.11–2 DINDORF), with translation from E. and M. JEFFREYS – R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, 1986, 214. A similar turn of phrase is used by the author of the *Parastaseis* to describe the philosopher Galen's predictions about Verina and her son-in-law Zeno as emperor, but after his restoration in 476: μετὰ τὴν ἀνάκαμψιν Ζήνωνος τὴν ἀπὸ Ἰσαυρίας τὸ δευτέρον (Paras. 40 [ed. PREGER, 1.46]).

¹²⁴ SHAW (n. 62) 252.

Papirius, named after his father, and ravaging the nearby countryside. Zeno managed to quell the raids of Indacus, perhaps being directly involved himself.¹²⁵ His namesake Zeno, also as *magister militum per Orientem*, had done something very similar in the late 440s (Priscus, frag. 16 [300–1 BLOCKLEY] = John of Antioch, frag. 199.1 [FHG 4.613]).

At the time of Zeno's appointment against Anagastes the *magister militum* for the East was Jordanes. He had been appointed consul for 470, however, and was presumably obliged to return to the capital to take up his consulship at some stage. Jordanes was definitely in Constantinople during his consulship in 470 because he fell under suspicion for taking a guided tour of the innermost part of the palace when the emperor was away, possibly at another palace during the summer months.¹²⁶ It is evident that Zeno replaced Jordanes as *magister militum per Orientem* sometime late in 469. From Isauria Zeno moved onto the command headquarters in Antioch. Leo cannot have been pleased at having Zeno so far from the court especially since, according to Theophanes, it was as a result of this plot against Zeno that Aspar became suspect to the emperor Leo (Theophanes AM 5962 [116.31–2 DE BOOR]). Zeno was to remain to Antioch until the eve of Aspar's assassination two years later.

7. *Patricius becomes Caesar, 470*

By late 469 Aspar was now in the ascendancy once more. At Constantinople, sometime in 470, he arranged for Patricius to be finally named *Caesar*. This announcement had been his objective for well over a decade, just as it had been Leo's objective to foil Aspar's request.¹²⁷ Not only was *Caesar* a special title and position, but it will have placed Patricius in the public position of heir-designate to Leo. One can only guess how Leo must have now felt after having so carefully deferred his original promise to Aspar back in 457 to elevate his son to *Caesar*, then evidently securing the succession through Ariadne's marriage to Zeno in 467. Still, for whatever reason, he had not taken the final step of appointing

¹²⁵ John of Antioch, frag. 206 (2) = FHG 4.616. On Indacus: PLRE 2.590–1, Indacus Cottunes. DEMANDT (n. 4) 767–8 thinks that Jordanes was still *magister militum per Orientem* until the end of 469, so that for this foray Zeno must have been *magister militum vacans*, between two regional military posts (Thrace and the East). It is simpler, and better, to follow LIPPOLD (n. 49) 156.

¹²⁶ John of Antioch, frag. 208 = FHG 4.617. DEMANDT (n. 4) 765 unnecessarily assumes that Jordanes was still *magister militum per Orientem* at the time and in fact lost his position as a result of this incident.

¹²⁷ Vict. Tonn. Chron. s.a. 470 (ed. HARTMANN, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 173a, 35 [12] = MGH AA 11, 188) with PLRE 2.842, Julius Patricius 15. The testimony of Victor is frequently overlooked or unjustifiably dismissed in dating this event to 468: ENSSLIN (n. 3) 1958; STEIN (n. 3) 360; DEMANDT (n. 4) 772; LANE FOX (n. 48) 192.

Zeno as *Caesar*. Theodore Lector seems to have discussed the elevation of Patricius at length. Since his history is lost, however, we are obliged to make sense of the traces of it which survive in later writers. According to Evagrius, repeated exactly by Theophanes, it was 'to gain the goodwill of Aspar' that Leo made this appointment.¹²⁸ In other words, the emperor might not like it but he now had to accept the reality of Aspar's authority. Zonaras reports that in the end Leo could resist Aspar's demand no longer (Zonaras 14.3 [122.8–10 BÜTTNER-WOBST]). The momentous appointment of Patricius as *Caesar* was clearly due to Aspar's persistent coercion.

That Leo was in no position to resist the demands of Aspar and Ardaburius is amply supported by episodes described in the *Vita* of Marcellus, written in the sixth century on the basis of reliable testimony. In fact all power was now so concentrated in their hands that they were effectively emperors themselves.¹²⁹ Much the same sentiment is echoed in the Syriac version of the *Life* of Simeon Stylites. It must have been around 470/1 that Leo made representations in Antioch, presumably to Zeno if he is the general mentioned, to have the remains of Simeon translated to Constantinople. At that time, according to Simeon's hagiographer, Aspar and Ardaburius 'were honoured like kings in the areas of their authority'.¹³⁰ Leo was now powerless to resist. It was probably under these circumstances that Leo was so overwhelmed by his misfortune that he 'not merely quitted the court – with phantoms haunting him as though he were an Orestes wanting in manhood – and dwelt elsewhere, but even came seriously to consider quitting the city itself . . .'. John the Lydian reports this anxious state of mind into which Leo had fallen without locating it at a particular time, except that it was after the expensive failure against the Vandals in Africa (Jo. Lyd. *De mag.* 3.44.3.).

The *Vita* of Marcellus, one of the 'Sleepless Monks' from the Stoudios monastery of St. John at Constantinople, provides two significant insights into the confidence of Aspar and his sons in the period from 469 to 471. The first is an incident concerning a certain John who had incurred the wrath of Ardaburius for some unspecified reason. The emperor was too powerless to protect him so he sought refuge in Marcellus' monastery. Ardaburius hunted him down, and had a contingent of his own men besiege the monastery, repeating the vilest threats, but the holy man's protection proved decisive in the end (*ibid.*). The other incident originated in the popular resentment aroused at Constantinople

¹²⁸ Evagrius, HE 2. 16: ἵνα τὴν Ἀσπαρος εὐνοίαν κτήσεται; Theophanes AM 5963 [117.14 DE BOOR]: ἵνα τὴν Ἀσπαρος εὐνοίαν ἔχῃ.

¹²⁹ *Vita Marcelli* 32, ed. G. DAGRON, AB 86, 1968, 314–6.

¹³⁰ *Vita Sim. Styl.* 125. It possibly refers to an earlier period when Ardaburius was *magister militum per Orientem* but the request for the transfer must have taken place sometime between the deaths of Simeon (469) and Leo (474); cf. LANE FOX (n. 48) 193–5.

by the enforced appointment of Patricius as *Caesar* and his marriage to Leontia in 470. As the *Vita* of Marcellus notes, the *Caesar* was a 'second emperor' having all the trappings and apparel of an emperor except the crown. A *Caesar* became sole emperor on the death of the *Augustus*, no-one else daring to take precedence or to challenge him.¹³¹ Fearing that the death of the ageing and already infirm Leo would leave them with an Arian emperor the orthodox populace, together with the patriarch Gennadius and Marcellus who left the monastery on this occasion, marched from Hagia Sophia to the hippodrome in order to voice their protest. For hours they shouted their hopes for an orthodox emperor, that Patricius would not be made *Caesar* and would not marry the emperor's daughter. In the end Leo assured the crowd that Patricius had forsaken his Arianism (*Vita Marcelli* 34, ed. DAGRON, 316–8). The essential focus of this exchange is also reflected in Theophanes, probably relying on Priscus, who notes that Patricius was made *Caesar* only after he had agreed to abandon his Arianism and pledge his loyalty to Leo (Theophanes AM 5961 [116.20–4 DE BOOR]). More detail, but clearly derived from writers such as Priscus, is provided by Zonaras. He informs us that, when Leo announced that Patricius would be *Caesar* after all, the senate was disturbed and roused the people to revolt. Their real concern, according to Zonaras, was the fear that when the imperial power passed to the family of Aspar the Arians would inflict greater atrocities on the orthodox than they had done earlier, in the reigns of Constantius II and Valens. So the clergy, the monks and the people, 'whoever felt correctly about the faith', implored the emperor to appoint a *Caesar* who was orthodox. 'By both his words and his deeds', concludes Zonaras, 'the emperor quelled the insurrection' (Zonaras 14.5–7 [122.11–123.8 BÜTTNER-WOBST]). Zonaras does not go any further. He does not say that Patricius was in fact made *Caesar*, nor that he agreed to renounce his Arian adherence.

The doctrinal attachment of Aspar and his family was a serious block to their advancement. Progressively during Leo's reign Arians and Arianism were outlawed. Unlike his predecessors, Leo was strongly hostile to Arians. He banned their churches and any congregation of Arians.¹³² That Patricius was an Alan or Goth, or the son of one, was never raised as a disqualification for the throne. Doctrinal allegiance was a far more significant obstacle. Aspar had challenged the doctrinal policy of the emperor and patriarch on at least one occasion (Theo-

¹³¹ *Vita Marcelli* 34 (DAGRON 316–7): 'Ὁ δὲ τοῦτο ἔχων τὸ ἀξίωμα δευτέρως ἐστὶν βασιλεὺς, ἀλουργίδα κατὰχρυσον καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τῆς βασιλείας παράσημα ἐνδεδυμένος δίκαια μόνου τοῦ στεφάνου – ὅπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ Φαραῶ καὶ τοῦ Ἰωσήφ ἀνηκόαμεν. Ὁ αἰσάρ τοίνυν, καὶ ἄχρι περιεστὶν ὁ βασιλεὺς πάντα κοινῇ πράττων μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ τελευτήσαντος μόνος τὴν βασιλείαν κρατεῖ, μηδενὸς δὲ πρὸ αὐτοῦ μηδὲ σὺν αὐτῷ τολμῶντος ἐκείνην λαβεῖν.'

¹³² Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.41 (295 THURN = 372.3–5 DINDORF); Chron. Pasch. 597.10–12 (DINDORF).

phanes AM 5952 [112.3–5 DE BOOR]), concerning the banishment of Timothy (the Cat) in 459, and is thought to be behind a law of 457 granting heretics a decent burial (Cod. Just. 1.5.9; cf. SCOTT [n. 4] 68–9). He had also been prepared to argue with Leo in favour of the appointment of Arians. By 470 Leo was more firmly opposed to Arianism. Moreover, he had marshalled to his cause new and exclusive forms of spiritual authority in the shape of Daniel and the relics of Simeon the Stylite, as well as the Virgin's robe in the chapel at Blachernai. If Aspar still wished his son to be *Caesar* then the son would have no option but to declare himself orthodox.

Now that the imperial succession was at least assured because Patricius was *Caesar*, there remained the final step of cementing the relationship with the family of Leo through marriage. Aspar had been planning for his son to marry a daughter of Leo since his coming to the throne in 457. As we have seen, there is evidence to suggest that Aspar's will was continually thwarted not only by Leo but also public opinion, the clergy, monks and people of Constantinople.¹³³ Thirteen years later, Aspar's plan was to come to fruition. Patricius was to marry not Ariadne, espoused to Zeno since 466/7, but her younger sister Leontia who must have been no more than thirteen at the time. Now, Leontia is never actually named as the daughter-in-law of Aspar by any of the writers who mention this marriage (Vita Marcelli, Marcellinus, Jordanes, Malalas). Rather, it is inferred from the fact that since Ariadne was already married to Zeno by this time then it can only have been Leontia.¹³⁴ Of Patricius as *Caesar* almost nothing is known. There are, for instance, no coins of Leo *Augustus* and Patricius *Caesar* which may well be a sign of reluctance on Leo's part to permit this privilege.¹³⁵ The only other action of Patricius *Caesar* was a journey to Alexandria where he was received with all the pageantry accorded a *Caesar*.¹³⁶

¹³³ This information is contained in the *De insidiis* extracts of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and attributed to Malalas but may be from elsewhere. It is also possible that it does not so much refer to events over a long period of Leo's reign but just that episode relating to Patricius' appointment to *Caesar* described by *vita Marcelli* and Zonaras.

¹³⁴ The alternative – that Ariadne married Zeno in 466/7 but was divorced from him in order to marry Patricius in 470, then re-married to Zeno after Patricius' demise in 471 – has its serious advocates beginning with SEECK (n. 3) 489 who persuaded himself that Leontia was simply too young to be anyone's bride in 470, cf. ENSSLIN (n. 3) 1948 and LANE FOX (n. 48) 192 but not DEMANDT (n. 4) 773–4. This is an unnecessary and unlikely scenario.

¹³⁵ The claim of GRIERSON – MAYS (n. 43) 162–3 that certain coins of Leo with an apparently redundant C in the reverse legend signify Patricius as *Caesar* cannot be sustained (cf. KENT [n. 43] 102, 109).

¹³⁶ Theophanes AM 5961 (116.20–3 DE BOOR); Cedrenus 613.18–21 (BEKKER). Theophanes probably obtained this story from his local Alexandrian document (C. MANGO – R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 1997, lxxviii–lxxx). The purpose of the journey is not specified. SCHWARTZ (n. 48) 182 may be correct in suggesting that it was designed to show that the Vandal defeat had not diminished the empire's strength.

Meanwhile, Zeno and his family remained in Antioch. In journeying to Antioch, Zeno had been accompanied by a monk named Peter the Fuller with whose anti-Chalcedonian views he sympathised. After arriving there Peter began to identify and encourage the anti-Chalcedonians who would challenge the pro-Chalcedonian patriarch Martyrius. Eventually he invited monks into Antioch to promote his views more forcefully, especially his famous addition to the Trishagion, 'who was crucified for us', suggesting that God and not just Christ had suffered in the flesh. As Peter's following grew, with Zeno's blessing, the patriarch Martyrius sought the support of the emperor and travelled to Constantinople where he was well received by both Leo and the patriarch Gennadius. In Martyrius' absence Peter had himself consecrated patriarch of Antioch which led to the resignation of Martyrius on his return. He was alarmed at the civil unrest and violence and Zeno's evident support for it.¹³⁷ Shortly after, doubtless with fury against Peter, Leo invoked his exile from Antioch but he fled on receiving the news. On the same day that Peter was sent into exile, 1 June 471, the emperor sent a new law to Zeno forbidding monks to leave their monasteries and go to Antioch or elsewhere. Nor were they allowed to discuss doctrinal matters with the people, nor to incite to rebellion the 'simple minds of the populace' (Cod. Just. 1.3.29, with SCARCELLA [n. 103] 276–82). The emperor's attitude to Zeno who had condoned Peter's behaviour is not stated but he is unlikely to have regarded him kindly over this development.

From Antioch, in 470 or 471, Zeno was forced to confront an invasion of the Tzani into Roman Armenia (John of Antioch, frag. 206.2 = FHG 4.617), but we hear of no other military activity in the East at this time. Meanwhile, at Constantinople during the absence of Zeno, Aspar and Ardaburius were establishing a new stranglehold over Leo. They finally succeeded in pegging back the independence and advantage the emperor had previously acquired for the period 465–69 (cf. SEECK [n. 22] 609). There was, for them, the additional advantage that not only was Zeno far away from court but so was Basiliscus. It was probably from his internal exile at Herakleia, as *magister militum praesentalis*, that he now led a new expedition against the Vandals which reached Sicily. An overland expedition under Heracleius and the Isaurian Marsus marched from Egypt to Tripoli to link up with Basiliscus' forces. Before too long a settlement was reached with the Vandal king, Gaiseric, probably in the summer of 471 with Roman forces close to Carthage.¹³⁸ It had been precipitated by Leo's desire to recall Basiliscus and his troops in order to strengthen his hand in dealing with the increased threat

¹³⁷ Theodore Anagnostes, HE Epit. 390–2 (109.19–110.16 HANSEN); Cedrenus 611.20–612.10 (BEKKER); Nic. Call. HE 15.28 (PG 147.81–4) with W. H. C. FRENCH, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 1972, 166 and 168, but claiming that Zeno was in Antioch as *magister* as early as 467.

¹³⁸ Following the account of COURTOIS (n. 97) 204.

from Aspar and his son.¹³⁹ The settlement with Gaiseric was proclaimed as a victory in both east and west. Basiliscus the *magister militum praesentalis* who was duly honoured in a statue set up for him in Philippopolis (PLRE 2.212, Basiliscus 1, with BERSANETTI [n. 47] 344–5).

8. *The 'Butchery' of 471*

The creation of a *Caesar* for Leo was a vital and irrevocable step. For several months Patricius enjoyed his exalted position as the emperor's son-in-law and designated heir. Doubtless his father Aspar was pleased to have fulfilled his cherished goal. Yet, for both Aspar and Patricius, it came to a sudden and unexpected end the following year. The events leading up to Leo's decision to finally despatch Aspar and his sons in a single action are very unclear. Speculation is unavoidable. Although absent from Constantinople, Basiliscus and Zeno, together or separately, may have emboldened Leo to strike. They will each have had their own loyal allies at court and a common foe in Aspar. Beyond that, their interests may not have coincided and neither may have enjoyed Leo's full support.

Candidus, the writer closest to the event in question and quick to identify the fortunes of his fellow-Isaurians, explains how Ardaburius was discovered trying to lure the Isaurians over to his side which ultimately only aggravated the intense personal hostility between the emperor and Aspar's family. It was sufficient to cause Leo to decide on murder (Candidus, frag. 1 [466/7 BLOCKLEY] = Photius, Bibl. 79). Aspar and Ardaburius were planning an usurpation, so John Malalas reports.¹⁴⁰ Writing a little later in Constantinople, Procopius (Wars 3.6.27) claims that Leo feared that Aspar and Ardaburius were plotting to kill him, obviously in order to expedite the promotion of Patricius to *Augustus*. The notion that Aspar was conspiring to kill Leo when neither Basiliscus nor Zeno was in Constantinople to defend the emperor, or foil the conspiracy, is further elaborated by Zonaras. Again, it needs to be recalled that Zonaras drew his information on Leo's reign from Priscus and others. 'Some say', so Zonaras reports, 'that Leo feared Aspar and his sons would take advantage of his grandson's age,

¹³⁹ COURTOIS (n. 97) 204. These events are clearly connected by both Theophanes AM 5963 (117.9–11 DE BOOR), AM 5964 (117.29–30 DE BOOR), presumably originating with Priscus (cf. BLOCKLEY [n. 14] 76–7, 212 n. 37), and Paul the Deacon, Hist. Rom. 15.2, possibly also originating in an eastern chronicle (cf. W. GOFFART, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, 1988, 352). The context is explained more fully in an unpublished paper by F.M. CLOVER (summary in Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts 1976, 2–3 at <http://www.byzconf.org/1976abstracts.html>). I am grateful to MIKE CLOVER for this and other assistance with an earlier draft of this paper.

¹⁴⁰ Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.40 (294 THURN = 371.9–372.2 DINDORF) with the additional sentence from the *De insidiis* extract (see E. and M. JEFFREYS – SCOTT [n. 123] ~ THURN 294); followed by the *Chronicon Paschale* 296.17 (DINDORF): *τυραννίδα μελετήσαντα*.

so he killed them» (Zonaras 14.29 [126.30–127.4 BÜTTNER-WOBST]). Earlier Zonaras had noted that, sometime after the installation of Patricius, Leo discovered that Aspar and Ardaburius were conspiring against his throne (Zonaras 14.8 [123.8–10 BÜTTNER-WOBST]). Finally, there is Leo's own admission in a letter to the western emperor Anthemius, intercepted en route, that: «I put to death Aspar and Ardaburius so that nobody should oppose my orders».¹⁴¹ Leo's motivation was intensely personal. He was not driven to action by «un mouvement germanophobe, entretenu sans doute par le cour» (STEIN [n. 3] 360).

Clearly, then, Leo felt threatened and desperate in the aftermath of the installation of his new *Caesar*. The initiative now lay once more with Aspar, not Leo, and the fear of a conspiracy to do away with the reigning emperor as a means of putting the succession beyond the slightest doubt is very probable.¹⁴² There may be a kernel of truth in the story told only by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos: when Leo won a guarantee from Aspar and Ardaburius that they would renounce their heresy, and refrain from plotting against him, Ariadne (not Leontia) was married to Patricius. Since they did not hold back from plotting, one day in the hippodrome the people turned on them. Aspar and son fled along with their military support to St. Euphemia's at Chalcedon. Leo sent the patriarch Gennadius to deal with them and they agreed to come out only if Leo guaranteed their safety. He did so and prepared to dine with them. However, Zeno was in the palace and decapitated them. This story is a blend of fact, fiction and speculation but it does raise the question of Zeno's interlude in Chalcedon.

For the months and weeks immediately prior to the assassination in 471 there is no information. All that is known is that Leo decided to take the initiative against his overlords. Given Aspar's position at court, and the persistent plotting of Ardaburius, Leo will have had to be extremely careful in devising their termination. Theophanes, again probably from Priscus, reports that Leo concluded peace with the Vandals in order to recall Basiliscus, Heracleius and Marsus whom he needed in the showdown with Aspar.¹⁴³ It was perhaps now too that Zeno was recalled from Antioch. He was still there on 1 June when a law was addressed to him (Cod. Just. 1.3.29). At same stage thereafter Zeno travelled to Chalcedon presumably on the pretext of essential imperial business. At the time of the actual murder of Aspar and Ardaburius, Zeno was waiting expectantly at Chalcedon (v. Dan. Styl. 65 [Zeno] and BAYNES [n. 78] 400–1), while Basiliscus was also not far away at Herakleia.

¹⁴¹ Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.45 (298 THURN = 374.10–11 DINDORF). For the authenticity of this story: J. B. BURY, EHR 1, 1886, 507–9.

¹⁴² It is accepted, for instance, by STEIN (n. 3) 361.

¹⁴³ Theophanes AM 5963 (117.9–11 DE BOOR) and LIPPOLD (n. 49) 157.

The fullest account of these events is provided by John Malalas who writes as follows:

During his reign he suspected that Aspar the patrician was planning a rebellion, being the leader of the senate, and so he put him to death inside the palace, together with his sons Ardabourios and [the *Caesar*] Patricius who were also senators, at a *conventus* and mutilated their bodies [throwing them from the palace into panniers]. A riot began in Constantinople, for the victims had a band of Goths and *comites* and other followers, and a large number of supporters [whom he called *foederati*, from which are derived the *annonae foederaticae*]. Then a Goth who was one of Aspar's associates, a *comes* named Ostrys, entered the palace with some other Goths, shooting with their bows. A battle broke out between the *excubitores* and Ostrys, and there were many casualties. He was surrounded and saw that he was beaten, so he fled, taking Aspar's concubine, a beautiful [and rich] Gothic girl, who escaped with him on horseback to Thrace, where he plundered [many] estates. The Byzantines chanted an acclamation about him, 'the dead man has no friend – except Ostrys'.¹⁴⁴

The assassination of Aspar and sons was plainly well-planned. As part of the plan, Ermanaric, the youngest son of Aspar, had been deliberately lured away to Chalcedon. Zeno could guarantee protection and a safe onward journey.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Aspar and Ardaburius were cut down inside the palace by eunuchs, that is, the *cubicularii* of the sacred bed-chamber. Obviously Aspar and Ardaburius had no reason to suspect what for them must have been a routine invitation. They were in and out of the palace all the time. On this occasion they were to attend a *conventus* or meeting of senators.¹⁴⁶ The whole incident may have been just as much a surprise to Aspar's friends and supporters too. Aspar and Ardaburius died there and then. The *Caesar* Patricius was wounded but apparently escaped to safety although he is never heard of again.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps this sce-

¹⁴⁴ Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.40 (294–5 THURN = 371.9–372.2 DINDORF), trs. E. and M. JEFFREYS – SCOTT (n. 123) 204–5, but incorporating supplementary material contained in the De insidiis version of Malalas (details in: E. and M. JEFFREYS – SCOTT [n. 123] 204–5 ~ 294–5 THURN).

¹⁴⁵ Theophanes AM 5964 (117.33–118.2 DE BOOR) with LIPPOLD (n. 49) 157; cf. SEECK (n. 3) 370; STEIN (n. 3) 360.

¹⁴⁶ Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.40 (294 THURN = 371.12 DINDORF), using the Latin term correctly as he normally does with such terms. On *conventus*: JONES (n. 3) 505.

¹⁴⁷ Candidus, frag. 1 (467 BLOCKLEY) = Photius, Bibl. 79 and Nic. Call. HE 15.27 say that he escaped. However, all other writers say he was killed. All that Photius says is that he survived and 'lived on' (διδασθήναι καὶ διέζησεν). Perhaps he did live some time afterwards, say, months or a couple of years, but later died from the injuries sustained. If any store can be put on the words of Leo himself the following year in a letter to Ricimer, that is, 'I put to death Aspar and Ardaburius' (Jo. Mal. Chron. 14.45 [298 THURN = 374.10–11 DINDORF]), then Patricius may still have been alive in 472.

nario, sparing the emperor's son-in-law and heir, was also part of the plot. The immediate reaction in Constantinople was retribution. Aspar's closest allies were a contingent under Ostrys. There was considerable unrest on the streets of Constantinople, as one might expect.

Ostrys escaped, presumably by sea rather than on horseback through the long and crowded thoroughfare leading to the city walls. He headed into Thrace plundering <many estates>, probably the extensive imperial estates close to Constantinople. Ostrys was a *comes rei militaris* in Thrace in 467 and maybe still in 471. It is possible that he just happened to be in Constantinople at the time, or he might have been based there. Also roused were some of the Gothic *foederati* which must mean a contingent of the *foederati* under Aspar's nephew, Theodoric Strabo, who had long been settled in Thrace.¹⁴⁸ They were challenged by the troops of Armatas, *magister militum* for Thrace and nephew of the empress Verina and her brother Basiliscus, who had the Goths' hands slashed off.¹⁴⁹ In the final analysis, Leo does not seem to have been seriously threatened and the unrest was evidently short-lived. That is probably an indication that the troops and supporters of the emperor easily reclaimed the streets of Constantinople. If there was a large Gothic faction behind Aspar and his sons then it melted away at this crucial point. Ostrys was the only one prepared immediately to take up the cause of Aspar if that is the point of the acclamation <the dead man has no friend – except Ostrys>. Leo was now desperate enough to support anything which promised liberation from the dominance of Aspar. However, the operation was planned, it looks as if both Basiliscus and Zeno were part of it. Writing in the mid-550s, Jordanes certainly thought Zeno was implicated (Jordanes, *Romana* 338: *Zenonis generi sui instinctu*). Before long, both Basiliscus and Zeno reappeared. They had been placed in range and were soon in Constantinople once more. The *Vita* of Daniel is very clear that Zeno did not return to Constantinople until after the deaths of Aspar and Ardaburius, and this would appear to be confirmed by Theophanes.¹⁵⁰

The aftermath of Leo's <butchery> was not necessarily smooth for the emperor but there was no concerted resistance from any <Gothic faction>. Theodoric Strabo immediately claimed his uncle Aspar's mantle but it was Leo who kept the upper

¹⁴⁸ R. SCHARF, *Foederati. Von der völkerrechtlichen Kategorie zur byzantinischen Truppengattung*, 2001, 51–61.

¹⁴⁹ Malchus, *Byzantiaka frag.* 9.4 (416/7 BLOCKLEY) = Suda A 3968 with PLRE 2.148, Armatas.

¹⁵⁰ V. Dan. Styl. 66: καὶ οὕτως ἐγένετο θαρσύναντα Ζήνωνα περᾶσαι ἀπὸ Χαλκηδόνος ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸ παλάτιον πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Λέοντα; Theophanes AM 5964 (117.30–1 DE BOOR): καὶ Ζήνων ἀπὸ Χαλκηδόνος, ὃς ἦν ἐκεῖ τὸν Ἀσπαρος ἀναμένων φόνον. SCHWARTZ (n. 48) 184 considered that hatred of Zeno was <so intense and widespread at Constantinople that he did not re-enter the city until after his son Leo was made <co-emperor in 473>. This may be so, in which case it will have occurred after he was made *Caesar* in 472 (for the date: CROKE [n. 81] 563–7).

hand. Immediately, he sent a court official (*silentarius*) named Pelagius¹⁵¹ to Theodoric and the Goths in Thrace. As reported by Malchus, it was all very formal and friendly: 'The barbarians gladly received him and in turn sent envoys to the Emperor, wishing to be friends of the Romans'. There was no spontaneous Gothic revolt at Aspar's death. Ostrys had fled to the Goths for safety, not to organise a revolt. Leo and the Goths commenced a normal diplomatic process with all its attendant courtesies and its protracted timetable. What is clear is that the process will have begun just after Aspar's death. Malchus explains why finalising the agreement with the Goths dragged on for eighteen months or so. Leo rejected the Goths' initial proposals, whereupon Theodoric launched an attack and blockaded nearby Arcadiopolis and Philippi. Eventually the Goths realised that assuring their permanent food supply had to be their priority. So, by now in 473, they finalised an agreement with the Romans which included the appointment of Theodoric Strabo as *magister militum praesentalis*.¹⁵² Leo must have left the position vacant until he had secured the terms of Theodoric's agreement. He was prepared to appoint Theodoric in 471. It was not Leo's reluctance which delayed the appointment until 473.

Being a close relative Theodoric had sought Aspar's inheritance, land for his people in Thrace and Aspar's post as *magister militum praesentalis*. Leo could not agree to the first two requests at the time but did accept immediately that he could replace Aspar as *magister militum* provided he agreed to become the emperor's friend and not seek to undermine him. In other words, having done away with the power and proximity of Aspar, Leo was prepared to allow Aspar's nephew into exactly the same powerful position at court. Such acquiescence highlights both the extent to which Leo's antipathy to Aspar was personal, as implied by Candidus, and the fact that he was not seeking to eliminate Gothic influence or a 'Gothic faction' (Candidus, frag. 1 [466/7 BLOCKLEY] = Photius, Bibl. 79). It was a personal power struggle and Leo had resorted to the desperate solution of eliminating his rival. His fears of a conspiracy may have been well-founded, but it seems that the sensitive issue of the doctrinal allegiance of Patricius, possibly Aspar too, was paramount. Several later writers sum up the 'butchery' as the elimination of dangerous Arian heretics rather than the removal of Goths or a Gothic threat.¹⁵³ As for Aspar's estate, Leo seems to have confiscated it for church building purposes.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ PLRE 2.857, Pelagius 2, cf. 1058 (Telogius) assuming with PLRE that Malchus meant 'Pelagius' for 'Telogius' (frag. 2 [406/7 BLOCKLEY] = Exc. de leg. Gent. 2).

¹⁵² Malchus, Byzantiaka, frag. 2 (406/7 BLOCKLEY) = Exc. de leg. Gent. 2, with HEATHER (n. 21) 264–71.

¹⁵³ Marcellinus, Chron. s.a. 471 (MGH AA 11, 90): *Aspar ... Arrianus cum Arriana prole*; Cedrenus 607.13 (BEKKER): ὡς Ἀρειανῶς ὄντα.

¹⁵⁴ Anonymus Banduri (PG 122.1236C). In doing so he was possibly following the dictates of his own legislation (Cod. Just. 1.5.10).

The slaughter of Aspar and Ardaburius in 471 represented the culmination of a protracted struggle for succession which dominated and shaped imperial policy and behaviour for most of the time since Leo came to the throne, with Aspar's connivance, in February 457. Underlying Leo's decision to liquidate two of the most powerful public figures at Constantinople was the fear that their growing influence threatened the secure transition from one reign to another within the family of Leo. In 471 Leo hoped that he would be succeeded by his son-in-law Zeno, then *magister militum per Orientem* in Antioch. Yet the cause of Zeno was bleak because the emperor already had an heir-apparent in Patricius *Caesar*, son of Aspar. It was an appointment Leo had resisted unsuccessfully and doubtless resented. Growing increasingly infirm, he evidently feared that time was running out. Suspecting a conspiracy on the part of Aspar, probably his own demise and replacement as *Augustus* by Patricius, Leo was impelled to drastic pre-emptive action. The eclipse of Aspar paved the way for the return of Zeno, Ariadne and their son to Constantinople and the eventual elevation not of Zeno but of the emperor's grandson as Leo II. It also brought Basiliscus back to court.¹⁵⁵

9. *Ethnicity: Goths and Isaurians*

Ethnic solidarity and a quest for ethnic supremacy have been taken to be the factors motivating personal and political action during the reign of Leo I, so that the emergence of Zeno in 465/6 has signified the deliberate creation of a new ethnic power-bloc to balance that of Aspar. Such an interpretation is belied, however, by a careful analysis of the key episodes considered here. An underlying consideration, the structure and ethnic diversity of the Roman army at the time, also suggests that the factional interpretation is misplaced. Isaurians, for instance, were not foreigners or aliens but provincial Romans in the military service of the empire. Indeed, being 'Isaurian' never constituted a particular linguistic or ethnic identity at all. Rather it was an indication of belonging to the Roman province of Isauria or from the broader geographical region, an affiliation highlighted and then caricatured as a result of Zeno's imperial rule.¹⁵⁶ Isaurians had long had a reputation for being tough and separatist mountain fighters. Zeno was part of the new Isaurian provincial elite which had become connected by marriage to the aristocracy of the imperial capital. He simply followed a traditional career path for Isaurians. It is no surprise to find him among a unit of

¹⁵⁵ Nic. Call. HE 15.27 (PG 147.80C); cf. BURY (n. 3) 337: 'he led a life of retirement at Herakleia on the Propontis, until he appeared on the scene of public life again after Leo's death'.

¹⁵⁶ W.D. BURGESS, *AncW* 21, 1990, 109–21 and, for the impact of Zeno on the notion of an 'Isaurian', ELTON (n. 29, 2000) 293–307.

the emperor's military staff, the *protectores domestici*. Nor is it surprising that he should be involved in military action as *comes domesticorum* in 467, as *magister militum per Thraciam* in 469 and as *magister militum per Orientem* in 469–71. Zeno did not have a large contingent of Isaurians, nor were the *excubitores* solely or mainly Isaurian.

That ethnic solidarity always prevailed is patently untrue. There were occasions when Goths fought against Goths; for instance, Aspar and Ostrys against Goths in Thrace in 467, not to mention 'Aspar's men' being under the control of a Hun, Chelcal. Likewise, Isaurians could be found in battle against Isaurians, as Zeno was against Indacus late in 469. In both cases it was a contingent of the emperor Leo's army fighting against a particular enemy. On these occasions ethnicity or provincial origin was plainly subsidiary to imperial service and policy. Nor do contemporary and later writers divide the historical actors into neat ethnic compartments. While Candidus the Isaurian labels Zeno an Isaurian, Priscus (at least in the extant fragments) refers only to Zeno as Leo's son-in-law, never as Isaurian. In the *Vita* of Daniel he is referred to as Isaurian by birth but that is all. Theodore Lector, albeit only available in summary form, never mentions Zeno as Isaurian. Of later writers, the *Chronicon Paschale* never mentions Zeno during Leo's reign but only introduces him subsequently as 'Zeno the Isaurian' (*Chron. Pasch.* 599.12 [DINDORF]), Cedrenus makes no reference to Zeno being Isaurian, while in introducing his sole reign Zonaras says that 'Zeno was characteristic of his nation'. In brief, the writers on whom we mainly depend for our knowledge of Zeno's career in the reign of Leo do not indicate that his Isaurian background was the governing factor in his policy and behaviour, let alone that his promotion and authority rested on his command of an exclusively Isaurian contingent.

So too, the few incidents which have been taken as the signs of the 'Isaurian faction' asserting its weight have been significantly over-rated. There is no testimony during Zeno's emergence at court, nor subsequently, that he led a large and threatening contingent of fellow-Isaurians. In fact, virtually all the known Isaurians can be traced to three families (BURGESS [n. 7] 117). Not only is there scant evidence of an armed Isaurian faction in Leo's reign, but hardly any high-ranking Isaurians are known from then. There is only the general Marsus who played a role in the campaign in Africa (PLRE 2.728–9, Marsus 2) and Illus who evidently held some office under Leo (*Patria Constantinopoleos* 3.33 [PREGER 2.227]; cf. ELTON [n. 7] 400). Most of the snippets of documentation cited to support the notion that Zeno initiated an Isaurian ascendancy at Constantinople from 465/6 apply to a later period. The role of Isaurians at the court of Zeno himself, as sole emperor from late 476, is quite another story altogether.

Similarly, the 'Gothic faction' in the reign of Leo also dissolves on close inspection. Instead, there are reports of Gothic contingents in action at different points, as there had been in the past. Most weight, however, is given to Malalas' account of the events surrounding Aspar's murder. What Malalas says is that

Aspar had a military contingent of Goths (Γοτθικὴν χεῖρα), presumably one of the many such units in the Roman army and one of the many under his command as *magister militum praesentalis*. They were not a private army or a Gothic war-band maintained by Aspar to enforce the will of the <Gothic faction>. Damascius writing in the early sixth century about the cloud-seer Anthusa says that Aspar was a Gothic leader (τὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν Γότθων: Damascius, in Photius, Bibl. 242.69 [HENRY 6.22]). Damascius may not have troubled himself too much over such a description which is a stylised one required to interpret a cloud shaped like the silhouette of a Goth. As *magister* Aspar was bound to find himself occasionally with a unit of Goths or others. He had a range of such units under his regular command (SCOTT [n. 4] 61 with n. 10), but so did Zeno. At some stage Aspar would have commanded Isaurians and Zeno would have commanded Goths but they were all Roman soldiers.¹⁵⁷ When news emerged from the palace of the slaying of Aspar and Ardaburius, Ostrys, so it would appear, had under his command a contingent of Goths plus many others. The addition of *foederati* is probably an indication that Theodoric Strabo also arrived in Constantinople with some troops. Again this is insufficient to support the notion of a final showdown between two factions. It was a struggle between generals, as well as between individual generals and their emperor (KAEGI [n. 10] 32).

10. *Dynasty: Emperors and contenders*

Leo I had owed his throne to the dominant position of Aspar. At his installation in 457 Aspar was the senior court general and his son Ardaburius held military authority throughout the eastern provinces. Their family and associates continued to enjoy the highest offices and honours for several years but gradually Leo began to assert his own independent authority as emperor. Open conflict with Aspar occurred over certain appointments to high office (the consulship for 466, the City Prefecture at some stage), over how to deal with Rome's enemies (not to support the Sciri against the Goths in 466; not to mount a campaign against the Vandals), and over matters of religious policy. The most serious conflict, however, running right from 457 to 470 was over the promotion of Aspar's son as Leo's heir-designate. Leo had an advance understanding with Aspar that as emperor he would seal their relationship by marrying his daughter Ariadne to Aspar's son Patricius, then would make Patricius his *Caesar* and heir. Before long, Leo obviously preferred to retain the prized imperial succession for his own family. The birth of his own son in 463 proved a short-lived solution, while

¹⁵⁷ For example, one of the palatine auxiliary units (the *Felices Theodosiani Isauri*) was under the command of the *magister militum praesentalis* (Notitia Dignitatum. Or. 5.66 [SEECK 14]).

the discrediting of Aspar's eldest son Ardaburius in 465 brought Leo more time. Gradually, as Ariadne grew closer to marriageable age, Aspar became more impatient. Her betrothal in 466/7 to Ardaburius' nemesis, Zeno, followed by the appointment of the emperor's brother-in-law Basiliscus as *magister militum praesentalis* in 467 must have threatened Aspar. He now had not only one of Leo's family as equal, at least in terms of military rank and authority, but had also lost the agreed opportunity for a marriage alliance with the emperor's family.

Aspar's eventual response to both these impediments to his plans and expectations, either by careful planning on his part or accidents of circumstance which he shrewdly exploited, was to have his dynastic rivals banished. By mid-469 neither Basiliscus nor Zeno had direct access to the emperor and his court, the former operating as *magister militum praesentalis* from Herakleia in Thrace following the failure of the Vandal expedition, the latter being forced into fleeing to Antioch where he was *magister militum per Orientem*. In both cases it is Aspar and Ardaburius who stand accused of engineering the events which led to the successive exiles of the senior generals in 469. The power vacuum created by the absence of Basiliscus and Zeno presented Aspar with the opportunity to reassert his authority and his control over the succession. So the isolated emperor Leo had no option but to agree in 470 to both the elevation of Patricius as *Caesar* and imperial heir, and to his marriage with the emperor's daughter Leontia. The only concession extracted, and in response to intense public pressure at that, was the conversion of Patricius from Arianism to orthodoxy.

The struggle between Leo and Aspar which led to Aspar's eclipse was not so much about competing ethnic groups or factions. Rather it was more about the primal dynastic impulse of retaining power and securing succession, a traditional concern of imperial families and their rivals in every era. It abounds with the timeless motivating factors of self-interest and self-preservation, not that of larger factional interests or policies on behalf of a particular ethnic group or region. Religion was a motivator, a binder and excluder. Leo's strategy was to cultivate sources of authority, spiritual and political, from which Aspar was excluded and to promote his wife's brother and other associates. Leo slowly built his own power-base but it was not exclusively dependent on 'hardy Isaurian mountaineers'. For fourteen years Aspar and Leo manoeuvred persistently towards the goal of securing and maintaining power and influence. In the end, it was a struggle of individuals, both for themselves and on behalf of their family's interests. Only with the assassination of Aspar and Ardaburius in the latter half of 471 was a resolution achieved. The house of Leo was now assured.

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