

# ARBAZACIUS, FRAVITTA, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ISAURIA CA A.D. 396–404

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A FRAGMENT OF EUNAPIUS preserved in the *Suda* describes the origin of Arbazacius as follows:

Ἀρβαζάκιος, Ἰσαυρος, ἐπὶ Ἀρκαδίου τοῦ βασιλέως, ὃν Ἀρπαζάκιον ἐκάλουν διὰ τὸ πλεονεκτικόν. ἦν μὲν γὰρ ἐξ Ἀρμενίας, τοῖς τρισὶν ἅμα συγκατελιημένος πάθεσιν . . .<sup>1</sup>

The claims both that Arbazacius was an Isaurian and that he was from Armenia also do not seem easily reconcilable. On the basis of this passage, the standard prosopography claims of Arbazacius that “he was of Isaurian descent but was born in Armenia.”<sup>2</sup> Yet there seems no good reason to exclude the contrary interpretation, that he was of Armenian descent but was born in Isauria. Unfortunately, our literary sources preserve relatively little information concerning Arbazacius’ career against which to test these opposed interpretations. All we know of him is that he led the Roman force which pacified Isauria ca 404, but the exact nature of his appointment remains unknown. Zosimus describes him as στρατηγός,<sup>3</sup> which has been variously interpreted as *comes rei militaris* or *magister militum*,<sup>4</sup> while the chronicler Marcellinus describes him simply as *legatus*.<sup>5</sup> Although Marcellinus dates his appointment to 405, Zosimus claims that he avoided prosecution for his activity in Isauria, or lack of it, by giving part of his plunder to the empress (*HN* 5.25.3). This provides a *terminus ante quem* for his activity there since the empress Eudoxia died of a miscarriage on 6 October 404 (*PLRE* 2.410). He further claims that Arbazacius remained at Constantinople in order to enjoy the remainder of his plunder, which suggests

<sup>1</sup> *Suda* A 3752; fr. 71.1 in Blockley 1983: 112, whose translation runs: “Arbazacius the Isaurian, during the reign of the Emperor Arcadius. They called him Harpazacius [“Grabber”] because of his greed. He was from Armenia and was a prisoner of three vices . . .”

<sup>2</sup> *PLRE* 2.127–128; alternatively, Blockley (1983: 148) claims that “his epithet ‘Isaurian’ could derive not from descent but from close association with that area.” However, a comparison with the entry for the general Arbogastes (*Suda* A 81: Ἀβρογάστης, Φράγγος, ὅς κατὰ ἀλκὴν σώματος καὶ θυμοῦ τραχύτητα φλογεῖδης ἦν, . . .) suggests that “Isaurian” should refer to the perceived descent of Arbazacius rather than his military activity there.

<sup>3</sup> Zos. *HN* 5.25.2: τούτων ἀπαγγελθέντων Ἀρβαζάκιος ἐκπέμπεται στρατηγός ὡς δὴ τοῖς ἐν Παμφυλίᾳ πράγμασι πονοῦσιν ἐπικουρήσων. On widespread raiding by Isaurians in 404 in particular, see also Joh. Chrys. *Ep.* 14.4.

<sup>4</sup> He is tentatively described as a *comes rei militaris* at *PLRE* 2.128; Ridley (1982: 112) prefers *magister*, as do Paschoud (1986: 190) and Cameron, Long, and Sherry (1993: 251). Liebeschuetz (1991: 124) describes him as plain “general.”

<sup>5</sup> Marcell. Com. s.a. 405: *Isauri per montem Tauri discursantes ingens dispendium rei publicae importarunt: quibus Narbazaicus legatus maius continuo rependit incommodum.*

that his Isaurian appointment had marked the highlight, and end, of his military career.

It is an interesting coincidence both that Arbazacius was Isaurian and that he campaigned in Isauria. Unless the compiler of the *Suda* was completely mistaken in this, it seems an attractive proposition that he was chosen to lead the campaign to pacify Isauria precisely because of his personal knowledge of conditions in that region, that he had been born and raised there. So what is the Armenian connection? An important inscription proves the presence of the *legio I Armeniaca* at Anemurium in Isauria, as follows:

τείχος ἀμωμήτοιο ταγαῖς ἐτέλεσε τάχιστα  
λαμπροτάτου κόμιτος τοῦτο Ματρωνιάνου  
Εὐσέβιος ἀγαθὸς στρατιῆς προτεταγμένος ἐσθλῆς  
Πρώτων Ἀρμενίων, ὧν κλέος ἐστὶ μέγα.<sup>6</sup>

This records the completion of a sea-wall by the *legio I Armeniaca* under the prefect Eusebius at the command of the *comes* Matronianus. The latter seems identifiable as the *dux et praeses Isauriae* Matronianus addressed by a rescript issued at Constantinople on 12 June 382.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the presence of the *legio I Armeniaca* in Anemurium can be securely dated to the early 380s. The *Notitia Dignitatum* reveals that the *legio I Armeniaca* was a *legio pseudocomitatensis* subject to the authority of the *magister militum per Orientem* (ND. Or. 7.49), which title reveals that it had been promoted from among the static units, the *limitanei*, to serve with the mobile forces proper, the *comitatenses*. Late Roman military units generally operated in pairs, and the *Notitia* associates the *legio I Armeniaca* with the *legio II Armeniaca* (ND. Or. 7.50) so that it seems probable that they operated as a pair also.<sup>8</sup> Their titles and sequential numerals reinforce this point, suggesting that they had been raised together. So the presence in Isauria of the *legio I Armeniaca* points to the presence there also of the *legio II Armeniaca*, although not necessarily at Anemurium itself. But why were these legions there at all?

According to the *Notitia*, Isauria was garrisoned by two legions, the *legio II Isaura* and the *legio III Isaura* (ND. Or. 29.7–8). One must remember, though, that the *Notitia*'s information was not necessarily true except for its date of composition ca 394.<sup>9</sup> For example, in 354 the *comes* Castricius, governor of Isauria, defended its capital Seleucia with the help of three legions (Amm. 14.2.14). These seem identifiable as the *II Isaura* and *III Isaura*, which were still there ca 394, with

<sup>6</sup>This inscription was first published by Alföldi-Rosenbaum (1972). I follow here the revised reading proposed by Jones (1972). His translation runs: "This wall was most swiftly finished on the orders of the irreproachable Matronianus, most excellent count, by Eusebius, the valiant prefect of the brave host of the First Armenians, whose fame is great."

<sup>7</sup>*Cod. Theod.* 9.27.3 = *Cod. Iust.* 9.27.1; *PLRE* 1.568. The *Notitia* describes the governor of Isauria as the *comes rei militaris per Isauriam et praeses* (ND. Or. 29.6). I will refer to him simply as the *comes Isauriae*.

<sup>8</sup>In general, see Tomlin 1972; also Elton 1996: 91.

<sup>9</sup>On the dates of composition of the two halves of the *Notitia*, see Ward 1974; Mann 1991.

the addition of the *I Isaura* also. For the *Notitia* lists the *I Isaura* as a *legio pseudocomitatensis* (ND. Or. 7.56) which proves that it had once served among the *limitanei*. Its title and numeral, identical to and in sequence with the titles and numerals of the *II Isaura* and *III Isaura*, suffice to prove that it had once served with them in Isauria. This shows how unwise it is to project the situation depicted by the *Notitia* too far back in time. The present inscription reinforces this message. Strictly speaking, we know that the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* were promoted to the status of *pseudocomitatenses* by ca 394, but we do not know when this happened. It had been argued that it happened when the territory which they had garrisoned was ceded to the Persians in 363, but this was simply the best hypothesis in the absence of more detailed information.<sup>10</sup> The reality may have been rather more complex. The present inscription reveals that the *legio I Armeniaca* was subject to the command of the *comes Isauriae* ca 382, which seems firm evidence that it was ranked among the *limitanei* still by that date. For the *Notitia* appears to indicate that the *comes Isauriae* and other frontier commanders all answered directly to the emperor himself rather than through their regional *magister*, and that a strict distinction was maintained between the *limitanei* and *comitatenses*, so that if a unit was subject to the authority of the *comes Isauriae*, it could only rank among the *limitanei*.<sup>11</sup> Hence the loss of their territory did not necessarily result in the immediate upgrading of the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* to rank as *pseudocomitatenses* among the mobile forces under one of the *magistri*, or not on a permanent basis anyway, since they ranked among the *limitanei* again in Isauria ca 382.<sup>12</sup>

The transfer of these legions to Isauria seems entirely understandable given the history of unrest in that region.<sup>13</sup> The widespread raiding of 354 was followed by a renewed problem ca 359, which was dealt with by the *comes* Lauricius (Amm. 19.13.1–2). Trouble occurred again ca 368 when the *vicarius Asiae* Musonius was killed in an ambush (Amm. 27.9.6–7) and, if Zosimus is to be believed, there may have been problems there also ca 375 (HN 4.20.1–2).<sup>14</sup> Hence Valens had strong cause to reinforce the garrisons in Isauria. The addition of *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* to the three legions already present meant the doubling of the

<sup>10</sup> See Hoffmann 1969: 420–423; Elton 1996: 95.

<sup>11</sup> Jones 1964: 609, although he notes that surviving laws reveal that this situation changed during the early fifth century when the regional *magistri* clearly did possess some authority over the *comites* and *duces* in their particular regions.

<sup>12</sup> The participation of *I Armeniaca* in Julian's Persian expedition of 363 (Mal. Chron. 13.23) does not reveal anything about its status, since Julian seems to have included eastern *limitanei* among his forces also, as revealed by the participation of a contingent under the *dux Osrhoenae* (Amm. 24.1.2).

<sup>13</sup> In general, see Rougé 1966; Hopwood 1989.

<sup>14</sup> See also Eunapius fr. 43.4. Paschoud (1979: 371–372) believes that Eunapius, followed by Zosimus, misplaced the revolt of ca 368 to ca 375, while Blockley (1983: 141, n. 97) argues that Eunapius deliberately described the two different revolts at the same point in his narrative. Lenski (1995: 540–548) argues that Basil of Caesarea's correspondence (*Epp.* 215, 217, canons 55–57) supports the occurrence of a separate Isaurian revolt ca 375.

garrison almost, to a total of five legions. It is tempting to assume that this was a reaction to the loss of so senior an official as the *vicarius Asiae* ca 368, but this remains uncertain. Given that there is no evidence of any trouble in Isauria from ca 375 until 396, which suggests tighter military control there than ever before, exactly as would have been achieved had the *comes Isauriae* acquired almost twice the normal garrison with which to operate, one should probably date the arrival there of *I Armeniaca* and the *II Armeniaca* to 375. The Isaurians began to raid as far as Cilicia and Palestine again only ca 396, which coincides with a reduction of the garrison there to a fourth-century low of only two legions, the *II Isaura* and the *III Isaura*.<sup>15</sup> Whether the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* were promoted to rank among the *pseudocomitatenses* again at the same time as the *I Isaura* admits of no easy answer. The fact that the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* occur much earlier than the *I Isaura* in the list of *legiones pseudocomitatenses* subject to the authority of the *magister militum per Orientem*, i.e., that they had precedence, suggests that they were promoted to this status at an earlier date than the *I Isaura*. One possibility is that they were promoted during Theodosius' preparations to campaign against Maximus in 388, while the *I Isaura* was only promoted in preparation for the campaign against Eugenius in 394. Alternatively, their separation may simply represent two stages in the preparations for the one campaign. So the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* may have been included in a first draft of units from the *limitanei* to the mobile forces, while the *I Isaura* was included in a second draft when it was decided that still more men were needed. Whatever the case, the end result was the same. The effort to raise forces to fight against successive western usurpers, Maximus in 388, and Eugenius in 394, left so few troops to the *comes Isauriae* that he could no longer perform his duties effectively. Large-scale raids began once more, and although these were checked for a short while by the Goth Fravitta (see below), it was a serious problem again when Arbazacius was sent there ca 404.

The presence in Isauria of *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* is of immediate interest in the context of any discussion of Arbazacius' background and origin. Originally stationed among the *limitanei* in Armenia, the majority of their recruits were probably from the local population. They possessed, therefore, a strong ethnic Armenian identity. Their arrival in Isauria, whenever exactly this occurred,

<sup>15</sup> A number of sources point to the resumption of Isaurian raids by the late 390s, some of which will be discussed in more detail below: Philost. *HE* 11.8; Soz. *HE* 8.25; Zos. *HN* 5.20.1; *Suda* Φ 681. Some are so vague in their accounts of these raids that it is difficult to decide whether they really distinguished between the two separate outbreaks of violence, the first settled by Fravitta in the late 390s, the second by Arbazacius in the early 400s. Indeed, since Fravitta was recalled from his campaign against the Isaurians to defend Constantinople against Gainas in 400 (see below), then it is probable that he did not have time to complete his subjugation of the Isaurians before he left, so that it seems better to talk of two peaks in an ongoing struggle rather than two separate outbreaks of violence. A *terminus post quem* for the start of this problem in the late 390s is provided by Jerome, *Ep.* 60.16, where a catalogue of misfortunes mentions raids south from the Caucasus by the Huns, but omits to mention the depredations of the Isaurians also. This letter can be firmly dated to 396, on which see Scourfield 1993: 230–232.

marked a large influx of ethnic Armenians into the region, not only of the soldiers themselves, but of their dispossessed families, and of camp-followers also. This may well explain how Arbazacius could be described both as Isaurian and from Armenia. It is entirely within the timescale involved that he arrived in Isauria as a young boy, or was born there even, when his father was transferred among the *limitanei* there as a member of either the *I Armeniaca* or the *II Armeniaca*. Later, exactly as the law required, he followed his father's footsteps and embarked upon a military career himself also, maybe within the same unit even.<sup>16</sup>

This, then, is one interpretation of the claim that Arbazacius was ἐξ Ἀρμενίας, that it refers specifically to his identity as an ethnic Armenian. However, a second possibility also presents itself, that the compiler of the *Suda* has misinterpreted a reference to either the *I Armeniaca* or the *II Armeniaca*. One must ask oneself how Eunapius would have described a unit which included *Armeniaca*, or some variation thereof, among its titles. The answer lies in the description by Zosimus of the position of a certain Menelaus at the battle of Mursa in 351, in a section of his history where he used Eunapius as his main source, and where his language may be assumed to reflect that of Eunapius. Menelaus is described as the commander of mounted-archers from Armenia (*HN* 2.51.4: Μενέλαος ὁ τῶν ἐξ Ἀρμενίας ἵπποτοξοτῶν ἄρχειν τεταγμένος) which is usually interpreted to refer to his command of the *comites sagittarii Armenii* (*ND. Or.* 6.31).<sup>17</sup> Eunapius' use of a preposition with the name of Armenia rather than some adjective meaning "Armenian" distinguishes his style from that of the inscription from Anemurium, or of John Malalas, for example.<sup>18</sup> It was not the only, or even the most natural way, to denote a unit which included the description "Armenian" among its titles, and may have been open to misinterpretation for this reason.<sup>19</sup> This, then, is a second possible interpretation of the claim that Arbazacius was ἐξ Ἀρμενίας, that it refers not so much to his identity as an ethnic Armenian, but is a mistaken summary rather of a longer passage describing his command of one or more units which included "Armenian" among their titles.

It seems preferable, therefore, to abandon the assumption that Arbazacius was born in Armenia of Isaurian descent in favour of his birth in Isauria of Armenian descent. For while there is proof that ethnic Armenian forces were transferred to serve in Isauria, there is no indication that the reverse occurred. One wonders even whether the return in 404 of this Armenian from Isauria to the land of his birth, or of his youth at least, marked the return to Isauria also of some of its former garrison. Indeed, the tendency of the surviving classicizing sources to emphasize the role of the individual commander, and his moral qualities, may be most misleading here. Was Arbazacius himself personally chosen to pacify Isauria

<sup>16</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 7.22.1–12; *P. Abinn.* 19; *Sulp. Sev. Vit. Mart.* 2.

<sup>17</sup> *PLRE* 1.596; Hoffmann 1969: 247; Paschoud 1989: 208.

<sup>18</sup> *Mal. Chron.* 13.23 on Eutychianus *vicarius* of the *legio I Armeniaca* (βικάριος τοῦ ἰδίου ἀριθμοῦ τῶν Πριμοαρμενικῶν).

<sup>19</sup> For comparative purposes, see Várady 1963 on the five units ἀπὸ Δελματίας (*Zos. HN* 5.45.1).

because of his individual merits, or did he just happen to be the *comes* in command of the *I Armeniaca* and the *II Armeniaca* when they were returned to their original station and status? How long did *legiones pseudocomitatenses* necessarily retain this status? This possibility, that Arbazacius was *comes* of the *I Armeniaca* and the *II Armeniaca*, and returned home as *comes Isauriae* when his legions reverted to their former status among the *limitanei* once more, certainly deserves far more consideration than it has hitherto received, if only because the evidence for his identification as a *magister militum* is so extremely weak.

As earlier stated, Zosimus describes Arbazacius' position while pacifying Isauria as στρατηγός, which was his preferred term to denote a wide variety of military ranks and posts.<sup>20</sup> In fact, he only used the terms κόμης and δούξ on one occasion each.<sup>21</sup> It would have been entirely in keeping with his style, therefore, had he described the *comes Isauriae* Arbazacius as simply a στρατηγός. Indeed, there is a strong case for identifying a certain Valentinus as the *magister militum per Orientem* in 404. At least he operated out of Antioch, the headquarters of this officer.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, a closer reading of Zosimus' description of the activity of Arbazacius reveals that he says not that Arbazacius actually campaigned in Pamphylia, but that he was sent out to solve the crisis there. Since the best way to solve the crisis in Pamphylia was to prevent the raiders leaving Isauria in the first place, there is no requirement here that Arbazacius possessed any authority other than was entirely normal for a *comes Isauriae*.

The strongest argument for identifying Arbazacius as *magister militum* in 404 seems to be that of precedent, that the Goth Fravitta was *magister militum per Orientem* when he campaigned against bandits, Isaurians also apparently, shortly before his appointment to oppose the rebel Gainas in 400.<sup>23</sup> Yet the evidence to support this interpretation of events is far less strong than is usually assumed. According to Zosimus, when the emperor appointed him as general in command of the war against Gainas, Fravitta "was already famous for many commands, having freed the whole East, from Cilicia to Phoenicia and Palestine, from the ruin of bandits."<sup>24</sup> Note that Zosimus does not say that Fravitta *campaigned* throughout the whole of the East, just that he *freed* (ἐλευθερώσαντι) this region from bandits, which was not necessarily the same thing at all. As already stated, the latter was best achieved, not by a long campaign through all the named areas, but by a strike to the heart of the problem in Isauria itself. An energetic *comes Isauriae* who blockaded the Isaurians in their mountain strongholds would have

<sup>20</sup> See Ridley 1970; also Paschoud 1989: 201–212.

<sup>21</sup> To describe the reforms of Constantine I concerning those entitled *duces* (HN 2.33.3), and the murder under Arcadius of the *comes Orientis* Lucianus (HN 5.2.2).

<sup>22</sup> PLRE 2.1139–40; Joh. Chrys. Ep. 116 reveals that his appointment took place only in 404.

<sup>23</sup> PLRE 1.372; Paschoud 1986: 160; Cameron, Long, and Sherry 1993: 225, 245.

<sup>24</sup> HN 5.20.1: τοῦτω τοίνυν ἤδη πολλαῖς διαπρέψαντι στρατηγίαις, καὶ τὴν ἑφάν ἄπασαν ἀπὸ Κιλικίας ἄχρι Φοινίκης καὶ Παλαιστίνης τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ληστῶν λύμης ἐλευθερώσαντι, παραδεδώκασιν τὰς δυνάμεις.

achieved as much to protect these provinces as any wide-ranging *magister militum per Orientem*.

A second point concerns the relative values of Zosimus' testimony in this matter and a similar passage in the *Suda* which begins by describing Fravitta as "general of the East" (στρατηγὸς τῆς Ἀνατολῆς) before proceeding to reveal that "he easily destroyed the brigands so that the word 'brigandage' almost disappeared from the lips of men."<sup>25</sup> It is clear that the *Suda's* description of Fravitta's appointment as "general of the East," i.e., *magister militum per Orientem*, corresponds to the description by Zosimus of Fravitta's appointment as the "general" (στρατηγός) in command of the war against Gainas. It is also clear that the *Suda's* vague description of Fravitta's success against unspecified bandits corresponds to Zosimus' description of Fravitta's success against the bandits troubling the eastern coastal strip from Cilicia to Palestine in particular. The descriptions of these events follow the same order in both, which obviously reflects the original order in their common source, a description of the appointment of Fravitta as *magister militum per Orientem* followed by a description of his success against the bandits. However, this was not necessarily the correct chronological sequence of events, and Zosimus' account reveals that the description of Fravitta's success against the bandits refers to one of his many commands *before* he was appointed as *magister militum* for the campaign against Gainas. The compiler of the *Suda* has so abbreviated Eunapius' original text that this fact has been obscured. Hence the *Suda* does not support the identification of Fravitta as *magister militum per Orientem* during his campaign against the Isaurian bandits, despite an initial appearance of doing so.

A third more general consideration concerns the nature and origin of the forces which Fravitta used to defeat Gainas in 400. Where did these forces come from? There was insufficient time between his appointment to his new command and his confrontation with Gainas for him to have raised and trained a sufficient number of fresh troops. It has been assumed, therefore, that "the core of the army must have been some portion of the troops already under Fravitta's command in his capacity as *magister militum per Orientem*."<sup>26</sup> Yet the *comes Isauriae* also had troops under his command, and not that far from Constantinople itself. Why should the emperor have failed to call upon their services in his hour of emergency? The previous year's fighting had only extended as far south as Selge in Pamphylia, so the forces under the command of the *comes Isauriae* should have remained relatively untouched by recent troubles.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, it was his fleet which

<sup>25</sup> *Suda* Φ 681; fr. 69.2 in Blockley 1983: 108.

<sup>26</sup> See Cameron, Long, and Sherry 1993: 224, where it is assumed that Fravitta was *magister militum per Orientem* until his appointment against Gainas, which marked his promotion as *magister militum praesentalis*. Burns (1994: 173) agrees, claiming that Fravitta was *magister militum per Orientem* tidying up in Asia after Tribigild's rebellion when he was named as *magister militum praesentalis*.

<sup>27</sup> Zos. *HN* 5.15–16. Gainas sent his subordinate Leo to assist Valentinus of Selge and his volunteers against the attempts by the rebel Goth Tribigild to plunder their province, with no mention

played the key role in Fravitta's defeat of Gainas, a fleet which must already have existed by the time of his appointment.<sup>28</sup> So where did this fleet come from? One must remember that the Isaurians plundered by sea as well as by land, as revealed by their raids even upon Cyprus (Philost. *HE* 11.8). It is noteworthy also that Zosimus' account of the areas which Fravitta freed from raiders emphasizes coastal regions—Cilicia, Phoenicia, Palestine—which suggests that the problem was primarily one of pirate raids rather than of overland attacks. The *comes Isauriae* must have developed a fleet himself also as part of his strategy to prevent these attacks. So one explanation of the swift arrival in Constantinople of Fravitta, with trained forces including a fleet, is that he brought these from his previous appointment in Isauria only a short distance away.

Finally, some brief comment is necessary concerning the circumstances of Fravitta's death. Cameron, Long, and Sherry (1993: 245–246) have recently argued that the Hierax responsible for the death of Fravitta secured the governorship of Pamphylia in 404 in order both to make his fortune and to dig up whatever he could against Fravitta. This argument builds upon the fact that Fravitta had campaigned against the Isaurians before his appointment against Gainas, and that his actions had presumably left him open to accusations of corruption and profiteering. However, assuming that this interpretation of events is correct, it must be stressed that the fact that Hierax had sought the governorship of Pamphylia does not in itself prove that Fravitta must have conducted military operations in that particular province. One must remember that the governorship of Isauria combined military and civilian powers so that it was generally unavailable to civilians such as Hierax. The governorship of Pamphylia, a neighbouring province, was simply the next best thing. For the inhabitants of Pamphylia surely had as much cause for complaint against Fravitta as those in Isauria itself, both for his failure to put a complete end to the raids from Isauria, and for his failure to restore whatever of their property he had presumably recovered from the raiders. Furthermore, the coincidence between the attempt to prosecute Arbazacius in 404 and the simultaneous attempt by Hierax to dig up dirt on Fravitta is such as to suggest that these events formed part of the same ongoing struggle between Hierax and Fravitta. Arbazacius may well have owed his appointment in Isauria to the patronage of Fravitta, and have become a target for prosecution for this reason. Alternatively, he may have served as one of Fravitta's leading officers at precisely the time of his alleged misconduct, and have been accused of complicity in the same for this reason.

There seems a strong case, therefore, that Fravitta was *comes Isauriae* before his appointment as *magister militum per Orientem* during the summer of 400. A

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of the forces in Isauria. The claim at Philost. *HE* 11.8 that Tribigild suffered many losses during battles in Isauria remains unsubstantiated. It is not clear that he refers to the late Roman province as such rather than a wider region.

<sup>28</sup> Philost. *HE* 11.8; Zos. *HN* 5.20.3–21.4; *Suda* Λ 490. See Paschoud 1986: 161–165; Cameron, Long, and Sherry 1993: 238.



certain Fl. Leontius was governor of Isauria sometime during the period 395–402 (*PLRE* 2.674), but the evidence allows that his appointment may either have preceded or followed that of Fravitta. Unfortunately, we know little about the earlier whereabouts of Fravitta other than that he was present at the court of Theodosius I in Constantinople during the winter of 392/3 when he murdered his rival Eriulf.<sup>29</sup> However, his appointment to Isauria should probably be compared to the appointment of the Goth Munderichus as *dux Arabiae* (*Amm.* 31.3.5). In brief, we should not allow ourselves to be blinded by his later success in a career which had begun like that of so many other middle-ranking barbarian officers before him. He simply happened to be in the right place at the right time to receive the promotion which he did during the summer of 400.

As the Isaurian raiders whom Fravitta was sent to quell do not seem to have imposed themselves upon the neighbouring provinces until 396 at earliest, his appointment as *comes Isauriae* probably only occurred during the period 396–400. The return to Constantinople by November 395 of the bulk of the eastern army which had gone West against the usurper Eugenius, presumably meant the return of the *legiones pseudocomitatenses* also, including the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca*.<sup>30</sup> These were still available sometime later when the newly appointed *comes Isauriae* Fravitta sought reinforcements for his task, and were returned with him to their former status among the *limitanei* of that province. The service of these legions under Fravitta in Isauria explains how Arbazacius and Fravitta became so associated that Fravitta's enemy Hierax tried to implicate Arbazacius also in the charge of misconduct which he later brought against Fravitta. Thus, by the start of 400, Fravitta had successfully driven back the Isaurians within their mountain fastnesses once more, and had also developed a strong fleet while so engaged. But he was the nearest experienced commander with forces sufficient to threaten Gainas when the latter finally revolted that year. Consequently, the emperor promoted him as *magister militum per Orientem*, he removed most of its garrison from Isauria, and the Isaurian raiders were freed to resume their old activities. It was not until ca 404, then, that a strong military governor was returned to Isauria, Arbazacius, with the *I Armeniaca* and *II Armeniaca* again, and some order was finally restored there.

In conclusion, therefore, the success which Arbazacius enjoyed against the Isaurians in 404 was no different than that enjoyed by other military governors of Isauria before him, whether Lauricius in 359, or Fravitta during the period ca 396–400. It does not in itself prove that he must have held a more senior position such as *magister militum per Orientem*. His greatest strength may well have lain in his origin in that region, because his description as an Isaurian from Armenia points to his descent from one of the soldiers of either the *legio I Armeniaca* or *legio*

<sup>29</sup> Zos. *HN* 4.56.1–3; following the date accepted, for example, by Heather 1991: 186.

<sup>30</sup> Burns 1994: 153–154. Claudian (*In Rufinum* 2.174) records the presence of Armenians with Stilicho in Thessaly during the summer of 395, just before he was ordered to return the eastern troops to Constantinople once more. He may well refer to the *I Armeniaca* and the *II Armeniaca* in particular.

*II Armeniaca* who had eventually ended up in Isauria following the loss of their territory to Persia by the treaty of 363. Indeed, the return of the local boy made good may point to the return to Isauria also of these same legions whose absence among the mobile forces had surely contributed to the renewed disturbances there from the mid-390s onwards.

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