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SOME EUNAPIANA

David Woods

The pagan sophist Eunapius of Sardis (347-c.404) composed a *History* which continued the *Chronicle* of Dexippus of Athens from 270 to 404. Unfortunately, it has not itself survived, so we depend for our knowledge of it, first, on its use by later authors, chiefly Zosimus writing c.502, then, on excerpts preserved both in the *Excerpta Historica* compiled under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-59) and in the late 10th-century lexicon known as the *Suda*, and, finally, on cross-references in Eunapius' other known work, the *Lives of the Sophists*.¹ There is much room for controversy, therefore, concerning the accuracy with which these sources preserve Eunapius' own words, or, in some instances, whether they preserve his words at all. Moreover, the nature of our knowledge of this text is such that any larger thesis tends itself to fragment into a series of smaller notes concerning the identification or interpretation of a number of short passages which often have little direct bearing upon one another. The present paper consists of four such notes, the first two revealing the difficulty in recovering what Eunapius himself actually wrote from the words of these later sources, the second two that Eunapius did not always understand his own sources very well. Together, they serve to illustrate the interest of Eunapius as a source both to secular and ecclesiastical historians. The study of a Greek author who has contributed so much to our understanding of late Roman history, a pagan who has contributed to our understanding of the early church, is a fitting tribute, I hope, to the efforts of my former teachers who have contributed so much to my understanding of both the Greek language and Roman history, and to the continuation of patristic scholarship at Maynooth.

I Constantine I and the *Persocomites*

The 9th century saw an explosion of interest in the life of Constantine I

¹ The best introductions to Eunapius and his work consist of two recent doctoral dissertations. See T.M. Banchich, *The Historical Fragments of Eunapius of Sardis* (submitted at the State University of New York at Buffalo, 1985: UMI no. 8528233), and A.E. Baker, *Eunapius and Zosimus: Problems of Composition and Chronology* (submitted at Brown University, 1987: UMI no. 8715450). Texts and translations of the fragments are most easily accessible in R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire II* (Liverpool, 1983), pp. 2-150.

(306-37) which resulted in the composition of many hagiographical accounts of his life.² One of the earliest of these was the Guidi-legend, as it is now called after its modern editor,³ also referred to as *BHG* 364 from its place within the standard catalogue of hagiographical texts.⁴ It shares important similarities with the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor, who died in 818,⁵ and it is generally accepted that it was composed during the mid- to late 9th-century also, even if the exact nature of its relationship with the *Chronicle* is a matter of controversy.⁶ It is the first surviving life of Constantine to preserve in full a number of features which are commonly found in the later Byzantine lives of Constantine, and its importance in the development of the Constantinian legend is such that it has recently been translated into English.⁷ It is the purpose of the present paper to offer a new explanation for the origin of what is probably the most puzzling element in

² See A. Kazhdan, "Constantin Imaginaire": Byzantine Legends in the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great', *Byzantion* 57 (1987), pp. 196-250; also S.N.C. Lieu, 'From History to Legend and Legend to History: The Medieval and Byzantine Transformation of Constantine's Vita', in S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *Constantine: History, Historiography, and Legend* (London, 1998), pp. 136-76.

³ See M. Guidi, 'Un ΒΙΟΣ di Costantino', *Rendiconti della Reale accademia dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morale, Storiche e Filologiche*, 5th ser. 16 (1907), pp. 304-40 and 637-60.

⁴ See F. Halkin (ed.), *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* I (Brussels, 1957).

⁵ In general, see C. Mango and R. Scott (eds.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813* (Oxford, 1997), esp. pp. 24-40.

⁶ It seems that the Guidi-legend shares a common source with the *Chronicle* of Theophanes and the undateable *On the Discovery of the True Cross* by one Alexander the Monk. See Mango and Scott (n. 5), p. lxxvii; also R. Scott, 'The Image of Constantine in Malalas and Theophanes', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 57-71, at 67.

⁷ Trans. by F. Beetham, with revisions by the editors, in S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views. A Source History* (London, 1996), pp. 97-146. The translation is extremely welcome, although it contains the odd slip. E.g. on p. 131, the list of confessors who attended the council of Nicaea in 325 should refer to Nicolaus of Myra, a town in Lycia, rather than to "Nicolaus of the unguents." Guidi (n. 3), 638, l.8 contributed to this error by failing to capitalize Myra (Νικόλαος ὁ τῶν μύρων), although he did so for the other towns named in the same context. Pace C. Kelly, *CR* 47 (1997), 436, the inclusion of the "long and lugubriously hagiographical Guidi-Vita" is the most valuable element of this volume, while the translation of the *Artemii Passio*, marred as it is by the decision to omit chs. 25-34, must come a close second. One looks forward to the publication as soon as possible also of Beetham's translation of the so-called Opitz-Vita (*BHG* 365).

this text, the alleged capture of Constantine by the Persians.⁸

According to this story, shortly after the death of his father Constantius I (293-306), Constantine gathered an army of 20,000 men and led them against the Persians who were attacking Roman cities at that time. Before any engagement could take place, however, the Persians surprised the Roman camp in an attack by night, and captured the emperor himself and many of his staff. The rest of his army was put to flight, some of whom were pursued as far as the Roman border, but others, those with swift horses, managed to escape to a tree-covered mountain nearby in Persia itself. Shortly afterwards the latter group captured some of the Persians' slaves as they came to cut wood, and asked them what was happening to their emperor. The slaves told them that the Persians intended to sacrifice Constantine on the birthday of their gods, the very next day, but they also agreed to help rescue him in return for their lives. They claimed that the Persians were vulnerable to attack when they offered sacrifice, since they left their weapons outside the wall surrounding their altar. So the next day, when Constantine was dragged bound to the altar, the slaves gave the signal to the Romans who were hiding nearby, and these seized the Persians' weapons first before attacking the Persians themselves. The king of the Persians then fell down before Constantine as he was being released, begged him to spare his life, and requested a peace-treaty for a fixed period. Constantine granted these requests, and the Persian king then gave him a thousand Persian guards also. Constantine returned to Gaul next, from where he soon launched his attack upon the persecuting emperor Maxentius which culminated in his victory at the battle of the Milvian bridge.

Clearly, there are huge problems with this story as it stands. In so far as Constantius I died in 306, and the battle of the Milvian bridge occurred in 312, it seems to require us to believe that Constantine led an expedition against the Persians sometime during the period 306-12. This would have

⁸ Guidi (n. 3), 316-19; ch. 7 of the text as divided in Lieu and Montserrat (n. 7), pp. 113-15. In reference to this aspect of the Constantinian legend, Lieu (n. 2), p. 168, claims that "echoes of the extraordinarily successful Persian campaigns of Heraclius in the seventh century are too numerous to mention", and does not care to trouble us with detail. It remains unclear whether he thinks that these campaigns inspired this aspect of the legend from its very start, or whether they merely influenced its continued growth as witnessed to by the so-called Patmos-Vita (*BHG* 365n) of the 12/13th-centuries. If the former is the case, then I shall be arguing against him here.

been impossible, however, since Constantine only controlled Britain, Gaul and Spain at this time, and would have had to march through the territories of three rival emperors – Maxentius in Italy, Galerius Maximianus in the Balkans, and Maximinus in the East – in order to confront the Persians. Later hagiographers spotted that there was a problem here, and sought to redate this element within the greater Constantinian legend. Hence the anonymous author of the passion of St. Eusignius, a fictitious military martyr allegedly executed by the emperor Julian (360-63), used a life of Constantine similar to the Guidi-legend in order to create a military career for St. Eusignius, even claiming that Eusignius had participated in the rescue of Constantine from the Persians, but he set this event after the discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem by Constantine's mother Helena, i.e. during the late 320s apparently.⁹ Another life of Constantine, the so-called Patmos-legend (*BHG* 365n), seems to envisage a similarly late date for this episode in so far as it sets its version of Constantine's war against the Persians after its accounts of his destruction of the tyrants Maxentius and Licinius, and associates it with his foundation of Constantinople.¹⁰ The problem, however, is that there is no evidence that Constantine ever took to the field against the Persians.¹¹ True, this does seem to have been his intention at his death in May 337, but he had not yet advanced beyond the preparations for such an expedition when he suddenly died at Nicomedia, far removed from the Persian frontier.¹² So shifting the setting of his alleged capture by the Persians within the greater Constantinian legend does not solve the problem, although the medieval hagiographers were not to know this. For my part, I intend to tackle this problem in two stages. First, I shall re-examine the evidence for the identity of the guards whom the Persian king is alleged to have given to Constantine in order to prove that such a named unit really did exist, even if the legend has distorted its origin. I shall then turn to a broader consideration of the wider episode in order to investigate whether one can detect any historical basis for the episode as a

⁹ See P. Devos, 'Une Recension Nouvelle de la Passion Grecque *BHG* 639 de Saint Eusignios', *Analecta Bollandiana* 100 (1982), pp. 209-28, at 225-27.

¹⁰ See F. Halkin, 'Une Nouvelle Vie de Constantin dans un *Légendier* de Patmos', *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959), pp. 63-107, at 84-86.

¹¹ On Constantine's movements, see T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 68-80.

¹² See G. Fowden, 'The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Versions and Their Influence', *JRS* 84 (1994), pp. 146-70; also D. Woods, 'Where did Constantine I die?', *JThS* 48 (1997), pp. 531-35.

whole rather than for the individual elements within it.

(a) *The Identity of the Persocomites*

To begin, therefore, we are fortunate that the Guidi-legend preserves the exact title of the guards whom the Persian king gave to Constantine. The relevant text, and its most recent translation, run as follow:

ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς τῶν Περσῶν παρέδωκε τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν Ῥωμαίων χιλίους Πέρσας φύλακας, οἵτινες καὶ προσηγορεύθησαν παρὰ τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις ὡς ἀληθῶς Κωνσταντίνου Περσοκόμητες.¹³

moreover, the king of the Persians handed over to the emperor of the Romans a thousand Persian guards, who received from Constantine, who is truly one of the saints, the title of the Long-haired Persians.¹⁴

The passion of St. Eusignius preserves a similar account of the origin of these guards in a speech which it attributes to St. Eusignius during his trial before the emperor Julian:

Τότε ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Περσῶν ἀπέθετο ἐν ὄρκῳ εἰρήνην ἐπὶ ἔτη φανερά, ὡς μὴ ἐπιβουλευσαι καθ' ἡμῶν, καὶ παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν χιλίους Πέρσας φύλακας, οἵτινες ἐπεκλήθησαν παρ' ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ βασιλέως Περσοκόμητες. Καὶ ἐστὶν ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν χιλίων φυλάττοντες τοὺς ὅρους Ῥωμαίων τε καὶ Περσῶν.¹⁵

Then the king of the Persians made a peace-treaty for a fixed number of years, that he would not plot against us, and he surrendered to us a thousand Persian guards, whom we and the emperor have called the Persian Companions. And this unit of a thousand men has remained guarding the borders of the Romans and the Persians until the present time.¹⁶

¹³ Guidi (n. 3), 319, l.1-3.

¹⁴ Lieu and Montserrat (n. 7), p. 115.

¹⁵ Devos (n. 9), 226-27.

¹⁶ My translation. Kazhdan (n. 2), 204, fails to note that it is Eusignius who claims that

My first point is that the title of these Persian guards should be translated as the 'Persian Companions' rather than the 'Long-haired Persians'. The prefix *Perso-* has been added to the plural of the Latin noun *comes* 'companion', i.e. *comites*, rather than to the plural of the Greek adjective κομήτης 'long-haired', i.e. κομηται. Some confusion is possible not only because the stem of the Latin noun is variously transliterated into Greek either as κόμιτ- (e.g. κόμιτα) or κόμητ- (e.g. κόμητα), but also because the ancient Persians had been described as 'long-haired' on at least one famous occasion.¹⁷ It is clear from the context, however, that we are dealing here with a transliteration of the Latin *comites* rather than a variant spelling of the Greek κομηται. First, the Guidi-legend preserves many terms which are transliterations into Greek of original Latin terms, of military terms in particular. These include the terms τριβούνος (Lat. *tribunus*), φοσσάτον (Lat. *fossatum*), βίγλα (Lat. *vigilia*), κάστρον (Lat. *castra*), and λιβέλλος (Lat. *libellus*).¹⁸ It is no surprise, therefore, to discover another instance of this phenomenon. More importantly, though, and as I will discuss next, the Latin *comites* was used as a military title in the late Roman army in the exact fashion that it occurs here in the Guidi-legend. Hence there can be no doubt that the title Περσοκόμητες ought best to be translated as 'Persian Companions'.

The use of *comites* 'companions' as a formal military title in the Roman army seems to date to the late 3rd-century. A papyrus text reveals that troops described as the κομίτες τοῦ κυρίου 'companions of the Lord' were present in Egypt with the emperor Galerius Maximianus in 295, while an undated inscription of approximately the same period records the deaths in Italy of two brothers who were members of the *comites imperatoris* 'companions of the emperor'.¹⁹ Our best source in this matter is the *Notitia*

the *Persocomites* were still guarding the borders in his present, i.e. in 362, not the anonymous author of the passion, so there is no need to accept this statement at its face value as he does, that the *Persocomites* were ever really set guarding any border. This element represents an addition to the original source by the author of the passion. Nor does Kazhdan explain his claim that "this institution of border guardians may recall the situation on the Arab frontier rather than that on the Persian."

¹⁷ Herodotus 6.19.

¹⁸ Respectively, Guidi (n. 3), 310, l.14; 313, l.27; 316, l.13; 637, l.17; 641, l.8.

¹⁹ *P. Oxy.* 43; *CIL* 11.6168. M.P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar: The Roman Emperors'*

Dignitatum, a composite document whose detailed accounts of all the military units in the eastern and western halves of the empire have been dated c.401 and c.420 respectively.²⁰ It preserves the names of 11 units which bore the title *comites*, and these all served as cavalry units, vexillations to be precise, the majority as *vexillationes palatinae*,²¹ two as *vexillationes comitatenses*.²² The titles of two of the *vexillationes palatinae*, the *comites Arcadiaci* (*Or.* 8.25) and the *comites Honoriaci* (*Or.* 8.26), named after the emperors Arcadius (383-408) and Honorius (393-423) respectively, reveal that new units of this title were still being created by the end of the 4th-century even, and it remains possible that further such units were created in the centuries that followed. As far as we are here concerned, not only does the *Notitia Dignitatum* fail to name the *Persocomites* as such, but it fails to name any unit at all whose titles included the prefix *Perso-*. Indeed, the only units we know whose titles included this prefix were creations of Justinian I (527-65), the *equites Perso-Justiniani* and the *felices Perso-Armenii*.²³ These units were both stationed in Italy for a time, and had presumably been formed of prisoners whom the Romans had captured during Justinian's Persian war.²⁴

It is a distinct possibility, therefore, that the *Persocomites*, if they had ever existed at all, were another Justinianic creation also. Yet such an interpretation of the evidence places too great an emphasis on the exact form of the title as presently preserved. The *Notitia Dignitatum* itself illustrates that a certain flexibility had come to exist in this matter by the end of the 4th-century at latest. It often refers to the same unit twice under different headings, and sometimes changes the details of their titles as it does so. For example, the *equites sagittarii Parthi seniores* occur as such on

Horse Guard (London, 1994), p. 199, n. 188, suggests that the brothers may have arrived in Italy with Galerius Maximianus in 307.

²⁰ On the dating problem, see J.C. Mann, 'The *Notitia Dignitatum* - Dating and Survival', *Britannia* 22 (1991), pp. 215-19; also C. Zuckerman, 'Comites et ducs en Égypte autour de l'an 400 et la date de la *Notitia Dignitatum Orientis*', *Antiquité Tardive* 6 (1998), pp. 137-47.

²¹ *comites clibanarii* (*Or.* 5.29); *comites sagittarii iuniores* (*Or.* 5.30); *comites Taifali* (*Or.* 5.31); *comites seniores* (*Or.* 6.28); *comites sagittarii Armeni* (*Or.* 6.31); *comites Arcadiaci* (*Or.* 8.25); *comites Honoriaci* (*Or.* 8.26); *comites seniores* (*Oc.* 6.43); *comites Alani* (*Oc.* 6.50).

²² *comites catafractarii bucellarii iuniores* (*Or.* 7.25); *comites iuniores* (*Oc.* 6.75).

²³ *ILS* 2810; *P. Dip.* 122.

²⁴ Procopius, *Bella* 2.19.24-25.

one occasion (*Oc.* 6.68), but as the *equites Parthosagittarii seniores* on another (*Oc.* 7.186).²⁵ The tendency to run the ethnic title of a unit into one of its other titles, and treat it as a prefix, is evident from the papyrological evidence also. A certain Flavius Abinnaeus has left us an account of his career in which he claims that he served in the *vexillatio Parthusagittariorum* at Diospolis in the province of Thebais, for 33 years apparently c.303-36.²⁶ The *Notitia* refers to the same unit simply as the *equites sagittarii indigenae* (*Or.* 31.27), from which it is clear that the title *Parthusagittarii* represents a running together of the separate titles *sagittarii* and *Parthi*, exactly as in the previous example. It is arguable, therefore, that the title *Persocomites* represents a similar such transformation. In order to restore the full formal titles of this unit as they most probably were had it existed in the 4th century, we must separate out its ethnic title once more. In this manner, the *Persocomites* become the *comites Persae*. But does the evidence support the existence of the *comites Persae* any more than it does that of the *Persocomites*?

An examination of the *Notitia* reveals only one unit which included *Persae* among its titles, a *vexillatio palatina* entitled the *equites Persae clibanarii* (*Or.* 6.32). It also reveals that there were only two *vexillationes palatinae* which included *clibanarii* among their titles, the same *equites Persae clibanarii* and the *comites clibanarii* (*Or.* 5.29). It has long been recognised that most late Roman military units, of the mobile armies at least, were created and/or operated in pairs, and that this was true of the *vexillationes palatinae* also.²⁷ The organization of the Roman army changed a great deal as the 4th century progressed, and Theodosius I (379-95) deliberately broke many old pairings during his reorganization of his mobile forces. Nevertheless, it remains a relatively simple task to reconstruct the pairs, or 'brigades', in which most of the eastern *vexillationes palatinae* surviving

²⁵ O. Seeck (ed.), *Notitia Dignitatum* (Berlin, 1876), p. 141, amends *Oc.* 7.186 to read *equites Parthi sagittarii seniores*. But his *apparatus criticus* reveals that the four main manuscripts all read *Panthosagittarii* which seems better restored as *Parthosagittarii* rather than *Parthi sagittarii*.

²⁶ P. Abinn. 1.4-5: '... traditus in vexillatione Parthusagittariorum degentium Diospoli provincia[e] T[h]e[ba]i[d]os super[i]oris'. See T.D. Barnes, 'The Career of Abinnaeus', *Phoenix* 39 (1985), pp. 368-74.

²⁷ E.g. see R.S.O. Tomlin, 'Seniores-Iuniores in the Late Roman Field Army', *AJPh* 93 (1972), pp. 253-78, esp. n. 10; also H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe AD 350-425* (Oxford, 1996), p. 91.

c.401 had originally served, on the basis of their status, titles, and their relative positions within the relevant lists. My reconstructions of these pairs run as follows:²⁸

(<i>Or.</i> 5.28) <i>equites promoti seniores</i>	(<i>Or.</i> 6.28) <i>comites seniores</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 5.29) <i>comites clibanarii</i>	(<i>Or.</i> 6.32) <i>equites Persae clibanarii</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 5.30) <i>comites sagittarii iuniores</i>	(<i>Or.</i> 6.31) <i>comites sagittarii Armeni</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 5.31) <i>comites Taifali</i>	(<i>Oc.</i> 6.50) <i>comites Alani</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 5.32) <i>equites Arcades</i>	(<i>Oc.</i> 6.52) <i>equites Constantes Valentinianenses seniores</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 6.29) <i>equites Brachiatii iuniores</i>	(<i>Oc.</i> 6.49) <i>equites Cornuti iuniores</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 6.33) <i>equites Theodosiaci seniores</i>	(<i>Or.</i> 8.27) <i>equites Theodosiaci iuniores</i>
(<i>Or.</i> 8.25) <i>comites Arcadiaci</i>	(<i>Or.</i> 8.26) <i>comites Honoriaci</i>

It would seem, therefore, if for no other reason than by a process of elimination, that the *comites clibanarii* had probably been paired with the *equites Persae clibanarii* originally.

It is important next to note that the *Notitia* sometimes omits elements from the full formal titles of the units which it lists. For example, units from various Gallic cities appear as the most senior *vexillationes comitatenses* subject to the two eastern *magistri militum praesentales* and the *magister militum per Thracias*. These have been identified as units which Constantius II transferred to the East following his defeat of the western usurper Magnentius in 353.²⁹ The first *magister militum praesentalis* had as his most senior *vexillatio comitatensis* the *equites catafractarii Biturigenses* (*Or.* 5.34), the second *magister militum praesentalis* had as his two most senior units the *equites catafractarii* (*Or.* 6.35) and the *equites catafractarii Ambianenses* (*Or.* 6.36), and the *magister militum per Thracias* had as his most senior unit of this type the *equites catafractarii Albigenses* (*Or.* 8.29). It is immediately clear that its final title has been lost in the case of the *equites catafractarii* (*Or.* 6.35). By good luck, however, an epitaph from Heraclea Lyncestis preserves the full titles of a unit entitled the *equites catafractarii Pictavenses*.³⁰ It has been argued, therefore, that the full titles of the *equites catafractarii* (*Or.* 6.35) should be restored as the *equites catafractarii Pictavenses*.³¹ A second inscription reinforces this point. The

²⁸ There remains one unit whose original partner seems to have been lost, probably at the battle of Adrianopolis in 378, the *equites Batavi iuniores* (*Or.* 6.30).

²⁹ See D. Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum I* (Düsseldorf, 1969), pp. 484-85.

³⁰ *CIL* 3.14406a.

³¹ Hoffmann (n. 29), p. 493.

epitaph of Flavius Aemilianus, which is securely dated to 356, records that he had served as a member of the *Io[viani] Cor[nuti] sen[iores]*.³² The *Notitia* does not list any unit by these exact titles, but it does list units entitled the *Ioviani seniores* (*Oc.* 5.145) and the *Cornuti seniores* (*Oc.* 5.158).³³ This suggests that one of these is identifiable as the unit in which Aemilianus had served, but that the *Notitia* has failed to preserve its full titles. Finally, the *Notitia* refers to the garrison at Hermopolis in Egypt as the *cuneus equitum scutariorum* (*Or.* 31.24) while the papyrological evidence proves that its full title should have read *cuneus equitum Maurorum scutariorum*.³⁴ It is evident, therefore, that the *Notitia* does not necessarily preserve the full and correct titles of every unit which it lists, and we cannot simply assume this in the case of the *comites clibanarii*, certainly not if there is any evidence to the contrary.

Finally, the description of the *comites clibanarii* as a unit of *clibanarii* provides strong grounds to believe that it was of eastern origin. First, the Romans perceived that one of the strengths of the Persian army was its heavy-armoured cavalry, its *clibanarii*, and the only theatre of operations where they may have felt under pressure to develop the same type of cavalry as a counter-measure was along the eastern front.³⁵ Next, the *Notitia*

³² See T. Drew-Bear, 'A Fourth Century Latin Soldier's Epitaph at Nakolea', *HSCP* 81 (1977), pp. 257-74. The restoration of the first title, whether it should read *Io[viani]* or *Io[vii]*, is somewhat controversial. M.P. Speidel, 'Raising New Units for the Late Roman Army: *Auxilia Palatina*', *DOP* 50 (1996), pp. 163-70, prefers *Iovii*, but his argument rests on a misinterpretation of *Aur. Vict. Caes.* 39.15 which refers to units named after both Maximianus as *Herculius* and Diocletian as *Iovius*. But since there were no units entitled *Herculii* analogous to those entitled *Iovii*, he must refer to the units entitled *Herculiani* and *Ioviani*. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Victor was not writing a military manual, and does not necessarily use the term *auxilium* in its technical sense, so there is no reason to assume that the units to which he was referring were *auxilia palatina* rather than legions. In the present context, however, it matters little whether we restore the full titles of this unit as *Ioviani Cornuti seniores* or *Iovii Cornuti seniores*, since the *Notitia* does not record any unit with either set of titles in full.

³³ Alternatively, it also lists a unit entitled the *Iovii seniores* (*Oc.* 5.168).

³⁴ See J.G. Keenan, 'Soldier and Civilian in Byzantine Hermopolis', in A. Bülow-Jacobsen, *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists* (Copenhagen, 1994), pp. 444-51, esp. n. 3.

³⁵ See J.W. Eadie, 'The Development of Roman Mailed Cavalry', *JRS* 57 (1967), pp. 161-73; M.P. Speidel, 'Catafractarii Clibanarii and the Rise of Later Roman Mailed Cavalry: A Gravestone from Claudiopolis in Bithynia', *Epigraphica Anatolica* 4 (1984), pp. 151-56. Armoured cavalry from, or in, the West, tended to take the form of *catafractarii*

lists only nine units which included the term *clibanarii* among their titles, and eight of these were situated within the eastern armies.³⁶ Furthermore, of these nine units, the eastern origin of five are explicit in their titles, three being described as *Parthi*, one as *Persae*, and one as *Palmyreni*. None were obviously of western origin, since the four remaining units lacked any ethnic title at all. Not surprisingly, the workshops which produced their armour for the *clibanarii* were also situated mostly in the East.³⁷ There is strong reason to suspect, therefore, that the four units of *clibanarii* listed without ethnic titles were themselves of eastern origin also, and that, if they are ever recovered, their titles will probably be found to be similar to those already noted - *Parthi*, *Persae*, or *Palmyreni*.

In this manner, therefore, the association of the *comites clibanarii* with the *equites Persae clibanarii*, the proven fallibility of the *Notitia* in the matter of the preservation of the full titles of any unit, and the apparent eastern origin of the *clibanarii*, all combine to suggest that the full title of the *comites clibanarii* was the *comites [Persae] clibanarii*.

The identification of our *Persocomites* as the *comites [Persae] clibanarii* of the *Notitia* suggests only that our hagiographical sources are correct that such a unit did exist. But did it exist under Constantine I? Although our literary sources do not always maintain a proper distinction between the terms *Parthi* and *Persae*,³⁸ the use of *Persae* seems *prima facie* evidence at least that this unit was created sometime after the replacement by the

rather than *clibanarii*, i.e. the horses lacked the mail protection of their riders.

³⁶ *comites clibanarii* (*Or.* 5.29); *equites primi clibanarii Parthi* (*Or.* 5.40); *equites Persae clibanarii* (*Or.* 6.32); *equites secundi clibanarii Parthi* (*Or.* 6.40); *equites promoti clibanarii* (*Or.* 7.31); *equites quarti clibanarii Parthi* (*Or.* 7.32); *cuneus equitum secundorum clibanariorum Palmyrenorum* (*Or.* 7.34); *schola scutariorum clibanariorum* (*Or.* 11.8); *equites sagittarii clibanarii* (*Oc.* 6.67 = *Oc.* 7.185). The fact that the only western unit of *clibanarii* was stationed in Africa may be of some significance in so far as this was the region where the conditions most resembled those of the eastern frontier.

³⁷ *Fabricae clibanariae* were situated in the East at Antioch (*Or.* 11.22), Caesarea in Cappadocia (*Or.* 11.26), and Nicomedia (*Or.* 11.28). One was also situated at Augustodunum in Gaul (*Oc.* 9.33). See S. James, 'The *Fabricae*: State Arms Factories of the Later Roman Empire', in J.C. Coulston (ed.), *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 257-331, at 261-65.

³⁸ See A. Chauvot, 'Parthes et Perses dans les sources du IVe siècle', in M. Christol et alii (eds.), *Institutions, Société, et Vie Politique dans l'Empire Romain au IVe Siècle ap. J.C.* (Rome, 1992), pp. 115-25.

Persian Sassanids of the Parthian Arsacids as the ruling dynasty of Iran, i.e. after 224. Two facts point to the creation of the *comites [Persae] clibanarii* during the early 4th-century in particular. First, the fact that it occurs only second after the *equites promoti seniores* (Or. 5.29) in the list of *vexillationes palatinae* subject to the first eastern *magister militum praesentalis* points to its relative seniority, and early creation, therefore. Second, the *comites [Persae] clibanarii* form a pair with the *equites Persae clibanarii* in the exact manner that the *comites seniores* (Or. 6.28) form a pair with the *equites promoti seniores* (Or. 5.29), i.e. a *comites* – *equites* pair, the only two such among all the pairs of *vexillationes palatinae*. This suggests that these two pairs of units were created either at the same time or one in imitation of the other. It has been argued that the *comites seniores* and the *equites promoti seniores* were formed from the *equites singulares Augusti* and the praetorian horse respectively, and if this had not already occurred under Diocletian (284-305), then it had certainly occurred by the time that Constantine disbanded the praetorian guard in 312.³⁹ The evidence suggests, therefore, that the *comites [Persae] clibanarii* and the *equites Persae clibanarii* were created in imitation of the *comites seniores* and the *equites promoti seniores*, and in so far as the latter seem to have originated under Diocletian, then the former must date to that period also, or sometime thereafter. But there is no good reason yet to associate their creation with the reign of Constantine I in particular.

So far we have focussed on the use of the title *comites*, but the description of the *Persocomites*, or *comites Persae*, as *Persae*, i.e. Persians, is equally important. The description of a newly created unit in this manner suggests that it was formed of Persians, so the question now is when, if ever, during the early 4th-century were Persians either available or acceptable as recruits into the Roman army? The Persian frontier had remained relatively quiet since the treaty of 299 following Galerius Maximianus' smashing victory over the Persian king Narses and open warfare was not renewed until shortly before the death of Constantine in 337. We are reasonably well informed about the terms of the treaty of 299, and there is no evidence to suggest that it required the Persians to surrender recruits for service in the

³⁹ See M.P. Speidel, 'The Later Roman Field Army and the Guard of the High Empire', *Latomus* 46 (1987), 375-79; *idem*, 'Maxentius' Praetorians', *MEFRA* 100 (1988), pp. 183-86.

Roman army.⁴⁰ Certainly, Rome normally insisted that its newly defeated enemies should submit in this manner, but Rome's relationship with Persia was on a different plane. It has been noted, for example, that only in the case of Persia was Rome prepared to exchange hostages, and that this exchange of hostages was a short-term measure pending the negotiation or implementation of a peace-treaty rather than a condition of the peace-treaty itself.⁴¹ Given that Persia did not usually surrender long-term hostages to Rome, even at its darkest moment in 299, it is most improbable that it ever surrendered any recruits for service in Rome's armies. For this reason, it seems unlikely that Galerius Maximianus, or any other emperor, formed the *comites Persae clibanarii* of Persian recruits surrendered for this purpose, as our hagiographical sources would have us believe. The alternative possibilities are that this unit was formed of volunteers, of Persians who had deserted their own state for personal or political reasons, or that it was formed of captives, either of former Persian soldiers or of fresh recruits from a captive civilian base.

As far as Constantine is concerned, he never went to war with Persia, so he never had the opportunity to acquire sufficient captives from which to recruit two fresh units, the *comites Persae* and its sister unit the *equites Persae clibanarii*. On the other hand, he did welcome the Persian prince Hormisdas to his court as a refugee c.324, and one may suspect that Hormisdas brought a small entourage with him.⁴² The steady trickle of refugees, traders and adventurers back and forth across the Romano-Persian border may also have contributed to the availability of a small pool of Persian manpower within the Roman borders.⁴³ But a palatine vexillation probably consisted of about 500 men,⁴⁴ so that the creation of the two new units of *Persae* would have required about 1,000 men, and it is difficult to

⁴⁰ See R.C. Blockley, 'The Roman-Persian Peace Treaties of AD299 and 363', *Florilegium* 6 (1984), pp. 28-49.

⁴¹ See A.D. Lee, 'The Role of Hostages in Roman Diplomacy with Sassanian Persia', *Historia* 40 (1991), pp. 366-74.

⁴² Zosimus, *HN* 2.27; Zonaras, *Ann.* 13.5. One notes, though, that John of Antioch, *frag.* 178 in C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* IV (Paris, 1851), p. 605, identifies the emperor who received Hormisdas as Licinius.

⁴³ See S.N.C. Lieu, 'Captives, Refugees, and Exiles: A Study of Cross-Frontier Civilian Movements and Contacts between Rome and Persia from Valerian to Jovian', in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (eds.), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 475-505.

⁴⁴ See T. Coello, *Unit Sizes in the Late Roman Army* (Oxford, 1996), p. 41.

believe that Hormisdas could have brought so many able-bodied men with him, such were the circumstances of his defection, or that there were so many able-bodied Persians already available within the empire. In short, it is difficult to understand how Constantine could ever have gathered sufficient Persians to justify the inclusion of the title *Persae* among the titles of two new palatine vexillations.

(b) The Creation of the Persocomites in Context

It is now clear that there is a strong argument for identifying the *Persocomites* of the Guidi-legend with a known, historical unit, the *comites* [*Persae*] *clibanarii* of the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Unfortunately, though, the *comites* [*Persae*] *clibanarii* are little more than a name to us, and we have nothing with which to compare the wider story behind the creation of the *Persocomites* as preserved by the Guidi-legend in order to determine whether it has any historical basis at all. Yet it is not unfair to assume that there must have been some sort of historical basis to it originally, however distorted it may have become in its transmission. We should not underestimate the professional integrity of the medieval Byzantine hagiographer of Constantine, even if we cannot always admire his competence, since as far as Constantine was concerned, he was as much a historian as a hagiographer, and had a wide range of sources upon which to draw. For example, the anonymous author of the Guidi-legend mentions two of his sources by name, bishop Eusebius of Caesarea and his successor Gelasius, and even if he did not consult their works directly himself, they still remain the ultimate sources for much of the information which he preserves, the sources of his source.⁴⁵ Nowhere is this more obvious than in his account of Constantine's vision and his subsequent creation of the *labarum* which clearly derives from Eusebius of Caesarea's original account of the same.⁴⁶ He also excuses his failure to detail the honours accorded Constantine at his death on the grounds that such information was easily available in the 'chronicles of the masses'.⁴⁷ Hence one suspects that there must have been some sort of historical basis to the wider tale concerning Constantine's war against the Persians which resulted in the creation of the *Persocomites*, and that it was not a complete and deliberate

⁴⁵ Guidi (n. 3), 319, l. 22; 320, l. 1.

⁴⁶ See Lieu and Montserrat (n. 7), p. 143, on Eusebius, VC 1.30-31 and Guidi (n. 3), pp. 322-23.

⁴⁷ Guidi (n. 3), 654, l. 21.

act of fiction.

Rather than trying to force this tale to fit in with the known facts of Constantine's life, one should consider it in isolation and on its own merits. If we did not already 'know' that it related to Constantine I, to whose reign would we attribute this tale as a somewhat distorted and exaggerated version of a genuine sequence of historical events? One cannot help but note a startling resemblance to the early reign of Constantius II (337-61). It is unfortunate that no full, narrative account of the early reign of Constantius II has survived, since the surviving books of the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus only begin in late 353. Nevertheless, it is possible to see in our account of Constantine's war against the Persians a somewhat confused account of the early reign of Constantius II c.337-44. The similarities may be treated under four headings.

First, the Guidi-legend claims that Constantine I collected an army for use against the Persians shortly after the death of his father. Following his attendance at the funeral of his father Constantine I at Constantinople in May 337 and the subsequent negotiations with his brothers concerning the division of the empire, Constantius II returned to Antioch in Syria for the winter of 337/38 from where he launched a series of campaigns against the Persians and their allies beginning in the spring of 338.⁴⁸ The Guidi-legend also makes it clear that the Persians were already attacking Roman cities in the East before Constantine had collected his army against them, and one may see in this a reference to the first siege of Nisibis in 336, if not the destruction of Amida and Antoninopolis also, before Constantine I had died even.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ On Constantius' movements, see T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), pp. 219-24.

⁴⁹ For a full list, and translations, of all the relevant sources for Constantius II's early wars with the Persians, see M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (eds.), *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 226-363. A Documentary History* (London, 1991), pp. 164-210. Although the sources (e.g. Jerome, *Chron. s.a.* 338) date the first siege of Nisibis to 338, R.W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 232-38 (= 'The Dates of the First Siege of Nisibis and the Death of James of Nisibis', *Byzantion* 69 (1999), pp. 7-17), argues that it occurred in 337, on the basis of his reconstruction of a hypothetical source common to Jerome and other chroniclers, his so-called *Continuatio Antiochiensis*. While Burgess is correct to posit the existence of a common source, he has failed to note that, for the late reign of Constantine I, it systematically postdated events by 2 years, as revealed, for example, by the fact that

Second, the Guidi-legend claims that Constantine was captured in a night-attack by the Persians. According to surviving historical sources, Romans and Persians fought nine major engagements during the reign of Constantius II, although the emperor himself was personally present at only two of these.⁵⁰ But he was present at one of the more notorious of these engagements, the famous night-battle at Eleia near Singara, when Roman troops stormed the Persian camp itself, but threw away their victory by continuing to fight in the darkness, so allowing the Persians to mount a successful counter-attack. The details of this battle are obscure because our two main sources for it are the two panegyrics which Libanius and Julian Caesar delivered in 344/45 and 355 respectively.⁵¹ Their prime concern was to prove that the Romans did not really lose this battle, but that if they did lose, it was the fault of the soldiers, and not of the emperor. They put the best possible gloss on events from the Roman perspective, and one notes that they say very little about the exact sequence of events following the Persian counter-attack. The two sides disengaged the next day, and the Persians did retreat back across the Tigris, but it is not at all clear whether they had not managed to recapture their camp on the night. Whatever the case, there is a clear parallel between Constantine's alleged defeat by the Persians during a night-attack and Constantius II's defeat during the night-battle near Singara in 344.⁵²

Third, the most incredible element in the Guidi-legend is the claim that Constantine was actually captured by the Persians, although he did manage to escape. There is no evidence that Constantius II was ever captured by the Persians, and it seems most unlikely that he was, but he may have come far closer to capture than the surviving panegyric accounts of his early wars with Persia would have us believe. Ammianus preserves an intriguing reference to an occasion on which Constantius was defeated in battle by the

Jerome dates the death of the empress Fausta to 328 rather than to 326, and the consecration of Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria to 330 rather than to 328. Hence one must deduct 2 years from 338 to discover the correct date of the siege, 336.

⁵⁰ Jerome, *Chron. s.a.* 348; Festus, *Brev.* 27.

⁵¹ Libanius, *Or.* 59.103-20; Julian, *Or.* 1.22d-25b.

⁵² There is some dispute concerning the date of the battle, since some sources date it to 348 rather than 344, but these seem to have confused two different battles near Singara. The decisive testimony must be that by Julian, *Or.* 1.26b, who claims that the emperor Constantius (337-50) died about 6 years after the battle.

Persians and fled with a small group of companions to the safety of an unguarded frontier post where he was forced to live on a meagre allowance of bread supplied to him by a local woman.⁵³ We cannot date this incident other than to say it must have occurred during the period 338-50, but the fact that Constantius participated personally in the relevant battle, and that he only participated in two of the nine major battles with the Persians during his reign, one of which was the night-battle near Singara, encourages the suspicion that this anecdote relates to the immediate aftermath of his defeat at Singara. Whatever the case, Constantius was separated from the bulk of his forces on at least one occasion following his defeat by the Persians, during which time there must have been a very real fear that he had been either captured or killed.

Finally, the claim by the Guidi-legend that the king of the Persians gave a thousand guards to Constantine, whom he then named his *Persocomites*, is no more credible than the claim that the Persians had captured Constantine. Stepping back from the particulars, however, the broader claim is that Constantine created the *Persocomites* following an earlier defeat by the Persians. Again, this is reminiscent of developments under Constantius II who was forced to reform the cavalry branch of his army in the wake of setbacks against the Persians.⁵⁴ In particular, one notes that he was responsible for the creation of some formations of heavy-armed cavalry, *clibanarii*.⁵⁵ So there is a parallel between Constantine's alleged creation of the *Persocomites*, whom we have already identified as the *comites [Persae] clibanarii*, and Constantius II's development of *clibanarii* among his forces also.

It is my argument, therefore, that the story of the Persian war in which Constantine was taken captive is no more than a displaced and distorted account of the earliest phase of the wars between Constantius II and Sapor II of Persia (309-79). That such displacement could, and did, occur is evidenced by the fact that Theophanes Confessor, or a source which he copied, attributed the Persian war which Constantius II waged as Augustus to his period as Caesar under Constantine I, to the ridiculously early year of

⁵³ Amm. 25.9.3.

⁵⁴ Hoffmann (n. 29), pp. 265-77.

⁵⁵ Julian, *Or.* 1.37c-d.

325 to be precise.⁵⁶ Different factors may have contributed to such displacement in different sources, but in this instance it is relatively easily explained. It seems to have resulted from a simple confusion between the names of Constantine I and Constantius II which is all too common in the manuscripts of our surviving sources for late antiquity, whether in Greek or Latin, because only one letter distinguishes between these names in either language. The author of the Guidi-legend, or of a slightly earlier life of Constantine, discovered a source which seemed to tell how Constantine I had launched an expedition against the Persians immediately after the death of his father, and simply copied the relevant excerpt into a pre-existing framework at what he thought was the appropriate point, the description of how Constantine I came to power after the death of his father Constantius I. The apparent distortion or exaggeration in this tale is rather less easy to explain because insufficient comparative material survives from the relevant period, but it is not difficult to envisage how important distinctions in an original account which stated merely that it had been *feared*, or *rumoured*, that Constantius II had himself been captured in the aftermath of a defeat, because of his separation from the main body of his troops for a period, may have been lost in subsequent condensations of a longer and more complex work. This may then have paved the way for the more fantastic inventions. But there is no way of distinguishing whether these elements were already present in the tale before it was salvaged for re-use in a life of Constantine, or represent subsequent developments in the new setting.

It is important to point out that the confusion between the names of Constantine I and Constantius II in this particular instance had occurred long before the composition of the Guidi-legend in the 9th century. In the *Chronicle* which he composed not long after the death of Justinian I in 565,⁵⁷ John Malalas describes a victory by Constantine I over the Persians which is clearly an extreme abbreviation of the episode which has been best

⁵⁶ Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5815. I will argue elsewhere that the notice at the heart of this entry had originally described the defection of Hormisdas to the Roman empire 322/24, but that by the time Theophanes came to copy the chronicle within which it was embedded, it had become thoroughly corrupted and changed completely, not least because it had been 'corrected' or added to by editors influenced by their knowledge of subsequent events c.336-50.

⁵⁷ See E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, and R. Scott (eds.), *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney, 1990), pp. 1-27.

preserved by the Guidi-legend:

He [Constantine] began a campaign against the Persians, was victorious and made a peace treaty with Sapor, the emperor of the Persians. It was the Persians who asked to have peace with the Romans.⁵⁸

This raises a question concerning the nature of Malalas' immediate source in this matter, and its relationship to the Guidi-legend. Was it an early life of Constantine, and if so was it an ancestor of the Guidi-legend? If it was a life of Constantine, then its order of events must have been different to that surviving in the Guidi-legend, since Malalas records Constantine's campaign against the Persians after his alleged baptism by bishop Silvester in Rome, whereas the Guidi-legend sets it before his baptism by Silvester. It is noteworthy, however, that Malalas' account of the life and works of Constantine is a strange collection of obscure, often unique, facts which seem to have been dragged together from a number of different sources, and his account of Constantine's Persian campaign seems to constitute yet another of these isolated pieces of information rather than part of a larger life of Constantine. Hence I am inclined to believe that Malalas and the author of the Guidi-legend both chanced upon the same account of Constantine's Persian expedition which had been preserved independently of any life of Constantine as such.

The ultimate source for this episode must remain a mystery, although we do have two clues. First, the preservation of such a technical detail as the name of a particular military unit, the *Persocomites*, suggests that it is a narrative history rather than a rhetorical work, some speech or panegyric, which lies at the heart of the present mystery, since the latter tend to omit such detail. Furthermore, the length of the episode, even if it has grown a little during its transmission, suggests that this history was a full and detailed work rather than some chronicle or *breviarium*. More importantly, however, the story does not reflect well on the emperor, even in its present hagiographical context. The rescue of the emperor is credited to the valour of his soldiers, or to the slaves of the Persians even, rather to any merit on his part. The author responsible for the preservation of this unflattering

⁵⁸ Malalas, *Chron.* 13.3. Trans. by E. Jeffreys et alii, *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne, 1986), p. 172.

anecdote was clearly hostile to the emperor concerned, even if the anecdote has become a little exaggerated in the retelling. So we are looking for the author of a detailed political history, which included the reign of Constantius II, but who was hostile to this emperor at least. Hence Eunapius of Sardis must emerge as the strongest candidate in this matter. He wrote a detailed political history which covered the period from 270 to 404, and was a bitter critic of the Christian emperors from Constantine I onwards.⁵⁹ As noted above, his history has not itself survived, but many fragments have been preserved in compilations produced under the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. It is generally agreed also that when Zosimus wrote his *New History* c.502, he merely abbreviated large parts of Eunapius' earlier history for much of his account of 4th-century events.⁶⁰ In the present context, however, it is noteworthy that no fragments have survived which tell us anything concerning Eunapius' treatment of the earliest wars between Constantius II and Sapor c.337-44. And Zosimus is no more enlightening. He fails to describe any events anywhere in the empire between the death of Constantine II in 340 and that of Constans in 350. He then summarizes over ten years of war on the eastern frontier in a most brief and misleading fashion.⁶¹ For these reasons, we remain almost completely ignorant as to how Eunapius described the Persian wars c.337-50, other than that he characterized them as a defeat for Constantius II. So nothing precludes the identification of Eunapius as the original source for the episode under discussion here. Indeed, the fact that Zosimus preserves an account of the creation of units entitled *Salii* and *Batavi* under Julian Caesar in Gaul c.358,⁶² suggests that such detail was of interest to Eunapius, and provides a parallel for the inclusion of similar detail by him also in the case of the *Persocomites*.

Some minor points remain. It must also be said in favour of the

⁵⁹ See R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* I (Liverpool, 1981), pp. 1-26.

⁶⁰ E.g. see R.T. Ridley, 'Zosimus the Historian', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 65 (1972), pp. 277-302. Baker (n. 1), p. 101, concludes that "Zosimus followed Eunapius more often than he deserted him."

⁶¹ Zosimus, *HN* 2.43.1: "At this juncture, the Persians plundered the eastern cities, especially those in Mesopotamia. Although he was defeated in the war against them, Constantius nevertheless was determined to attack Magnentius and Vetrano and their armies."

⁶² Zosimus, *HN* 3.8.1.

identification of Constantius as the real subject of Constantine's alleged Persian war, that the number of troops attributed to Constantine in this war, 20,000 men, better fits the early reign of Constantius II than it does that of Constantine. One does not have to believe Zosimus' claim that Constantine led 90,000 infantry against Maxentius in 312, or 120,000 infantry against Licinius c.316, in order to realise that he ought to have been able to field a far larger force than 20,000 men had he really decided upon a Persian expedition.⁶³ As the sole ruler of the empire, he ought to have been able to gather a force comparable to the 83,000 men whom Julian gathered for his Persian expedition in 363,⁶⁴ had he really contemplated such an expedition in the late 320s, say. On the contrary, Constantius II ruled only about a third of this empire until 340, and only about a half until 353. Hence his resources were always far more limited, and 20,000 men seems a good approximation of the size of force which he would have been able to field in the early 340s. This brings us back to the earlier question concerning the source of manpower for the *Persocomites* and its twin, the *equites Persae clibanarii*. Constantius may have attracted a few Persian deserters and adventurers to his side by 344, but far more significant is the fact that he had captured a sizeable Persian city only a few years earlier, and had deported its whole population to Thrace.⁶⁵ These unfortunate exiles would have constituted an excellent source of manpower for Constantius in his new enterprise. The men ought to have had some familiarity with the Persian use of *clibanarii* which he wished to imitate, and their loyalty could be relied upon because their families were effectively hostages for their good behaviour.

Finally, the Guidi-legend preserves another strange episode concerning Constantine which deserves some mention here also because it too refers to

⁶³ Zosimus, *HN* 2.15.1; 2.22.1. The *Origo Constantini* 5.16 preserves much more realistic figures when it states that Constantine led 20,000 men against Licinius' army of 35,000 in their first civil war c.316.

⁶⁴ Zosimus claims that Julian reviewed a force of 65,000 men at Circesium after he had already detached a diversionary force of 18,000 men (*HN* 3.12-13). Hence the total of 83,000 men. In so far as Libanius (*Or.* 18.214) and Ammianus (23.3.5) describe the diversionary force as consisting of 20,000 and 30,000 men respectively, Zosimus' figures seem reasonably accurate in this instance.

⁶⁵ Libanius, *Or.* 59.83-87. Libanius does not name the part of Thrace to which the Persians had been deported, but I shall argue elsewhere, on the basis of Malalas, *Chron.* 13.12, that they had probably been settled in and about Maximianopolis in Rhodope.

a Persian war, although it is a little less absurd than the account of Constantine's capture by the Persians and quite separate from it in the narrative.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, it may well represent the same process at work once more, the pasting of another excerpt from the same, or a similar, source into a pre-existing life of Constantine where the editor thought most appropriate. It purports to tell how the citizens of Byzantium put up a fierce resistance against Constantine following his defeat of Licinius in 324, and is of interest to us here because it claims that the Byzantines had hoped to defeat Constantine in a third and final engagement when he sent the bulk of his army back to garrison duty in Rome because of a Persian invasion there. Fortunately, Constantine saw a sign in the sky again just as he had in his war against Maxentius, remembered how helpful the sign had been on that occasion, and put it to use once more. He triumphed, of course, and captured Byzantium. Now, one hardly needs to emphasize that this tale is nonsense as it survives. The Persians did not attack the empire under Constantine, and they certainly never threatened Rome! But the tale of how an emperor finally triumphed in his third engagement with the enemy after witnessing a sign in the sky similar to that which had appeared in the sky before the defeat of Maxentius earlier, and this despite the fact that he was being threatened by the Persians also, is reminiscent of the circumstances in which Constantius II found himself in 351. He had suffered several defeats by the usurper Magnentius before he finally triumphed at Mursa, all in the same year that he had appointed his cousin Gallus as Caesar in the East in order to check the Persian threat there.⁶⁷ Most importantly, later sources attributed his victory at Mursa to the appearance in the sky of the same sign which had appeared to Constantine I before his victory over Maxentius in 312,⁶⁸ and Constantius seems to have encouraged contemporary commentators to compare his victory over Magnentius to that of his father

⁶⁶ Guidi (n. 3), 335-36; ch. 23 in the text as divided by Lieu and Montserrat (n. 7), pp. 126-27.

⁶⁷ See J. Šašel, 'The Struggle between Magnentius and Constantius II for Italy and Illyricum', *Ziva Antika* 21 (1971), pp. 205-16.

⁶⁸ Philostorgius, *HE* 3.26; *Chron. Pasch. s.a.* 351. Originally, the cross had only appeared in the sky above Jerusalem, and bishop Cyril of Jerusalem had written to Constantius reporting this phenomenon as a sign of divine favour towards him, but, as the above sources reveal, this distinction was soon lost, and tradition came to assert that Constantius and his men had themselves seen the cross over Jerusalem even though they were fighting Magnentius in far-away Pannonia.

over Maxentius.⁶⁹ In short, one suspects that one of the more important ingredients in the mix which gave rise to the present tale concerning Constantine's victory over the hostile Byzantines was a rather confused account of Constantius II's victory at Mursa in 351. Again, one suspects that confusion between the names of Constantine I and Constantius II played a key part in this process. The final text has a solid historical starting point in that Constantine had been forced to besiege Licinius in Byzantium for a short period in 324, although there is no evidence that the Byzantines continued the struggle after Licinius fled to Chalcedon.⁷⁰ But there was a link between Constantine's struggles against Licinius and Constantius' struggle against Magnentius in that Constantius had located his headquarters at Cibalae for a period in 351, in part because it reminded all that his father had defeated Licinius there (although in their first civil war in 316 rather than in their second in 324).⁷¹ Hence there were several features of Constantius' campaign against Magnentius in 351 which may have contributed to its confused assimilation with events under Constantine I. Whatever the case, there is no intrinsic connection between the two episodes of Constantine's capture by the Persians and his defeat of the Byzantines at this stage in the Constantinian legend, even if such a connection does develop later, and the one argument need not explain both episodes.

To conclude, therefore, it is my argument that the story of Constantine I's Persian expedition resulting in his defeat, capture, but ultimate triumph, is a displaced and somewhat distorted account of the earliest phase of the war between Constantius II and Sapor II c.337-44. As for the *Persocomites* allegedly created as the result of this expedition, they are identifiable as the *comites [Persae] clibanarii* of the *Notitia Dignitatum*. This story most likely has its origin in a fragment from the lost history of Eunapius of Sardis which had been corrupted in its transmission. Its survival should be compared, perhaps, to that of an unusually detailed account of the deaths of Crispus and Fausta in another life of Constantine, the so-called Optiz-legend (*BHG* 365), whose origins may be traced back to Eunapius also, via

⁶⁹ Themistius, *Or.* 3.44b. See also D. Woods, 'A Persian at Rome: Ammianus and Eunapius, *Frg.* 68', in J.W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (eds.), *The Late Roman World and Its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1999), pp. 156-65.

⁷⁰ *Origo Constantini* 5.25-27; Zosimus, *HN* 2.23-24.

⁷¹ Zosimus, *HN* 2.48.3.

II On the Identity of the Egyptian from Spain (Zosimus, *HN* 2.29)

In a famous passage the pagan historian Zosimus attributes the conversion of Constantine I to Christianity to the influence of an Egyptian from Iberia who persuaded him that baptism would purge him of his guilt for the killing of his wife and eldest son, Fausta and Crispus (*HN* 2.29.3):⁷³

Αἰγύπτιος τις ἐξ Ἰβηρίας εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην ἐλθὼν καὶ ταῖς εἰς τὰ βασιλεία γυναιξὶν συνήθης γενόμενος, ἐντυχὼν τῷ Κωνσταντίνῳ πάσης ἀμαρτάνδος ἀναιρετικὴν εἶναι τὴν τῶν Χριστιανῶν διεβεβαιώσατο δόξαν καὶ τοῦτο ἔχειν ἐπάγγελμα, τὸ τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς μεταλαμβάνοντας αὐτῆς πάσης ἀμαρτίας ἔξω παραχρῆμα καθίστασθαι.

A certain Egyptian, who had come from Spain to Rome and was intimate with the ladies of the court, met Constantine and assured him that the Christian religion was able to absolve him from guilt and that it promised every wicked man who was converted to it immediate release from all sin.⁷⁴

The identity of this Egyptian is problematic, although his identification as bishop Ossius of Cordova (c.300-57) has long since won general acceptance.⁷⁵ The problem is that Ossius was of Spanish birth and origin, so it is difficult to understand why Zosimus should refer to him as an Egyptian. The most commonly accepted explanation is that it was a term of abuse,⁷⁶ although it is difficult to explain its exact connotations, since no

⁷² See J. Bidez, 'Fragments nouveaux de Philostorge sur la vie de Constantin', *Byzantion* 10 (1935), pp. 403-37.

⁷³ For the background, see D. Woods, 'On the Death of the Empress Fausta', *G & R* 45 (1998), pp. 70-86.

⁷⁴ Trans. by R.T. Ridley, *Zosimus: New History* (Canberra, 1982), p. 37.

⁷⁵ For the history of this identification, see V.C. de Clerq, *Ossius of Cordova: A Contribution to the History of the Constantinian Period* (Washington, D.C. 1954), p. 53, n. 63. More recently, this identification has been accepted by, e.g. F. Paschoud, *Cinq Études sur Zosime* (Paris, 1975), pp. 40-43; D. Bowder *The Age of Constantine and Julian* (London, 1978), p. 33; Ridley (n. 74), p. 157; Lieu and Montserrat (n. 7), p. 17.

⁷⁶ E.g. A. Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (Oxford, 1948), p. 102, n. 1; J.H. Smith, *Constantine the Great* (New York, 1971), p. 213. Exceptionally, M. Grant, *The Emperor Constantine* (London, 1993), p. 141, accepts that Ossius really was

examples can be adduced to prove that it really was a term of abuse. For while it is true that, as a race, the Egyptians did enjoy a bad reputation as a contentious, bad-mannered, and superstitious people,⁷⁷ there is no evidence that contentious, bad-mannered or superstitious individuals were ever referred to as 'Egyptians' simply because of their possession of these qualities. Hence an alternative explanation has also been offered, that the description may have resulted from some misunderstanding concerning Ossius' trip to Alexandria in Egypt in 324.⁷⁸

That this Egyptian from Iberia was a bishop seems assured by a parallel passage in the ecclesiastical history of Sozomen. He describes a pagan claim that, following the murder of his wife and son, Constantine had enquired of the philosopher Sopater concerning the means of his purification, and that when he had been told that this was not possible in this case, he had happened to meet some bishops who promised him that baptism would produce the required effect.⁷⁹ Hence his baptism. It is generally agreed that Sozomen's source in this matter is the *History* of Eunapius of Sardis, and that, since Zosimus simply condenses Eunapius' work for much of the earlier part of his history, Zosimus' Egyptian is probably identifiable as one of the anonymous bishops mentioned by Sozomen. The convincing recent argument that Zosimus actually combined two very different sources to produce his account of the conversion of Constantine, the *Actus Silvestri* as well as the *History* of Eunapius, does not change this.⁸⁰ The Egyptian from Iberia must be a bishop, and since Ossius of Cordova fulfils two of the three conditions, being both a bishop and Spanish, his identification as the bishop concerned has won widespread acceptance.

My concern here is that there is another bishop whose candidacy in this matter has as much to recommend it as that of Ossius. I refer here to bishop Paphnutius of Egypt. As I will demonstrate next, he also fulfils two of the three conditions, being both a bishop and Egyptian. So why should we prefer one candidate to the other in this matter? Before proceeding any further, it is important to emphasize that we are less concerned here with

of Egyptian birth.

⁷⁷ E.g. Amm. 22.6.1; Eunapius, *VS* 463; *SHA Quadrigae Tyrannorum* 8.5.

⁷⁸ See de Clerq (n. 75), p. 56.

⁷⁹ Sozomen, *HE* 1.5.

⁸⁰ See Fowden (n. 12), 146-70, at 163-65.

the status of the historical Paphnutius, whether he was really a bishop, whether he attended the council of Nicaea, or whether there was a historical Paphnutius even, than with the legend that had grown up about him by the end of the fourth century.⁸¹ We are concerned here with the sort of information concerning this Paphnutius which was available to Eunapius, and the manner in which Zosimus adapted this, rather than with the historical accuracy of this information. The fact that, writing c.402, Rufinus of Aquileia already believed that Paphnutius had been a bishop suffices to prove that Eunapius probably thought so also, since they were contemporaries and Rufinus may be presumed to preserve information similar to that which would have been available to Eunapius. Hence when I refer to bishop Paphnutius of Egypt, I do not necessarily accept the existence of a bishop of this name under Constantine I, but refer only to the legendary figure as he existed by the end of the 4th-century.

Obviously, the first argument in favour of the identification of the legendary 'bishop' Paphnutius of Egypt with the mysterious Egyptian from Iberia must be that he was in fact Egyptian. Of the early church-historians, Rufinus refers to him as a 'bishop from the region of Egypt' (*episcopus ex Aegypti partibus*), Sozomen describes him as 'Paphnutius from Egypt' (Παφνούτιος ὁ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου), and Theodoret as 'Paphnutius the Egyptian' (Παφνούτιος ὁ Αἰγύπτιος).⁸² Socrates is the most specific, describing him as 'Paphnutius from the Upper Thebais' (Παφνούτιος τε ὁ ἐκ τῆς ἄνω Θηβαϊδος) and as 'bishop of one of the cities of Upper Thebes' (μιάς πόλεως τῶν ἄνω Θηβῶν ἐπίσκοπος).⁸³ It is clear, therefore, that the name of Paphnutius' see dropped from the mainstream Christian historical tradition at an early date, if it had ever been present at all, so that he was known simply as 'the Egyptian', with the occasional acknowledgement that he actually came from the Upper Thebais.

A second point to consider must be his access to the imperial court and, more importantly, to Constantine himself. Rufinus describes his presence at the council of Nicaea in 325, and his relationship with the emperor, as

⁸¹ See F. Winkelmann, 'Paphnutios, der Bekenner und Bischof', *Probleme der koptischen Literatur, I* (Halle, 1968), pp. 145-53.

⁸² Rufinus, *HE* 10.4; Sozomen, *HE* 1.10; Theodoret, *HE* 1.6.

⁸³ Socrates, *HE* 1.8, 11.

follows (*HE* 10.4):

There was also at the council the man of God bishop Paphnutius from Egypt, one of the confessors whom Maximian, after gouging out their right eyes and severing their left hams, had condemned to the mines. But there was in him such a grace of miracles that signs were worked through him no less than through the apostles of old. For he put demons to flight with a mere word and cured the sick by prayer alone. He is said to have returned sight to the blind and given back soundness of body to the crippled. Constantine regarded him with such veneration and love that many times he called him into the palace, embraced him, and bestowed fervent kisses on the eye which had been gouged out in his confession of faith.⁸⁴

This is as strong as anything which survives concerning the relationship between Constantine and Ossius. In his description of how Constantine sent a letter to Alexandria in Egypt in 324 in an attempt to reconcile the two sides in the growing Arian crisis there, Eusebius of Caesarea describes the messenger as follows (*VC* 2.63):

He forthwith selected from the Christians in his train one whom he knew to be approved for the sobriety and genuineness of his faith, and who before this time distinguished himself by the boldness of his religious profession, and sent him to negotiate peace between the dissentient parties at Alexandria.⁸⁵

Eusebius' continuators rephrase his sentiments, and explicitly identify this anonymous messenger with Ossius of Cordova, but do not preserve anything which can be taken as proof that Constantine enjoyed a closer relationship with Ossius than he did with any of the other bishops.⁸⁶ Indeed, there are strong doubts whether they are right even to interpret these lines in reference to Ossius.⁸⁷ Whatever the case, the real distinction between

⁸⁴ Trans. by P. Amidon, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia: Books 10 and 11* (New York, 1997), pp. 11-12.

⁸⁵ Trans. by E.C. Richardson, *NPNF* 1, 2nd Series (New York, 1890), p. 515.

⁸⁶ Socrates, *HE* 1.7; Sozomen, *HE* 1.16.

⁸⁷ B.H. Warmington, 'The Sources of Some Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and Life of Constantine', in E. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica*

Constantine's relations with Ossius and Paphnutius lie in the official duties which he entrusted to the former.

The earliest explicit evidence for Ossius' association with Constantine occurs in a letter which Constantine sent to bishop Caecilian of Carthage in 313, which reveals that Constantine had requested Ossius to draw up a list of bishops in the diocese of Africa who deserved his financial support on account of the orthodoxy of their faith.⁸⁸ He also sent him to Alexandria in 324 with a letter for the parties in the Arian dispute there, as already noted, but the highlight of Ossius' career under Constantine was surely his appointment as president of the Council of Nicaea in 325. Yet these and other appointments prove little other than that Constantine regarded Ossius as a capable administrator, a tactful negotiator, and a good civil servant. They do not prove that the emperor relied on his advice more than that of any other bishop, nor that they enjoyed particularly good relations.⁸⁹ A number of different factors may have come into play here such as the education of the bishops from whom Constantine could choose for such tasks, their willingness to perform such tasks, or their physical ability even. In the case of Paphnutius, for example, the fact that his right eye had been gouged out, and his left-leg crippled, not to mention any other complications which may have resulted from his service in the mines, probably rendered him physically incapable of performing many of the tasks which fell to Ossius. If one wants to contrast the relative standing of these two individuals, whatever their clerical status, one should turn rather to the debate on celibacy which occurred at Nicaea, or rather was alleged to have occurred. According to our sources, Paphnutius spoke out boldly during the council against a proposal that clergy should refrain from intercourse with their wives after entering upon the priesthood.⁹⁰ In so far as

18 (Kalamazoo, 1989), pp. 93-97, argues that this description refers to the *notarius* Marianus, not Ossius, although T.G. Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great* (Scranton, 1996), p. 164, disagrees with him on the basis of Athanasius, *Apol. c. Arian*. 74.4 and 76.3.

⁸⁸ Eusebius, *HE* 10.6.1-3.

⁸⁹ In general, see B.H. Warmington, 'Did Constantine have "Religious Advisers"?', in E. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 19 (Louvain, 1989), pp. 117-29.

⁹⁰ Socrates, *HE* 1.11; Sozomen, *HE* 1.23; Gelasius, *HE* 2.32. It is this, of course, which has attracted far more attention to Paphnutius than he might otherwise have received. See e.g. C. Cochini, *The Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy* (San Francisco, 1990), pp. 195-200.

Ossius was president of the council, and had also attended the council of Elvira c.300 at which an identical proposal had already been passed, it has been argued that Ossius was the main force behind this proposal.⁹¹ It was defeated, however, so on the one issue on which we can be sure that Ossius and Paphnutius did have strongly opposed views, Paphnutius' view triumphed. To be more precise, given the attempts by Constantine to impose a measure of uniformity in practice and doctrine on all the churches throughout the empire, Constantine allowed Paphnutius' view to triumph, i.e. he preferred Paphnutius' advice to that of Ossius, or so the tradition went by the end of the 4th-century.

It is appropriate at this point to consider the wider circumstances of Constantine's alleged conversation with the Egyptian from Iberia. When and where did it take place? If we are to believe Zosimus, then it took place at Rome, sometime after Constantine had gained sole control of the empire, and shortly after the deaths of Crispus and Fausta. At its face value, therefore, this seems to prove that this incident occurred during the summer of 326 when Constantine visited Rome for his vicennial celebrations.⁹² But Zosimus' account of this incident cannot be taken at its face value because it is a composite formed from two different sources, Eunapius' *History* and the *Actus Silvestri*. Strictly speaking, in his initial account of Constantine's approach to Sopater seeking purification from his sin, Sozomen does not state where this encounter occurred. Nevertheless, he records later that the council of Nicaea sparked off a number of debates at Constantine's court between pagan philosophers and Christian bishops.⁹³ In one instance, a simple old man, highly esteemed as a confessor, but unskilled in logic, opposed a philosopher whom he managed to persuade to convert to Christianity, while on a second occasion bishop Alexander of Constantinople miraculously silenced his pagan opponent. Of particular interest to us here is Sozomen's claim that this second contest took place after Constantine had returned to Constantinople from Nicaea, i.e. during the winter of 325/6. It seems probable that Eunapius had included a pagan account of these same debates which took place during late 325 and early 326, and one wonders how he explained the success of the Christians. He could not deny their success, of course, since the subsequent history of

⁹¹ See de Clerq (n. 75), p. 279.

⁹² See Barnes (n. 11), p. 77.

⁹³ Sozomen, *HE* 1.18.

Constantine's reign put this beyond the shadow of a doubt, but he could hardly have brought himself to admit that the Christians genuinely got the better of the philosophers in the debates. The answer, I suggest, is that Eunapius explained the failure of Sopater and his fellow philosophers to persuade Constantine to return to traditional Roman beliefs on the basis that they had refused to offer him purification for his murders of his wife and son, but that the Christians had. So Sopater and his colleagues did not really lose the argument, since the Christians had cheated and seduced the emperor to their side by bribing him in effect.

It is my argument, therefore, that Eunapius located the debates between the pagan philosophers, who included Sopater, and the Christian bishops, who included the Egyptian from Iberia, at Constantinople rather than Rome, and during the spring of 326. Zosimus then changed the order of events slightly, so the debates were shifted to Rome during the summer of 326. This was how he resolved the conflict of evidence between Eunapius who set Constantine's conversion at Constantinople just before his last visit ever to Rome and the *Actus Silvestri* which set Constantine's baptism at Rome, not Constantinople. As far as we are presently concerned, the fact that these debates took place at Constantinople, not Rome, contributes little to the solution of the mystery concerning the identity of the Egyptian from Iberia, although we cannot now prefer to identify him as Ossius simply on the basis that Rome was in the West and he was a western bishop, whereas Paphnutius is not known ever to have left the East. The council of Nicaea left Paphnutius and Ossius both within a short distance of Constantinople in 325, and one does not doubt that such distinguished individuals were welcome in Constantine's entourage as he returned to his capital. Both were probably present during the debates of late 325 and early 326, and one may even suspect that the simple old confessor who persuaded a pagan philosopher to convert, according to Sozomen at least, was none other than Paphnutius.

In the final analysis, we know nothing concerning their wider careers under Constantine which enables us to distinguish which of Paphnutius or Ossius is to be preferred as the Egyptian from Iberia. We are back to the original problem. The description does not fit Ossius since he was not an Egyptian, while it does not fit Paphnutius since it is hardly likely that he ever visited Spain. On the face of things, we are seeking to identify an Egyptian bishop who travelled to Constantinople via Spain, an explanation for which route

should tax even the best imagination. Rather than engage in ever more inventive interpretations of this phrase explaining why it does not really mean what it appears to say, let us question rather whether it is wise to accept this reading of the text as it stands. Two approaches suggest themselves.

On the one hand, one should remember that we depend for our knowledge of Zosimus' text on a single manuscript of the 11/12th-centuries, and that although late Byzantine sources may occasionally throw some indirect light on the correct readings on certain passages, this is not true in this case.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Zosimus' text contains mistakes whose very nature reveals that they are due to the faulty transmission of a text, whether of Eunapius' *History* as used by Zosimus, or of the source even which Eunapius himself had used. The best example is Zosimus' claim that the emperor Gratian was killed at Singidunum in Moesia, whereas he was actually killed at Lugdunum in Gaul.⁹⁵ At some point in the tradition, the first syllable of Lugdunum has been corrupted so that it was interpreted to read Singidunum instead, and the wider context developed accordingly. A similar occurrence may well lie at the heart of the present problem. Either Eunapius' copy of his original source text, or Zosimus' copy of Eunapius' *History*, contained a faulty reading which has gone unchallenged since. One of either the description of the Egyptian as an Egyptian or the description of his origin at Iberia before he arrived at Constantinople represents a faulty reading of the original text.

A second approach is possible also, though, and may well prove the more convincing. One notes that although his name is more correctly spelled 'Ossius', Greek sources render it as 'Hosius', doubtless because of its similarity to the Greek adjective ὅσιος 'holy'.⁹⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, for example, enjoyed the play upon words contained in his name.⁹⁷ There is an obvious danger, therefore, that his name might be misinterpreted as a simple adjective rather than as a real name, particularly if one knows little about the church-history of the first half of the 4th-century. This is exactly

⁹⁴ See F. Paschoud, *Zosime. Histoire Nouvelle: Tome I (Livres I et II)* (Paris, 1971), pp. LXXV-LXXXVIII.

⁹⁵ Zosimus, *HN* 4.35.6. Cf. Socrates, *HE* 5.11.

⁹⁶ See de Clercq (n. 75), pp. 44-48.

⁹⁷ Athanasius, *Apol. de Fuga* 5; *Hist. Arian.* 45.

what has happened in this case, I suggest. Eunapius' source named the two bishops Paphnutius the Egyptian and Osius from Spain in close sequence, but Eunapius misinterpreted the name Osius as the adjective 'holy' in continued reference to Paphnutius the Egyptian, and so reached the mistaken conclusion that the 'holy' Egyptian had come from Spain, or Iberia as he preferred to call it in accordance with his classicizing style. Naturally, he could not accept the description of a Christian bishop as 'holy', and so omitted it altogether.

In conclusion, Eunapius described a series of debates between pagan philosophers and Christian bishops at the court of Constantine I during late 325 and early 326, and explained the success of the Christians by claiming that they had seduced Constantine to their cause by offering him purification for his murder of his wife and eldest son. He named the leader of the philosophers as Sopater, and the leader of the bishops as Paphnutius the Egyptian who had come from Iberia. Unfortunately, his description of the leader of the bishops resulted from his misinterpretation of the first two names of a longer list of bishops. He misinterpreted the name of one bishop, Hosius from Spain, as an adjective 'holy' in reference to a second bishop, Paphnutius from Egypt, to reach the understanding that the Egyptian Paphnutius had travelled to Constantine's court at Constantinople from Spain. Later, when Zosimus was summarizing Eunapius' *History* for his own work, he decided to leave Paphnutius anonymous, referring to him simply as a certain Egyptian, and in order to reconcile Eunapius' account of Constantine's conversion with the account of his baptism in the *Actus Silvestri*, he transferred the alleged conversion to Rome instead.

III The Burning of a *Hadrianeum* under Jovian

That volume of the *Excerpta Historica* known as the *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis* (EV) has preserved a condensed account of the reign of the emperor Jovian (363-4) so similar to that found in the *Suda* that it is clear that they depend on the same ultimate source. This was probably Eunapius' *History*, or so it is agreed. One notes, however, that each account is two steps removed from Eunapius' original. For the EV attributes its account to the 7th-century historian John of Antioch, and although the *Suda* does not attribute its account to any author in particular, the fact that it begins with the false claim that Jovian had resigned from the army under the emperor Julian rather than offer sacrifice suggests that it derives from a Christian

intermediary source.⁹⁸ These accounts tell us relatively little about Jovian which we do not know from other sources already, with one notable exception. Both claim that Jovian was responsible for the burning of a temple built by the emperor Hadrian.

Καθαπτόμενοι καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἱεροῦ καταστροφὴν. Ἀδριανὸς μὲν γὰρ ὁ βασιλεὺς εἰς ἀποθέωσιν καὶ τιμὴν τοῦ πατρὸς Τραϊανου ἔκτισε μικρὸν τινα καὶ χαριέστατον ναὸν, ὃν Ἰουλιανὸς ὁ παραβάτης βιβλιοθήκην κατεσκεύασεν· ὃν σὺν τοῖς βιβλίοις Ἰοβιανὸς κατέκαυσε (*Exc. de Virt.* 63).⁹⁹

They [the Antiochenes] also blamed his wife for the destruction of the temple. For the emperor Hadrian built for the worship and honour of his father Trajan a most beautiful, small temple, which the apostate Julian made into a library. This Jovian burned with its books.

ὁ δὲ Ἰοβιανός, ἐκ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ κινηθεὶς τὸν ὑπὸ Ἀδριανοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως κτισθέντα ναὸν χαριέστατον ἐς ἀποθέωσιν τοῦ πατρὸς Τραϊανου, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ Ἰουλιανοῦ κατασταθέντα βιβλιοθήκην εὐνούχῳ τινὶ Θεοφίλῳ, κατέφλεξε σὺν πᾶσιν οἷς εἶχε βιβλίοις, αὐτῶν τῶν παλλακίδων ὑφαπτουσῶν μετὰ γέλωτος τὴν πυράν (*Suda* I 401).¹⁰⁰

Urged by his wife, Jovian burned the most beautiful temple built by the emperor Hadrian for the worship of his father Trajan which had been turned into a library by the eunuch Theophilus at the command of Julian, together with all the books which it held, and his concubines set the fire with laughter.

⁹⁸ In general, see Banchich (n. 1), pp. 39-57. Given the differences between the two accounts, it does not seem possible that the *Suda*'s account of the burning of the temple is derived from the excerpt of John of Antioch as preserved in the EV.

⁹⁹ *Exc. de Virt.* 63 = John of Antioch, *frag.* 181 in Müller (n. 42), p. 607.

¹⁰⁰ *Suda* I 401 = Eunapius, *frag.* 29.1 in Blockley (n. 1), p. 46.

This is an important claim as far as Jovian's religious policy is concerned, since it seems to reveal him as an active persecutor of paganism. Yet it is a controversial claim, not least because other evidence suggests that Jovian exercised a policy of toleration.¹⁰¹ Ammianus Marcellinus records that animals were sacrificed for Jovian immediately after his accession, while Libanius claims that sacrifices had been allowed to continue from the reign of Julian until that of Jovian's successors, the brothers Valentinian I and Valens.¹⁰² Moreover, as the head of an embassy from the Senate of Constantinople, Themistius had delivered a panegyric before Jovian at Ancyra on 1 January 364 in which he had praised him for his religious toleration and argued for the continuation or extension of this policy.¹⁰³ Eunapius himself admits that Jovian had continued to honour two of the more notorious of Julian's religious advisors, Maximus and Priscus.¹⁰⁴ It is generally agreed, therefore, that whatever his long term intentions may have been, Jovian was not yet secure enough on the throne by his death on 17 February 364 to have begun an active persecution of pagans. So what had happened to the temple built by Hadrian?

The claim by the *Suda* that Jovian had been inspired by his wife to burn the temple, and that his concubines had laughed as they set it on fire, is clearly ridiculous. It is reminiscent of the claim that the courtesan Thais had persuaded a drunken Alexander the Great to allow her, together with the other courtesans present at the feast, to lead the burning of the great palace of the Persian kings at Persepolis in 330 BC.¹⁰⁵ Given that Alexander had continued to be a popular choice for late antique authors when they wished

¹⁰¹ So, for example, N. Lenski, *Valens and the Fourth Century Empire* (doctoral dissertation submitted at Princeton University, 1995: UMI no. 9605072), p. 17, accepts the burning of the temple at Antioch but attributes responsibility to rioters rather than to the emperor. He compares this incident to the destruction of the estates of a certain Datianus following the arrival at Antioch of the news of the death of Jovian himself (Libanius, *Epp.* 1184-86).

¹⁰² Amm. 25.6.1; Libanius, *Or.* 30.7.

¹⁰³ See J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court: Oratory, Civic Duty, and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius* (Ann Arbor, 1995), pp. 148-53.

¹⁰⁴ Eunapius, *VS* 7.4.10, 478.

¹⁰⁵ Curtius 5.7.1-7; Diodorus 17.72.1-6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 38. See N.G.L. Hammond, 'The Archaeological and Literary Evidence for the Burning of the Persepolis Palace', *CQ* 42 (1992), pp. 358-64.

to draw historical parallels,¹⁰⁶ and that Jovian does seem to have indulged too much in wine and women,¹⁰⁷ one suspects that it is some such parallel which lies at the heart of present problem. We know little about Jovian's wife Charito other than her name and the fact that she was the daughter of a senior military commander of Pannonian origin,¹⁰⁸ and it may be that she encouraged her husband to forgive those responsible for the burning of the temple after the event. It would be anachronistic in the extreme, however, to view her as an active supporter of the destruction of temples in the manner, for example, that the empress Eudoxia was to support the destruction of the temples at Gaza in 402.¹⁰⁹ At best, the authors of the *EV* and the *Suda*, or of their sources rather, have each misunderstood a parallel between the irresponsible behaviour of Jovian and that of Alexander, both of whom indulged too much in wine and women, so that they reached the mistaken conclusion that his concubines had accompanied Jovian as he set the temple on fire, just as Thais and her fellow courtesans had accompanied Alexander as he set fire to the palace at Persepolis. But did Jovian really set the temple on fire? I do not doubt that this is what Eunapius originally said, that Jovian burned a temple built by Hadrian, but Eunapius was bitterly anti-Christian and may have blamed Jovian for something for which he bore little or no real responsibility.¹¹⁰ Hence when Eunapius claimed that Jovian burned a temple, he may have meant no more than that Jovian was responsible for ordering, or allowing, a temple to be burned, which claim was entirely false, and not that he was personally present at the burning itself. But our epitomators did not notice this, and misled by the parallel between Jovian and Alexander, concluded that Jovian must have been present at the burning of the temple just as Alexander had been present at the burning of the palace.

The realisation that Jovian need not have been present at the burning of the temple for Eunapius to have held him responsible still, frees one to consider a wide range of possible locations for this incident. A much longer description of the reception of Jovian at Antioch, followed by an account of

¹⁰⁶ For examples, see R.J. Lane Fox, 'The Itinerary of Alexander: Constantius to Julian', *CQ* 47 (1997), pp. 239-52.

¹⁰⁷ Amm. 25.10.15.

¹⁰⁸ Zonaras, *Ann.* 13.14; Amm. 25.8.9.

¹⁰⁹ On this incident, see F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370-529* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 207-22.

¹¹⁰ Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 77.

his actions while there, including a claim that he burned a temple of Hadrian, i.e. that he gave the orders, or allowed, a temple to be burned, has been so abbreviated as to give the impression that this temple was itself in Antioch. But this was not necessarily the case. In fact, the wider evidence points to the location of this temple at Alexandria in Egypt instead.

Firstly, Alexandria was notorious for its inter-communal strife which often resulted in the occupation or destruction of a rival place of worship.¹¹¹ For example, the Arian bishop George of Alexandria had destroyed a *Mithraeum* when preparing a site for the construction or extension of a church in the precinct of the *Caesareum* in late 361, and it was his treatment of the materials discovered in this *Mithraeum* more than anything which so enraged the pagan mob.¹¹² He was particularly unfortunate in that the news of the death of his imperial patron Constantius II reached Alexandria only days later, so that he was jailed first before a mob stormed the jail and killed him almost a month later on 24 December 361. Again, a pagan mob burned down the main church at this site, which the Christians referred to as 'the church called the *Caesareum*', on 21 July 366, although the immediate cause of this riot remains unknown.¹¹³ This is in stark contrast to Antioch where such religious strife was almost unheard of. For while it is true that the famous temple of Apollo at Daphne in the suburbs of Antioch was burned to the ground in 362, this was not the result of mob-violence.¹¹⁴ Indeed, it did not prove possible to blame any individual Christian even for this disaster, and the pagan Ammianus goes so far as to admit that the fire may have been started accidentally. It is noteworthy also that Julian responded by closing the Great Church at Antioch, not by destroying it. In brief, Antioch had not experienced the same level of religious violence as Alexandria, so that it is difficult to explain why this event should have

¹¹¹ See C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997), esp. pp. 278-330.

¹¹² Only Socrates, *HE* 3.2, followed by Sozomen, *HE* 5.7, mentions the *Mithraeum*, although Amm. 22.11.9 and *Hist. Aceph.* 2.10 confirm the construction work. In general, see A. Martin, 'Les premiers siècles du christianisme à Alexandrie. Essai de topographie religieuse (IIIe-IVe siècles)', *REA* 30 (1984), 211-25. On the circumstances of this incident, generally misunderstood, see D. Woods, 'The Final Commission of Artemius the Former *Dux Aegypti*', *BMGS* 23 (1999), pp. 2-24.

¹¹³ *Festal Index* 38. Barnes (n. 48), p. 163, tentatively suggests that the correct date may be 21 July 365 when a huge tidal wave caused massive destruction throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

¹¹⁴ E.g. Amm. 22.13.1-3; John Chrysostom, *de S. Babyla* 93-109 (Schatkin).

occurred there in particular. Nor is it credible that anyone would have dared to commit such an outrage while the emperor was present in the city, since this would have been interpreted as a direct challenge to his authority, and have been dealt with accordingly. So one suspects that this incident actually occurred at Alexandria, probably shortly after the arrival there on 19 August 363 of the news of the death of Julian.¹¹⁵ It should best be compared to the riots which led to the murder of bishop George shortly after the Alexandrians had learned of the death of Constantius. Some seem to have drawn the wrong conclusion from Julian's failure earlier to punish the city as a whole for this murder, and to have decided that the administrative indecision consequent upon the change of régime again presented them with another opportunity once more for riotous behaviour.

Next, an inscription dated 170 attests the existence of a *Hadrianeum* in Alexandria, which must seem a strong candidate for identification with our temple which was built by Hadrian in honour of Trajan.¹¹⁶ In so far as it has been argued that the *Hadrianeum* was situated in the vicinity of the *Caesareum*, then it would have been suitably close to that flashpoint for other riots at this period to have become increasingly endangered itself also.¹¹⁷ Indeed, there is no evidence that Hadrian built a temple of Trajan at Antioch other than the passage under discussion here.¹¹⁸ It is particularly noteworthy that the Antiochene John Malalas does not mention it among the long list of other projects at Antioch whose construction he attributes to Hadrian.¹¹⁹

Thirdly, the claim by the *Suda* that Julian had instructed a eunuch called Theophilus to make the *Hadrianeum* into a library suggests the identification of this Theophilus with the Theophilus mentioned by Julian in a letter to the *praefectus Aegypti* Ecdicius.¹²⁰ Julian wrote to Ecdicius to inform him of the height of the Nile on 20 September 362, and mentioned that he had learned this from the στρατοπεδάρχης Theophilus, by which he seems to mean that Theophilus was the *dux Aegypti* at this time. This is

¹¹⁵ *Hist. Aceph.* 4.1.

¹¹⁶ *IGRR* I. 1060.

¹¹⁷ A. Adriani, *Repertorio d'arte dell'Egitto greco-roman* (Palermo, 1966), pp. 222-23.

¹¹⁸ A.R. Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor* (London, 1997), p. 153, follows the standard interpretation of this passage in locating the temple at Antioch.

¹¹⁹ Malalas, *Chron.* 11.14.

¹²⁰ Julian, *Ep.* 45 (Wright).

not to claim that the *dux Aegypti* Theophilus really was a eunuch. His description as such belongs to the author of the *Suda*, or his intermediary source, rather than to Eunapius. One should compare his role in the construction of a library at the *Hadrianeum* to the role of the *dux Aegypti* Diodorus in the construction work on or near the *Mithraeum* in late 361. They merely provided the security for these projects in a highly volatile section of the city.

Next, it is an interesting coincidence both that Julian ordered the construction of a library in the *Hadrianeum* and that he was very concerned also to recover the library which had used to belong to the murdered bishop George. Two letters attest his interest in George's library, the first to the *praefectus Aegypti* Ecdicius, and the second to an otherwise unknown Porphyrius who may be tentatively identified as George's former *notarius*.¹²¹ In his letter to Ecdicius, Julian said that he wanted the Christian writings within George's library to be destroyed, but that this should be done only after all the books had been safely recovered, in order to ensure that none of the non-Christian works were destroyed also. Then, in his letter to Porphyrius, he specified that all the books were to be sent to him at Antioch. But we do not know that the books were ever actually sent to him there. His letter to Porphyrius must postdate his arrival at Antioch in July 362, and if his threats are any guide in this matter, it would seem that he was not very pleased at the progress made to date in tracing all of George's books. It is possible, therefore, that the library in the *Hadrianeum* was not intended as a permanent institution but was a temporary repository for George's books until his whole library had been recovered once more and was finally ready to be sent on to Julian. One notes, for example, that despite Zosimus' claim that Julian built a library at Constantinople where he then deposited all his books, a speech which Themistius delivered in the eastern Senate in 357 proves that it was really Constantius who had founded this library.¹²² The most that one can claim for Julian is that he had added to its collection. So the claim that Julian ordered the creation of a library in the *Hadrianeum* may represent a similar exaggeration of a more mundane reality, that the *Hadrianeum* had served as a temporary storage depot for the collection and re-cataloguing of George's library.

¹²¹ Julian, *Ep.* 24; *Ep.* 38 (Wright).

¹²² Zosimus, *HN* 3.11.3; Themistius, *Or.* 4.59d-60a.

Finally, it should be noted that a number of pieces of circumstantial evidence combine to suggest that Eunapius had visited Alexandria and had probably witnessed first-hand the destruction of the *Serapeum* there in 391. This would explain both his knowledge of and interest in earlier acts of violence against the temples there, and why it is that he records an event which has passed unattested otherwise.

It is my argument, therefore, that the original description of Jovian's reign by Eunapius has been seriously distorted by successive epitomators. A simple parallel between the characters of Jovian and Alexander the Great was extended beyond Eunapius' original intent to include his description of Jovian's responsibility, as he saw it, for the burning of a temple built by Hadrian. The same epitomators merely assumed from the context that the temple in question was at Antioch, whereas this was simply the location of Jovian when he happened to receive the news about the burning of the temple in Alexandria. Jovian did not burn down a temple which the emperor Hadrian had built at Antioch, and which a eunuch by the name of Theophilus had converted into a library under Julian. Rather, a Christian mob burned down the *Hadrianeum* at Alexandria which was under the protection of the *dux Aegypti* Theophilus shortly after they had learned the good news of Jovian's accession.

IV Goths or Monks?

In his *Lives of the Sophists*, Eunapius preserves the strange allegation that monks had assisted the Goth Alaric during his invasion of Greece in 396. They had apparently opened the pass of Thermopylae to him (*VS* 7.3.5, 476):

ὅτε Ἀλλάριχος ἔχων τοὺς βαρβάρους διὰ τῶν Πυλῶν παρήλθεν, ὥσπερ διὰ σταδίου καὶ ἵπποκρότου πεδίου τρέχων· τοιαύτας αὐτῷ τὰς πύλας ἀπέδειξε τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἥ τε τῶν τὰ φαῖα ἱμάτια ἔχόντων ἀκωλύτως προσπαρεισελθόντων ἀσέβεια, καὶ ὁ τῶν ἱεροφαντικῶν θεσμῶν παραρραγείς νόμος καὶ σύνδεσμος.

[It was the time] when Alaric with his barbarians invaded Greece by the pass of Thermopylae, as easily as though he were

traversing an open stadium or a plain suitable for cavalry. For this gateway of Greece was thrown open to him by the impiety of the men clad in black raiment, who entered Greece unhindered along with him, and by the fact that the laws and restrictions of the hierophantic ordinances had been rescinded.¹²³

While it is true that he does not actually refer to the monks as such (μοναχοί), it is commonly accepted that this is what he means here by 'the men clad in black raiment'.¹²⁴ So, for example, he follows his specific statement that monks assisted in the destruction of the *Serapeum* at Alexandria in 391 with the explanation that every man who wore a black cloak and wanted to behave in unseemly fashion in public possessed the power of a tyrant.¹²⁵ Their black dress was most distinctive, and served to emphasize their rejection of the conventional values of late antique society, so pagans tended to refer to monks in derisive fashion as 'men-in-black'. For example, in a speech which he delivered in his defence c.380, Libanius described monks as men who were restrained only as far as their dress was concerned.¹²⁶ Similarly, in his speech on behalf of pagan temples which he addressed to the emperor Theodosius I himself in 390, Libanius described them as the 'men-in-black' who ate more than elephants.¹²⁷ There is no reason to doubt, therefore, that Eunapius really does mean us to understand that monks assisted Alaric in his invasion of Greece.

Several problems now present themselves. First, why should monks have wanted to assist Alaric? True, he was an Arian Christian, but this does not suffice to explain their action.¹²⁸ One immediately calls to mind that fragment of Eunapius' *History* in which he claims that the Goths had used false bishops to deceive the emperors into allowing them to enter the empire, and that these had been accompanied by monks also:

¹²³ Text and translation from W.C. Wright (ed.), *Philostratus and Eunapius: Lives of the Sophists* (Loeb Classical Library 134: Cambridge, Mass. 1921), p. 438.

¹²⁴ E.g. Wright (n. 123), p. 438; Blockley (n. 59), p. 18; R.J. Penella, *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century AD: Studies in Eunapius of Sardis* (Leeds, 1990), p. 143.

¹²⁵ Eunapius, *VS* 6.11.7, 472: μέλαιναν φορών ἐσθῆτα.

¹²⁶ Libanius, *Or.* 2.32.

¹²⁷ Libanius, *Or.* 30.8: μελανειμονούντες

¹²⁸ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 1.2; Orosius, *Adv. Pag.* 7.37.2.

ἦν δέ τι καὶ τῶν καλουμένων μοναχῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς γένος, κατὰ μίμησιν τῶν παρὰ τοῖς πολεμίοις ἐπιτετηδευμένον, οὐδὲν ἐχούσης τῆς μιμήσεως πραγματῶδες καὶ δύσκολον, ἀλλὰ ἐξήρκει φαιδὰ ἱμάτια σύρουσι καὶ χιτῶνια πονηροῖς τε εἶναι καὶ πιστεύεσθαι.

They also had with them some of the tribe of so-called 'monks', whom they had decked out in imitation of the monks amidst their enemies. The imitation was neither laborious nor difficult, but it sufficed for them to trail along grey cloaks and tunics to both become and be accepted as evil-doers.¹²⁹

This passage had traditionally been interpreted to refer to events under Theodosius I, but it has recently been proven that it really refers to the Gothic crossing of the Danube in 376.¹³⁰ It would appear, therefore, that the Goths had brought their own monks with them into the empire as early as 376, and the obvious suggestion is that it was Gothic monks also who opened the pass of Thermopylae to Alaric in 396. Yet while this may well explain the apparent sympathy of the monks towards Alaric, it does not explain how they were able to accomplish their aim.

This is our second problem. How did monks, Gothic or otherwise, come to be able to betray the pass of Thermopylae to Alaric? While some Roman officers may well have been lulled into a false sense of security by the false oaths of false bishops back in 376, exactly as Eunapius alleges, such tricks were hardly still effective by 396. So while it is all very well to make vague assertions to the effect that it was the monks who betrayed Thermopylae to Alaric in 396, it is difficult to understand how they could have achieved this in practice. This assumes, of course, that there really was a garrison at Thermopylae at this time, and that Eunapius does not mean that some monks merely directed Alaric towards this pass, guarded or not. Furthermore, the vague nature of his claim, that it was the impiety of the monks which delivered Thermopylae to Alaric, might even encourage one

¹²⁹ *Exc. de Sent.* 53 = Eunapius, *frag.* 48.2 in Blockley (n. 1), pp. 76-77.

¹³⁰ See P. Heather, 'The Crossing of the Danube and the Gothic Conversion', *GRBS* 27 (1986), pp. 289-318, at 305-10, followed by N. Lenski, 'The Gothic Civil War and the Date of the Gothic Conversion', *GRBS* 36 (1995), 51-87, at 70-71. Both accept Eunapius at face-value, that some Goths really did disguise themselves as Roman monks in order to gain passage into the empire.

to suspect that the connection between their alleged impiety and Alaric's invasion is a matter of personal interpretation only, since this is clearly true of the other cause which Eunapius adduces for the success of this invasion, that "the laws and restrictions of the hierophantic ordinances had been rescinded." Nevertheless, his statement that the monks entered Greece alongside Alaric suggests that Eunapius really did think that there were monks physically present with Alaric at Thermopylae in 396, just as they had been present with the Goths crossing the Danube in 376.

This brings us to a third problem. How do we reconcile Eunapius' account of Alaric's success at Thermopylae with that preserved by Zosimus? According to Zosimus, Alaric secretly sent to Gerontius, the commander of the garrison at Thermopylae, in order to announce his coming.¹³¹ Gerontius then withdrew with his guards, and allowed Alaric to enter Greece unhindered. But where do the monks fit into this version of events?¹³² Opinions differ. The problem is that although it is generally agreed that Zosimus did little more than summarize Eunapius' *History* for most of his account of the 4th-century, there are important exceptions which point to his occasional use of other sources also.¹³³ Is this another exception? We cannot be sure on the present evidence, since the apparent differences between the two accounts may well be explicable in terms of their different contexts, and the different aims of Eunapius in his *History* and his *Lives of the Sophists*.¹³⁴ So Eunapius may well have believed that some monks really did play a part in the larger scheme of events which saw Gerontius withdraw from Thermopylae in the face of Alaric's advance, but this only brings us back to the previous problem. How could monks have played any serious part in persuading Gerontius to abandon Thermopylae?

¹³¹ Zosimus, *HN* 5.5.5-6.

¹³² W.J. Cherf, 'The Thermopylae Garrison of *Vita Claudii* 16', *CPh* 88 (1993), pp. 230-36, argues that, writing c.397, the anonymous author of the notorious *Historia Augusta* based a fictitious event in the life of the emperor Claudius Gothicus (268-70) on events at Thermopylae in 396, but there is nothing to hint that he knew of the alleged involvement of monks in the events of 396.

¹³³ E.g. P. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 147-48, argues that Zosimus has inserted a confused summary of the Gothic war of 376-82 from a second source into his basic Eunapiian account.

¹³⁴ See F. Paschoud, *Zosime. Histoire Nouvelle. Tome III, Ire partie (Livre 5)* (Paris, 1986), pp. 91-94.

The abandonment of Thermopylae by Gerontius in the face of Alaric is a serious problem, whether or not we accept that monks played any part in this. Our sources for the events of 395-6 are all hostile towards Alaric, and depict him as a barbarian rebel who ravaged Greece. Hence the traditional interpretation of Alaric as a hostile invader,¹³⁵ which requires either that Gerontius was a traitor acting in collusion with Alaric, or that he was forced to withdraw because of some military weakness. It has also been argued, though, that Alaric was actually operating on behalf of the Eastern government at Constantinople, as the *magister militum per Illyricum*, and had been sent to Greece in order to prevent Stilicho repossessing it for the West.¹³⁶ According to this interpretation, Gerontius opened Thermopylae to Alaric because he had been instructed to do so by his government. As far as we are presently concerned, however, it remains difficult to understand how monks were involved in this process, whether Gerontius withdrew because he was in collusion with Alaric, because of some military weakness, or because he had been ordered to do so.

So what really happened at Thermopylae in 396? It is possible, of course, that Eunapius lied, that he simply invented his tale concerning Alaric and the monks in order to depict Christians in the worst possible light once more. It was a favourite accusation of pagan polemicists that Christians could not be trusted to defend the empire, while Christians were extremely proud to be able to point to evidence to the contrary. One may contrast Christian pride in the role which bishop Jacob of Nisibis played in the defence of his city against the Persians in 336,¹³⁷ to pagan rumours that bishop Heliodorus of Bezabde had betrayed his city to the Persians in 360.¹³⁸ Similarly, the pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus draws repeated attention to the role of Christian clergy as the ambassadors of Rome's enemies.¹³⁹ There is no evidence, however, that Eunapius would have deliberately lied in this matter, not least because such a lie would have been counter-productive anyway. There would have been no point to a claim which any interested Christian could easily have refuted. Hence I do

¹³⁵ See A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 168-76; Heather (n. 133), pp. 199-204.

¹³⁶ See T.S. Burns, *Barbarians within the Gates of Rome: A Study of Roman Military Policy and the Barbarians, ca. 375-425 AD* (Bloomington, 1994), pp. 165-67.

¹³⁷ E.g. Jerome, *Chron. s.a.* 338; Philostorgius, *HE* 3.23; Theodoret, *HE* 2.30.1-14.

¹³⁸ *Amm.* 20.7.7-9.

¹³⁹ *Amm.* 29.5.15, 31.12.8, 31.15.6.

not doubt that Eunapius genuinely believed that monks really did help Alaric at Thermopylae. The real question is whether he was right to believe this.

It is my argument that Eunapius was so blinded by his hate for Christians in general, and for monks in particular, that he seriously misinterpreted his source(s) both for the Gothic crossing of the Danube in 376 and for Alaric's invasion of Greece in 396. On each occasion he misinterpreted a classicizing Greek term for one of the newly-arrived tribes from across the Danube in reference to Christian monks instead. In brief, he mistook references to a tribe known as the 'Blackcloaks' (Μελάγχλαινοι) as a variation on the common pagan disparagement of monks as the 'men-in-black', much because it appealed to his prejudice that Christians were always to be found hand-in-hand with Rome's enemies.

Herodotus had identified the 'Blackcloaks' as a trans-Danubian tribe that lived north of the Royal Scythians, but he had also emphasized that they were not themselves Scythian.¹⁴⁰ Writing c.AD 101, however, Dio Chrysostom left us a brief description of the inhabitants of Borysthenes in which he claimed that they each wore a small black cloak, and that most of their clothing was black in fact, as a result of the influence of a certain tribe of Scythians, the 'Blackcloaks'.¹⁴¹ Of later writers, Ammianus twice mentions the 'Blackcloaks', or *Melanchlaenae* as he calls them, but does so in his scientific digressions, and does not attempt to label any of the recent migrant groups within the empire as *Melanchlaenae*.¹⁴² Procopius proves little more helpful. For while he clearly identifies the 'Blackcloaks' as a Scythian people, he does not attempt to pin this label on any contemporary group in particular.¹⁴³ Hence by late antiquity the general consensus seems to have been that the 'Blackcloaks' were a Scythian people, but since classicizing historians tended to refer to all trans-Danubian groups as Scythians, this does not help us to determine whether this label had become attached to any particular group, Gothic or not.

¹⁴⁰ Herodotus 4.20.

¹⁴¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 36.7.

¹⁴² Amm. 22.8.31, 31.2.15.

¹⁴³ E.g. Procopius, *Bella* 3.2.2, 8.5.6.

I argue, therefore, that when the Goths crossed the Danube in 376, they did not bring any monks with them, real or otherwise, not as far as the present evidence is concerned at least. Rather, they included within their number a group whom Eunapius' source identified as 'Blackcloaks', and whom Eunapius proceeded to misidentify as monks. He then proceeded to complicate things further by denying that they had been real Roman monks at all, but had only been disguised as such in order to deceive the Romans. Three arguments may be adduced in favour of this hypothesis. First, the fact that Eunapius should refer to the monks as a 'tribe' (γένος) is significant since it suggests that this term was present in his source also, and reminds one of Dio Chrysostom's description of the 'Blackcloaks' as a 'tribe of Scythians' (γένος Σκυθῶν). It is not a natural term to use of a group of monks. So Eunapius' reference to a 'tribe of so-called "monks"' originated as a reference to a 'tribe of so-called "Blackcloaks"', one suspects. Indeed, it may have been the use of this term by his source which had encouraged Eunapius in his misinterpretation of the name of the 'Blackcloaks' in the first place. For the term 'tribe' can have a pejorative sense in Greek (either γένος or ἔθνος), much as in modern English, and one depends on the context to determine whether any particular use is pejorative or not. Fragments of Eunapius preserve his dismissive references to 'the tribe of villains and criminals' and 'the tribe of eunuchs', so that it does not surprise that he should have misinterpreted a technical use of the term 'tribe' (γένος) on this occasion in a pejorative sense.¹⁴⁴

Next, it is difficult to understand what was so different about the alleged Gothic monks that they had to be disguised in order to make them look like the monks among their enemies, i.e. Roman monks. After all, Christianity, including monasticism, had been introduced among the Goths by Roman citizens.¹⁴⁵ We know, for example, that the heretical bishop Audius of Mesopotamia had sent missionaries into Gothic territory when exiled to the neighbouring Roman province of Scythia under the emperor Constantius II,

¹⁴⁴ *Suda* I 437 = Eunapius, *frag.* 25.1 in Blockley (n. 1), p. 37: τὸ τῶν πονηρῶν ἔθνος καὶ ἀδικούντων; *Suda* Σ 897 = Eunapius, *frag.* 65.7 in Blockley (n. 1), p. 99: τὸ τῶν εὐνούχων ἔθνος. The poet Claudian is similarly dismissive of the 'tribe' (*genus*) of eunuchs: *In Eutropium* 1.332, 415.

¹⁴⁵ See R.W. Mathisen, 'Barbarian Bishops and the Churches "in barbaricis gentibus" during Late Antiquity', *Speculum* 72 (1997), pp. 664-97.

and that these had founded monasteries.¹⁴⁶ Strictly speaking, therefore, both groups of monks from either side of the Danube, Gothic or Roman, ought to have looked pretty much indistinguishable, especially since they had probably remained in almost continuous contact with one another. One recalls Ambrose of Milan's famous attack upon Iulianus Valens, bishop of Poetovio, because he dared to wear neck- and arm-bands in the manner of the Goths,¹⁴⁷ and admits that Gothic monks may also have adapted their dress somewhat in the light of local Gothic custom, but it remains hard to credit that their ordinary appearance differed from that of Roman monks to the extent that Eunapius requires. Hence Eunapius' misinterpretation of his source has forced him to assume that there were two very different types of monk, Gothic and Roman, the absurdity of which does not seem to have struck Eunapius himself, since he regarded all monasticism as absurd anyway.

Finally, had monks been as numerous among the Goths at this period as Eunapius would have us believe, then Ammianus ought to have mentioned them also in his detailed account of their entrance into the empire which culminated at the battle of Adrianopolis in 378. He does mention that the Gothic chief Fritigern sent a Christian priest as an envoy to the emperor Valens shortly before this battle, and that the victorious Goths sent a Christian, probably a priest also, to deliver their demand for the surrender of Adrianopolis itself after the battle, and to this extent he supports Eunapius' claim that the Goths used Christian bishops to deceive the emperors.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, he fails to mention that the Goths included among their number a large 'tribe' of monks. This is not to deny that there were monks among the Goths before they crossed into Roman territory. I merely note that Eunapius' account of their number and importance contrasts with Ammianus' failure to mention them. It is also difficult to believe that so many should have survived the persecution of Christians within Gothic territory during the 370s, even if they had enjoyed the protection of Fritigern, ruler of the Greuthungi, one of the larger Gothic groups.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 70:14.5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Ambrose, *Ep.* 1.10.9.

¹⁴⁸ Amm. 31.12.8-9, 15.6.

¹⁴⁹ See P. Heather and J. Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool, 1991), pp. 103-31.

I argue that Eunapius compounded his initial mistake by claiming that the alleged Gothic monks had not been real monks in the Roman style primarily because it seems most unlikely that his original source would have claimed that a single tribe, 'Blackcloaks' or not, had all disguised themselves as monks. At best, Eunapius' source said only that the Goths had disguised some of their number as false bishops, and when Eunapius thought that he had read a reference to the presence of monks among the Goths, he then extended the anecdote concerning Gothic cunning to include their disguising themselves as monks as well as bishops.

This brings us back to Alaric in 396. While it remains possible that some Gothic monks may have crossed the Danube with their fellow Goths in 376, since the whole population was in flight, it is far more difficult to explain what the alleged monks were doing at Thermopylae in 396. In this case, the military context lends extra force to the argument that Eunapius has misinterpreted his source, that the 'Blackcloaks' at Thermopylae were not monks, but fellow barbarians from across the Danube, if not actually Goths also, and that this was why they assisted Alaric. They were barbarian soldiers in Roman service who defected to the enemy, with the result that their commander Gerontius was no longer able to hold the pass at Thermopylae. Contrary to Zosimus, therefore, Alaric did not send word of his approach to Gerontius as such, but to some of his forces under Gerontius whose defection left Gerontius himself with no choice but to retreat. This is not surprising, since barbarian elements within his army had already attempted to defect from Theodosius I to the usurper Magnus Maximus sometime during the 380s, although their exact military status remains a matter of controversy.¹⁵⁰ There is an obvious comparison here also with events in Phrygia in 399, when the *comes* Tribigild began his revolt with the support of Goths serving in the regular Roman forces, Greuthungi for the most part.¹⁵¹ In short, the Gothic elements within the regular Roman forces had not been fully reconciled to their fate by 396, and this was why the 'Blackcloaks' defected to Alaric. Indeed, if the Gerontius who commanded the pass of Thermopylae in 396 is identifiable as the Gerontius who had massacred some Gothic troops at Tomi in the 380s,¹⁵² as

¹⁵⁰ See Heather (n. 133), pp. 183-84 on Zosimus, *HN* 4.45.3.

¹⁵¹ See A. Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 111-16.

¹⁵² Zosimus, *HN* 4.40.

some believe possible,¹⁵³ then one suspects that his attitude towards them may have been one of the factors which impelled the 'Blackcloaks' towards Alaric.

To conclude, therefore, Eunapius of Sardis has left a false impression of the strength of monasticism among the Goths during the last quarter of the 4th-century because of his misinterpretation of the name of a tribe called the 'Blackcloaks' in reference to monks, or the 'men-in-black' as he disparagingly called them. Arguments concerning the date of the conversion of the Goths to Christianity, or the degree of their Christianization, need to be revised accordingly.

¹⁵³ E.g. *PLRE I*, p. 394; Burns (n. 136), p. 157.