

= Artabanus (general) =

Artabanus (Greek : ????????? , from Old Armenian Artawan , fl . 538 ? 554) was an East Roman (Byzantine) general of Armenian origin who served under Justinian I (r . 527 ? 565) . Initially a rebel against Byzantine authority , he fled to the Sassanid Persians but soon returned to Byzantine allegiance . He served in Africa , where he won great fame by killing the rebel general Guntharic and restoring the province to imperial allegiance . He became engaged to Justinian 's niece Praejecta , but did not eventually marry her due to the opposition of the Empress Theodora . Recalled to Constantinople , he became involved in a failed conspiracy against Justinian in 548 / 549 , but was not severely punished after its revelation . He was soon pardoned and sent to Italy to fight in the Gothic War , where he participated in the decisive Byzantine victory at Casilinum .

= = Early life = =

Artabanus was a descendant of the royal Armenian Arsacid line , a branch of which at the time was recognized as autonomous local princes in the eastern fringes of the Eastern Roman Empire . His father was named John , and he had a brother also named John .

= = = Revolt against Byzantium = = =

In 538 / 539 , Artabanus , at the time apparently still a young man , took part in the Armenian conspiracy against Acacius , the proconsul of First Armenia , whose heavy taxes and cruel behaviour was greatly resented . Artabanus himself killed Acacius . Shortly after , in a skirmish between the rebels and the Byzantine army at Oenochalacon , Artabanus may have killed the Byzantine general Sittas , sent by Justinian to quell the rebellion (Procopius supplies two accounts , one attributing Sittas 's death to Artabanus and another to an otherwise unknown Armenian named Solomon) . Artabanus 's father tried to negotiate a settlement with Sittas ' successor , Bouzes , but was murdered by the latter . This act forced Artabanus and his followers to seek the aid of the Sassanid Persian ruler , Khosrau I (r . 531 ? 579) . Crossing over to Persian territory , over the next few years Artabanus and those who followed him took part in Khosrau 's campaigns against the Byzantines .

= = Service in Africa = =

At some time around 544 , perhaps as early as 542 , Artabanus , his brother John and several other Armenians deserted back to the Byzantines .

Along with his brother , Artabanus was placed in command of a small Armenian contingent and sent to Africa in spring 545 under the senator Areobindus . There , the Byzantines were engaged in a protracted war with the rebellious Moorish tribes . Shortly after their arrival , John died in battle at Sicca Veneria with the rebel forces of the renegade Stotzas . Artabanus and his men remained loyal to Areobindus during the rebellion of the dux Numidia Guntharic in late 545 . Guntharic , allied with the Moorish chieftain Antalas , marched on Carthage and seized the city gates . At the urging of Artabanus and others , Areobindus decided to confront the rebel . The two armies appeared evenly matched , until Areobindus took fright and fled to a monastery seeking sanctuary . Thereupon the troops loyal to him also fled , and the city fell to Guntharic .

Areobindus was murdered by Guntharic , but Artabanus secured guarantees of his safety and pledged himself to Guntharic 's service . In secret , however , he began planning to overthrow him . Soon after , Artabanus was entrusted , alongside John and Ulitheus , with an expedition against Antalas 's Moors . He marched south , along with an allied Moorish contingent under Cutzinas . Antalas 's men fled before him , but Artabanus did not pursue them and turned back . According to Procopius , he considered leading his men to join the loyalist imperial garrison that held out at Hadrumetum under Marcentius , but decided to return to Carthage and go on with his plan to assassinate Guntharic . Artabanus kept his plan in absolute secrecy for a long time , confiding only

with his two closest Armenian friends : even his Armenian unit of hand @-@ picked and completely loyal veteran soldiers was not aware of it until the very last moment . Such a perfect concealment was achieved , not least thanks to the fact that during both planning and implementation stages of this assassination the communication between the exclusively Armenian conspirators was in their mother tongue , an incomprehensible language for other ethnic elements of the imperial army in Africa .

Upon his return to Carthage , he justified his decision to turn back by insisting that the entire army was needed to quell the insurgents , and urged Guntharic to set forth himself . At the same time , he conspired with his nephew , Gregory , and a few other of his Armenian bodyguards to murder the usurper (although Corippus suggests that it was the praetorian prefect Athanasius who was the real mastermind of the plot) . On the eve of the army 's departure in early May , Guntharic hosted a great banquet , and invited Artabanes and Athanasius to share the same couch , a mark of honour . Suddenly , during the banquet , Artabanes ' Armenians fell upon Guntharic 's bodyguards , while Artabanes himself allegedly landed the killing blow on Guntharic .

This deed won him great honour and fame : Praejecta , the widow of Areobindus and niece of Justinian , whom Guntharic was planning to marry , gave him a rich reward , while the emperor confirmed him as magister militum of Africa . Despite being already married to a relative of his , Artabanes eventually became engaged with Praejecta . He sent her back to Constantinople and himself asked from Justinian to be recalled from Africa , so that they could marry .

= = Artabanes at Constantinople and the conspiracy against Justinian = =

Soon afterwards , Artabanes was indeed recalled to Constantinople , replaced in Africa by John Troglita . He received numerous honours from Justinian , and was named magister militum praesentalis , comes foederatorum and honorary consul . Despite these and his great popularity however , he was unable to achieve his ambition of marrying Praejecta : his wife came to the imperial capital and presented her case to the Empress Theodora . The Empress compelled Artabanes to retain his wife , and not until after Theodora 's death in 548 was the Armenian general able to divorce himself . By then , however , Praejecta had already been remarried .

Irritated over this affair , shortly after Theodora 's death (late 548 / early 549) he became involved in the so @-@ called " Armenian Plot " or " Conspiracy of Artabanes " . The real instigator , however , was a relative of his , named Arsaces , who proposed to assassinate Justinian , and elevate Justinian 's cousin Germanus on the throne instead . The conspirators thought Germanus amenable to their plans , since he had been dissatisfied with Justinian 's meddling in the settling of the will of his recently deceased brother Boraides , which had initially named Germanus as the major beneficiary as opposed to the former 's sole daughter . The conspirators approached Germanus 's son Justin first , and revealed to him the plot . Immediately , he informed his father , and he in turn informed the comes excubitorum Marcellus . In order to find out more of their intentions , Germanus met the conspirators in person , while a trusted aide of Marcellus was concealed nearby and listened in . Although Marcellus hesitated to inform Justinian without further proof , eventually he revealed the conspiracy to the emperor . Justinian ordered the conspirators imprisoned and questioned , but they were otherwise treated remarkably leniently . Artabanes was stripped of his offices and confined to the palace under guard , but was soon pardoned .

= = Service in Italy = =

In 550 , Artabanes was appointed magister militum per Thracias and sent to replace the aged senator Liberius in command of an expedition under way against Sicily , which had recently been overrun by the Ostrogoth king Totila . Artabanes failed to catch up with the expedition before it sailed for Sicily , and his own fleet was driven back and scattered by severe storms in the Ionian Sea . Eventually he arrived in Sicily and took command of the Byzantine forces there . He besieged the Gothic garrisons left behind by Totila after he left the island and soon forced them to surrender . Over the next two years , he remained in Sicily . According to Procopius , the inhabitants of the

mainland city of Croton , which was being besieged by the Goths , repeatedly sent to him for help , but he did nothing .

In 553 , he crossed over into mainland Italy , where he joined the army of Narses as one of its generals . Facing the Frankish invasion in the summer of 553 , Narses ordered Artabanes and other generals to occupy the passes of the Apennines and harass the enemy advance ; after a Byzantine contingent was defeated at Parma , however , the other Byzantine generals withdrew to Faventia , until an envoy from Narses persuaded them to move up to the area of Parma again . In 554 , Artabanes was stationed at Pisaurum with Byzantine and Hunnic troops . At Fanum , he ambushed and defeated the advance guard of the Frankish army of Leutharis , which was returning from a plundering expedition into southern Italy and heading back to Gaul . Most of the Franks fell , and in the confusion , the many captives escaped , taking much of the Franks ' booty with them . Artabanes did not engage the main body of Leutharis ' army however , since it far outnumbered his own force . He then marched south and joined Narses 's main force , accompanying him in his campaign against the remaining Frankish army under Butilinus . At the decisive Byzantine victory in the Battle of Casilinum , along with Valerian , he commanded the cavalry in the Byzantine left flank . They were concealed in the woods , as part of Narses 's stratagem to attack the Franks in the rear and encircle them . Nothing further is known of him after that .