

= John Troglita =

John Troglita (Latin : Ioannes Troglita , Greek : ??????? ?????????) was a 6th @-@ century Byzantine general . He participated in the Vandalic War and served in North Africa as a regional military governor during the years 533 ? 538 , before being sent east to the wars with the Sassanid Persians . As dux Mesopotamiae , Troglita distinguished himself in several battles , and was noticed by agents of the Byzantine emperor , Justinian I (r . 527 ? 565) . In summer 546 , Justinian chose John Troglita to assume overall command of Byzantine forces in Africa , where a succession of revolts by the indigenous Moorish tribes and within the imperial army itself had seriously reduced the Byzantine position . Troglita quickly secured an initial victory in the winter of 546 / 547 against the Moors of Byzacena , but was defeated in summer 547 by the tribes of Tripolitania , and Africa was once again laid open to destructive raids . Troglita reorganized his army and secured the assistance of some tribal leaders , and confronted and decisively defeated the tribal coalition at the Fields of Cato in summer 548 . This victory spelled the end of the Moorish revolt , and heralded an era of peace for Africa . Troglita was also involved in the Gothic War , twice sending some of his troops to Italy to assist against the Ostrogoths .

John Troglita 's exploits , especially against the Moors in Africa , are the subject of the last Latin epic poem of Antiquity , the Iohannis , seu de Bellis Libycis (" Tale of John , or On the Libyan War ") of Flavius Cresconius Corippus , which is the main source on his life .

= = Origins and early career in Africa and the East = =

The exact origins of John Troglita are unclear . He may have been born in Thrace , but his peculiar surname might indicate provenance from Trogilos (Greek : ?????????) in Macedonia . According to information provided by the 6th @-@ century historian Procopius of Caesarea and Troglita 's panegyrist Flavius Cresconius Corippus , he was the son of a certain Evanthes , and had at least one brother named Pappus . Troglita himself married a " daughter of a king " , probably a barbarian chieftain , and had a son , Peter .

John Troglita is first mentioned as having participated in the Vandalic War (533 ? 534) under Belisarius , and may be identifiable with another John , who commanded a unit of foederati in the battles of Ad Decimum and Tricamarum . Troglita remained in the province of Africa after Belisarius 's departure in 534 , and participated in the expeditions of Solomon against the Moors in 534 ? 535 . At the time , he was probably the local military governor (dux) in either Byzacena or , more probably , Tripolitania , for he is mentioned as leading successful expeditions against the Leuathae tribe . Troglita also fought against the mutinous army under the renegade Stotzas , participating in the first victory under Belisarius at Membresa in 536 , and then , under Solomon 's successor Germanus , in the decisive battle at Scalas Veteres in spring 537 . In this battle , he was one of the commanders of the cavalry on the Byzantine army 's right wing , which according to the historian Procopius was defeated and driven off by Stotzas 's men , losing its standards in the process . Nevertheless , the battle resulted in an imperial victory . In 538 , Troglita distinguished himself in the Battle of Autenti , probably in the Byzacena .

At some point after 538 , Troglita was sent to the Eastern frontier , where by 541 he was appointed dux Mesopotamiae , one of the most important military commands of the region . From this position , he arrested a member of the embassy sent by the Ostrogothic king Witiges to the Persians to incite them to attack Byzantium . When war broke out , according to Corippus John scored a number of successes against the Persian army : he defeated the general Nabedes near Nisibis , led his army in a successful night attack against the Persian force besieging Theodosiopolis , and then defeated another Persian army besieging Dara , capturing its general , Mihr @-@ Mihroe . Procopius , however , gives a different account of the first battle , indicating that Troglita had to be saved from a sudden Persian attack by Belisarius , and does not mention the other two incidents at all . Nevertheless , Corippus maintains that John was congratulated for his performance by Urbicius , one of Emperor Justinian 's advisors who had been sent to supervise the war .

= = High command in Africa = =

During Troglita 's absence from Africa , the situation had been turbulent . Germanus had remained in the province until 539 , and succeeded in restoring discipline in the army and pacifying the core territories of Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena . He was succeeded by Solomon , who began his second tenure with great success , defeating the Moors of the Aurès Mountains and establishing control over Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis . However , the Moorish revolt flared up again in 543 and Solomon was killed in the Battle of Cillium in 544 . His successor , his nephew Sergius , was incompetent . He was defeated by the Moors , recalled and replaced with the senator Areobindus , who was murdered in spring 546 in another military revolt led by the general Guntharic . The latter intended to declare himself independent of Constantinople , but was soon murdered by the Armenian Artabanus . The need for a new and capable leader in Africa was apparent to Constantinople . After a truce was signed with Persia in 546 , Emperor Justinian , perhaps , as Corippus implies , acting on Urbicius 's advice , recalled Troglita from the East . After having him report on the situation there in Constantinople , the Emperor placed him at the head of a new army and sent him to Africa as the new magister militum per Africam in late summer 546 .

= = = Suppression of the Moorish revolt = = =

In late 546 , when John Troglita reached Carthage , the situation was dire : the imperial troops , under Marcentius the dux of Byzacena and Gregory the Armenian in Carthage , were few in number and demoralized . They held out in the coastal cities , blockaded by the Moors of Byzacena under their chieftain Antalas , while the Leuathae and Austurae tribes from Tripolitania were raiding Byzacena with impunity . Diplomatic efforts , however , secured the allegiance of the Moorish leaders Cutzinas and Ifsidaia , who joined the imperial army with several thousands of their men . In addition , the tribesmen of the Aurès Mountains under Iudath withdrew to Numidia on learning of Troglita 's arrival and pursued a course of armed neutrality .

Upon his arrival in Carthage , Troglita reorganized his troops , bolstering the local forces with the veterans he had brought with him ? mostly horse archers and cataphracts ? and marched out to meet the rebels . At Antonia Castra , emissaries from Antalas presented themselves , but Troglita rejected their terms and imprisoned them . The Byzantine army marched into Byzacena , relieved the beleaguered cities and joined up with Marcentius . The Moors , taken by surprise by the imperial army 's swift advance , withdrew again to the mountainous and wooded interior , where they gathered their forces under the leadership of Iudath of the Leuathae and Antalas . Corippus suggests that they hoped that Troglita would not maintain his pursuit in the midst of winter , and that they would have the advantage over the imperial army in this terrain . Troglita encamped near the Moorish positions and dispatched an envoy , Amantius , to bring Antalas his terms : the general offered amnesty in exchange for submitting to imperial authority again .

Corippus narrates the subsequent battle at length , but his imitation of Virgilian verse provides little concrete detail : it is clear that it was a long , indecisive , and bloody conflict , which probably took place to the south or east of Sbeitla in late 546 or early 547 . Eventually , the Byzantines prevailed and drove back the Moors , breaking through their defences and storming their camp . According to Corippus , Iudath , who was the chief priest of the god Gurzil , was killed while trying to protect an image of the god . Many other tribal leaders fell , and the remainder scattered . The remains of the Tripolitanian tribes abandoned Byzacena , and Antalas was forced to lay down arms . In addition , many prisoners were released from the Moorish camp , and among the treasures captured there were the military standards lost by Solomon at Cillium in 544 . These were dispatched to Constantinople , while Troglita held a triumphal entry into Carthage .

= = = = Battle of Marta = = = =

With this victory , the war seemed won , and peace re-established in Africa . A few months later , however , the tribes of Tripolitania reassembled and formed a coalition under the king of the

Ifuraces , Carcasan . After raiding Tripolitania , they turned west to raid Byzacena again . Notified of this by Rufinus , the dux of Tripolitania , Troglita marched out to meet them . The Byzantine army had been weakened in the meantime by the need to reinforce Belisarius against the Goths in Italy : of the nine regiments Troglita had brought with him from Constantinople , three were dispatched to Italy . The Moors under Antalas remained hostile but did not immediately join the conflict for the moment , but the Byzantines were deprived of the services of Ifsidaia , who refused to commit his men . Despite the hot summer , Troglita marched his men quickly to the southern limit of Byzacena , along the edge of the desert , hoping to meet the Moors there and prevent the long @-@ suffering province from being ravaged again . The Moors initially withdrew into the arid interior , hoping to shake him off , but Troglita 's army , accompanied by a caravan with water and provisions , followed them into the desert . Both armies suffered from thirst and hunger , and discontent spread among the Byzantine soldiers . Finally , a near mutiny erupted when an epidemic killed off a large part of the army 's horses , forcing Troglita to turn again north towards the coast .

There , Troglita positioned himself between the Matmata plateau and the coast , and awaited the Moors . He also sent for ships to bring supplies , but adverse winds made this impossible . When the Moorish army appeared nearby it was likewise exhausted from hunger and made for some sources of water , which Troglita set out to reach first . The Byzantines camped at Marta in the district of Gallica , where battle was joined . It was a disastrous defeat for the Byzantines , whose army broke and fled . Corippus , possibly in an attempt to exculpate his hero Troglita , attributes the defeat to the indiscipline of some soldiers , who attacked the enemy before the army was ready , leading to a disorganized piecemeal engagement . According to Corippus 's account , the Moorish allies of the Byzantines panicked first and retreated , causing the entire army to disintegrate , despite the personal intervention of Troglita and the other Byzantine leaders .

Following this defeat , Troglita fled to Iunci (modern Bordj Younga , 9 km south of Mahares) , where he began regrouping the survivors . The losses were so high and the army 's morale so low , however , that he was soon forced to withdraw further north to the fortress of Laribus (the modern village of Lorbeus , near Le Kef) , where he started mustering his army . Learning of the battle , Antalas immediately rose up again and joined the Tripolitanian tribes , while the Byzantines ' allies , Cutzinas and Isfidaia , were quarreling among themselves . Throughout the remainder of 547 , the Moors were free to raid across Africa , even reaching the vicinity of Carthage itself .

= = = Battle of the Fields of Cato = = =

Troglita did not remain inactive : from Carthage , the praetorian prefect Athanasius and Troglita 's young son organized reinforcements and supplies for the camp at Laribus , while Troglita himself succeeded not only in reconciling Cutzinas and Isfidaia , but also in gaining the allegiance of King Iaudas and his tribe . In the spring of 548 , Troglita , having regrouped his forces , met with his Moorish allies at the plain of Arsuris on the northern limits of Byzacena . Corippus gives extraordinary numbers for the native contingents provided by each chief : 30 @,@ 000 for Cutzinas , 100 @,@ 000 for Isfidaia , and 12 @,@ 000 under Iaudas 's brother . Whatever the real numbers , it seems clear that Troglita 's regular troops formed the lesser portion of the imperial army .

The tribes , under the leadership of Carcasan and Antalas , had encamped in central Byzacena , in the plain of Mamma or Mammes . Carcasan , confident after his victory the previous year , wanted to confront the imperial army immediately , but as it happened he gave way to Antalas , who advocated the more cautious and well @-@ tried Moorish tactic of withdrawing and drawing the Byzantines into the interior , forcing them to march far from their supply bases and through a devastated country , thus exhausting and demoralizing them . The rebels thus retreated south and east , reaching Iunci after ten days . Troglita 's army pursued them at some distance , only exchanging a few blows with the tribes ' rearguard . Once the Byzantine army reached the plain before Iunci and laid camp , however , the Moors again withdrew into the mountainous interior . Having been informed by a spy of his enemy 's strategy , Troglita refused to follow , and remained encamped near the port of Lariscus , from where he could be easily resupplied . Nevertheless , discontent grew among the soldiers , who did not understand their leader 's reluctance to fight : the

army mutinied and attacked the tent of Troglita , who was barely able to escape . Thanks to the allied Moorish contingents , who remained steadfast , Troglita was able to reimpose control over his men .

Troglita now moved his army to confront the enemy , who were encamped at a plain called the Fields of Cato . The Moorish camp had been heavily fortified , and Troglita was reluctant to launch a direct assault . He therefore blockaded it , hoping that hunger would force the Moors to fight him in open battle . To further encourage them , he restrained his men , feigning a reluctance to fight . Troglita 's plan worked : encouraged by sacrifices to their gods and hoping to catch the imperial army unprepared , the Moors attacked the Byzantine camp on a Sunday . The battle hung long in the balance , with many dead on both sides , but eventually the Byzantines gained the upper hand . At this point , Carcasan rallied his forces and launched a fierce counterattack , but was killed by Troglita himself . Seeing their leader fall , the Moors broke and fled . The battle was a resounding success for the Byzantines : seventeen of the Moors ' principal leaders were dead , the Tripolitanian tribes were decimated and withdrew to the desert , and Antalas and his followers submitted to Troglita . Byzacena , Numidia , and Tripolitania were finally secured , and a period of peace was inaugurated that lasted for the next fourteen years , until 562 .

= = = Later activities = = =

At about this time , Troglita seems to have been promoted to the honorific court rank of patricius , as attested by the 6th @-@ century historian Jordanes (Romana 385) . He remained in command in Africa for at least another four years , beginning the difficult work of reconstruction . Troglita re @-@ established the civil administrative apparatus as originally envisaged by Emperor Justinian in 533 , sharing his authority with the prefect Athanasius . The provincial fortifications built by Solomon were restored , and the subdued Moorish tribes carefully returned to a status of vassalage as imperial foederati . According to the scholar John B. Bury , Troglita 's record in re @-@ establishing order and tranquility in the troubled province make him , along with Belisarius and Solomon , " the third hero of the Imperial reoccupation of Africa " .

Troglita 's success in restoring peace to Africa can be seen from the fact that in late 551 , when Totila , king of the Ostrogoths , captured Sardinia and Corsica , Troglita was able to spare enough forces and send a fleet to reclaim them , albeit without success . The exact date of Troglita 's death is unknown , but it is most likely that he died in 552 or soon after .