

= Stylianos Zaoutzes =

Stylianos Zaoutzes (Greek : ?????????? ?????????? , but ?????????? in Skylitzes) was a high Byzantine official of Armenian origin . Rising to high rank under Byzantine emperor Basil I (reigned 867 ? 886) , he then rose further to prominence under Basil 's successor Emperor Leo VI the Wise (r . 886 ? 912) , who had a close friendship and possibly an affair with Stylianos 's daughter Zoe Zaoutzaina . Stylianos Zaoutzes was Leo 's leading minister during the first half of his reign , and was awarded the unique title of basileopator . His standing and influence declined after 895 , but in 898 , he became Leo 's father @-@ in @-@ law when the Byzantine emperor married Zoe . He died in 899 , in the same year as Zoe . Following an attempted coup by his relatives , the Zaoutzes clan was deprived of the considerable power it had amassed under Stylianos 's tutelage .

= = Biography = =

= = = Origins and early career = = =

Zaoutzes was of Armenian descent , and was born in the thema of Macedonia . It has been theorized by the historian Nicholas Adontz that Zaoutzes might be the son of a contemporary strategos of Macedonia named Tzantzes , the name also of Zaoutzes 's son , but the connection is ultimately impossible to prove . According to Steven Runciman , the surname Zaoutzes derives from the Armenian word Zaoutch , " negro " , reflecting Zaoutzes 's particularly dark complexion . In the same vein , Zaoutzes was known among Byzantines as " the Ethiopian " . Whatever his exact ancestry , he shared ethnic and geographical origin with the Emperor Basil I the Macedonian , a factor that probably played an important role in his ascent to high office during the latter 's reign .

In late 882 , the young Leo , Basil 's second son and heir after the death of his elder brother Constantine in 879 , was wedded to Theophano , a member of the Martinakes family . The bride was the choice of empress Eudokia Ingerina , and did not please Leo , who instead preferred the company of Zoe Zaoutzaina , the beautiful daughter of Stylianos Zaoutzes . Whether Zoe was actually his mistress is uncertain ; Leo himself strenuously denied this in later accounts . At that point , Zaoutzes held the post of mikros hetaireiarches , i.e. commander of the junior regiment of the Byzantine emperor 's mercenary bodyguard , the hetaireia . Leo 's relations with his father Basil were always strained , and when Theophano informed him of this affair , Basil reportedly became enraged , beat Leo until he bled , and married Zoe off to one Theodore Gouzouniates . Furthermore , in 883 , Leo was denounced as plotting against Basil and was imprisoned ; it was only through the intervention of patriarch Photios and Stylianos Zaoutzes that he was not also blinded . This affair does not seem to have hurt Zaoutzes 's own standing with Basil or his career , for by the end of Basil 's reign he was protospatharios and megas hetaireiarches (senior commander of the hetaireia) .

= = = Rise to prominence = = =

Leo spent three years in prison , until released and restored to his rank in late July 886 . Here too Zaoutzes played a major role , as he personally pleaded with the Byzantine emperor to secure Leo 's release . By that time , Basil was ailing , and on August 12 , 886 , he was gravely wounded during a hunt . Zaoutzes 's participation in the hunt raised suspicions of a conspiracy , but his complicity is generally rejected , as Basil survived for nine days , during which he did not punish Zaoutzes . Upon Basil 's death , Leo was crowned emperor , but Zaoutzes , who was awarded the titles of patrikios and magistros and the office of logothetes tou dromou , effectively assumed control of the government , directing state policy . One tradition , based on the Vita Euthymii (the hagiography of Patriarch Euthymios I) , holds that Basil himself appointed Zaoutzes as regent (epitropos) , but other sources indicate that his ascent to power was more gradual . It is indicative of his authority that most of Leo 's ordinances (novels) are directed to him in person , and in 893 , he succeeded in

getting his protégé , Antony Kauleas , elected as Patriarch of Constantinople . In the same period (between 886 and 893) , Emperor Leo VI himself delivered a homily on a church built on Zaoutzes 's orders in Constantinople .

Zaoutzes 's rise to prominence was consolidated in 891 ? 893 , when he was given the newly created title of basileopator (" father of the emperor ") . His promotion to this new and enigmatic title has been a subject of controversy , as neither the reasons for the creation of the title nor its exact functions are known . The early date of his elevation precludes a relation to the eventual rise of his daughter Zoe to the imperial throne as Leo 's empress . Gratitude for Zaoutzes 's support against Basil may have played a role , and a common theory is that the office implied some form of tutorship over the emperor . The office certainly confirmed Zaoutzes as the senior secular official of the Byzantine Empire . However , although Zaoutzes has traditionally been regarded as an all @-@ powerful regent over a weak emperor , in no small part due to the account provided in the Vita Euthymii , the actual relationship between the two may have been quite different . A more careful evaluation of the source material has led modern scholarship to conclude that Leo was actively involved in government , and that Zaoutzes as chief minister was loyal and obsequious to his master .

An assessment of his record as the Byzantine Empire 's first minister is difficult . Of the few available sources on his career , the Vita Euthymii , compiled years after Zaoutzes 's death , is extremely hostile , seeking to pin the responsibility for several of the reign 's failures or unpopular decisions on him , and thus preserve Leo from blame . The account of the Vita is further colored by the fierce rivalry between Zaoutzes and Euthymios , then a synkellos and Leo 's spiritual father , over influence on the Byzantine emperor . Thus the Vita accuses Zaoutzes of being responsible for the sacking of the successful general Nikephoros Phokas the Elder from the army , as well as for the outbreak of hostilities with Bulgaria in 893 : allegedly , two of his protégés moved the main market for Bulgarian goods from Constantinople to Thessalonica and then proceeded to extract exorbitant fees from the Bulgarian merchants . When Leo , at the behest of Zaoutzes , rejected the merchants ' protests , the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon I found a pretext to attack Byzantium . It has , however , been recently suggested by the scholar Paul Magdalino that the transfer was in fact Leo 's initiative , aiming to enrich Thessalonica , whose patron saint , Saint Demetrius , he showed special favor to .

= = = Fall from favor and death = = =

Nevertheless , all this has led to the enduring image of an ineffectual leadership in foreign and military affairs under Zaoutzes . This may explain why , despite the resumption of Leo 's affair with Zoe , the relationship between Zaoutzes and the emperor became strained : tales of an alleged plot by Zaoutzes 's son to murder Leo in 894 / 895 indicate a rift between the two , and although Zaoutzes himself was not involved , a major quarrel between them ensued shortly after . Although they were reconciled , Zaoutzes 's standing seems to have declined further thereafter , as two of his protégés , found guilty of accepting bribes , were punished by Leo . Nevertheless , in late summer 898 , following the death of Theophano in December 865 or 866 and of Zoe 's first husband Gouzouniates in early 898 , Leo at last married Zoe , raising her to Augusta . In the next year , however , both Zoe and Stylianos died . Following their deaths , Leo proposed to marry yet again , choosing Eudokia Baïana as his wife . Zaoutzes 's numerous relatives , who had benefited from his patronage , were fearful of losing their positions to the new Empress 's relations , and conspired to overthrow Leo . Chief among them was Basil , Zoe 's nephew . The plot , however , was betrayed by the eunuch servant Samonas , and the conspiracy suppressed . The Zaoutzes relatives were exiled or confined to monasteries , and the clan 's power broken . Samonas himself was richly rewarded : he was taken into the imperial service and rapidly promoted , becoming parakoimomenos by 908 , before he too fell from favor .