

The House of Anastasius

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THE FIRST THREE SECTIONS of this paper were originally drafted as prosopographical commentaries on a group of poetic texts that happened to concern the family of the emperor Anastasius. When put together they suggested certain conclusions about the rôle of that family in the social, political and religious life of sixth-century Byzantium that have not, I think, been previously drawn. The accompanying stemma (see *infra* p.274) is based on the arguments here presented, and differs in several respects from that to be published in *PLRE II*.

I

All we know of the immediate kin of Anastasius is that he had a brother named Paul and a sister named Caesaria (mother, as we shall see, of his three famous nephews Hypatius, Pompeius and Probus). No source happens to mention the name of his father, but allusions in two poems written under Anastasius, Priscian's *Panegyric* on the emperor¹ and Christodorus' *Ecphrasis* of the statues in the Zeuxippus,² offer a hint worth following up.

First, Christodorus. When describing a statue of Pompey the Great, he concentrates on Pompey's reduction of Isauria. Naturally enough. Anastasius had just done the same. But he does not leave the matter there. It is Pompey, he claims (*AP* 2.403–04), *ὁ βασιλῆος | ἠγαθέην ἐφύτευεν Ἀναστασίου γενέθλην*. Compare now the lines Priscian addressed to Anastasius a year or two later (*Laud.Anast.* 10–15):

*nec mirum tales ex tanta stirpe creatos
Pompeii, proprio quem culmine Roma locavit? . . .
sed tamen egregio, Pompei, cede nepoti.*

¹ In *GRBS* 15 (1974) 313–16, I argued that this poem was written in 503. Alain Chauvot, *Latomus* 36 (1977) 529–50, subsequently recapitulated the case for the traditional later dating (more precisely to autumn 513), though without producing any decisive objection to my date or support for his.

² Written round about 500: see my *Porphyrus the Charioteer* (Oxford 1973) 154.

This repetition of so unlikely yet so precise a claim suggests something more than the frivolous and casual compliment of imperial panegyric. It was predictable enough to compare the achievements of these two hammers of the Isaurians; but it was by no means inevitable that two different poets should claim Pompey (after five centuries) as a direct *ancestor* of Anastasius.

One thinks of the claim of earlier panegyrists that Theodosius I was descended from Trajan.³ As a successful soldier-emperor Trajan was certainly an appropriate ancestor for Theodosius. But the specific link that justified this particular fiction was their common Spanish blood. It is hard to believe that even a Byzantine courtier would have been emboldened to trace Anastasius' line to Pompey just because both had defeated the Isaurians. And was this remarkable descent not discovered till after the final Isaurian defeat in 498?

The specific link, I would suggest, is that Anastasius' *father* was called Pompeius. If this had been so, one might expect the name to recur in the family—and indeed it does. Not only is there Pompeius, son of Caesaria, consul in 501; and Pompeius the son of this Pompeius' brother Hypatius.⁴ There is in addition Flavius *Anastasius Paulus* Probus Sabinianus *Pompeius Anastasius*, consul in 517.⁵ Anastasius was always ready with a consulship for his male kinsmen. His brother Paul was consul in 496; his nephews Hypatius, Pompeius and Probus were consuls in 500, 501 and 502; their father Secundinus (oddly enough a decade after his three sons) consul in 511; and a Flavius *Anastasius Paulus* Probus Moschianus Probus Magnus consul in 518.⁶

It has generally been assumed⁷ that the consuls of 517 and 518, evidently both grandnephews of the emperor, were the sons of

³ See (e.g.) R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta* (Oxford 1971) 101–03.

⁴ C. Capizzi misread Procopius' words (BV 2.28.42f; cf. BG 3.31.2f) as referring to the brother instead of the son of Hypatius and so omitted this younger Pompeius from his account of Anastasius' family (*L'imperatore Anastasio I* [*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 184, Rome 1969] 42 [hereafter CAPIZZI]), which concludes with the assertion that the Nika revolt brought its "rovina quasi totale" (p.45).

⁵ ILS 1305 (see next note).

⁶ ILS 1306, like ILS 1305 engraved on consular diptychs. For the repetition of the Probus cf., from other consular diptychs of the age, ILS 1303 (Areobindus), 1304 (Clementinus), 1308 (Philoxenus), 1310 (Flavius Strategius). 1306 is unusual in that the name repeated is secondary, not primary.

⁷ Most recently (e.g.) by Capizzi and in the relevant entries of *PLRE II*, edited by J. R. Martindale, to be published by the Cambridge Press in 1980.

Pompeius and Probus respectively. This would certainly explain the Pompeius and the double Probus, but it should be noted that both are called Paulus as well as Probus. And what of the Sabinianus, the Moschianus and the Magnus? We can hardly overlook Sabinianus son of Sabinianus (both *magistri militum*), consul in 505,⁸ and Moschianus, presumably son of Moschianus, *magister militum* in 481, and perhaps a general himself, consul in 512.⁹ (Presumably one or other of the Moschiani built the 'Portico of Moschianus' mentioned in a circus riot of 565.¹⁰)

It is surely more natural to see the consuls of 517 and 518 as grand-nephews of Paul. Their fathers would then be Sabinianus and Moschianus respectively, both men having married daughters of Paul, winning themselves a consulship apiece in reward. It was prudent (and fitting) for a civilian emperor to attach successful generals to the imperial family in this way.

On this reconstruction Paul had only daughters, three of them. Yet Priscian credits him with sons, so it has usually been inferred. A more careful reading of the relevant passage does not confirm this deduction. At lines 290–94 Priscian praises Paul before evoking in 295 the piety of Anastasius, piety

*qua fratris natos animo complecteris aequo,
non patruum tantum, sed patris more colendo,
indole quos nutris dignos et stirpe parentum?
Hypatii vestri referam fortissima facta. . .*

On the face of it, the 'frater' of 296 might be thought to be Paul. Yet the only one of the 'fratris natos' singled out for individual mention, Hypatius, was unquestionably *not* a son of Paul. Furthermore, which nephews of Anastasius can a panegyrist writing (as Priscian probably was) in 503 have had in mind but Hypatius, Pompeius and Probus, consuls in turn for 500, 501 and 502 (Hypatius and probably Pompeius too had both commanded armies as well¹¹)? And Hypatius and Pompeius at least are expressly stated to have been sons of Secundinus. There is no direct evidence for Probus' father, and the one text which mentions all three together, *Hypatius, Pompeius et Probus genere*

⁸ Marcellinus, *Chron. s.a.* 505.

⁹ For the earlier Moschianus, see John of Antioch, fr.213 (*FHG* IV 620); the later is known only from the consular fasti.

¹⁰ Malalas, p.490 Bonn.

¹¹ For all details of their careers see now their entries in *PLRE* II.

consobrini, divique Anastasii nepotes (Marcellinus, *Chron. s.a.* 532), does not seem to me (*pace* Stein) necessarily to imply (though it certainly does not exclude the possibility) that all three had the same father. What does seem to me to tilt the balance of probability in favour of this (the usual) conclusion¹² is Priscian's phrase '*fratris natos*'. Had Probus been Paul's son, then it would have been both accurate and tactful, nor would it have made any difference to the metre, for Priscian to have written '*fratrum natos*', to cover Paul as well as Secundinus. He wrote '*fratris*' because *all* of Anastasius' distinguished nephews were the sons of the same 'brother'. It is difficult to believe that an experienced panegyrist would have been so careless as to risk quite unnecessary offense by writing '*fratris*' if he had really been meaning to evoke the sons of two imperial brothers. Secundinus is not actually named because, being only a brother-in-law, he was not himself (unlike his sons) of the blood royal, nor quite so important a person as Paul—or indeed his own sons, as illustrated by his late consulship. If Paul had had any sons who survived to maturity, we may be sure that they would have received honours comparable to those showered so generously on Secundinus' sons. The fact that none is on record suggests of itself that there were no such sons.

On my reconstruction of Paul's family, we can even explain Magnus, the name by which the polyonymous consul of 518 was actually known. Paul's wife was called Magna. And in section II we shall meet another Magnus descended from the same line.

So Anastasius had one nephew and two grandnephews called Pompeius. And with the consul of 517 correctly placed in the line of Paul, Pompeius (like Probus) appears in both branches of the family, reducing the probability that both grandnephews (on one side) were named after the nephew (on the other). The threefold recurrence of the name Pompeius would be very neatly explained if the father of Anastasius, Paul and Caesaria had been a Pompeius. Presumably the reason neither Priscian nor Christodorus explicitly refers to Anastasius' father is that he had been a person of no great consequence; not necessarily a man to be ashamed of and probably not poor, but not one deserving to be evoked in his own right in the praises of a Roman emperor. This was a principle long established and well understood by both the writers and the recipients of imperial panegyrics. But any mention of the name Pompeius in a panegyric, even

¹² See the long discussion (not making the point about *fratris natos*) in Capizzi 33–42.

though the reference was plainly to Pompeius Magnus, was bound at the same time to remind the contemporary listener of the emperor's father—and to suggest that pleasing possibility of his descent from so great a Roman.

II

But of all this abundance of distinguished kinsmen not one, as it was observed at the time with some surprise, was able to secure the succession. Yet the house of Anastasius continued in power and wealth for many generations after the emperor's death.

His immediate successors do not seem to have felt any anxiety about the situation. Hypatius and Pompeius were left in command of troops. On the face of it, the unsuccessful proclamation of Hypatius by a rioting crowd in January 532 revealed this confidence to be ill-placed. One might have expected the immediate and total ruin of the entire family. Yet it survived.

There is no need to rehearse all the details of the Nika revolt here. The likelihood is that it began spontaneously and was subsequently exploited by elements hostile to Justinian. There is little to suggest that Hypatius, seemingly the chief beneficiary, either planned or even welcomed his elevation.¹³ On the fifth day of the riot both Hypatius and Pompeius were still closeted in the palace with Justinian, and when, suspecting their loyalty, he ordered them to leave, they pleaded to be allowed to stay. They warned him that the people might forcibly proclaim them, at which he grew even more suspicious and, unwisely, sent them away immediately. When the mob arrived at Hypatius' door first thing the following morning, we may well believe that it was against his better judgement (and despite the entreaties of his wife) that he agreed to go with them. They had already tried Probus' house; more prudent than his brothers, he had taken care to be out. The mob burned the place in revenge.

But however reluctant the usurper, once the revolt was over he could not be allowed to survive. What had happened might happen again, whatever Hypatius' own intentions. He and Pompeius were executed, their property was confiscated and their bodies thrown into

¹³ See my analysis of the course and causes of the revolt in *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford 1976) 278–80. For all details and chronology, E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire II* (Paris/Bruxelles/Amsterdam 1949) 449f [hereafter STEIN].

the sea. A number of other senators involved suffered exile and confiscation, among them, more fortunate than his brothers, Probus, and their cousin Olybrius. But the family disgrace was not to last long. A year later both Hypatius and Pompeius were posthumously rehabilitated and their property restored to their sons. Probus and Olybrius (and no doubt the other senators too) were recalled from their exile and given back their property.

The loss to the treasury of these estates (particularly those of Olybrius) must have been considerable. Justinian, badly in need of money, must have felt the political advantage worth the surrender of such a prize. The appalling carnage of the Nika revolt, a sorry tale of vacillation and misjudgement,¹⁴ was going to take a long time to live down. The popularity that led to Hypatius' proclamation is not likely to have died with him; and since he was after all safely dead, it might be politic to restore his good name. As for Probus, Olybrius and the rest, since they had been allowed to survive, they were perhaps safer in Constantinople as living proofs of Justinian's magnanimity than exiles with a grudge.

Two interesting epigrams by Julian the ex-prefect 'the Egyptian' bear contemporary witness to this change of heart. First AP 7.591:

*Ἵπατίου τάφος εἰμί· νέκυν δ' οὐ φημι καλύπτειν
τόσσου τόσσοις ἐὼν Αὐσονίων προμάχου.
γαῖα γὰρ αἰδομένη λιτῶ μέγαν ἀνέρα χῶσαι
σήματι, τῷ πόντῳ μᾶλλον ἔδωκεν ἔχειν.*

"I am the tomb of Hypatius; but, small as I am, I make no claim to cover the body of so great a champion of the Romans. The earth blushed to bury the mighty man beneath a paltry tombstone, and preferred to entrust him to the keeping of the deep."

There can be little doubt that this masterpiece of evasion is the official inscription of a cenotaph. No hint of the real reason Hypatius' body ended up in the sea; he is simply a 'champion of the Romans', evoking his long and distinguished service as a general.

The companion piece 7.592 is rather more problematic:

*Αὐτὸς ἄναξ νεμέσῃσι πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης
κύμασιν, Ἵπατίου σῶμα καλυψαμένοις.
ἤθελε γὰρ μιν ἔχειν γέρας ὕστατον, οἶα θανόντα,*

¹⁴ See *Circus Factions* (*supra* n.13) 280.

καὶ μεγαλοφροσύνης κρύψε θάλασσα χάριν.
 ἔνθεν, πρηϊνόου κραδίης μέγα δειγμα, φαεινόν
 τίμησεν κενεῶ ἰήματι τῶδε νέκυν.

“The emperor himself was angry with the waves of the raging sea for enveloping the body of Hypatius. For he wished him to enjoy the final honour befitting a dead man, and the sea hid the favour of his magnanimity. This is why he honoured the illustrious body with this cenotaph, striking proof of his merciful heart.”

On the face of it, 592 should be the pair to 591, both from the same cenotaph.¹⁵ Yet editors of the Anthology, from Jacobs to Waltz, have claimed it as a political lampoon, marked by a bitter irony. The case has recently been restated by R. C. McCail,¹⁶ who also finds it significant that the poem is left anonymous in *AP*. The explanation, he suggests, is that only 591 was inscribed on the cenotaph; 592 is a *satire* on Justinian’s indignation at being robbed of the credit for his magnanimity by the sea, “even though,” he adds, “stylistic resemblances make it likely that Julian was in fact the author.”

I must confess that, like E. Stein, I can find no trace of this “savage and transparent irony.” As can be observed in totalitarian regimes today, the overnight rehabilitation of one-time enemies of the state is always liable to create problems. As in 591, it was decided to pass over Hypatius’ crime and execution, but at the same time some allusion had to be made to Justinian’s magnanimity. With the crime that explains the magnanimity suppressed, a certain awkwardness was bound to result. There is no irony in the reference to Justinian’s ‘anger’ at the waves; it is just another evasive allusion to the loss of Hypatius’ body which explains the cenotaph. Justinian’s magnanimity was not mere pretence to curry popularity, fit only for satire, but something real and solid enough for Hypatius’ heirs. Of course there may well be something in the malicious allegation of the *Secret History* (12.12) that Justinian kept all the best furnishings and estates and restored only those liable to the heaviest taxes ‘in pretence of generosity’ (*φιλανθρωπίας προσχήματι*). But the fact remains that he did not have to give anything back. The anonymity of the poem is best attributed to simple carelessness, the omission of *τοῦ αὐτοῦ* or the like.

¹⁵ It was very common at this period for monuments to be engraved with a plurality of inscriptional poems: see my *Porphyrius* (*supra* n.2) *passim*.

¹⁶ *JHS* 89 (1969) 90–91.

It should be added that, if (as we can hardly doubt) both poems are by Julian the ex-prefect, he could scarcely have afforded such irony. He would himself have been a beneficiary of that same magnanimity. For Julian was a person of consequence, Praetorian Prefect of the East as recently as 530/1,¹⁷ and somehow or other unlucky enough to be carried off by the rioting crowd together with Hypatius and Pompeius in the very moment of their proclamation (*Chron.Pasch.* 1.624.15). That would have taken some explaining. Whether or not he was actually exiled along with Probus and the others we do not know, but he will presumably have had to lie low for a while. Whatever he may really have thought of Justinian, we may be sure that he was rather careful when writing the inscription for Hypatius' cenotaph.

But this is not the only problem. According to the *Paschal Chronicle* (1.627–28), Hypatius' body was not lost at sea, but washed up and, on Justinian's orders, buried in the place set aside for executed criminals, with an insulting inscription. After a few days, however, his sons were allowed to remove the remains and rebury them in the Martyrium of St Maura. Pompeius' body was never recovered. This story, as McCail rightly remarks, is too circumstantial to be discounted.

Why then the cenotaph? For we cannot discount the contemporary evidence of the epigrams either. According to McCail, "the two versions are not irreconcilable, however: the epigrams may concern some monument to Hypatius sanctioned by Justinian before the body was recovered from the sea; or they may express a lingering resentment still felt by Hypatius' partisans after its recovery and reburial." Neither explanation is really satisfactory. Lingering resentment there may have been—but not expressed in our epigrams. And who is supposed to have erected this cenotaph, emperor or partisans? And why a cenotaph now that the body was available? The first suggestion runs into even more serious difficulties. Quite apart from the improbability of the cenotaph being erected in the week or two before the body was washed up, the epigrams surely imply that the cenotaph was a token of Hypatius' rehabilitation. Yet when the body was washed up, Justinian was clearly *not* yet prepared to display *πρηϋνόου κραδίης μέγα δεῖγμα* (hence the criminal's grave and the insulting epitaph).

When did the rehabilitation take place? General considerations of prudence and probability would suggest an interval of years or months rather than weeks or days. Procopius only says 'later' (*ἔπειτα*, *BP*

¹⁷ See *JHS* 86 (1966) 13 and, for a further argument identifying the poet with the prefect of 530/1, *Byzantion* 47 (1977) 41–48.

1.24.58), but Malalas records that it was early in January 533 that Probus and Olybrius were recalled and restored to their estates (478B). It would be logical for all the guilty parties to have been pardoned together, and this would be an eminently logical moment to have done it. The games at which the trouble broke out began on January 13th, and the executions took place on the 19th. Survivors have a habit of remembering the anniversaries of massacres, and it would have been a shrewd move to announce the rehabilitations *before* the first anniversary of the Nika revolt.

It seems to me that the two versions *are* irreconcilable. If the cenotaph dates from (at earliest) January 533, Hypatius' body had long been rescued from the 'raging sea'. There is however one very simple solution. While we must accept the basic lines of the story in the *Paschal Chronicle*, it is quite possible that the author¹⁸ simply confused Hypatius and Pompeius. Surely it was *Pompeius'* body that was washed up? Hypatius' was never recovered, so that when he was rehabilitated, a cenotaph was inevitable. Whether it was a public monument or one put up by Hypatius' sons in the family burial ground (at the Martyrium of St Maura), there can be little doubt that the epigrams, though written by a former associate of Hypatius, must have received official approval.

III

More interesting still is another poem by Julian, *AP* 7.590, on the death of a certain John, a famous man, son-in-law (*γαμβρός*) of a 'queen' and 'flower' of the line of Anastasius:

Κλεινὸς Ἰωάννης. "θνητός, λέγε." γαμβρὸς ἀνάσσης.
 "θνητὸς ὄμω." γενεῆς ἄνθος Ἀναστασίου.
 "θνητοῦ κακείνου." βίον ἔνδικος. οὐκέτι τοῦτο
 θνητὸν ἔφη. ἀρεταὶ κρείσσονές εἰσι μόρου.

(This is the) famous John. "Call him mortal."
 He was the son-in-law of a queen. "But still mortal."
 A flower of the line of Anastasius. "He too was mortal."
 He was just in his life. You did not call *that*
 mortal. Virtues live on after death.

¹⁸ If indeed it was not rather a subsequent copyist who, having written both names in the previous sentence, repeated the wrong one here.

According to the lemma, this John was the son-in-law of the empress Euphemia, wife of Justin I. But Euphemia is not known to have had any children, and especially since no details are given about either the imperial wife or the connection with Anastasius, we are probably justified in dismissing it as a guess based on a *floruit*-date for Julian extracted from the epigrams on Hypatius. The more so since, as was recognized as early as Brunck, we know from Procopius¹⁹ of a candidate who fits the requirements to perfection.

In 548/9 John the grandson of Hypatius married Praiecta, daughter of Justinian's sister Vigilantia. A poet may surely be permitted the licence of calling the emperor's sister a 'queen', and in any case the lady in question cannot have been a queen in the fullest sense, an emperor's wife, for then John would surely have been described as the *emperor's* son-in-law. What we need is someone exactly like Vigilantia, a lady of the imperial house who is more important than her husband. So in John the grandson of Hypatius we have a member of the house of Anastasius who became the son-in-law of a queen.

Now it was one thing for Justinian to rehabilitate Hypatius after the unfortunate catastrophe of 532, but quite another to marry his only available niece to Hypatius' grandson. Praiecta's status made her much sought after on the assassination of her first husband Areobindus. The front runner, a brilliant young soldier called Artabanes, had to withdraw at the last moment when it was discovered that he already had a wife in Armenia. Our John, it would seem, was the next most eligible bachelor in the whole empire. He is not recorded as holding any office, civil or military; his claim on Praiecta's hand evidently rested on his distinguished family and (more important, one suspects, to Justinian) his ancestral wealth. Not only did the Nika revolt *not* ruin the house of Anastasius. We find Justinian prepared within less than twenty years to increase the prestige of the family still further by linking it to his own. Had John lived longer he might have proved a candidate for the succession.

The name Praiecta occurs at the same rarified level of Byzantine society in the next generation. As Stein has observed, there is every chance that John's wife is the mother of the Praiecta who is attested on a papyrus of 591 as mother of the great Egyptian noble Apion III,

¹⁹ BV 2.24.3, 26.18; BG 3.31.14.

grandson of Apion II, consul in 539,²⁰ husband of a daughter of Rusticiana, an emigrée granddaughter of the western aristocrat Boethius.²¹

IV

AP 7.590 cannot have been written before *ca* 550 and (since its general tone does not suggest that John was unfortunate enough to die the moment he had compounded his good fortune with the imperial match) perhaps several years later. But presumably well before *ca* 566/7,²² when Agathias' *Cycle* (of which it formed a part)²³ was published and when Julian (if he wrote his poems on Hypatius in—or soon after—533, having already attained the highest office open to him) must have been in his seventies.

If I seem to be labouring the *terminus ante quem* of AP 7.590, it is because, were it possible to date the poem as late as *ca* 580, there is in fact another candidate who satisfies all its other requirements. He cannot be Julian's John, but it will not be irrelevant to trace his pedigree, which has some rather surprising ramifications.

John of Ephesus, writing of the late 570's, mentions an "illustrious John, who was descended from King Anastasius, and the son moreover of Queen Theodora's daughter."²⁴ This daughter of Theodora tends

²⁰ *P.Oxy.* XVI 1989–90; wife therefore of Strategius II. The mother of a grown son in 591 could just be the daughter of John, married to Praiecta I *ca* 550, but we must allow the possibility that Praiecta II was the daughter of Areobindus. For the history of the Apions see E. R. Hardy, *The Large Estates of Byzantine Egypt* (New York 1931) 25–38, though I am doubtful of his conclusion (p.37) that by the seventh century "the re-Egyptianization of the Apion family was evidently quite complete." No doubt, as the papyri show, they visited their Egyptian estates regularly, but it is not easy to believe that the aristocratic wives of such grandees were willing to spend more time than they had to in Oxyrhynchus.

²¹ For Rusticiana, descendant of the Anicii and Symmachi of old, and her move to Constantinople, see Averil Cameron, "A Nativity Poem of the Sixth Century A.D.," *CP* 84 (1979), forthcoming.

²² That the *Cycle* was published in 566/7 under Justin II and not (as previously supposed) under Justinian was demonstrated by Averil Cameron and myself in *JHS* 86 (1966) 6–25. This part of our thesis is unaffected by the reservations expressed by McCail, *art.cit.* (*supra* n.16) 89f, still less by B. Baldwin's curious attempt to prove the emperor of Agathias' preface Justinian (*BZ* 70 [1977] 298f) while making no mention of the presence in the body of the collection of poems naming his successor.

²³ It is firmly embedded in a solid sequence of 50-odd poems from the *Cycle*, running from 7.555–614.

²⁴ John of Ephesus, *HE* 2.11 (Lat. transl. from Syriac, E. W. Brooks, *CSCO* 106 = *Scriptores Syri* 55 [Louvain 1936, repr. 1952] 52).

to be glossed over in biographies of Justinian and Theodora, especially (though not exclusively) those that play down the more sensational allegations concerning her early years. Procopius describes how Theodora schemed to marry another son of this daughter, called Anastasius, to Belisarius' daughter Joannina, with the object of gaining control of Belisarius' vast wealth (Joannina being his only child and sole heir). Belisarius' imperious wife Antonina was strongly opposed to the match, and it was only (so Procopius alleges) by prevailing upon Anastasius to seduce Joannina while Belisarius and Antonina were away in Italy (547) that Theodora managed to bring it off.²⁵

It had often been supposed that this (regrettably unnamed) daughter of Theodora was in fact fathered by Justinian before their marriage in *ca* 523. This is just about possible, though the latest that the birth of Theodora's daughter can well be placed is *ca* 515 (if she gave birth to Anastasius at the age of 15 and he married Joannina at the age of 18), and Procopius implies (*Anecd.* 9.30) that it was not till after his uncle Justin's accession in 518 that Justinian took up with Theodora.²⁶ But the real objection is that the girl is invariably referred to as the daughter of Theodora, not as the daughter of Justinian and Theodora. For Procopius, Anastasius is three times styled Theodora's *θυγατριδοῦς* (4.37, 5.18, 5.20), *i.e.* 'daughter's son', and once (5.23) τὸν Θεοδώρα ἐκγονον. For John of Ephesus too the 'illustrious John' was 'son... of Queen Theodora's daughter' (2.11), as too is a third grandson mentioned in a later book (5.1), 'Athanasius, the son of Queen Theodora's daughter'. This Athanasius is described by Michael the Syrian (eleventh century, but clearly deriving from much earlier sources) as 'fils de la fille de l'impératrice Théodora'.²⁷ Theophanes describes John and yet another man, a *curator* called George (not said to be John's brother) as 'kinsmen' (*συγγενῶν*) of Queen Theodora.²⁸ If Justinian was the father, why is Theodora consistently named as if the sole parent? In any case, the story of her pitiful appeal that the holy man Sabas make her womb fruitful²⁹ makes it clear enough that she had not then (in 531) born Justinian a child.

²⁵ *Anecd.* 4.37, 5.18–24.

²⁶ The latest discussion of the premarital relations of Justinian and Theodora is by Tony Honoré, *Tribonian* (London 1978) 9–11, assuming that the daughter was not Justinian's but not going into any details.

²⁷ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. tr. J.-B. Chabot, II (Paris 1901) 253 and (same description) 285 (9.30.8 and 10.1).

²⁸ *Chron.* p.237.4 de Boor.

²⁹ *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, ed. E. Schwartz (Leipzig 1939) p.174,1.

Then there is the law (*Cod. Just.* 5.4.23) which permitted Justinian to marry Theodora. Though couched in fairly general terms, relaxing the legal impediments on actresses, “every detail of the law,” as David Daube has recently emphasized, “is tailored to the particular dilemma of Justinian and Theodora.”³⁰ This must be why, after the imperial dispensation whereby former actresses can be made as though they had never been actresses, there comes a specific provision that daughters born to an ex-actress *before* her rehabilitation should be entitled to an ‘imperial conferment of unrestricted marriage capacity’, *quasi non sint scaenicae matris filiae*. In the light of the texts just quoted there can be little doubt that this last clause was quite deliberately framed with Theodora’s own (illegitimate) daughter in mind. If Justinian had been the father, he would surely have simply legitimised or adopted the child. The fact that she is always credited to Theodora alone virtually proves that Justinian did *not* adopt her, even when, as the years passed, it had become plain that Theodora was not going to bear him any children of his own.

The moment Theodora was dead (in 548), Antonina took her daughter away from the young Anastasius, thereby “gaining a great reputation for heartlessness in the eyes of all men” since the couple were devoted to each other. Her reason, according to Procopius (*Anecd.* 5.23), was that she “scorned a grandson of Theodora as a kinsman.” Motivations suggested by the *Secret History* must always be treated with caution, but in this case the action seems to confirm it. Now we can hardly believe that Antonina would have rejected so offensively a grandson of *Justinian*, a son-in-law who (in the absence of closer kin, now sealed forever by the death of Theodora) must have seemed a likely candidate for the succession. Yet it is easy to see why she felt so strongly about an illegitimate grandson of Theodora.³¹ Like Theodora a one-time actress, like Theodora a mother of illegitimate children herself before her lucky marriage (*Anecd.* 1.11f), Antonina naturally wanted a *real* aristocrat or a *real* prince for her

³⁰ “The Marriage of Justinian and Theodora: Legal and Theological Reflections,” *Catholic University of America Law Review* 16 (1967) 380f.

³¹ Bastards had never enjoyed either status or honour at Rome, whatever their parentage (cf. R. Syme, “Bastards in the Roman Aristocracy,” *ProcPhilSoc* 104 [1960] 323–27). It is only because he happened to die in a theatre riot in 501 (Malalas fr.39, p.168 de Boor) that we know Anastasius had a son by a concubine. Galerius had an illegitimate son who was subsequently adopted for the purpose of a dynastic match by his wife Valeria, who had no children of her own (*PLRE* I, Candidianus 1)—the exception that proves the rule.

son-in-law. Not having been acknowledged by Justinian, Anastasius like his brothers stood no chance of the purple, as events were to confirm.

So John of Ephesus' illustrious John, like John the grandson of Hypatius, was descended from the line of Anastasius *and* a son-in-law of a queen. If he was descended from Anastasius, it follows that Theodora's daughter must have married a descendant of Anastasius. This would neatly explain why the grandson Procopius mentions was called Anastasius. Furthermore it is clear from John of Ephesus that both the illustrious John and his brother Athanasius were ardent monophysites (though Athanasius veered away into John Philoponus' monophysite heresy of Tritheism, eventually founding his very own sect, the Athanasiani).³² Since Theodora was herself a devoted monophysite, it is entirely credible that she should have had her own daughter and grandchildren reared in the same faith. The house of Anastasius was divided in its christology. Anastasius himself, notoriously, was a monophysite, but his sister-in-law Magna and his nephews Pompeius and Hypatius were all firm Chalcedonians.³³ Pompeius' widow Anastasia ended her days as an abbess on the Mount of Olives. But Probus was no less firm a monophysite, as was his sister Caesaria the younger, a regular correspondent of Severus of Antioch,³⁴ no less. It was at the house of the 'glorious patrician Probus' that the monophysite John of Ephesus stayed during his first visit to Constantinople in 540–42.³⁵

A son or grandson of Probus or Caesaria must have seemed as eligible a suitor to Theodora as did a grandson of Hypatius to Vigilantia the following year—more so if, in addition to the prestige and wealth of the house of Anastasius, he was also a monophysite.

A page after his first reference to John, John of Ephesus gives further precious details about his family and connections (*HE* 2.12). His mother-in-law was a high-born and very wealthy patrician called Antipatra; his wife, "also of consular rank," was called Georgia, both

³² John of Ephesus, *HE* 5.7 (*ed.cit.* [*supra* n.24] 195).

³³ Stein 216; Capizzi 41 n.48. It is for this reason that I doubt whether the evidently monophysite 'Georgia daughter of Anastasia the *hypatissa*' with whom Severus of Antioch corresponded (*Select Letters* II.2 [London 1904] 455–59) is to be connected with the wife of Pompeius, even though Severus more than once emphasises Georgia's 'glorious' parents and house. The letter belongs to the period 519–538, when Georgia was of mature years but still unmarried.

³⁴ Stein 235 n.2; Capizzi 41 n.49.

³⁵ See John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, transl. E. W. Brooks, I no. 10 (*PO* 17.1 [Paris 1923]) 157.

ardent monophysites. Throughout Justin's persecution of monophysites Antipatra was supported by her friend, another rich and well-born lady, Juliana, "daughter of the consul Magnus." Magnus too, John adds, "was descended from King Anastasius."

A glance at the stemma will reveal at once how well a Magnus and a Juliana fit in the line of Anastasius' brother Paul. His daughter Irene married Olybrius, son of Anicia Juliana, last scion of the combined blood of the great Roman house of the Anicii and the imperial houses of Valentinian and Theodosius. The stemma of their line, happily preserved for us by the patriarch Nicephorus,³⁶ reveals another Juliana two generations later. The Magnus runs down this side of the family from Paul's wife. Olybrius and Irene had at least one other daughter besides Irene,³⁷ and the most economical guess, though no more than a guess, would be to trace Magnus back in this direction.

In all probability, then, Juliana was descended not only from the line of Anastasius but (*via* Olybrius) from the Anicii and the two last great imperial houses of the West. As a finishing touch, she married Marcellus, brother of Praiecta I and the reigning emperor, Justin II. Her intransigent monophysitism was to prove something of an embarrassment to the imperial family during the persecutions of 572/3; but Marcellus could scarcely have found a bride with a better pedigree. Her cousin Placidia (a name that proclaims her imperial descent) married John Mystacon ('the moustachioed'), a senior general under Tiberius and Maurice.

Yet another prominent man of the period described by John of Ephesus as "of the family of King Anastasius" is the Peter who went on an embassy to Persia with the illustrious John. Elsewhere (if the text is sound) he is referred to as "of the family of Peter the Patrician,"³⁸ that is to say either Peter Barsymes, Justinian's low-born *comes sacrarum largitionum* and praetorian prefect or his *magister officiorum* Peter the Patrician, in either case a successful bureaucrat whose family had at some point married into the Anastasian line.

V

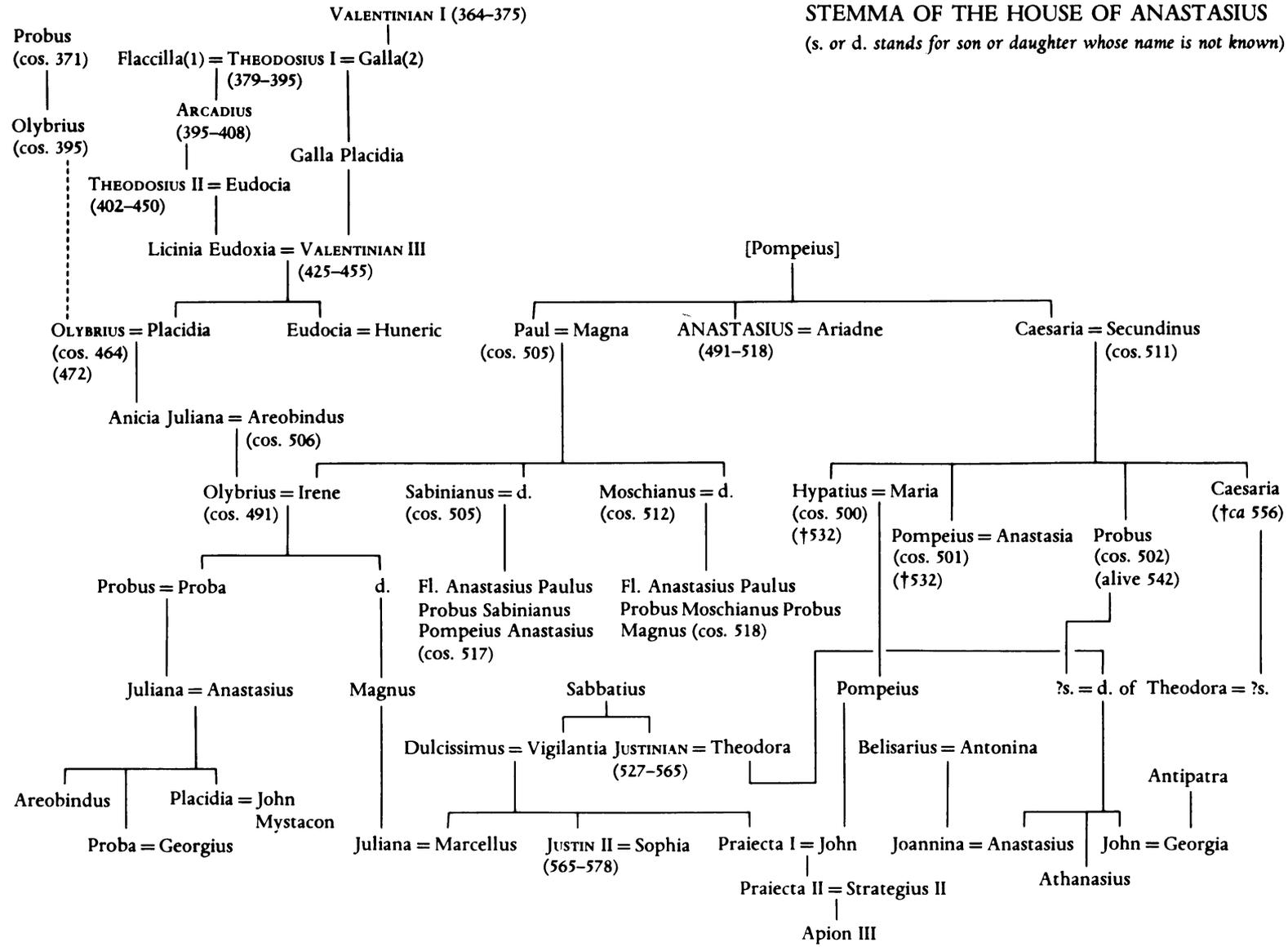
In addition to its immense prestige, the family of Anastasius was evidently very wealthy. The number of consulships they enjoyed

³⁶ Niceph. *Opusc.hist.* ed. de Boor (BT, Leipzig 1880) 103–04, *cf.* p. xxxiv.

³⁷ AP 1.10.39 wishes long life to Juliana's son "and his daughters" (*κούραις*).

³⁸ John of Ephesus, *HE* 6.12 and 2.11 (*ed.cit.* [*supra* n.24] 232, 52).

STEMMA OF THE HOUSE OF ANASTASIUS
 (s. or d. stands for son or daughter whose name is not known)



under the ennobler of their line represents by itself several fortunes spent on public entertainments alone. And what scattered hints we have about individuals bear out the general supposition. Athanasius, for example, was able to spread his heretical views by “a liberal expenditure of gold,” according to John of Ephesus; the extent of his wealth is nicely illustrated by his will, which John quotes in detail (5.7). The younger Caesaria not only built monasteries “in a grand and admirable style” but even purchased a large goldmine to provide for their upkeep!³⁹ And it is clear from her extravagant building activity that Anicia Juliana brought much of the wealth of the Anicii and the imperial house of the West with her to Constantinople.⁴⁰ What was left must have passed through her son Olybrius into Paul’s branch of the family of Anastasius.

It is easy to see why the family was in such demand among those aiming at a good marriage: generals, bureaucrats, princes, even an empress with an illegitimate daughter to get off her hands. All could be accommodated in such a family, with mutual benefit. Many will have done little but spend their days in titled ease at their suburban estates contemplating future marriage alliances. But perhaps a surprisingly large number continued to hold high office. By the last quarter of the sixth century most of the more prominent members of the family were of the monophysite persuasion, indeed the backbone of the monophysite party in the capital. Yet even so they survived Justin II’s fierce monophysite persecutions of ca 572/3.

The consul Magnus was *comes sacrarum largitionum* at the beginning of Justin’s reign and also *curator* of the imperial estate of Arcadius’ daughter Marina.⁴¹ John of Ephesus’ remark (2.12) that he was “on one occasion banished with all of his family” (that is to say during the persecutions) shows also that he survived. His redoubtable daughter Juliana, Marcellus’ wife, was incarcerated in a nunnery, shorn and forced to wash the dishes and clean out the latrines. Even so she was eventually restored to her home and rank. The illustrious John was also a temporary victim, but by 575/6 we find him together with his

³⁹ John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* III no.54, “Caesaria the Patrician” (PO 19.2 [Paris 1926]) 190. She was at one stage married, for Severus had tried to dissuade her from leaving her husband for the ascetic life (*ib.* p.186 n.2). My stemma therefore allows for the possibility that it might be her son who married Theodora’s daughter.

⁴⁰ *cf.* C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, *DOPapers* 15 (1961) 245.

⁴¹ For the details of his career, see Averil Cameron, ed. *Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (London 1976) 127–28.

kinsman and fellow-monophysite Peter serving on an important embassy to Persia (2.11). John is described as consul and patrician, Peter as *curator* of the estates of the empress as well as consul (honorary consulships, of course).⁴² In his rather different field Theodora's grandson Athanasios was also a man of consequence and ambition. It has been conjectured that at one stage he set his sights on the patriarchate of Alexandria⁴³ (one goal that was to elude the family; it will be remembered that Anastasios himself was once a disappointed candidate for the see of Antioch).

With a little persistence the descendants of Anastasios can be followed down through five generations. Their family tree thus provides a unique opportunity to study the workings of the early Byzantine aristocracy—so different from the aristocracy of Rome (and the later Byzantine aristocracy). But it is not (as often said) a simple question of an aristocracy of birth at Rome and of functionaries at Constantinople. The Roman aristocracy was not quite so exclusive as it is sometimes represented, and it is clear that (even after his death) the nephews and grandnephews of Anastasios enjoyed what can only be described as an aristocrat's natural claim on high office. But the early Byzantine aristocracy did not develop corporate traditions or personal power bases (like the 'Eastern earls' of later centuries with their hereditary armies)⁴⁴ independent of the emperor and his court. Indeed, senate and court must in practice have overlapped to a considerable extent. Things were very different in the late Roman West, not least because no emperor after the mid-third century resided at Rome. The western aristocracy would attend at court when necessary, of course, but their social life was by long tradition quite independent of the emperor and his entourage. Above all, it was not normal in the West either for aristocrats to marry into the imperial family or for relatives of the emperor to become aristocrats. It was a natural consequence of the proximity in which they lived as much as deliberate policy that the descendants of Anastasios remained so close to the emperor, his family and his generals.

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⁴² Simocatta 3.15.6 gives Peter the title of patrician as well, which Stein perhaps unnecessarily doubts (p.724 n.1).

⁴³ W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge 1972) 290–91.

⁴⁴ R. J. H. Jenkins, *Speculum* 23 (1948) 222 = *Studies on Byzantine History of the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London 1970) x, 222.