

R

OMANO-BARBARIAN *AMICITIA*: SHAPING THE DISCOURSE AND SUSTAINING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Abstract:

Links of *amicitia* were an essential element of the Roman elite's inner relations and a mark of belonging to it. These political alliances were performed and sustained by the exchange of gifts and letters revolving around participation in literary culture, recommendations of friends, and seeking favours. Forms established in the late Roman Republic, exemplified in letters of Cicero and others continued into the Later Roman Empire and were performed as a signifier of a Roman identity of the elites. With the increase of numbers of military officials of foreign – 'barbarian' – background in the 4th and 5th century, a new group of potential *amici* appeared. Achieving such high honours as consulate and exercising considerable power, these 'immigrants' were expected to take part in the very same set of conventions, which integrated the imperial elites for centuries.

This article discusses several cases of individuals of non-Roman background, either first generation 'immigrants' or people already established within the Roman society, whose only trait differentiating them from the rest of the society was their non-Roman descent. Among these are Stilicho, Richomeres, Bauto, Ellebichos, Modares and Arbogastes, examined through the perspective of letters addressed to them by Symmachus, Libanios, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, Sidonius Apollinaris and Auspicius of Toul. Examination of these case studies demonstrates only situational instances of the exclusion of 'barbarian' *amici*. The ethnicity of the addressee could be present and relevant within the discourse but functioned more as a tool of control of the social advancement of the 'immigrants'. It served as an instrument in a subtle game of establishing and sustaining the symbolic balance of power between the old and the new members of the elite.

Keywords:

amicitia, φιλία, barbarian, Later Roman Empire, Roman elites

Links of *amicitia* were an essential element of the Roman elite's inner relations and a mark of belonging to it. These political alliances were performed and sustained by the exchange of gifts and letters revolving around participation in literary culture, recommendations of friends, and seeking favours, be they of a political or other nature. A stylised language of friendship was developed to convey messages regarding these matters. Forms established in the late Roman republic, exemplified in the letters of Cicero and theoretically framed in his treaty *De amicitia*, continued into the late Roman Empire as seen in the epistolography of such individuals as Symmachus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Ausonius, Jerome or Augustine. The Greek-speaking world had its parallel in the term *φιλία*, philosophically set out in Plato's work *Lysis*. Roman officials of 'barbarian' background of the 4th and 5th centuries were not exempt from these practices and needed to navigate the uncertain waters of the elite 'friendship' to sustain their networks of power.

Contrary to the norms established in elite culture by Cicero, the term *amicitia* could cover many types of relationships. Individuals of differing social stations or gender could consider each other *amici* and often expressed this in honorary and funerary inscriptions.¹ However, in its idealised literary form, described in the epistolography of the elite, *amicitia* was to be exclusively a cordial relationship between men of higher social standing, who could hold offices, lands and slaves. *Amici* were not necessarily of equal position, as the term could cover relations akin to that of a patron – client. But even in such cases usage of the language of *amicitia* was expected, at best differentiating between *amici superiores* and *inferiores*.² *Amicitia* was performed as a signifier of the Roman identity of the elites, an activity of a true Roman 'gentleman'. With the increasing numbers of military officials of foreign, 'barbarian', background in the later Roman Empire, a new group of potential *amici* emerged. Achieving such high honours as the consulate and exercising considerable power, these 'immigrants' were expected to take part in the very same set of conventions, which had integrated the imperial elites for centuries. Inclusion of Roman military officers of non-Roman origin or background within networks of *amicitia* meant that they were powerful or Roman enough, or both, to be considered worthy *amici*. However, it did not necessarily mean they were wholly accepted as Romans by their counterparts. A certain cultural bias, serving to prove the superiority of the old elites, is traceable even in the highly conventionalised language of *amicitia* and *φιλία*. How accurately are these tensions reflected by these practices of 'friendship'?

¹ Williams 2012: *passim* and particularly 23–26 and 286–289.

² Cicero, *De Amicitia*, 69–70; Plato, *Lysis*, 214c–d.

This article discusses several cases of individuals of non-Roman background, either first generation ‘immigrants’ or people already established within the Roman society, whose only trait differentiating them from the rest of the society was their non-Roman descent. Among these cases are Stilicho, Richomeres, Bauto, Ellebichos, Modares and Arbogastes, examined through the perspective of letters addressed to them by Symmachus, Libanios, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, Sidonius Apollinaris and Auspicius of Toul.

The first three of these ‘barbarians’, Stilicho, Richomeres and Bauto, can be found as addressees of letters written by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus. Salzman proposed that the correspondence of Symmachus to these three reveals his strategy of implying his addressees’ lack of manners and culture, due to their origin, in order to establish his own superiority.³ However, the picture emerging from these letters is more nuanced. The epistolography of this member of the Roman senatorial aristocracy, urban prefect of 384/5 CE and consul of 391 CE, was collected in ten books, seven of which were selected, compiled and edited by Symmachus himself.⁴ The choice of addressees and letters served to illustrate Symmachus’ prominence by association with powerful friends, but also his mastery of the art of letter-writing and conducting *amicitia*. The very fact that an addressee could be found in Symmachus’ collection was an affirmation of his position within the Roman elite. The fourth book begins with letters to Stilicho, a *magister militum*, guardian of the young emperor Honorius and the *de facto* regent of the western part of the Roman Empire in the years 394–408 CE. At the same time, though it was rarely mentioned before his downfall, he was the son of a Vandal.⁵ The location and number of letters, 14 of 74 in the entire book, marks Stilicho as an important addressee of Symmachus.⁶ A friendship with the most powerful individual in the western part of the Empire of the time was a mark of honour and significance for Symmachus. Both the tone and subject of the letters leave little doubt about the balance of power between the two *amici*.

³ Salzman 2006.

⁴ Sogno: 2006, 61. The dating of the original publication of Symmachus’ correspondence is a debated issue, particularly in the case of the first book. For some recent contributions see: Kelly 2015, who argued the first book had been published as early as 381/382; Loughheed 2019, who placed it in the late 390s.

⁵ *PLRE*, 1: 853–858.

⁶ Loughheed 2019 proposed that the positioning of letters addressed to Stilicho in the middle of the collection reflected both recognition of him as one of the most important of Symmachus’ correspondents, but also a need to distance Symmachus from Stilicho due to the backlash to his involvement in proclamation of Gildo as the public enemy by the Senate (see below) by placing this relationship in a broader context of Symmachus’ network. That is an interesting hypothesis, but difficult to prove.

Symmachus sought Stilicho's help in rehabilitating his son-in-law, Nicomachus Flavianus the Younger, who was disgraced because of his late father's involvement with the losing side of the civil war between Theodosius and Eugenius.⁷ With Stilicho's support, Nicomachus was able to attend the inauguration of a consulship of Theodorus and thereby shook off the stigma of his father's involvement with the usurpation. Symmachus dutifully thanked and praised the *magister militum* for that favour.⁸ Stilicho was not the only recipient of letters on the matter of restoring Nicomachus Flavianus' prominence, so carefully tended to by Symmachus.⁹ He convinced Florentinus, the urban prefect of the time, to make use of Nicomachus in a delegation to the imperial court.¹⁰ Symmachus also used his network to save Nicomachus Flavianus from paying back the salary his father received for his service as praetorian prefect of Italy under the emperor Eugenius.¹¹ Stilicho and others received letters with thanks on facilitating Nicomachus Flavianus' attendance to celebrations of Theodorus' consulship. Besides Stilicho these were Minervius, *comes sacrarum largitionum*, Macrobius Longinianus, possibly *comes privatarum largitionum* at the time, brothers Petronius, a former vicar of Spain, and Patroinus, who were both influential figures at the imperial court, and the consul Theodorus himself.¹² Restoring Nicomachus Flavianus' position within the elite was a process that required a number of important contacts and favours. Stilicho was one of them, but their relationship was not limited to matters pertaining to Nicomachus Flavianus.

On another occasion Symmachus asked for Stilicho's assistance in obtaining Spanish horses for his son's praetorian games.¹³ He also presented the *magister militum* with pleas from other senators.¹⁴ But the relationship was not entirely one-sided, and Symmachus made sure the readers of his collection were aware of that. A case of reciprocity can be found in a letter informing Stilicho of the senate's support for the campaign against Gildo.¹⁵ The war against an African warlord, incited to rebellion against the court of Ravenna by its Constantinopolitan coun-

⁷ Symm. *Ep.* 4.2 and 4.4.

⁸ Symm. *Ep.* 4.6.

⁹ Sogno 2006: 80–83

¹⁰ Symmachus states so in *Ep.* 6.52 to Nicomachus. Nicomachus does not seem to find this idea appealing as Symmachus sent several letters (*Ep.* 6.56, 6.59, 6.63) in an attempt to convince him to take part in the delegation.

¹¹ A letter to Protadius 4.19 and to Florentinus 4.51.

¹² A letter to Minervius 4.39; to Theodorus 5.6; to Longinianus 7.95; to Petronius and Patroinus 7.102. For Longinianus' office see Jones 1973, 1: 412.

¹³ Symm. *Ep.* 4.7.

¹⁴ Symm. *Ep.* 4.9.

¹⁵ Symm. *Ep.* 4.5.

terpart, was a political project dear to Stilicho.¹⁶ One can imagine the ‘friendship’ between the two facilitated Symmachus’ involvement in obtaining the favourable result in the *Curia*.

Political business is not the only subject of Symmachus’ correspondence to Stilicho. Letters are also full of customary pleas for attention and epistolary responses from the powerful *magister militum*.¹⁷ Symmachus tried to maintain the friendship by providing news about his life and that of his family. He invited Stilicho for a visit and informed him of his son’s marriage.¹⁸ Stilicho is consistently praised throughout the letters: “I would continue even for longer, if **your noble modesty, equal to all your other virtues**, was not stopping me from the weighty praise [*Longius pergerem, nisi tuus nobilis pudor par virtutibus ceteris laudis onera vitaret*]”,¹⁹ “I leave it to your **lofty eminence**, always most revered by me [*sed eminentissimae et semper mihi reverendae sublimitati tuae expendendum relinquo*]”.²⁰ In all of this, there is no hint of Stilicho’s ancestry being recognised as a factor in his capability to be Symmachus’ *amicus*. Perhaps his letters would have painted a different picture if Symmachus had lived to see Stilicho’s downfall in 408 and the anti-barbarian propaganda employed to justify his removal and execution, which resonated throughout the works of Jerome, Orosius and Philostorgios.²¹ It appears Symmachus was ready to erase the names of his correspondents that fell out of grace, though he still included the letters he exchanged with them in his collection.²² But at this point in time Stilicho was still a powerful Roman statesman, not a traitor whose ‘barbarian’ origin should be deemed a source of his infidelity.

A different power dynamic and attitude emerges from Symmachus’ letters to two other Roman commanders of ‘barbarian’ background. Richomeres and Bauto, both Franks, and like Stilicho *magistri militum* in Roman service, were recipients of letters that strongly implied their cultural inferiority.²³ They were chastised for failing to send Symmachus customary gifts to celebrate their consulships (384 and 385 CE). The urban prefect “praised” Richomeres for the “affection” shown to him by Richomeres’ singling him out from all others by sending him a delayed gift, thereby proving that it was an expression of their friendship rather than duty:

¹⁶ For more details on the political conflict between Ravenna and Constantinople that led to this development, see Oost 1962.

¹⁷ Symm. *Ep.* 4.10 and 4.11.

¹⁸ Symm. *Ep.* 4.13 and 4.14.

¹⁹ Symm. *Ep.* 4.12.

²⁰ Symm. *Ep.* 4.8.

²¹ Oros. 7.38.1–6; Jer. *Ep.* 123.16; Philost. *HE* 12.1–2.

²² Bonney 1975; Seeck 1883: XXIII no. 43.

²³ Salzman 2006.

One may possibly reckon that the gift, which the last year's consul delivered, was late: I see that for me and others, who live afar, it was delayed until this moment in time because of trust in friendship [*amicitiae fiducia*], in fact, those who you were unable to remember for that long, were satisfied straightaway. [...] Consequently I will see, if anyone believes that he was put after the others in order or in honour; I judge that I was placed before others because of pure affection [*pura adfectione*]. Nor is one enough of a friend [*amicus*] to whom some customary practice is granted at once; of greater honour is such composure, which reckons it not a disgraceful thing, if it is withheld from close friends for some time. On that account I wish you would believe that even the delay itself was sweet to me. Thus I judge, thus I understand, these things, which were according to custom sent to the others a short time ago, were saved for me out of love [*nobis amore servata*].²⁴

In the same manner he excused Bauto, blaming the gaffe on unnamed enemies who attempted to spoil their friendship:

No suspicion falls on you that you could be thought to deliberately neglect the friendship [*amicitiae neglegens*]. [...] On that account I did not think earlier that I was excluded from the number of those upon whom you bestowed consular gift at the beginning of the year, and currently I believe I was given more than the others. For what a general offering gave to them, a special care restored to us. In this regard I should not to be indignant at those who wanted to deprive me of previous honours. In fact, it may have not happened to me otherwise that I received twice what another's deceit had taken away. [...] Whether it had been done by mistake or evil intent, you made it known to all not to make cunning plans for the destruction of friendships [*ad destruendas amicitias*] any more, which they see growing because of their plots.²⁵

In both cases, it is apparent that Symmachus is establishing his cultural superiority on two levels: firstly, by pointing out the *faux pas* and secondly by 'graciously' turning the errors of his *amici* into expressions of consideration and friendship. As Michele Renee Salzman pointed out, Symmachus established himself as an *arbiter amicitiae*.²⁶ By educating his less civilised friends on manners, he was effectively 'romanising' them and elevating them, though not to an equal status. Perhaps the reason Richomerus and Bauto are treated differently than Stilicho, besides their lesser positions in the Roman hierarchy, is because unlike him they are 'immigrants'. Richomerus was a recipient of no fewer letters than Stilicho (16), and like him was asked for favours, namely to intervene in the removal of Nicomachus Flavianus the Younger from his post of proconsul in the province of Asia, after he unjustly ordered the flogging of a decurion.²⁷ Symmachus facilitated

²⁴ Symm. *Ep.* 3.59.

²⁵ Symm. *Ep.* 4.15.

²⁶ Salzman 2006.

²⁷ Symm. *Ep.* 3.69.

the *amicitia* of Richomerus and Nicomachus Flavianus the Elder, recommended a former subordinate from the time of his urban prefecture, and demanded more of Richomerus' letters.²⁸ Pellizzari took this and the sheer number of letters to Richomerus as an indication of Symmachus' acceptance of him as a member of same elite, based also in shared religious views, much like in Richomerus' relationship with Libanios.²⁹ However, the common religious identity is not a subject of Symmachus' letters in the manner we are going to observe in Libanios' correspondence. More importantly, most of the correspondence to Richomerus is dated as later than 385 CE (11).³⁰ The balance of power in *amicitia* between Richomerus and Symmachus at this point in time is visibly shaped differently than that in the case of Stilicho, tilted in Symmachus' favour.

Was the ethnicity a factor? Perhaps Richomerus is to be identified with the father of a Frankish king, Theodemer. According to Gregory of Tours, Theodemer was murdered with his mother, Ascula, at the beginning of the 5th century.³¹ The bishop of Tours had little to say on Theodemer besides this, but, if that familial connection is correctly identified, it would signify that Richomerus, even though achieving high ranks in the Empire, still retained close links to the frontier zone, which allowed his son to rise to prominence and military leadership, later perceived as Frankish kingship. Perhaps these links singled him out as more 'barbarian', and thereby justified Symmachus' sense of superiority. On the other hand, Bauto seems to have integrated well within the imperial elites, to the point where his daughter Eudoxia became a wife of the emperor Arcadius and an empress.³²

What the two had in common was the year of receiving chastising letters (385 CE) and the fact that at the time they both served in the East, having little influence in the West, where Symmachus' interests lied. The attitude towards them may have also been a function of Symmachus' dissatisfaction with the imperial elite that led him to resign from his position of *praefectus urbi*. Unlike in later case of Stilicho, Symmachus could afford to chastise both. Richomerus and Bauto were subjected to Symmachus' allusions about their lack of manners and barbarism. Even if worthy of *amicitia* due to their rank, they were not to be treated as equals. In case of Richomerus this changed later, when he first campaigned in Italy against the emperor Magnus Maximus, supported by Symmachus, and stayed there after Theodosius' victory. It is no coincidence that majority of Symmachus' letters to Richomerus are dated to that period. The senator remembered about his

²⁸ For the friendship of Richomerus and Flavianus see Symm. *Ep.* 3.66; for the recommendation, see 3.67; for requests for letters, see 3.54; 3.56; 3.60; 3.61; 3.64; 3.68.

²⁹ Pellizzari 2011: 205–206.

³⁰ Symm. *Ep.* 3.54; 3.55; 3.56; 3.57; 3.60; 3.62; 3.63; 3.64; 3.67; 3.68.

³¹ Greg. Tur. *LH* 2.9.

³² Philost. *HE* 11.6.

amicus in the Theodosius' service, when he needed to secure his relationship with the victorious side.

Elite members of the Roman military of barbarian background were not the only ones Symmachus was capable of chastising on the grounds of breaks of etiquette.³³ Other addressees of his letters suffered similar treatment. In a letter to Ambrose he pointed out bishop's break of protocol – sending two men to Symmachus with just a single letter of recommendation rather than two separate ones.³⁴ An anonymous senator was threatened by³⁵ Symmachus with the cessation of their friendship with the “subtlety of the Godfather”, as Matthews put it, for considering ending a betrothal between senator's daughter and Herculus, one of Symmachus' friends.³⁵ Yet another of his friends and a recipient of 7 other letters – Eusignius, a proconsul of Africa (383 CE) and praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyria (386–387 CE) – was challenged on claims he made in regards to a land dispute involving Nicomachus Flavianus sometime before 397 CE. Although Symmachus claimed that he kept himself from sending letters which were against the *ius amicitiae*, he nevertheless castigated Eusignius on the shortcomings of his letters and approach to friendship.³⁶ It seems then that Bauto and Richomerus, were subject to the same tactic of establishing superiority by seizing the position of *arbiter amicitiae* as other Symmachus' *amici*, who had Roman background. This does not exclude a possibility that the ‘barbarians’ discussed here were treated this way because their origin made them an easy target for chastisement on etiquette. Symmachus used a tool established within the conventions of the epistolary *amicitia* regardless of his addressees' origin, but reasons for employing it in the first place varied depending on the case. It may very well be that a barbarian origin was one of the factors in it, but the more significant matter here is that they were subject to the same conventional treatment as other members of the elite. Even by subtly chastising Bauto and Richomerus, Symmachus was still recognising them as members of the same elite, though not necessary of the same status.

Stressing the lack of manners and inferiority of the new members of the elites ensured a sense of control and power for the old elite, a universal mechanism throughout history. Yet its impact on the political and social standing of the victims is rather doubtful. Symmachus could appear superior to the readers of his letters, but without Richomerus' and Bauto's responses, there is little evidence for their concern in the entire matter. If the number of letters sent by Symmachus

³³ Matthews 1986.

³⁴ *Symm. Ep.* 3.32; Matthews 1986: 173–174.

³⁵ *Symm. Ep.* 9.43; Matthews 1986: 168.

³⁶ *Symm. Ep.* 4.71: *itaque litteras contra ius amicitiae ad eum missas repressi, ne amantem tui dolor iustus offenderet*. Matthews 1986: 168–169.

as requests for contact and attention are any indication, one can imagine that the subtle literary games of a senatorial aristocrat spending time at his landed estates were of negligible interest to military commanders occupied with their state duties, though as the relationships of Richomerus and Ellebichos with Libanios show, military men could make use even of contacts with local municipal elites. It is also clear from the evidence that Symmachus dared to establish himself as a superior *arbiter amicitiae*, when his correspondent was either of an inferior station or too far away to be of an immediate use to him.

The correspondence of a member of the Antiochene civic elite illuminates further the dynamic between the representatives of the old elite and the rising stars of the military one. Richomerus' service in the eastern Mediterranean earned him *amici* among the Greek-speaking elite. The Roman commander became a φίλος of Libanios, the head rhetorician of Antioch.³⁷ Being an addressee of merely four letters out of a staggering number of 1544 (though it should be noted that only 273 of these belong to the period 388–393 CE, in which the letters to Richomerus were written) does not make him the most prominent in the corpus documenting Libanios' vast network, but it certainly attests him belonging to it.³⁸ Besides letters, the rhetorician mentioned Richomerus in one of his orations, describing him as a pious man, an adherent of the traditional religion, who invited Libanios to celebrate his consulship.³⁹ The themes of Libanios' letters are akin to those in Symmachus' correspondence, with the exception of the Antiochene making no attempts to establish his cultural superiority. The courtesies opening the first letter concentrate on the first meeting that led to the friendship and honours Libanios enjoyed from Richomerus from then on:

I remember that day when I first met you, and the brief but elevating conversation we enjoyed, and I shall remember it all my life and after. And I remember also the honours [τιμῶν] in your time of service here, when I came to enjoy more prestige [λαμπρότερος] from you on both counts.⁴⁰

This and flatteries about Richomerus' victories serve as a pretext to recommend to him envoys sent by the city and a request for a favourable hearing of their pleas.⁴¹ The letter does not mention which matter the Antiochenes brought to Richomerus' attention, but it seems probable that it had to do with his station as the *magister militum per Orientem*. The city was under Richomerus' military authority. It could be speculated that Antiochene *curiales* appealed to the *magister militum* about the billeting and recruitment of soldiers, or on matters concerning veterans.

³⁷ Janiszewski, Stebnicka, and Szabat 2015: 214–216.

³⁸ Lib. *Ep.* 866, 972, 1007 and 1024. Janiszewski, Stebnicka, Szabat 2015: 215.

³⁹ Lib. *Or.* 1.219–220.

⁴⁰ Lib. *Ep.* 866, trans. Norman 1992.

⁴¹ Lib. *Ep.* 866.

The other possibility is that it was for the sake of seeking his patronage at court in other affairs.⁴²

The themes of the first meeting, Richomeres' military achievements and Antioch, are again repeated in another letter.⁴³ Its main aim seems to be to praise Richomeres and the emperor Theodosius for quelling the usurpation of Maximus in the West, but at the same time it reminded the *magister militum* of the continued loyalty of Antioch, especially after Rome's betrayal. Another letter follows the same set of conventions, mentioning Libanios' and Antioch's fondness for Richomeres and loyalty to the emperor.⁴⁴ But this time the rhetorician aimed to promote Palladius, a *comes Orientis* and Richomeres' subordinate, for his service in the city. Libanios' letters have a standard set of topics: friendship, news, asking for favours, and bringing up matters of other 'friends'. There is no trace of treating Richomeres any differently from the other addressees of Libanios. He is an influential military man; his origin is of no interest to his correspondent. The only contrast Libanios set between himself and Richomeres is that of their professions:

Well, rumour used to bring you some items of news about me, that I deliver and compose my orations, that I sit surrounded by pupils who are either persuaded or forced to learn something of my art. But yours is a career of fame, renown, and greatness, of military commands, battles, victories, the suppression of tyranny, and the rescue of free men from slavery, as our emperor and yourself hasten to all deeds of high endeavour, and by wisdom or by main force win the day. Such conduct has received its meed of praise, and does and will do more; and the reward for your successes is this, just as Homer bestowed it on the deeds of those who went with Agamemnon.⁴⁵

Yet this contrast serves to glorify Richomeres and his deeds, rather than set a division between him and Libanios. Compared to another commander, but of Roman background, and Libanios' correspondent, Promotus, Richomeres is treated with much more affection.⁴⁶ Though it may be noted that Libanios requested from Promotus a report on Theodosius' campaign against Magnus Maximus.⁴⁷ Even though Richomeres also participated in it sharing command with Promotus and others, Libanios did not turn to him in his search for a material that he could then use for his oration on that subject. Perhaps that indicates Libanios' assumptions about Richomeres literary interests and competence.

⁴² Cancik, Salazar, Schneider 2006: 152–153.

⁴³ Lib. *Ep.* 972.

⁴⁴ Lib. *Ep.* 1024.

⁴⁵ Lib. *Ep.* 972; trans. Norman 1992.

⁴⁶ Pellizzari 2011: 209–210.

⁴⁷ Lib. *Ep.* 867.

The other identity that is brought up in their correspondence and in the abovementioned oration is a religious one, which unifies the two. The Antiochene made several references to their common religion. In his oration it is Richomerēs' defining characteristic, when he is introduced: "*magister militum* Richomerēs, a man devoted both to sanctity and gods [Ῥιχομήρης στρατηγός, ἱεροῖς τε καὶ θεοῖς προσκείμενος ἄνθρωπος]".⁴⁸ In the first of the letters to the mighty commander, Libanios is offering his powerful ancient prayers [εὐχαὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ γήρως ἰσχὺν ἔχουσαι] in exchange for Richomerēs granting him his friendship.⁴⁹ In another letter Libanios described Richomerēs' friendship as the greatest blessing bestowed by the gods.⁵⁰ In the last of the letters written to his friend, inviting him for a visit to Daphne, Libanios praised the city as one beloved by Apollo and famous for its temples devoted to the gods.⁵¹ For Libanios, shared religious identity is another element connecting him to Richomerēs and one of the reasons for their φιλία. It is significant that even though Symmachus also shared it with Richomerēs, he did not use it in any capacity in his discourse of *amicitia*. Aiming to create distance and to imply Richomerēs' cultural inferiority, he ignored this commonality.

There were other 'northern barbarians' amongst Libanios' φίλοι. The Antiochene rhetor kept in contact with Victor, a Sarmatian and *magister equitum*, Teutomerēs, a *protector domesticus*, and *magister militum* Ellebichos.⁵² Relation with the last one is particularly interesting and have been subject to a thorough study by McLaughlin.⁵³ The correspondence to Victor and Teutomerēs falls to what is considered to be the first and most influential period of Libanios' epistolary activity in 50s and 60s of the fourth century, while that to Ellebichos and Richomerēs is firmly set at the time when Libanios' network and activity waned in the 80s and 90s.⁵⁴ Yet correspondence with Ellebichos and Richomerēs marks them as the more significant for Libanios, not just because it constitutes a greater share of letters from the second period (over 3%) than the percentage of letters sent to any 'barbarian' military officials, including those of Persian and other eastern origins, in the first period (a meagre 0.5%) or to military officials in general in the entire corpus (less than 2%), but also because of its contents.⁵⁵ Assuming surviving letters reflect Libanios' network and its usage more or less adequately, this rise in the later period might have to do either with personal change in Libanios' attitude towards

⁴⁸ Lib. *Or.* 1.219.

⁴⁹ Lib. *Ep.* 866.2.

⁵⁰ Lib. *Ep.* 972.1.

⁵¹ Lib. *Ep.* 1024.3–4.

⁵² *PLRE*, 1: for Victor see 957–958; for Teutomerēs possibly to be identified with Tautomedes see 886 and 880; for Ellebichos see 277–278.

⁵³ McLaughlin 2014.

⁵⁴ Bradbury 2014: 220.

⁵⁵ For that last percentage see McLaughlin 2014: 260.

his 'barbarian' φίλοι or mark rise in prominence and recognition of military officers of 'barbarian' origin in the post-Adrianople empire. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that numbers of letters in question are relatively small and the variation may be coincidental.

Before we delve into the correspondence with Ellebichos, it is worthwhile to consider who he was. The very first time he is attested, Ellebichos is a *comes* and *magister utriusque militiae* in an imperial instruction on how to treat traducers addressed to him in 383 CE.⁵⁶ He held command in the east, at that time constructing a mansion and baths in Antioch. He was appointed to investigate the riots in Antioch and eventually recalled to Constantinople in 388 CE and remained a powerful member of the elite.⁵⁷ He probably owned a major property in Constantinople since a district of the city was named seemingly after him – τὰ Ἐλεβίχου.⁵⁸

According to Schönfeld his name was Gothic.⁵⁹ Ἐλλέβιχος' is another variant of the name recorded in Greek as Ἀλάβιχος', which can be written in Latin as 'Alavivus'. There is incidentally an individual of that name, who disappears in our sources a couple years before Ellebichos emerges as a high-ranking military commander in Roman service. That Alavivus was one of two Tervingi leaders in 376 CE. Together with Fritigern, he obtained a permission to cross the Danube into the Roman territory. At the beginning of 377 CE, Alavivus and Fritigern were invited by the Roman commander Lupicinus to dinner. After a fight broke out between Romans and Gothic troops, Lupicinus ordered the murder of their bodyguard and captured both, only to release Fritigern. Alavivus is never mentioned again by Ammianus, who was the only source of the story.⁶⁰

Is it possible that a Tervingi chief captured in 377 CE by Romans became *magister militum per Orientem* in 383 CE? A case of an Alamannic king Vodomarius is instructive here. He was taken prisoner by emperor Julian and sent to Spain in 361 CE, effectively losing his position to his son. However, sometime after that he became *dux Phoenices*, held command in Valens' war against the usurper Procopius and continued to serve as Roman military commander at the Persian border, even after his son's death.⁶¹ A similar career may have been Alavivus' lot, after a period of imprisonment, in the aftermath of the battle of Adrianople and the peace agree-

⁵⁶ CTh. 9.39.1 as Hellebicus.

⁵⁷ PLRE, 1: 277–278.

⁵⁸ Janin 1950: 323–324; Lib. Or. 42.45 criticised Ellebichos for using his wealth to build golden houses. Given context of the speech pertaining to the matter of Thalassios' candidacy for the senate in Constantinople it is likely Libanios meant Ellebichos' properties in that city.

⁵⁹ Schönfeld 1911: 11–12.

⁶⁰ Amm. 31.4.1 and 8; 31.5.5–7; Heather 1991: 132–133 and 137; Lee 2009: 8.

⁶¹ PLRE, 1: 928–929.

ment between the emperor Theodosius and Goths in 382 CE.⁶² Like Vodomarius, Alavivus would have lost his position amongst the Tervingi, but remained an asset due to his military skills as well as any contacts he may have retained. Like Vodomarius he would be posted far away, in a region where his old loyalties did not interfere with his new one – the Persian border certainly suited such requirement and it is this region that Ellebichos operated in.

Regardless whether *magister militum* Ellebichos is to be identified with the Tervingi chief Alavivus, his barbarian origin and his relationship with Libanios is undisputed. Surprisingly for such relations it was initiated by Ellebichos in 385 CE or so claims Libanios, whose response survives as the second letter in his epistolary corpus.⁶³ Libanios rejoiced at Ellebichos' offer of friendship, which he had not expected after just a brief meeting with the *magister militum*. As McLaughlin pointed out it is a rare case where we see a Roman military official of 'barbarian' origin not only participating in the forms of Graeco-Roman high culture but also initiating a relationship within its convention.⁶⁴ Ellebichos was not the first 'barbarian' military man to seek out and actively engage in epistolary form of friendship with Libanios. Teutomeres wrote to Libanios asking for letters from him.⁶⁵ Yet unlike in this case where only one letter written in 363/364 CE survived to attest the friendship, the *φιλία* of Libanios and Ellebichos continued for years with at least four other letters, an oration dedicated to Ellebichos in thanks for what Libanios presented as lenient treatment of Antioch and its curial council during the investigation into the riot of 387 CE, as well as a panegyric that did not survive.⁶⁶

Contents of remaining letters show no extraordinary elements of this relationship. In one of the three letters sent in 388 CE Libanios asked Ellebichos to assist one of his former students, Eusebios, in his bid for a membership in the Constantinopolitan senate.⁶⁷ In another Libanios congratulated Ellebichos on the success and honours he received at the imperial court and recommended to him envoys from Antioch referring to them in an emotional manner – as Libanios' own children [τῶν πρόσβρων παίδων ὄντων ἐμῶν].⁶⁸ Usage of such emotional phrases

⁶² The nature of that event is a disputed one. Heather 1991: 158–166, is in favour of a treaty agreed upon by the Empire on one side and Goths on the other, whereas Halsall 2007: 180–185, interprets it as a series of surrenders of various Gothic groups rather than a negotiated agreement between just two parties.

⁶³ Lib. *Ep.* 2.

⁶⁴ McLaughlin 2014: 254, 256 and 266.

⁶⁵ Lib. *Ep.* 1117.

⁶⁶ Lib. *Ep.* 868, 884, 898, 925 and *Or.* 22; Panegyric is mentioned in *Or.* 1.232; For insight into the riot and its representation in literary sources see French 1998.

⁶⁷ Lib. *Ep.* 884.

⁶⁸ Lib. *Ep.* 868.

presupposes Libanios' conviction that the relationship with Ellebichos is intimate enough for them to work. Yet another letter attests shared networks of Ellebichos and Libanios by mentioning a military man stationed in Thrace, Annanios, who carried letters from Ellebichos and Saturninus on his visit to Antioch, as well as Ellebichos' projects in the city, such as baths.⁶⁹

The final letter seems to mark the end to the cordial relationship between Ellebichos and Libanios, as the latter held against the former his lack of intervention in the matter of accepting Libanios' acquaintance, Thalassios, to the Senate of Constantinople. In the letter Libanios accused Ellebichos of staying silent when others opposed Thalassios' bid.⁷⁰ What the rhetorician had not formulated in the letter, he expressed in an oration for Thalassios to emperor Theodosius. He did not mention Ellebichos by name, but he seems to be the only individual involved in the matter, who could be described as 'Gaison's son'.⁷¹ By affiliating Ellebichos with a Roman soldier of barbarian origin, who killed emperor Constans, Libanios made Ellebichos' ethnic background salient, implying that like his 'father' he is a threat to the emperor. McLaughlin pointed it out as symptomatic that this ethnic prejudice did not make into letters addressed by Libanios to Ellebichos.⁷² Outwardly attacking a friend was not permitted by conventions of epistolary *φιλία*, even in a critical letter. But orations had no such limits and seemingly Libanios was ready to smear his former friend within that set of conventions for the sake of Thalassios. Libanios' and Ellebichos' relationship demonstrates constraints of studying the saliency of ethnicity within the discourse of *amicitia* and *φιλία*. Yet, as the next instance shows, there were ways in which ethnic identity could be brought up within this discourse.

Such a case of *φιλία* between a Roman and a 'barbarian' can be found in the letters of Gregory of Nazianzus. The bishop of Constantinople (380–381 CE) wrote two letters to Modares, a *magister militum* and a member of a Gothic royal family, who entered Roman service and quickly proved his worth to the emperor Theodosius, by inflicting a crushing defeat on a Gothic warband in Thrace.⁷³ Gregory forged links of *φιλία* with Modares and employed them to commend a military man Theodor to the commander:

For long have I yearned to speak with your dignity [σου τὴν τιμότητα], and thanks be given to God for the opportunity to do it. Thinking on how to repay the one entrusted with the letter for you, I found it best to commend him to your authority.

⁶⁹ Lib. *Ep.* 898 to Ellebichos and 899 to Saturninus.

⁷⁰ Lib. *Ep.* 925: οὐ συνεπέθου μὲν οὖν, οὐκ ἐβόησας δέ, τῇ σιγῇ δὲ ἡδίκεις. εἰ γάρ, ὥς ἐπίστασαι καλῶς, ἐμέ τε καὶ Θαλάσσιον ἐβόησας, ἀπείχοντ' ἂν ἡμῶν οἱ νῦν βάλλοντες· νῦν δὲ οὐδὲν ἦν τὸ κωλύον.

⁷¹ Lib. *Or.* 42.45; McLaughlin 2014: 274.

⁷² McLaughlin 2014: 274–275.

⁷³ Zos. 4.25.2.

Honour him pleasantly partly for my sake, he is mine and yours, my householder, your soldier, I speak now about Theodor who makes his way from me to you, let him feel the reverence [τῆς τιμῆς], that you always honoured me with and still honour me now.⁷⁴

But as a *magister militum* operating in the region neighbouring the capital, Modares' value as a friend went beyond facilitating the careers of Gregory's protégés. He also had significant influence over non-military matters in Constantinople, and it is in this capacity that Gregory encouraged Modares to act:

To us at least you are a kinsman [συγγενῆς] and a relative [οἰκεῖος] and I could say you are everything. For piety joined us together and virtue of glory, we saw well you are showing clearly that Hellenism and barbarism is a difference of bodies, not souls [ὅτι τὸ ἑλληνικὸν καὶ τὸ βάρβαρον σωμαίων, οὐ ψυχῶν ἐστὶ διαφορά], a separation of places, but not customs and choices [καὶ τόπων διάστασις, ἀλλ' οὐ τρόπων οὐδὲ προαιρέσεων]. May there be many among our race [γένος] to imitate your conduct, and everything would go splendidly for us indeed, in both public and private matters. I call upon you, as you put down a war abroad by your right hand and wit, nobly making a stand for us; in this way resolve our matter, as much as is up to you; exert yourself so that the now assembled bishops achieve a peaceful solution. For indeed coming together often, not even finding the end of the evil, but always adding to disorders [more] disorders is a greater dishonour, and you know it yourself.⁷⁵

The Gothic *magister militum* was to intervene and try to reconcile the warring bishops at the council convened in 382 CE in Constantinople by the emperor Theodosius as a continuation of his efforts to forge a new theological consensus in the trinitarian controversy. By alluding to Modares' military experience in ending conflicts as the only way that could bring peace between bishops, Gregory stressed the dramatic character of the council. However, in his letter to the *magister militum* we also find the discourse of φιλία and the relevance of Modares' ethnicity. The praises for his virtues are made even more meaningful, precisely because of his 'barbarian' ethnicity. Gregory's and Modares' souls are unified thanks to the piety and virtue of Modares, even if there is an innate difference between a barbarian and a Hellene. The very usage of an opposition of 'barbarian' – 'Hellene', synonymous with the dichotomy between uncivilised and civilised, confirms the relevance of Modares' non-Roman ethnic identity, even if it is expressed in affirmative terms towards the *magister militum* himself. Modares is a powerful commander in the Roman military and an influential friend to Gregory, but he remains a 'barbarian' and outsider on some level. It is a model of limited integration in which an individual achieves a high position in the hierarchy, participates in the social networks and cultural activities expressing them, but nevertheless remains labelled as

⁷⁴ Greg. Naz. Ep. 137.

⁷⁵ Greg. Naz. Ep. 136.

an outsider. For Gregory it does not seem to be a matter of establishing his superiority, as in the case of Symmachus, but simply a rhetorical point that he believed is going to convince his addressee, who would be made to feel appreciated as “one of the good barbarians”.

Gregory’s rhetorical point is even more visible when set against two other cases of military commanders of barbarian background, who were addressees of bishop’s letters: Victor and Ellebichos. The relations between Gregory and the former official seem to mirror those with Modares. Victor is asked to intervene in the same church council as Modares and to inspire others to do so.⁷⁶ It is part of Gregory’s concentrated effort, as another military commander, Saturninus, also receives a letter on the matter.⁷⁷ Like Modares, Victor is asked to favour an individual recommended by Gregory – Hyperechios.⁷⁸ Yet there is no indication of a difference or an ethnic boundary between the two in either of letters, even if it was to symbolically make their relation stronger. On the contrary, it opens with conventional excuses for not writing letters often enough and a request for correspondence from the recipient.⁷⁹ The second one containing the recommendation praises the victories of Victor, both in battle and in kindness, but besides the reference to Victor’s military background there is nothing to set a boundary between them.⁸⁰

Gregory’s letter of 383 CE to Ellebichos, a correspondent of the abovementioned Libanios, deals in similar matters. In a message addressed to then *magister militum per Orientem*, Gregory asked for a favour.⁸¹ After the conventional opening in which Gregory mourns the loss which he inferred due to his illness – being unable to meet his friend in person – the bishop cleverly played on another convention characteristic of discourse of *amicitia* and *φιλία*. The author mentioned how a gift accompanying the letter would be in place and in fact he sends one – the lector Mamant. As it happens this “gift’s” father was a soldier and because of that

⁷⁶ Greg. Naz. Ep. 133: Ἐπειδὴ δὲ πάλιν σύνοδος, ἀγὼν πάλιν, καὶ τοῦτο ἐν μέσοις ἔχθοις πάντα τηροῦσιν ἐπιμελῶς τὰ ἡμέτερα, δὸς χεῖρα τῇ κοινῇ καταστάσει, ὡς μέρος ὢν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας οὐ τὸ φανulότατον, καὶ μὴ περιόλης πάντα καταναλωθέντα τῷ ἐμπρησμῷ τῷ νῦν περιέχοντι τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.

⁷⁷ Greg. Naz. Ep. 132.

⁷⁸ Greg. Naz. Ep. 134.

⁷⁹ Greg. Naz. Ep. 133: Οὐχ ὅτι νῦν γράφομεν, τολμηροί, ἀλλ’ ὅτι μὴ τάχιον, ὀκνηροί, μάλλον δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦτο· οὐ γὰρ εὐποροῦμεν δι’ ὧν ἐπιστελοῦμεν, καίτοι γε πῶς οἶει τοῦτο ποθοῦντες, ἐν ἀγρῷ πόρρω που τῆς μονῆς διατρίβοντες κάκει τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι. (2) Νῦν δέ, ἡνίκα καιρός, καὶ προσφθεγγόμεθά σε καὶ ἀξιοῦμεν ἦν παροῦσιν ἡμῖν τιμὴν ἐχαρίζου, ταύτην καὶ ἀποῦσι χαρίζεσθαι, καὶ μὴ διὰ γραμμάτων ὀκνεῖν παραμυθεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς σφόδρα τῷ χωρισμῷ κάμνοντα.

⁸⁰ Greg. Naz. Ep. 134: Νικῶν γὰρ τοῖς ὅπλοις τοὺς πολεμίους, ἕως ἐξῆν, καὶ νῦν πάντας νικᾷς χρηστότητι.

⁸¹ Greg. Naz. Ep. 225.

Mamant is liable for military service.⁸² The purpose of the letter is clearly stated – Ellebichos should grant Mamant an exemption from military service, allowing him to continue his service to God, which would certainly gain *magister militum* divine favour in war matters.⁸³

The playful reference to the gift-giving – a standard convention of epistolography and *φιλία* – inferred familiarity of it by Ellebichos. Gregory recognised military commander not just as a member of the same elite, but one that is learned enough to appreciate a creative use of the convention. Judging by the relationship between Libanios and Ellebichos, discussed above, it was not an unfounded presumption. Modares' case seems to be a clear exception, an experiment at crossing the boundaries of convention to stress the boundary of ethnicity.

The peculiarity of Gregory's letter to Modares is even more visible when compared to letters of Gregory's friend, Basil of Caesarea, a bishop, who shared his education as well as the social position of a member of a local elite. Just like Gregory he engaged in *φιλία* with Roman commanders of barbarian background. Three letters to two such addressees are preserved. One of these addressees, Victor, was also a recipient of letters from Gregory. The two letters he received from Basil in 373 CE bear little information besides courtesies.⁸⁴ Victor was thanked for his involvement in the church matters and anticipation of Basil's request in this regard.⁸⁵ There is hardly any indication of a differing treatment based on Victor's Sarmatian ethnicity.

Similarly, the letter sent to Arinthaëus (a Gothic name), a *magister peditum* 366–378 CE and consul of 372 CE, in 374 CE bears no evidence of any ethnic bias.⁸⁶ Arinthaëus was asked by Basil to intervene on behalf of an unnamed letter holder accused of an unspecified charge.⁸⁷ Only this letter to Arinthaëus survives, but judging by the fact that Basil was also in contact with this Roman commander's wife after his death in 378 CE, we may infer that their relationship continued throughout these years. In a letter of consolation to Arinthaëus' wife Basil

⁸² For this legal requirement of military service see Elton 1996: 128–129.

⁸³ Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 225: 'Επει δὲ καὶ δωροφορεῖν ἔδει τι, τοῦτο προσφέροντες, Μάμαντα τὸν ἀναγνώστην, ὄντα μὲν ἀπὸ στρατιώτου πατρός, καθιερωθέντα δὲ τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τὸν τρόπον. Ἄφες τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ συναριθμήσης τοῖς πλάνησι, καὶ δὸς ἐγγραφὸν τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἵνα μὴδὲ ὑπ' ἄλλων ἐπηρεάζεται. Δώσεις γὰρ σεαυτῷ δεξιὰς τὰς τοῦ πολέμου καὶ τῆς στρατηγίας ἐλπίδας.

⁸⁴ Bas. *Ep.* 152 and 153.

⁸⁵ Bas. *Ep.* 152: ὑπὲρ δὲ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας προέλαβες ἡμῶν τὰς παρακλήσεις, πάντα ποιήσας ὅσα ἂν ἡμεῖς ἐπεζητήσαμεν.

⁸⁶ Bas. *Ep.* 179; For Arinthaëus' name see Schönfeld 1911: 26; For his career see *PLRE*, 1: 102–103.

⁸⁷ Bas. *Ep.* 179: διὸ θαρρούντως πρεσβεύομεν ὑπὲρ ἀνδρὸς λαμπροῦ μὲν ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐκ προγόνων, πλείονος δὲ δι' ἑαυτὸν τιμῆς καὶ αἰδοῦς ἀξίου διὰ τὴν ἐνυπάρχουσαν αὐτῷ τῶν τρόπων ἡμερότητα· ὥστε σε παρακληθέντα ὑφ' ἡμῶν παραστῆναι αὐτῷ ἀγωνιζομένῳ δίκην, τῆς μὲν ἀληθείας ἕνεκεν εὐκαταφρόνητον, ἐναγώνιον δὲ ἄλλως διὰ τὸ τῆς συκοφαντίας βαρὺ.

described him as an excellent man whose strength of body rivalled the virtue of his soul.⁸⁸ The praise of Arinthaëus' military prowess is one of the themes of the letter, but there is no mention of his non-Roman ancestry.

Do patterns of *amicitia* between members of local elites and Roman commanders of barbarian background change in the 5th century with the disappearance of the hierarchies of power of the Roman Empire that made these relationships with the latter so valuable to the former? In the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Clermont, we can see the world of the local elites in Roman Gaul, caught between the weakening imperial power and increasingly aggressive and assertive warlords, who until recently had been established Roman commanders of both Roman and non-Roman origin. It is within such local networks that another 'barbarian' is found. In a letter from 477 CE, Sidonius replied to a request for exegetic advice that he politely refused to give, counselling his addressee to seek out bishops closer to his seat of Trier:

[...] in the third place comes your urbanity [*urbanitas*] which leads you to make a most amusing profession of clumsiness when as a matter of fact you have drunk deep from the spring of Roman eloquence and, dwelling by the Moselle, you speak the true Latin of the Tiber: you are intimate with the barbarians but are innocent of barbarisms [*sic barbarorum familiaris, quod tamen nescius barbarismorum*], and are equal in tongue, as also in strength of arm, to the leaders of old, I mean those who were wont to handle the pen no less than the sword. Thus, the splendour of the Roman speech, if it still exists anywhere, has survived in you, though it has long been wiped out from the Belgian and Rhenic lands: with you and your eloquence surviving, even though Roman law has ceased at our border, the Roman speech does not falter. For this reason, as I reciprocate your greeting, I rejoice greatly that at any rate in your illustrious breast there have remained traces of our vanishing culture. If you extend these by constant reading you will discover for yourself as each day passes that the educated are no less superior to the unlettered than men are to beasts.⁸⁹

The bishop of Clermont praised the qualities shown by the letter: esteem, modesty and city manners. Especially the last of the mentioned traits attracts attention, as it is not just any city that the addressee lives according to the manner of. It is the city – Rome. Although acquainted with barbarians, he is not tainted by their ways, retaining qualities of an ideal Roman military man and cultural prowess, therefore embodying all that remains of the glory of Rome in the regions no longer under the imperial rule. This last beacon of *romanitas* in the sea of barbarism is Arbogastes, comes of Trier and the descendant of a *magister peditum* of the same

⁸⁸ Bas. *Ep.* 269: Καλὸς μὲν οὖν καὶ μέγας ὁ θαυμαστός ἐκεῖνος, καὶ ἐφάμιλλος τῇ ρώμῃ τοῦ σώματος τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετὴν.

⁸⁹ Sid. *Ap. Ep.* 4.17 trans. Anderson 1936: 2.

name, a Frank who died fighting in a civil war against the emperor Theodosius, at the end of the 4th century.⁹⁰

The younger Arbogastes seemingly came to control the city of Trier and the neighbouring area as a *comes*, a title that may have been bestowed by a Roman authority or simply taken up by himself.⁹¹ He is possibly to be identified as a later bishop of Chartres, of the same name, attested during the 80s of the 5th century.⁹² Whether that is the case or not, as *comes* of Trier, Arbogastes forged links of *amicitia*, not only with Sidonius, but also with Auspicius, the bishop of Toul. The bishop of Clermont suggested to Arbogastes his colleague from Toul as the better choice for exegetical advice.⁹³

Perhaps Toul was within the territory controlled by Arbogastes, which would make him a quite powerful warlord at the time, ruling a significant portion of a territory along the Moselle. (Toul is 130 km away from Trier and, if this was the range of Arbogastes' power, it would bring into his domain other cities along the river such as Metz). Another possibility is that the *comes'* zone of authority did not exceed the city itself.⁹⁴ Whether that was the case or not, the bishop of Toul still considered it beneficial to compose his message in a very panegyric tone. In a letter dated to 471 CE, which survived as part of the collection known as the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, Auspicius praised *comes* of Trier, assuring him that his merits justify a higher rank, that of a *vir clarissimus*.⁹⁵

In fact, you have customarily seemed to me to be greater than everyone, with the result that your illustrious intellect surpasses the degree of your authority: This title thus is owed to you by us with a greater joy; not yet granted in name, it has been conferred already through your merits.⁹⁶

The praise of Arbogastes simultaneously contains advice on how to rule, to avoid cupidity and avarice, honour his bishop Iamblychus and be a good judge. His piety is contrasted with that of his 'pagan' progenitor, respected for his military prowess, but nevertheless an unbeliever:

You must be congratulated, O city of Trier, you who are ruled by such a man, the equal of the ancients. He has descended, I do believe, from a great family of your

⁹⁰ *PLRE*, 1: 95–97.

⁹¹ MacGeorge 2002: 75.

⁹² MacGeorge 2002: 75; Duchesne 1899: 2: 419 and 421. Although it is equally possible that it is yet another Arbogastes, like the bishop of Strasbourg, see below.

⁹³ Sid. Ap. Ep. 4.17.

⁹⁴ Zoloteňki 2011: 284–289 considers it a possible case of a *comitiva civitatis*, a temporary provision for small isolated territories that remained to some extent under Roman authority.

⁹⁵ Zoloteňki 2011: 286.

⁹⁶ *Epistula Auspici episcopi ecclesiae tullensis ad Arbogastem comitem treverorum* 4–5; trans. Mathisen 2003: 1.

people [*De magno, credo, semine descendit sui nominis*]. Undoubtedly his is that virtue which one reads was that of Arbogastes. His triumphs likewise are inscribed in the annals, just as also are written those of him whom I mentioned above. [*Certe virtutis eius est, ut Arbogastes legitur. Scribantur in annalibus huius triumphis pariter, sicut et eius scripti sunt, quem supra memoravimus.*] But let me add this distinction to the one who is truly greater, because he, dedicated to religion, invokes the name of Christ. That ancestor of his, it is true, was energetic in warfare, but he died an unbeliever, and in death he lost everything [*Fuit in armis alacer ille antiquus, verum est, sed infidelis moritur et morte cuncta perdidit*]. This man of ours, however, is vigorous, bellicose, acclaimed, and, what is greater than all of these, a devotee of the divine name.⁹⁷

For Mathisen, this passage is enough to consider Sidonius' and Auspicius' letters to be illustrating a case of a cultured barbarian, who, although accepted in the elite literary circle, was not allowed to forget his barbarian background.⁹⁸ However, there is nothing to suggest that, either in Sidonius' or Auspicius' letter. Nor is there any implication that Arbogastes could be perceived as a 'romanised Frank' as some claim.⁹⁹ In fact, it is the religious identity of his ancestor, 'paganism', that becomes the point of focus, not the ethnic one. We would not be aware of any 'barbarian' descent if not for the names, as it is simply not stated in the sources.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, it is impossible to tell if the younger Arbogastes' name is a homage to his famous ancestor or a case of a familial practice functioning as an expression of a differing identity. The only other name of a member of the family we know of is that of Arbogastes' father: Arigius, which does not have anything particularly Germanic or non-Roman about it.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, according to Auspicius, the family of Arbogastes stemmed from Trier, clearly belonging to the local elite, probably by this time of both military men and landowners. This regional identity is the only one mentioned next to the religious one. There is possibly yet another relative of *comes* of Trier, a bishop of Strasbourg from the 4th or 5th century of the same name.¹⁰² If he indeed belonged to the same family, his existence would provide more proof of their local connections and importance in eastern Gaul, placing them firmly amongst the Gallic elite. There can be little doubt that the younger Arbogastes was a Roman to his contemporaries, at a time when effective

⁹⁷ *Epistula Auspici episcopi* 13–18; trans. Mathisen 2003: 1.

⁹⁸ Mathisen 2003, 1: 34–38. Reiterated identification of Arbogastes as a Frank in Mathisen 2020: 82.

⁹⁹ Żołoteńki 2011: 219.

¹⁰⁰ For a similar opinion see Settapani 2020: 117.

¹⁰¹ *Epistula Auspici episcopi* 9. Settapani 2020: 117 identified him with Aredius, husband of Florentine known from a 5th century inscription from Trier.

¹⁰² For the episcopal *fasti* mentioning Arbogastes as bishop of Strasbourg see Duchesne 1915, 3: 166. Besides the list of bishops, there is another attestation of bishop Arbogastes – bricks found in Strasbourg with the stamp: ARBOASTIS EPS FICET (*Arboastis episcopus fecit*) see Duchesne 1915, 3: 171; MacGeorge 2002: 75.

imperial rule in Gaul had all but disappeared. He was not just any Roman, in fact, but a member of the elite, participating in its literary culture.

To conclude, the epistolography of the time and the proceedings of *amicitia* and *φιλία* reveal to us a diverse set of attitudes towards including 'barbarians' within the elite. There is a limited and conditional acceptance of Richomeres and Bauto by Symmachus, and somehow questionable of Modares by Gregory. But at the same time Gregory and his friend Basil recognised other *φίλοι* of barbarian backgrounds such as Victor, Arinthaëus or Ellebichos, without any indications of a different treatment. Richomeres was presented by Libanios as his co-believer and pillar of the Roman order. A similar full recognition as members of the Roman elite was applied towards Stilicho by Symmachus, and Arbogastes by Sidonius and Auspicius.

The ethnicity of the addressee could be present and relevant within the discourse but functioned more as a tool of control of the social advancement of the 'immigrants'. It served as an instrument of establishing a boundary and sustaining the balance of power between the old and the new members of the elite, the same way as other identities, such as religious ones, or social background, would be used to keep in check *homines novi* whose *romanitas* could not be questioned, but whose ancestors did not belong to imperial and civic elites. Using ethnic identity in such capacity had seemingly little applicability to Stilicho and Arbogastes, who already belonged to the 'self'/'our' rather than the 'other' category in the perception of their networks of *amici* within these elites. However, the difference between being perceived, or to be more precise, presented as 'self'/'our' rather than 'other' was a flexible one. It is particularly visible in the case of Richomeres, who could be at the same time a regular member of Libanios' network of friends, a co-believer, who shared interest in the tradition and monuments of the old religion, and a target of Symmachus' attempts at establishing cultural superiority, even if still treated according to the tenets of *amicitia*. With the lack of 'barbarian' responses, or the reception of these attitudes amongst the rest of the elite, it can only be speculated what kind of an impact it had on the individuals concerned and on their social position. One can imagine it was of a limited influence.

The primary source material allows us to discern only situational instances of the exclusion of 'barbarian' *amici*. However, even the cases we can observe are not attempts at full exclusion, the very language of *amicitia* and *φιλία* did not allow for it. The purpose of these letters is to sustain relationships of members of the same elite group and exchange favours and customary gifts. Symmachus could imply his correspondents lacked manners and were therefore inferior, but he did it within forms of cultural exchange characteristic for the upper strata of the Roman society, diminishing them, but still acknowledging as members of the same group. Openly considering an addressee as an inferior due to their ethnic background

did not suit the epistolary discourse of friendship. Ethnic identity could be either brought up as an experiment in making the boundary salient to add exceptionality to the friendship, as a relationship so powerful that it transgressed ethnic differences, in case of Gregory and Modares, or outside of letters as a final nail to the coffin of friendship as in case of Libanios' speech accusing Ellebichos of treacherous nature due to his ethnic background. Any indications of attempts at a more lasting and complete exclusion in letters are not visible, because these forms served the very opposite purpose. In the context of *amicitia* a feigned exclusion by indicating someone's imperfect *romanitas* was just an element of the subtle game of establishing hierarchies within the group, at least in its discourse. This does not mean exclusion did not take place by other means, but merely that within forms of the Roman friendship it was limited to be a tool rather than aim.

Bibliography

- Anderson, W. B. (trans.) 1936: *Sidonius Apollinaris, Poems and Letters*, 2 vols. London.
- Bonney, R. 1975: 'A New Friend for Symmachus?', *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 24/2, 357–74.
- Bradbury, S. 2014: 'Libanios' Networks' in L. van Hoof (ed.), *Libanios: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge, 220–240.
- Cancik, H., Salazar, Christine F., Schneider H. (eds) 2006: *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*, Leiden.
- Duchesne, L. 1894–1915: *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, 3 vols, Paris.
- Elton, H. 1996: *Warfare in Roman Europe*, Oxford.
- French, D. R. 1998: 'Rhetoric and the Rebellion of A.D. 387 in Antioch.', *Historia Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 47/4, 468–84.
- Halsall, G. 2007: *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568*, Cambridge.
- Heather, P. 1991: *Goths and Romans, 332–489*, Oxford.
- Janin, R. 1950: *Constantinople Byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, Paris.
- Janiszewski, P., Stebnicka, K., Szabat, E. (eds) 2015: *Prosopography of Greek Rhetors and Sophists of the Roman Empire*. Oxford.
- Jones, A. H. M., Martindale, J. R., Morris, J. (eds) 1971–1992: *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols, Cambridge.
- Jones, A. H. M. 1973: *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols, Oxford.
- Kelly, G. 2015: 'The First Book of Symmachus' Correspondence as a Separate Collection' in P. F. Moretti, R. Ricci, C. Torre (eds), *Culture and Literature in Late Antiquity*, Turnhout, 197–220.

- Lee, D. A. 2009: 'Abduction and Assassination: The Clandestine Face of Roman Diplomacy in Late Antiquity', *The International History Review* 31/1, 1–23.
- Lougheed, C. 2019: 'Gregory of Nazianzus and Q. Aurelius Symmachus: The Conflict between East and West and Elite Representation in the Later Fourth Century AD Rome and Constantinople', *Museion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 16/1, 121–143.
- MacGeorge, P. 2002: *Late Roman Warlords*, Oxford.
- Matthews, J. 1986: 'Symmachus and his Enemies.' in F. Paschoud (ed.), *Colloque genevois sur Symmaque à l'occasion du mille six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire: douze exposés suivis de discussions*, Paris, 163–175.
- Mathisen, R. 2003: *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity*, 2 vols, Ann Arbor.
- Mathisen, R. 2020: 'Sidonius' People' in G. Kelly, J. van Waarden (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, Edinburgh, 29–165.
- McLaughlin, J. J. 2014: 'Bridging the Cultural Divide: Libanius, Ellebichus, and Letters to 'Barbarian' Generals', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7.2, 253–79.
- Norman, A. F. (trans.) 1992: *Libanius Autobiography and Selected Letters*, 2 vols, London.
- Oost, S. I. 1962: 'Count Gildo and Theodosius the Great', *Classical Philology* 57/1, 27–30.
- Pellizzari, A. 2011: 'Le armi e i logoi i generali di Teodosio nelle lettere di Libanio', *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 60, 191–218.
- Salzman, M. R. 2006: 'Symmachus and the 'Barbarian' Generals.' *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 55/3: 352–67.
- Schönfeld, M. 1911: *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen-und Völkernamen*, Heidelberg.
- Seeck, O. (ed.) 1883: *Q. Aurelii Symmachi, quae supersunt*. Monumenta Germaniae Historica 6.1, Berlin.
- Settipani, C. 2020: 'Continuité des familles sénatoriales gallo-romaines au VI^e siècle' in M. Kazanski, P. Périn (eds), *Autour du règne de Clovis. Les grands dans l'Europe du Haut Moyen Âge. Histoire et archéologie: Actes des XXXIIe Journées de l'Association française d'archéologie mérovingienne*, Caen, 91–136.
- Sogno, C. 2006: *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, Ann Arbor.
- Williams, C. A. 2012: *Reading Roman Friendship*, Cambridge.
- Zołoteńki, D. 2011: *Galia u schyłku panowania rzymskiego: Administracja cywilna i wojskowa oraz jej reprezentanci w latach 455–486*, Kraków.

Aleksander Paradziński

parad@uni-bonn.de

University of Bonn
Heussallee 18–24
53113 Bonn, Germany

