

EPISTOLOGRAPHY, LITERARY CIRCLES AND FAMILY TIES IN LATE ROMAN GAUL

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During the century between A.D. 420 and 520, Gallo-Roman aristocrats indulged extensively in the composition of literary works in general and personal letters in particular: some 475 letters written by some 45 Gauls are still extant from this period.¹ In spite of this widespread popularity of epistolography, however, past scholarship has tended to place heavy emphasis on the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris alone, and to give short shrift to the letters of other writers, with the result that patterns of correspondence common to several of the Gallic epistolographers have remained unnoticed.² In this study, an analysis of the correspondence, and related works, of several Gallic authors of this time will indicate that one's close literary ties tended to be with one's relatives, whether by blood or by marriage, and that literary and family circles tended to overlap. It will be possible, furthermore, to specify with a greater exactitude the particular degrees of relationship among several of the most famous and influential of the Gallic writers of the period.

Large collections of letters survive for four Gallo-Roman aristocrats of the late fifth century: Sidonius Apollinaris, prefect of Rome in 468 and bishop of Clermont *c.* 470–485 (148 letters); Ruricius, bishop of Limoges *c.* 485–507 (82 letters); Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus, bishop of Vienne *c.* 490–518 (103 letters); and Magnus Felix Ennodius, a native of Arles, but bishop of Ticinum in northern Italy *c.* 490–534 (297 letters).³ The surviving

¹ These totals also include dedicatory letters to extant works, and only the forty or so letters of Ennodius written to Gallic addressees are included. For the texts of the epistolographers under consideration, see notes 3 and 36 below.

² For translations of and commentaries upon the letters of Sidonius, see W. B. Anderson, *Sidonius. Poems and Letters* I–II (London-Cambridge 1936 and 1965); O. Dalton, *The Letters of Sidonius* (Oxford 1915); and A. Loyer, *Sidoine Apollinaire. Lettres* II–III (Paris 1970). The letters of the other Gallic letter writers of this period have remained untranslated. See also notes 9 and 11 below for other secondary sources.

³ Critical editions of the letters of all these writers appear in the *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Auctores antiquissimi*. For Sidonius, see C. Leutjohann, *MGH AA* 8 (Berlin 1887); B. Krusch's edition of the letters of Ruricius appears in the same volume. For Avitus, see the

collections of other writers are much smaller, with none of them numbering over eleven letters.⁴ The four largest collections and their authors, therefore, will be discussed first, as they can be expected to be most representative of the patterns of correspondence of the period.

In the *corpora* of all of these four individuals, at least 20% of the letters are addressed to known relatives.⁵ This pattern is unlike that of earlier fifth-century ecclesiastics for whom large collections of letters survive, such as Jerome, Augustine, and Paulinus of Nola, who rarely if at all corresponded with relatives.⁶ The late fifth-century Gallic pattern, however, is very similar to that which is found at Rome in the late fourth-century inbred aristocratic circle of Q. Aurelius Symmachus, whose family assumed an important place in his correspondence.⁷ It would appear, then, that for fifth-century Gauls it was important to maintain their secular, aristocratic ties even after they entered the church.⁸

It has long been recognized, moreover, that family ties in some degree existed among all four of these prolific letter writers: Sidonius, Ruricius, and Ennodius all are known to have had family ties to the Aviti, which implies some form of relationship to each other.⁹ And these family ties

edition of R. Peiper in *MGH AA* 6.2 (Berlin 1883), and for Ennodius, that of F. Vogel, *MGH AA* 7 (Berlin 1885). In the *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* appear editions of Ruricius by A. Engelbrecht in *CSEL* 21 (Vienna 1891) and of Ennodius by W. Hartel in *CSEL* 6 (Vienna 1882). P. Mohr also did an edition of Sidonius, *C. Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius* (Leipzig 1895). Note that the *corpus* of Sidonius includes a single letter by another writer (*Epist.* 4.2), and that of Avitus contains not only letters of several other authors, but also a great deal of official, rather than personal, correspondence. For biographical information on these epistolographers, see notes 9, 11 below.

⁴ For these letters, see notes 36 and 46–47 below.

⁵ For Sidonius, at least 35 of his 168 addressed works are directed to relatives by blood or marriage (21%); for Ruricius, 20 of 82 (24%); for Avitus, exclusive of the official correspondence in his *corpus*, 15 of 72 (20%); and of Ennodius' Gallic correspondents, at least 20 of about 40, or 50%, were his relatives. For Gallic family ties during this period in general, see K. Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (Reutlingen 1948).

⁶ Of the 51 extant letters of Paulinus of Nola, for example, not a single one is addressed to a designated relative; see P. G. Walsh, *The Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola* (London 1966) 3–10.

⁷ See T. R. Glover, *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century* (New York 1901) 157–62, and J. A. McGeachy, *Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and the Senatorial Aristocracy of the West* (Chicago 1942) 110–11.

⁸ Note, for example, that more than half of the letters of Sidonius, Ruricius, Avitus and Ennodius are addressed to men in secular rather than ecclesiastical life. The secular interests of the Gallo-Roman bishops during this period have been discussed by, *inter alios*, S. Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London 1926) 476–503, and, more recently, Stroheker (above, note 5) and Heinzelmann (below, note 17), *passim*.

⁹ For the family ties of Ruricius, see Engelbrecht (above, note 3) lxxviii–lxi, Krusch (*ibid.*) lxxii–lxxvii, and H. Hagendahl, *La Correspondence de Ruricius*, in the *Acta universitatis Gotoburgensis* 58.3 (Göteborg 1952) 3–11. For Avitus, see M. Burckhardt, *Die Briefsammlung des Bischofs Avitus von Vienne* (§ 518), in *Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte*

are reflected in the exchange of letters among these four and their families: Sidonius, his son Apollinaris, and Ruricius, for example, all exchanged letters, as did Avitus and Apollinaris, and Ennodius and Avitus' brother.¹⁰ What has not been done hitherto, however, and what will be attempted in the following study, is to determine the specific family ties among these individuals. In the process of doing so, it will be possible also to clear up several uncertainties and misconceptions about their interrelationships which have persisted in the secondary literature for some time.

The Family Ties Among Sidonius, Avitus, Ruricius and Ennodius

Although the family background of Sidonius Apollinaris has been discussed more often than that of any other fifth-century Gallic aristocrat, a great deal yet remains unclear about the details of his family structure.¹¹ For example, even the name of his father, the *praefectus praetorio Galliciarum* of 448–449, is unknown.¹² Of importance for this study is the degree of relationship between Sidonius and Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus. In the past, no one has ventured to suggest exactly how these two were related, but a careful examination of Avitus' own references to their family ties not only can offer a probable solution to this problem, but also can identify the father-in-law of Sidonius' son Apollinaris.¹³

81 (Berlin 1938) 27–35, and Peiper (above, note 3) 309 ff. For Ennodius, see Vogel (above, note 3) ii–vi and J. Sundwall, *Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des ausgehenden Römertums* (Helsinki 1919) 1–83. For references to Sidonius, see note 11 below. For further information and bibliography, see also the appropriate entries in Stroheker (above, note 5), in M. Schanz, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (Munich 1920), and in J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire II, A.D. 395–527* (Cambridge 1980), hereafter PLRE II.

¹⁰ Sidonius, Apollinaris and Ruricius: Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 3.13 (to Apollinaris), *Carm.* 10–11, *Epist.* 4.16, 5.15, 8.10 (to Ruricius), *Carm.* 17 (to Ommatius, Ruricius' father), Ruric. *Epist.* 1.8–9 (to Sidonius), *Epist.* 2.26–27, 2.41 (to Apollinaris). Avitus and Apollinaris: Avitus *Epist.* 24, 36, 51–52. For the identification of the Apollinaris who received Ennod. *Epist.* 2.8, 3.13 and 4.19 with Apollinaris of Valence, the brother of Avitus of Vienne (below, note 20), see note 33 below. Note also Ennodius' very complimentary reference to Avitus himself in the *Vita Epiphani* 173 (see Vogel, above, note 3, 106), where Avitus is referred to as *praestantissimus inter Gallos*.

¹¹ For biographies of Sidonius, see, *inter alios*, A. Coville, "Sidoine Apollinaire à Lyon," *Revue d'histoire de Lyon* 3 (1904) 81–95, 193–207, 266–77; H. Rutherford, *Sidonius Apollinaris. L'homme politique, l'écrivain, l'évêque* (Clermont-Ferrand 1938); and C. E. Stevens, *Sidonius Apollinaris and His Age* (Oxford 1933). Sidonius' full name was C. Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius, see Stroheker (above, note 5) 217–19. For additional bibliography, see Rutherford 86–87.

¹² On Sidonius' father, see Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 1.3.1, 5.9.2, 8.6.5. It has been suggested, for example by Anderson (above, note 2) 2.422, 626 s.v., that the father's name was Apollinaris, but this is unlikely: Sidonius already had an uncle named Apollinaris, see Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 2.9.1 and Stroheker (above, note 5) 145.

¹³ H. Légio-Desgranges, *Les Apollinaires* (Paris 1937) 76, is able to suggest that Sidonius and Avitus of Vienne were first cousins only by mis-identifying Avitus with the older Avitus

Avitus discusses his relationship to the family of Sidonius in two of his letters to Apollinaris the younger, *Epist.* 51 and 52, and in a poem, *Carm.* 6, to his sister Fuscina.¹⁴ To Apollinaris in *Epist.* 51 he mentions their *quandam parentum communium sortem*, and goes on to say, according to the edition of Peiper,

si vos a patre vestro hoc didicistis virum saeculo militantem minus
inter arma quam inter obloquia periclitari, exemplum a Sidonio meo,
quem patrem vocare non audeo, quantum clericus perpeti possit ad-
sumo.

Peiper, however, deleted the reading *Archadio* which occurs in one of his two manuscripts between *patre vestro* and *didicistis*, in favor of the inoffensive, if superfluous, *hoc*, which appears in the other, a clear and unexplained violation of the principle of *lectio difficilior*.¹⁵ The reason for this, apparently, is that Peiper assumed that Avitus was speaking of the same "father," that is, Sidonius, on both sides of his analogy, and Apollinaris' father, of course, was Sidonius, not an otherwise unknown Arcadius.

But Peiper's deletion may have been overly hasty, as can be seen more easily by restoring the *Archadio* and translating the passage:

If you learned from your father Arcadius that a man performing secular duties runs risks less from battle than from verbal abuse, I take the lesson from Sidonius, whom I dare not call father, of how much a cleric can suffer.

Several arguments could allow for the retention of the manuscript reading. In the first place, Avitus seems to be discussing individuals with some claim to be called fathers but who were not blood fathers: just as Sidonius was not Avitus' own father, Arcadius, therefore, was not Apollinaris', although he probably was related in some degree.¹⁶ Secondly, Avitus' analogy implies that whereas he took his example from an individual who had ecclesiastical problems, Apollinaris took his from one who had secular problems. Now, Sidonius was in fact faced with serious dissension in his church as bishop of Clermont (Sid. *Epist.* 3.2.2; Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.23), and thus this half of the analogy does indeed apply to him, but the other half, the secular side, is much weaker if referred to Sidonius, and perhaps could be more applicable to the unknown Arcadius.

of Cottin (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 3.1). For the interrelationship, see Burekhardt (above, note 9) 27–32, *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 196–97, Schanz (above, note 9) 380, and Stroheker (above, note 5) 154–55.

¹⁴ For the texts of Avitus' *Epistulae* and *Carmina*, see Vogel (above, note 3).

¹⁵ Earlier editions, such as that in Migne, *Patrologia latina* 59.262, retain the *Archadio*.

¹⁶ Furthermore, such loose usage of the word *pater* was common; Ruricius, for example, in his *Epist.* 2.26 to Apollinaris referred to Sidonius as their *pater communis*.

The conclusion of this same letter (Avit. *Epist.* 51), moreover, removes any remaining doubt about the correctness of the manuscript-reading *Archadio*, for here, with Avitus discussing the merit of his own literary activity, the name Arcadius appears in all the manuscripts:

quia sicut non minus ad meam quam vestram gloriam pervenit communis Sollii opus illustre, ita vobis favente Christo militari actu magis magisque florentibus si in me nixus tenuis aliquid dignum lectione confecerit, etiam senem quandocumque Arcadium non pudebit.

Because just as the illustrious work of our common Sollius redounds no less to my than to your glory, thus, as you flourish more and more in secular action with the favor of Christ, if a trifling effort in me produces something worthy of being read, it will not at any time shame even old Arcadius.

Here, as in the previous passage, there is the juxtaposition of Sidonius on the one hand and Arcadius on the other, and note again the stress upon placing Apollinaris and Arcadius in a strictly secular context. Furthermore, literary endeavor can be seen here to result in a shared pride of accomplishment within an aristocratic family.

It now remains to identify an Arcadius who in some way could be called Apollinaris' father, and this can be done based on arguments of nomenclature. Apollinaris was married to a Placidina, and they had a son named Arcadius (Avitus *Epist.* 36; Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 3.9, 18; *Liber historiae Francorum* 24). Now, nothing was more natural during this period than to name the child after the grandparent, as Sidonius himself had done in the case of his own son Apollinaris (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 3.12.5), and therefore Arcadius would have been Apollinaris' father-in-law, a conclusion which is borne out by Avitus' reference to him in the previous quotation as *senex*.¹⁷

Other evidence for Avitus' relationship to the Apollinares comes from Avitus' *Epist.* 52 to Apollinaris, where Avitus refers to *necessitatem nostram patrumque communium*, indicating their descent from some common ancestor. But the most explicit evidence for Avitus' relationship to Sidonius comes in Avitus' poem to his sister Fuscina, in which he describes their family background (*Carm.* 6.655–59):

non et avos tibimet iam nunc proavosque retexam
vita sacerdotes quos reddidit inclita dignos;
pontificem sacris adsumptum respice patrem.
cumque tibi genitor vel avunculus undique magni
post fasces placeant populorum sumere fascem . . .

¹⁷ On patterns of nomenclature in Gaul during this period, see M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien* (Munich 1976) 13–22.

And I will not now review for you our grandfathers and great-grandfathers, whom a glorious life rendered worthy priests; look upon your father, a prelate received by the sacraments. And when your father and maternal uncle, of wide-ranging importance, after holding high secular office, were pleased to undertake charge of the people . . .

The *genitor* and *pater* who became a *sacerdos* and *pontifex* after holding a secular office was Hesychius, an *ex-comes* of the emperor Eparchius Avitus (A.D. 455–456), who was Alcimus Avitus' predecessor as bishop of Vienne.¹⁸ But who was the *avunculus* who likewise held a high secular office and then became a bishop? By far the best candidate is Sidonius himself, who after serving as *praefectus urbi Romae* in 468 was made bishop of Clermont.¹⁹

Sidonius, therefore, was Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus' maternal uncle, and Avitus and Sidonius' son Apollinaris thus were first cousins and had the same grandfather, Sidonius' as yet unnamed father.²⁰ Avitus' mother Audentia, furthermore, would have been one of the several unnamed sisters of Sidonius, two of whom were living with his mother at Lyons in 474/475 (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 5.16.5).²¹ The closeness of the ties between the two families is further emphasized by the consideration that Severiana, a daughter of Sidonius, adopted the religious life at Vienne with Avitus' sisters Aspidia and Fuscina (Sid. *Epist.* 2.12.2; Avitus *Carm.* 6.83–96).

With these relationships more clearly understood, it now is possible, on the basis of nomenclature, to speculate on the name of Sidonius' father. The ancient penchant for naming children after grandparents already has been mentioned, and because Sidonius named a daughter Alcima (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 3.2.12, *Glor. mart.* 65), and because his sister Audentia had a son named Alcimus (sc. Ecdicius Avitus), there would seem to be a strong possibility that Sidonius' father, the Gallic prefect of 448–449, was named Alcimus.²²

¹⁸ Hesychius: Hydatius *Chron.* 179, in A. Tranoy, *Hydace: Chronique* (Paris 1974), and *Vita Aviti* 1 edited by Peiper (above, note 3) 177–81. *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 554–55 separates these two Hesychii.

¹⁹ For Sidonius' career, see references in note 11 above.

²⁰ The ties between the families of Sidonius and Avitus also are evidenced by the name of Avitus' brother: Apollinaris, the bishop of Valence, for whom see Stroheker (above, note 5) 146. For the similarities of nomenclature between the two families in general, see Burckhardt (above, note 9) 27–28.

²¹ Audentia: Avitus *Carm.* 6.19, see Stroheker (above, note 5) 150 and *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 185.

²² The name Alcimus is otherwise rare in Gaul. In the mid-fourth century, a Latinus Alcimus Alethius was a poet and rhetor at Bordeaux, see Aus. *Prof.* 3, Jer. *Chron.* s.a.354; significantly, he is mentioned twice in the works of Sidonius (*Epist.* 5.10.3, 8.11.2). The only other Gallic Alcimus is called a *patricius*, apparently in the sixth century, in a late source, see *Gallia christiana* 16 (Paris 1865) 542. Sidonius' mother, whose sister was the mother of Avitus of Cottion (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 3.1.1) is commonly assumed to have been one of the

Finally, some further insight into the structure of the families of Avitus and his cousin Apollinaris may be gained from another quotation from *Epist.* 52 of Avitus to Apollinaris, referring to

divina miseratio, quae spem reparandae prosapiae in personae vestrae honore constituit et secuturæ posteritati nostræ te unigenitore etiam nos patres esse concessit . . .

the divine pity, which has placed in your hands the hope of continuing our family line and conceded indeed that we both be the fathers of our future posterity with you alone as the begetter . . .

This statement has the important implication that, as of the early sixth century, any offspring of Apollinaris were the only third-generation descendants of Sidonius' father Alcimus. And this conclusion is, in fact, consistent with the other surviving evidence. Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus and his siblings, Apollinaris of Valence, Aspidia, and Fuscina, all entered the religious life and had no known offspring.²³ On the other hand, Sidonius' only known brother took up the religious life at Riez as a youth, and of Sidonius' children, Severiana, as has been seen, did the same herself, and Alcima, another daughter, seems similarly to have been childless.²⁴

Apollinaris himself, moreover, as far as is known had but a single son, Arcadius, exemplifying well the extent to which many of the most noble families of fifth-century Gaul were simply vanishing, and this of their own volition, because of the propensity of these aristocrats to adopt the religious life and to fail to produce offspring to carry on the family line.²⁵

Besides those of Sidonius and Avitus, the other two large collections of Gallic correspondence from this period are those of Ruricius of Limoges and Magnus Felix Ennodius, and it is possible to clarify the degree of

Aviti herself, see Rutherford (above, note 11) 2 and Stevens (above, note 11) 1. This then would explain why Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus bore the names Ecdicius and Avitus, which commonly occur among the Aviti (for Sidonius' brother-in-law Ecdicius, see Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 20, *Epist.* 2.1, 2.2.15, 3.3, 5.16). Sidonius' mother, then, Alcimus Avitus' grandmother, may have been named either Avita or Ecdicia (for the occurrence of the latter name, see Aug. *Epist.* 262).

²³ For the careers of these, see their entries in Stroheker (above, note 5) and *PLRE* II (above, note 9), which omits Aspidia.

²⁴ Brother: Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 16.71–77. Since by c. 515 Alcima was living in the household of her brother Apollinaris (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 3.2, 12), one would suspect that she had no family of her own. Sidonius also had another daughter, Roscia (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 5.16.5).

²⁵ And the younger Arcadius himself seems to have entered the religious life as bishop of Bourges, see Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 3.12 and L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule* 2 (Paris 1910) 27–28. This Arcadius also seems to have had only a single child, a daughter Placidina, named after her grandmother, who married Leontius, bishop of Bordeaux, and who does not seem to have had any children, see Stroheker (above, note 5) 205 and *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 131–32, which identifies the *senex* Arcadius with the son of Apollinaris.

relationship between these two as well.²⁶ One of the letters of Ruricius (*Epist.* 2.37) is addressed *Dulcissimis nepotibus Parthenio et Papianillae*, but nothing in the letter indicates which of the two was, in fact, the grandchild of Ruricius. Nor does Ruricius' *Epist.* 2.36, requesting the aid of Caesarius of Arles for Parthenius in the pursuit of his business there, clarify Parthenius' relationship to Ruricius beyond calling him, again, *nepos*.

The only other reference by Ruricius to a grandchild occurs in *Epist.* 2.32 to Agricola, the son of Eparchius Avitus and the brother-in-law of Sidonius Apollinaris, in which Ruricius says:

quod superest, saluto plurimum et ancillam vestram vobis peculiari insinuatione commendo, quamlibet hoc salva vestra pietate non egeat, ut quo eam suscipere tanti habuistis affectu, semper foveatis indultu, quae largitate divina utrosque nos sibi paravit obnoxios, vos avos faciens sua fecunditate, nos proavos. domnam filiam meam desiderio et honore quo dignum est sospito.

For the rest, I offer my best regards and commend to you with particular insinuation your maiden, although she has no lack of your saving piety, so that to the extent that you have received her with such great affection, you always cherish her with indulgence, she who by divine generosity has made both of us indebted to her, making you grandparents and us great-grandparents. I bless my lady daughter with fitting desire and respect.

B. Krusch, in his 1889 edition of the letters of Ruricius, followed by Engelbrecht in his edition of 1891, summarily identified the *ancilla* and *domna* as Papianilla, and went on to assert on the basis of the manner in which Ruricius spoke of her that she was Agricola's daughter-in-law, and that Parthenius therefore was Ruricius' blood grandson and Agricola's son.²⁷ This conclusion, however, which has been accepted by all later writers on the subject, has two serious shortcomings: first, it fails to take into account considerations of nomenclature, and second, it makes necessary the awkward denial of an identification of this Parthenius with Parthenius, the nephew of Magnus Felix Ennodius.²⁸

²⁶ For the letters of these two authors, see note 3 above.

²⁷ Krusch (above, note 3) lxvi, Engelbrecht (*ibid.*) lxix. Note that Ruricius' reference to the *domna* as his *filia* cannot be taken to imply a blood tie: he addresses *Epist.* 2.15, to the mother of the wife of one of his sons, *filiae Cerauniae*. Nor can Ruricius' formal tone when speaking of the *domna* be used as evidence, as done by Krusch, for this is merely his normal style of writing, see Hagendahl (above, note 9) 4 and A. Loyer, *Sidoine Apollinaire et l'esprit précieux en Gaule* (Paris 1943) 169–73. The conciliatory tone of the letter, however, may have been justified, if her later marital infidelity had early roots (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 3.36), and if Papianilla was using Ruricius as an intercessor with her father Agricola.

²⁸ For these conclusions, see, for example, Stroheker (above, note 5) 199–200 and *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 830, 832–34.

Considerations of nomenclature disclose a striking inconsistency in Krusch's and Englebrecht's argument. On the one hand, only on the basis of nomenclature could it be suggested with any probability of certainty that the *domna* of Ruricius *Epist.* 2.32 is to be identified with Papianilla at all, who otherwise equally well could have been the daughter, or daughter-in-law, of any of Ruricius' five sons.²⁹ Yet, on the other hand, this very argument requires that Papianilla be Agricola's daughter rather than daughter-in-law. Specifically, the name Papianilla is a very rare name in Gaul, occurring only two other times. One of the others was the wife of Tonantius Ferreolus, praetorian prefect of Gaul in 451 (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 24.37), and she usually is assumed to be a member of the Aviti because the third Papianilla was the daughter of the Gallic emperor Eparchius Avitus, and the wife of Sidonius Apollinaris.³⁰ Given the close associations of this name with the family of Agricola, therefore, it is much more probable that he had a female child whom he gave the family name Papianilla than that he had a male child called Parthenius, a name which appears in neither Agricola's nor Ruricius' family.³¹

And such an identification removes some grave problems presented by the suggestion that Parthenius was the son of Agricola. Hitherto, it had been necessary to postulate one Parthenius, a nephew of Ennodius and like him a native of Arles, who was a schoolfellow in the early sixth century of Arator, an Italian protégé of Ennodius, and another Parthenius, the son of Agricola and grandson of Ruricius, who was a young nobleman in Arles c. 500 and who was the addressee of the *Epistula ad Parthenium* written c. 540 by the same Arator.³² An unwieldy, as well as very unlikely, hypothesis at best, and one which is obviated simply by recognizing that there was only one Parthenius, Ennodius' nephew, who was Agricola's son-in-law, not his son. This identification, furthermore, welds yet another link into the chain of interrelationship connecting the premier epistolographers of late Roman Gaul, in this instance tying together Ruricius, Ennodius, and the Aviti. It is significant, in this context, that in the *vita* of Apollinaris of Valence, who was the brother of Avitus of Vienne, Parthenius appears at Arles as Apollinaris' *consanguineus*.³³

²⁹ For the offspring of Ruricius, see references in note 9 above.

³⁰ Wife of Ferreolus: Anderson (above, note 2) 1.321, note 7. Wife of Sidonius: Stevens (above, note 11) 19–20. For all three Papianillae, see Stroheker (above, note 5) 198–99 and *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 830; see also note 33 below.

³¹ The only other Gallic Parthenius known from this period was bishop of Gevaudan c. 570 (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 4.39), and he may have been a descendent of the Parthenius and Papianilla under discussion.

³² Ennod. *Epist.* 5.9–12, 7.30. Arator *Epist. ad Parth.*: Migne, *Patrologia latina* 68.245–52. Schanz (above, note 9) 391, in his discussion of Arator, apparently in ignorance of scholarly opinions favoring two Parthenii, makes the logical assumption that there was only one.

³³ *Vita Apollinaris* 10, edited by B. Krusch in *MGH Script. rer. merov.* 3 (Berlin 1896) 197–203, *ubi a consanguineis suis Partemio et Ferreolo assiduo veneratur*. Given this

Other interrelationships of the individuals discussed thus far may be treated more briefly. Besides being related to the families of Ruricius and Avitus through Parthenius, Magnus Felix Ennodius would have been related to Sidonius and Avitus of Vienne through the family of Magnus of Narbonne, the praetorian prefect of Gaul in 458–459 and consul in 460.³⁴ On the one hand, Magnus was the uncle of Ennodius' own uncle Camillus (Sid. *Epist.* 1.11.10; Ennod. *Epist.* 4.25.2), and on the other Magnus himself, like Sidonius' father-in-law Eparchius Avitus, was a descendent of the fourth-century patrician Philagrius (Sid. *Carm.* 7.156, *Epist.* 2.3.1).³⁵ This would have given Magnus, and hence Ennodius, one distant degree of relationship to Sidonius and Alcimius Avitus, and the marriage of Magnus' son Probus to Sidonius' cousin Eulalia (Sid. *Epist.* 4.1.1, *Carm.* 24.95–98) would have given them another.

The study to this point, therefore, indicates the great extent to which the most noteworthy representatives of the fifth-century Gallo-Roman educated aristocratic elite had become knit together by an intricate web of family interrelationships, as depicted in the accompanying stemma. Undoubtedly, other correspondents of Sidonius, Ruricius, Avitus and Ennodius, as well as other Gallic writers whose works survive, were related to them as well, but their family ties have not yet been specified. For example, the father of Magnus Felix Ennodius was a Firminus of Arles (Ennod. *Orat.* 8.4), which would indicate that the Firminus of Arles with whom Sidonius corresponded (*Epist.* 9.1, 9.19), although not the same man, probably was a relative of Ennodius' father, making him also a distant relative of Sidonius.

The Monastic Circle of Lérins

If the circle of Sidonius Apollinaris produced the largest number of surviving letters for fifth-century Gaul, the next greatest amount was generated by another, more narrow, literary-familial circle which came

relationship of Apollinaris to Parthenius, and hence to Ennodius, it is reasonable to assume that the previously unidentified relative Apollinaris with whom Ennodius corresponded (note 10 above) was Apollinaris of Valence, Avitus of Vienne's brother. Note also in this context another indication of the relationship between Ennodius and the Aviti: the son of Ennodius' relative Helisaea of Aquileia was named Avitus, and both corresponded with Ennodius (Ennod. *Epist.* 4.29, 4.31, 5.1, 5.5, 5.20–21, 5.25, 6.13–14); see *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 195, 534. Apollinaris' relative Ferreolus (omitted from *PLRE* II) would have been of the family of Tonantius Ferreolus; for other ties of the Ferreoli to the family circle of Sidonius, see notes 30 and 48.

³⁴ See Stroheker (above, note 5) 190 and *PLRE* II (above, note 9) 700–701.

³⁵ The relationship also is suggested by the name of Magnus' son: Magnus Felix (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 9.4–5). See also the appropriate entries in *PLRE* II (above, note 9), and for further discussion of the ties between the families of Ennodius and Magnus, see R. Mathisen, "Resistance and Reconciliation: Majorian and the Gallic Aristocracy after the Fall of Avitus," *Francia* 7 (1979) 621–26.

into being earlier in the century at the monastery of Lérins, opposite Fréjus just off the southern coast of Gaul. Alumni of Lérins who wrote extant letters include:

1. Hilarius, bishop of Arles c. 428–449 (1 letter)
2. Eucherius, bishop of Lyons c. 432–450 (6 letters)
3. Salvianus, presbyter at Marseilles c. 435–475 (10 letters)
4. Lupus, bishop of Troyes c. 426–476 (1 letter)
5. Valerianus, bishop of Cimiez c. 450 (1 letter)
6. Faustus, bishop of Reiz c. 460–490 (11 letters)
7. Caesarius, bishop of Arles 502–540 (5 letters).

In addition, many inhabitants of Lérins also were the authors of ecclesiastical tracts, some of which are still extant and which indicate the degree of their commitment to the exercise of their literary inclinations.³⁶

Besides the quasi-familial ties of the monastery itself, blood relationships also united several of the monks of Lérins. Hilarius was a relative of his predecessor as abbot and bishop Honoratus, and he was married to Pimeniola, the sister of Lupus, whose brother Vincentius also was at Lérins and wrote the extant *Commonitorium*.³⁷ Eucherius was a relative of Valerianus, to whom he addressed his *Epistula paraenetica de contemptu mundi*.³⁸ And Salvianus, after leaving Lérins, wrote back to his ex-brethren asking them to accept into the monastery a young relative of his who had fled from Cologne (Salv. *Epist.* 1). The underlying family ties among many of the monks of Lérins are also indicated by their common origin from the area of Lugdunensis in north-central Gaul.³⁹

Another indication of the combined familial-cultural atmosphere provided by the monastery is seen in the education of the boys Veranus and Salonius not only by their father Eucherius but also by Hilarius, Salvianus, Honoratus and Vincentius.⁴⁰ And even after they were separated from each other, Salvianus' and Hilarius' ties to the family of Eucherius continued, as seen in their correspondence with Eucherius and his sending to

³⁶ For editions of these letters, see the following. Hilarius and Eucherius: K. Wotke, *CSEL* 31 (Vienna 1894); Salvianus: C. Halm, *MGH Auct. ant.* 1.1 (Berlin 1877), and F. Pauly, *CSEL* 8 (Vienna 1883); Lupus: *Corpus Christianorum, Series latina* 148 (Turnhout 1963) 140–41; Valerianus: Migne, *Patrologia latina* 52.691–758; Faustus: see Krusch, *MGH Auct. ant.* 8 (above, note 3), and Engelbrecht, *CSEL* 21 (*ibid.*); Caesarius: G. Morin, *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis opera omnia* 1–3 (Maredsous 1937). For other works of this group, see Schanz (above, note 9) 518–66.

³⁷ For discussion of these ties, see R. Mathisen, "Hilarius, Germanus and Lupus: The Aristocratic Background of the Chelidonius Affair," *Phoenix* 33 (1979) 160–69. Vincentius, *Comm.*: Migne, *Patrologia latina* 50.637–86.

³⁸ Migne, *Patrologia latina* 50.711–26. For the relationship, see P.-M. Duval, *La Gaule jusqu'au milieu de Ve siècle* (Paris 1971) 761.

³⁹ For the common origin of most of the monks of Lérins, see F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich* (Munich-Vienna 1965) 47–62, and Mathisen (above, note 37) 165–68.

⁴⁰ Euch. *Instruc. ad Salon. praef.* in Wotke (above, note 36) 65–66.

them of review copies of his *Instructiones ad Salonium*, as well as in Salvianus' correspondence with Salonius, including the dedication to him of the *De gubernatione dei*.⁴¹ Eucherius, on the other hand, addressed his *De laude heremi* to Hilarius.⁴² In these instances, then, literary ties are seen to be especially important in binding together this narrow circle of ecclesiastics.⁴³

Despite the relative small number of letters which survives from this circle, the same pattern of correspondence among the circle members obtains as did for the circle of Sidonius. Such a situation demonstrates on an ecclesiastical scale what already has been seen on a primarily secular level: the importance of epistolography in fifth-century Gaul for maintaining the cohesion of a narrow familial circle, whose members were related by blood, marriage, and, perhaps, a shared monastic experience.

During the period when the Lérins circle was most active, c. 420–450, there is no evidence for the existence of any other circle on a comparable scale; indeed, other Gallic literary endeavors of this period seem to have taken place in the context of this circle. For example, the *Laterculus* of the ex-palatinus Polemus Silvius, written in 449, was dedicated to Eucherius, as was the roughly contemporary *De orthographia* of Agroecius, who later became bishop of Sens.⁴⁴

With the death of Eucherius c. 450, however, the Lérins circle seems to have lost its internal cohesiveness, and by c. 460 the initiative in Gallic literary exposition had passed to Sidonius and his own familial circle.⁴⁵ It does not appear, however, that the two circles were mutually exclusive, and alumni of Lérins with literary inclinations participated freely in the Sidonian circle, even though there is no evidence for close family ties between the circles. Sidonius, for example, had epistular and literary ties with both Faustus (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 16, *Epist.* 9.3, 9.9) and Lupus of Troyes (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 6.1, 6.4, 6.9, 9.11), and Faustus was especially close to Ruricius, who sheltered him after he was exiled by the Visigothic

⁴¹ See Salv. *Epist.* 2, 8 (to Eucherius), 9 (to Salonius), and *De gub. praef.* in Halm and Pauly (above, note 36); Hilarius in Wotke (*ibid.*) 197–98. Eucherius also dedicated his *Formulae spiritualis intelligentiae* to his other son Veranus, see Wotke (*ibid.*) 3–6.

⁴² Wotke (above, note 36) 177–94.

⁴³ Salonius and Veranus went on to become bishops in their own right, of Geneva and Vence respectively, and exercised their own epistolary inclinations by composing, with Ceretius of Grenoble, an extant letter to Leo of Rome in 451 (Migne, *Patrologia latina* 54.887). For other extant works of Salonius, see Schanz (above, note 9) 529.

⁴⁴ Polem. Silv. *Laterc.*: T. Mommsen, *MGH Auct. ant.* 9 (Berlin 1892) 511–51. Agroec. *De orth.*: H. Keil, *Grammatici latini* 7 (Leipzig 1880) 113–25.

⁴⁵ Of course, another reason for the decline of the Lérins circle could have been the failure of its members to reproduce themselves because of their ecclesiastical inhibitions. This consideration, as has been seen, also was a factor in the Sidonian circle, although not to such an extreme extent.

king Euric c. 476 (Ruric. *Epist.* 1.1–2; Faustus *Epist.* 1–5). And in the early sixth century, Ruricius (*Epist.* 2.33, 2.36), Alcimus Avitus (*Epist.* 11), and Ennodius (*Epist.* 9.33) all corresponded with Caesarius of Arles. Thus, if epistolography came to serve as a means of maintaining one's family ties in particular, it remained equally as the most important means of preserving one's aristocratic ties in general. Indeed, Sidonius himself expressed the sentiment to his friends Sacerdos and Justinus, members of his own literary circle (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 24.26–30), that mutual literary interests were as strong a form of kinship as actual blood ties (*Epist.* 5.21.1):

ilicet ego poetae proximus fio professione, vos semine.

It appears, then, that in fifth-century Gaul, literary, and especially epistolographic, activities tended to be concentrated around one particular literary circle, first that of Lérins and then that of Sidonius and his family. The circle itself, moreover, would tend to be centered upon a single individual of recognized literary excellence, in the one case Eucherius and in the other Sidonius.⁴⁶ Very few literary works indeed of this period cannot be attributed to one circle or the other.⁴⁷

Finally, it is possible that the extended circle of Sidonius' family continued to exist into the sixth century and later. In the mid-sixth century, for example, bishop Ferreolus of Uzès, who would have been a descendent of

⁴⁶ The role of Sidonius as a late fifth-century *arbiter elegantiae* is seen, for example, in the dedication to him of Mamertus Claudianus' *De statu animae*, edited by A. Engelbrecht, CSEL 11 (Vienna 1885). Another member of Sidonius' circle to compose an extant work is Constantius, who lived in Lyons and composed the *Vita Germani Autissiodorensis* c. 480, dedicated to Patiens of Lyons and Censurius of Auxerre, and edited by W. Levison, *MGH Script. rer. merov.* 7 (Hanover 1919) 225–83. To Constantius Sidonius dedicated the first eight books of his letters, see Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 1.1, 7.18, 8.16, 9.16.1; see also 2.10.3 for their joint activity. Nomenclature could suggest that Constantius also may have had remote family ties to the circle: a son of Ruricius was named Constantius (Ruric. *Epist.* 2.24, 2.43).

⁴⁷ Even Remigius of Rheims, four of whose letters are extant, was included in Sidonius' circle: he received Sidonius' *Epist.* 9.7 and his brother Principius of Soissons received *Epist.* 8.14 and 9.8. For Remigius' letters, see W. Gundlach, *MGH Epistulae* 3 (Berlin 1892) 112–16. Other works composed during this period may have been by the survivors of earlier familial-literary circles. The late fourth-century circle of Decimius Magnus Ausonius, for example, is well known (see Glover, above, note 7, 102–24), and his descendent Paulinus (sc. Pellaëus) wrote c. 460 the extant *Eucharisticon*, edited by W. Brandes, CSEL 26 (Vienna 1888). And the Paulinus of Périgueux whose extant works include two letters to Perpetuus of Tours and a metrical life of Martin of Tours c. 470 also may belong in this circle; see M. Petschenig's edition in CSEL 16 (Vienna 1888). In the early fifth century a Gallic pagan literary-familial circle may have been centered on Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, the author of the *De reditu suo*, for which see the edition of J. Vessereau and F. Préchac (Paris 1933). His relative Palladius may be the Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus who wrote a *De re rustica*, and Palladius' father Exsuperantius may be the Iulius Exsuperantius who wrote the *De Marti Lepidi Sertorii bellis civilibus*; see Schanz (above, note 9) 40, 82 and Stroheker (above, note 5) 171, 197–98.

the Tonantius Ferreolus of Nîmes who married a Papianilla, was said to have been one (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 6.7)

qui libros aliquos epistularum, quasi Sidonium secutus, composuit.⁴⁸

This *corpus*, however, does not survive, but two books of letters written by bishop Desiderius of Cahors in the early seventh century do, and he had a sister named Avita, which conceivably could indicate his descent from the fifth-century Aviti.⁴⁹

And it may well be that the familial ties among important members of literary circles played a role in the preservation of their works in late Roman Gaul, just as they had done for Symmachus at Rome in the early fifth century.⁵⁰ Ruricius, for example, in a letter written to Sidonius' son Apollinaris after the death of the former (*Epist.* 2.26.3), noted

Sollium enim nostrum domnum patremque communem, quem transcribendum sublimitati vestrae dedisse dixeram, legendum recepi . . . quid enim iustius, quam ut ipse sis paterni interpres eloquii . . .

And it is noteworthy that the letters of Ruricius and Desiderius, along with thirteen letters addressed to Ruricius, are preserved together in a single manuscript, the ninth-century *Codex Sangallensis*, an earlier copy of which also included at least 23 letters of Sidonius.⁵¹ Clearly, the correspondence of Sidonius' family circle continued to have an audience long after the fifth century, and someone, perhaps a descendent, made a conscious effort to preserve it.⁵²

⁴⁸ For the ties of the Ferreoli to the family circles of the Aviti and Apollinares, see notes 30 and 33 above.

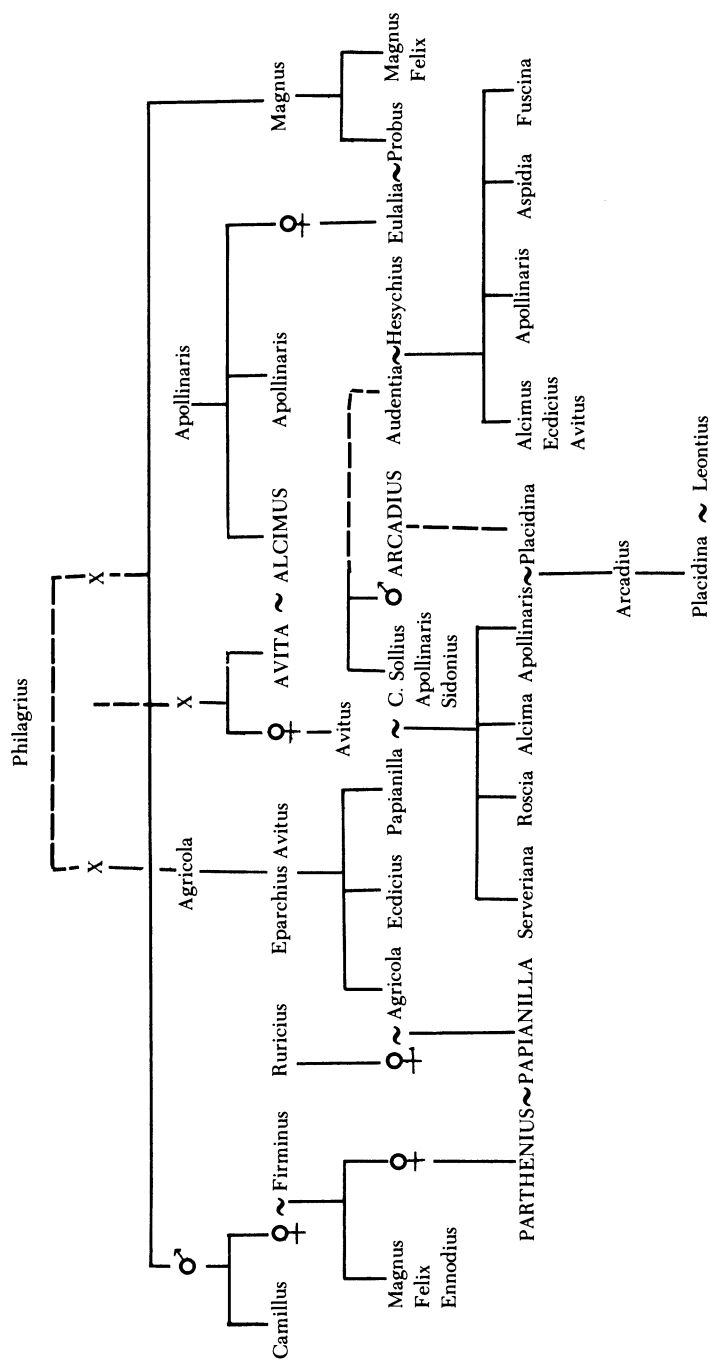
⁴⁹ Letters: W. Arndt, *MGH Epist.* 3 (Berlin 1892) 191–214. Avita: *Vita Desiderii Cadurcensis* 1, edited by B. Krusch, *MGH Script. rer. merov.* 4 (Berlin 1902) 563–602.

⁵⁰ The letters of Symmachus were arranged, edited and published by his son Q. Fabius Symmachus, see Glover (above, note 7) 149.

⁵¹ The index of the extant manuscript reflects the contents of an earlier copy; for discussion, see Krusch (above, note 3) lxix. Of the letters addressed to Ruricius, five were from Faustus of Riez, and three other letters of Faustus also are included in the manuscript. One could almost suspect that the letters of Ruricius, along with those addressed to him and the three extra letters of Faustus, comprised the contents of Ruricius' book-cabinet when he died, and were gathered together by his literary executor.

⁵² Gregory of Tours, for example, an Arvernian himself and writing in the late sixth century, quoted liberally from the letters of Sidonius (see, for example, *Hist. Franc.* 2.24–25, 34, 4.12 and *Vit. pat.* 3.1 for references to Sidon. *Epist.* 2.1, 3.3, 6.12, 7.1, 7.6 and 7.17) and possessed a copy of the now lost masses of Sidonius (*Hist. Franc.* 2.22); he also was familiar with the works of Avitus of Vienne (*Hist. Franc.* 2.34).

STEMMA OF INDIVIDUALS DISCUSSED



UPPER CASE: suggested identity
Dashed line: suggested relationship