

Aleksander Paradziński*

Sulpicius Alexander and the Soldier Historians of the Later Roman Empire

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jah-2023-0012>

Abstract: The focus of the article is the resemblance between the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus and Sulpicius Alexander, demonstrated by the selection and focus on the same kind of information, one that stems from an affinity of perspectives, shaped by similar professional experiences and social backgrounds, as well as intended audiences. The article explores the potential similarities between these two authors and another historian with a military background – Magnus of Carrhae. Inspecting these hypotheses facilitates in turn a reconsideration of the existing identification of Sulpicius Alexander proposed by Seeck and reiterated by Zecchini. In the conclusion it is postulated that examined cases are signs of a socio-cultural phenomenon of the soldier historians, which emerged in the Roman Empire of the fourth century CE, but ultimately died out due to political and societal changes, such as for example the disappearance of the professional military in the western part of the Roman Empire, which took place in the following century.

Keywords: Soldier historians, Latin historiography, Roman military, Later Roman Empire

In his note on Sulpicius Alexander in 1894, Seeck suggested possible identifications of the fourth-century CE historian, mentioned by Gregory of Tours, who quotes extracts from his work *Historiae*, with two individuals of the period. One of them was Alexander, a *praeses* of a province in the East, the other – a *tribunus et notarius* of the same name, who served under the usurper Magnus Maximus.¹ Seeck's hypothesis received little attention over the years, perhaps with the exception of Zecchini who reiterated it and speculated that Sulpicius Alexander's negative attitude towards Magnus Maximus and his commanders reflected his need to absolve himself

1 Seeck, "Sulpicius A." *RE* 1446. All dates in this article are CE unless otherwise noted.

***Corresponding author: Aleksander Paradziński**, University of Exeter, Classics, Ancient History, Religion and Theology, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ,
E-Mail: aleksander.paradzinski@wp.pl

of the stigma of supporting the usurpation.² This is not surprising given the identification was based merely on the similarity of the names of said individuals, while fragments of Sulpicius Alexander's historical work transmitted and discussed by Gregory of Tours contained no apparent biographical information of any kind. Most researchers focused on the stylistic and historiographical inspirations of Sulpicius' writings instead, giving up on the idea of establishing any biographical data for this historian. Tacitus and Sallust were both recognised as classical influences on Sulpicius Alexander's work; however, similarities with a contemporary panegyric by Latinus Pacatus Drepanius were also noted.³ Ammianus Marcellinus was another such suggested influence due to the similarities in the subject matter and framing of the historical material. This led Paschoud to insist on Sulpicius as Ammianus' continuator, who was later followed by another historian preserved fragmentarily in Gregory of Tours' writings, Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus.⁴

In this article, I argue that the resemblance between the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus and Sulpicius Alexander – demonstrated by the selection and focus on the same kind of information – stems from an affinity of perspectives, shaped by similar professional experiences and social backgrounds, as well as intended audiences. I am also going to explore the potential similarities between these two authors and another historian with a military background – Magnus of Carrhae. Inspecting these hypotheses through literary analysis and interpretation of surviving fragments of Sulpicius Alexander's work and other primary sources allows us in turn to reconsider the existing identification proposed by Seeck and reiterated by Zecchini, but also to draw further conclusions about the historiographic phenomenon of the fourth-century soldier historians postulated here. The conditions that contributed to its emergence and ultimate disappearance will be discussed in the final section of the article.

I Sulpicius Alexander's *Historia*

The sole surviving evidence of Sulpicius Alexander's oeuvre is the already mentioned *Historiae* by Gregory of Tours. The bishop of Tours cited long passages re-

² Zecchini (1993), 241–250 compares the alleged *tribunus et notarius* Sulpicius Alexander's situation in the aftermath of the Theodosian regime's victory over Magnus Maximus to that of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus.

³ Hansen (1982), 89–91; *contra* such stylistic influences, Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 83 n. 18. Humphries (1996), 173–174. Amm. Marc. 17.12.17 drew on Pacatus as well; *Pan. Lat.* 2.38.1; Kulikowski (2012), 82.

⁴ Paschoud (1998).

lated to the Franks extracted from Sulpicius' original work.⁵ Gregory's aim in quoting Sulpicius Alexander and a later historian of the first half of the fifth century, Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, is clear – the bishop of Tours attempted to collect the evidence for the origins and history of Frankish kingship up to the time of Clovis.⁶ He did not hide his confusion at the terminology used by both authors in describing Frankish leaders as *duces*, *regali*, *subregoli*, and *reges*.⁷ Quoting Sulpicius, Gregory passed on to us clauses connecting parts of the original narrative concerning the Franks to the rest of this historical account, revealing that these were in fact merely excursuses marginal to the main topic – the imperial politics, usurpations, and civil wars:

Because when he says that Maximus, having lost all hope of power, retreated to Aquileia like a fool, he adds: At that time, the Franks, who had Genobaudes, Marcomer, and Sunno as their commanders, invaded Germania, and, after having killed many people when they crossed the border, they laid waste to the most fertile districts and also menaced Cologne. When this news reached Trier, Nannienus and Quintinus, the *magistri militum* to whom Maximus had entrusted his son, still a child, and the defence of Gaul, raised an army and gathered in Cologne. [...] **But in the fourth book, when he narrates the execution of Victor, the son of the usurper Maximus, he says:** at that time Carietto and Sirus, replacing Nannienus, were stationed with their army in Germania to oppose the Franks. **And after a while, when the Franks had brought plunder from Germania, he added:** Arbogast, who did not want to

5 Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9 = Sulpicius Alexander, *Historia* F1–7 I follow the numbering of the fragments in Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 84–98. Though there is no direct evidence, the character of these quotes strongly suggests Gregory had access to them in his library at Tours. He referenced specific books from which he extracted citations.

6 There is a possibility that Gregory's use of Sulpicius Alexander went beyond quotations. Martinez Pizarro (2015) demonstrated that Gregory modelled elements of his narrative after some Late Antique authors. He shaped his description of the fall from grace of the count of Tours, Leudast, after Sidonius Apollinaris' depiction of the trial of the prefect of Gaul Arvandus. Martinez Pizarro postulates a similar source of inspiration for Gregory's accounts on Merovingian pretenders Gundovald, Munderic, and Sigulf. He argues these passages may have been influenced either by Amm. Marc.'s description of Procopius' usurpation or Pacatus' panegyric on Theodosius narrating the mental state of Magnus Maximus at the twilight of his usurpation. However, given similarities between Sulpicius Alexander's and Pacatus' account of Magnus Maximus' fall, noted by Humphries (1996), it is possible and even perhaps probable that Gregory took inspiration from Sulpicius Alexander, with whom he was familiar, rather than directly from Pacatus. For Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, see Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 99–130.

7 Fanning (2011) argued that Sulpicius Alexander deployed these Latin terms in their technical meaning, clearly lost by the time of Gregory of Tours. Familiarity with the more obscure political Latin terminology on kings and types of kingship among the Franks necessary to apply them in knowledgeable manner may be another indication of Sulpicius Alexander's background as a military official or a civil one whose duties involved dealings in frontier regions. Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 88–90 are much less definitive about the meaning and character of the terms.

delay anything, encouraged Caesar to enact the punishments that the Franks deserved, unless they immediately returned everything they had stolen from the slain legions the previous year and handed over those responsible for the war, who would be charged with the treasonous violation of the peace. He recounts that these things happened when there were commanders (duces); and then he says: after a few days, when a brief meeting was conducted with Marcomer and Sunno, the royal men of the Franks, and when, according to custom, hostages had been demanded, he retired into the winter quarters at Trier. [...] **While in the East various things were going on in Thrace, in Gaul public life was disrupted.**⁸

The geographical scope of Sulpicius' original work extended beyond Gaul's borders and included events in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.⁹ Chronological limits are more difficult to define, given the nature of Gregory's selection. The fact that the last quoted event is Eugenius and Arbogast's expedition to the Rhine and renewal of *foedus* with Frankish and Alammanic kings simply means that this was the very final mention of Frankish *reges* by Sulpicius Alexander. His work could have extended well into the fifth century but taken no further note of the subject matter of Gregory's interest. However, there are some indications of the chronological as well as thematic framework of Sulpicius' oeuvre.

Events marked as quoted from books 3 and 4 give us the idea on how extensive and lengthy they were in their original form. Citations describe military developments in great detail. They indicate that naming individual commanders, as well as relating the course of campaigns, battles, and skirmishes, even the marginal ones unfolding at the borders that parallel the main narrative about the civil war, were all characteristics of Sulpicius' *Historia*. The timespan of the fragmented books appears to be circa one to two years structured by seasons. Although Gregory's *Et post pauca* ("And after a while") indicates that Arbogast's handling of the Franks and

8 Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9. = Sulpicius Alexander, *Historia* F1-5: **Nam cum dicit, Maximum intra Aquileiam, amissam omnem spem imperii, quasi amentem resedere, adiungit:** *Eo tempore Genobaude, Marcomere et Sunnone ducibus Franci in Germaniam prorupere, ac pluribus mortalium limite inrupto caesis, fertiles maxime pagus depopulati, Agrippinensi etiam Coloniae metum incusserunt. [...] In quarto vero libro, cum de interfectione Victuris, filii Maximi tyranni, narraret, ait:* *Eo tempore Carietto et Sirius in locum Nanneni subrogati, in Germania cum exercitu opposito Francis diversabantur. Et post pauca, cum Franci de Germania praedas tulissent, adiecit:* *Nihil Arbogastis differre volens, commonet Caesarem poenas debetas a Francis exigendas, nisi universa, quae superiore anno caesis legionibus diripuerant, confestim restituerent auctorisque belli traderent, in quos violatae pacis perfidia poneretur. Haec acta, cum duces essent, retulit; et deinceps ait:* *Post dies pauculus, Marcomere et Sunnone Francorum regalibus transacto cursim conloquio imperatisque ex more obsidibus, ad hiemandum Treverus concessit. [...] Dum diversa in Oriente per Thracias geruntur, in Gallia status publicus perturbabatur.* Here and throughout the article I use Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b) as the most recent and entirely sufficient translation of Gregory.

9 Paschoud (1998), 314.

return to Trier under Valentinian II (F4) still belongs to book 4, making it cover events from late 388 to at least 390, the remaining material regarding Valentinian II's forced seclusion (F5) and Arbogast's military campaign against the Franks (F6) is distinctly set apart by Gregory's 'research' commentary on the terminology of kingship: *Cum autem eos regales vocet, nescimus, utrum reges fuerint, an in vices tenuerunt regnum. Idem tamen scriptor, cum necessitates Valentiniani agusti commemorat, haec adiungit* ("But although he calls them royal, we do not know whether they were kings, or whether they held power alternately. But the same writer, when mentioning the misfortunes of Valentinianus Augustus, adds the following") (F4-F5), implying it in fact belonged to a different book. So is the case for the passage describing Eugenius *foedus* with the Franks preceded by *Iterum hic, relictis tam ducibus quam regalibus, aperte Francos regem habere designat, huius que nomen praetermissum, ait ...* ("Then again, without mentioning either commanders (*duces*) or royal men, he openly states that the Franks had a king, but without giving his name, and he says ...") (F7). Valentinian stayed in Milan until 391 and only ended up under Arbogast's 'protection' when he was moved to Vienne in Gaul afterwards. Therefore, book 4 could hardly stretch beyond that year.

Although there was no strict rule about the number of books a history work would be divided into in Antiquity, there still existed conventions and tendencies that may indicate whether Sulpicius' *Historia* actually concluded with book 4, as believed to be the case by Paschoud, according to whom four books of *Historia* would span from 376/378 until circa 395.¹⁰ Ancient narrative histories were often composed of a number of books that were a multiplication of five or six.¹¹ The five or six books structure would be, therefore, more in line with the habits of ancient historians, unlike the four books postulated by Paschoud as part of his argument in favour of Sulpicius Alexander being Ammianus' continuator (see below). Even the unusual 31 books of Ammianus Marcellinus that could serve as an exception to push for Paschoud's hypothesis may differ from the historian's originally intended composition.¹² It is likely that Sulpicius Alexander's work followed that convention and was divided into at least five books. In such a case, the events leading to the next civil war and the conflict itself – a material of a little less than 3 years – were probably covered in book 5. This in turn may allow us to reconsider the time span narrated in the earlier books, the first and the second one, and the timeframe of the entire work.

The invasion of Italy by Magnus Maximus' in 387, Valentinian II's flight to the East, and the resulting civil war meant that the period of 387–389 abounded with

¹⁰ Paschoud (1998).

¹¹ Wölfflin (1886); Wachsmuth (1891).

¹² Kulikowski (2012).

material for a grand narrative. Earlier years were less eventful and dense with a subject matter for political history so books 1 and 2 could cover a lengthier period. With a plausible average of two to three years addressed in a single book, the beginning of Sulpicius' narrative could be placed in the early 380s. The most obvious choice of an event opening this narrative about civil wars would be Magnus Maximus' proclamation as the emperor and Gratian's death in 383. Such a beginning corresponds well to some of the themes included in the surviving fragments and the likely conclusion of Sulpicius' *Historia* with emperor Theodosius' triumph over Eugenius. It would be a history of usurpations quelled by that emperor.

Woudhuysen has suggested to me that the timeframe of Sulpicius Alexander's narrative proposed above would perhaps coincide with the ending of the period covered by the second edition or a continuation of Sextus Aurelius Victor's work the existence of which was recently postulated by him and Stover.¹³ That Sulpicius Alexander would be continuing Victor is indeed an intriguing possibility and one that would fit within the landscape of Latin historiography in the late fourth and early fifth centuries that is emerging as a result of Stover and Woudhuysen's study. If Victor's lost grand narrative did indeed hold the cultural significance they argue for (and I am convinced they are right in that regard), then Sulpicius Alexander undertaking a continuation of Victor rather than Ammianus Marcellinus, whose reception at the time appears rather limited in comparison, seems the more plausible of the two options.¹⁴ However, higher probability does not equate certainty and further exploration of that idea would necessitate a separate study that would account for the scholarly discussion that is bound to be initiated by the recent publication of Stover and Woudhuysen's monograph.

Gregory's use of Orosius in narrating Stilicho's handling of the Franks and the barbarian crossing of Rhine in 406 is a clue in defining the temporal confines of Sulpicius' narrative. As has been already pointed out by Paschoud, however, the strength of that evidence is limited given that Gregory cited only the passages that mentioned specifically Frankish kings and Sulpicius Alexander may have very well continued his narrative further, simply not mentioning in it what was of interest to Gregory.¹⁵ An important yet indirect indication of the end of Sulpicius Alexander's narrative is its intertextual inspiration, which may betray author's intent in composing the work. As argued convincingly by Humphries, Sulpicius' line about Max-

¹³ Stover and Woudhuysen (2023).

¹⁴ Though still noticeable: see Sánchez Vendramini (2018).

¹⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9; Zecchini (1993), 244–245 points to the use of Orosius as an argument against Frigeridus continuing Sulpicius Alexander's *Historia*. But Paschoud (1998) correctly ascertains that the mentions collected by Gregory are not in a chronological order, with quotation of Orosius placed after passages cited from both Sulpicius Alexander and Frigeridus.

imus remaining without hope and mentally deteriorating in Aquileia bears a striking resemblance to a panegyric delivered by Latinus Pacatus Drepanius in 389 in honour of the emperor Theodosius.¹⁶ This inspiration together with the hostility towards Magnus Maximus and his criticism of Quintinus in Sulpicius Alexander's work, may superficially appear to counter the identification of Sulpicius Alexander with Alexander, *tribunus et notarius* serving under Magnus Maximus, proposed by Seeck. However, hostility towards the usurper expressed by his former officer could be easily explained as a strategy for gaining favour with the Theodosian regime or/and "settling scores" with leadership that failed its men. Gregory did not note from which books the passages about Arbogast and Eugenius' usurpation originated.

Nevertheless, it is easy to envision a history of five or six books written with the purpose of praising the emperor Theodosius and his regime. It would have described his victorious wars against the two usurpers who were to blame for the death of Gratian and Valentinian and composed by a former official or a soldier of the first usurper, who, not unlike his contemporary and possible acquaintance Symmachus, sought to win favour with the emperor known for his affinity for history.¹⁷ Theodosius' affinity for history may be deduced from Nicomachus Flavianus' alleged dedication of his *Annales* to Theodosius stressed by Nicomachus' descendants (ILS 2984). Regardless of whether Flavianus did dedicate his work to the emperor or not in 431, Theodosius' interest in history was considered a fact.¹⁸ Another source that corroborates it is the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, which though recently proven to post-date Jordanes must reflect in the relevant passage a more contemporary tradition.¹⁹ Sulpicius Alexander's work may have been aiming at meeting assumed literary taste of the emperor. If he had been involved with Magnus Maximus regime, it would be one way to ingratiate himself with the house of Theodosius. A shift of attitude towards Magnus Maximus, similar to the one speculated by Zecchini and discussed here, is observable in works of another member of *gens Sulpicii* at the time – Sulpicius Severus. Could there be a connection between the two?

¹⁶ Humphries (1996), 173. It was not uncommon for material from panegyrics to be used by historians; see Omissi (2018), 65–66 on Amm. Marc. being influenced by Mamertinus, and p. 141 on Aur. Vict. reproducing claims of panegyrics against Maxentius.

¹⁷ For speculation about the possibility of identifying Sulpicius Alexander with *tribunus et notarius* seeking to illustrate his loyalty to the Theodosian dynasty in his *Historia*, see Zecchini (1993) and below for further discussion.

¹⁸ For sceptical presentation of the issue, see Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 39, 47–48; for an affirmative viewpoint, see Janiszewski (2023), 151–154.

¹⁹ *Epit. de Caes.* 48.11–12; Stover and Woudhuysen (2021).

II Sulpicius Alexander and Sulpicius Severus – a connection beyond names?

Sulpicius Severus, a Christian author and ascetic active at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, who originated from the elites of Aquitania and married into a consular family, pursued a career as an advocate before abandoning it for monastic life, is rarely mentioned when considering Sulpicius Alexander. Even though Sulpicius Severus shared with Sulpicius Alexander not only the *nomen gentilitium*, but also the interest in Magnus Maximus' usurpation, and was active most likely in the same generation. Sulpicius Severus' opinion towards Magnus Maximus and his usurpation is particularly interesting set next to that of Sulpicius Alexander, as it shifted in time and in this way was rather revealing of the views of the Gallic elites of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. In the earliest of Sulpicius Severus' works, *Vita Martini*, Magnus Maximus is presented negatively as *vir ferocis ingenii* who inspired undignified servility amongst bishops attending him (*V. Mart.* 20.1–3 and 8–9). In the later *Chronicle* image of this emperor is rather neutral, moving agency from him to bishops (*Chron.* 2.49.2 and 2.50.2). In *Dialogorum Libri Duo*, the latest of Sulpicius Severus' works, author adopts an apologetic tone, praising the emperor and his wife's piety and virtues. He argued Magnus Maximus would be risking his life if he did not accept the imperial acclamation. Sulpicius Severus claimed that the emperor was led astray by Ithacius and other bishops in the case of Priscilian. Magnus Maximus' greed was explained by the needs of the state bankrupted by his predecessors. Last, but not least, in *Dialogorum Libri Duo* Sulpicius Severus stressed the importance of Magnus Maximus' relationship with Martin of Tours, whereas in *Vita* he played it down (*Dial.* 2.6.2–3; 3.11.2, 8–11; 3.12.2, 4; 3.13.1). It appears with the passing of time, Sulpicius Severus felt more comfortable with sharing his real view of Magnus Maximus, giving lip service to the Theodosian propaganda in *Vita* published in 397, but rehabilitating the usurper in *Dialogorum libri duo*. It gives an interesting counterpoint to Sulpicius Alexander's depiction of Magnus Maximus in the context of his speculated alignment with the regime of that emperor prior to composing his historical work.

An argument in favour of a connection between Sulpicius Severus and Sulpicius Alexander, as well as the latter's ties to Gaul and the possibility of his work reflecting the official stance of the provincial elites at the time, is the dissemination of *Historia* itself. There are of course multiple ways in which this history work could have ended up in Gregory of Tours' book collection: he may have inherited it from his family in Clermont, he may have obtained it himself or it might have been a part of the episcopal library of Tours. In all these cases, the work – unknown anywhere else – would have circulated in Late Antique and Merovingian Gaul; in the last one,

it would have been stored in a city Sulpicius Severus had strong connections to – the seat of his hero, Martin of Tours. If the two Sulpicii were somewhat related, circulation of their works amongst the same social circles of Late Antique Gaul would be a possibility and explain Sulpicius Alexander's *Historia* in sixth-century Tours. Another piece of circumstantial evidence for that would be the Gallic perspective ascribed to Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, whose work was clearly used by Gregory of Tours next to that of Sulpicius Alexander and likely had similar patterns of circulation in sixth-century Gaul.²⁰

None of the other Late Antique Sulpicii can be decisively tied to Sulpicius Alexander in a convincing manner. A survey of the prosopographical material does offer some indications, even if of an indirect character, regarding the social background of this historian (see the Appendix). Sulpicii attested in this period do share some characteristics. Most of them can be identified or surmised to belong to the curial class. Much like Sulpicius Severus, who even though he became a close friend of a member of a senatorial class, Paulinus of Nola, and married into a consular family, likely belonged to the upper strata of the Aquitanian curial elites. This is suggested by his earlier legal career and his coming into great wealth only through his marriage.²¹ A later Sulpicius, a contemporary of Gregory of Tours, the bishop of Bourges Sulpitius Severus could be *vir valde nobilis et de primis senatoribus Galliarum*, a man of great nobility and descending from the most prominent senators of Gaul, but it seems the Sulpicii of the Later Roman Empire, even the ones in Gaul, by and large remained below the senatorial class, numbering amongst the *curiales*, governors and imperial officials of lower ranks.²² This is the likely background of Sulpi-

²⁰ Zecchini (1993), 241–250 postulated a “Gallo-Roman perspective” for both Sulpicius Alexander and Frigeridus, based on the interest and insight of both historians in the matters of the Rhine frontier. *Contra*, Paschoud (1998), who argued the substance of these fragments cannot be conclusive as Gregory's selection skews the evidence. Janiszewski (2023), 58–59 agrees to a degree with Zecchini that Frigeridus' attitude to political figures of the period (Constantine III, Jovian), particularly in regard to Aetius, reflects views held by Gallic elites of the time, which again suggests they were Frigeridus' intended audience and the social circles he had contacts with at the very least. Paschoud completely ignores this evidence in his dismissal of Zecchini.

²¹ *PLRE* 2:1006. Ghizzoni (1983), 57 argues that according to the sources “la famiglia di Sulpicio una delle più nobili e ricche dell'aristocrazia terriera gallo-romana”. However, while they certainly belonged to the elite, Sulpicius Severus' dependency on his mother-in-law Bassula, his earlier career as an advocate and achieving wealth only through his marriage, as attested and recognised by Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 5.5, appears to rule out membership of the senatorial aristocracy, pointing instead towards his social origin being from the local curial and landowning elite.

²² Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 6.39; also see Stroheker (1948), 220. The senatorial designation in the post-Roman Gaul is a complicated issue. Stroheker (1948), 115 and Brennan (1985), 145–161 point out that for Gregory, identifying someone as a ‘senator’ was conditioned by his descent from a senatorial family rather than particular wealth or position. Different views are represented by Kurth (1919), 2:97–115

cius Alexander himself based on the occurrence of his *nomen gentilicium*. Gaul may be tentatively pointed to as the most likely region of Sulpicius Alexander's origin and activity, given the transmission pattern of his work and potential connections to Sulpicius Severus. However, further evidence about his social background can be, in fact, inferred from Sulpicius Alexander's historical writing.

III A soldier's perspective

The thematic focus of Sulpicius Alexander's work is clear even in its fragmentary preserved state – the political turmoil of the late fourth-century Roman empire. In his selection of passages discussing Frankish kings and chiefs, Gregory of Tours transmitted for us glimpses of the main narrative, in which the Franks were incidental and even marginal. Sulpicius covered the civil wars of the 480s and 490s in the West, but clearly made some remarks on the politics in the East at the time, “While in the East various things were going on in Thrace, in Gaul public life was disrupted”.²³ This in itself is unremarkable and reflects some of the typical historiographic interests of Latin literature as well as its usual phrasing, but what is characteristic of Sulpicius' narrative is the perspective and details he provides us with. The description of Quintinus' campaign beyond the Rhine, in the wake of the victory at Silva Carbonaria, and the resulting battle at castellum Nivisium in 388 in Book 3 is full of topographic details suggesting intimate knowledge of the area, possibly gained first-hand (F1).²⁴

who assumed Gregory's ‘senators’ is a term synonymous with wealthy landowners and people of high position rather than one reserved solely for descendants of the imperial senators. Gilliard (1979), 685–697, who acknowledged that Kurth's philological argument went too far, still allowed for a greater degree of ambiguity of the term ‘senator’ and insisted Late Antique and Merovingian Gaul allowed for social mobility that was reflected in a large group of parvenus, who claimed senatorial rank on the grounds of their high social position. I am more convinced by Stroheker's and Brennan's arguments, but there is a possibility that some of those, whom the bishop of Tours counted among senators, had relatively short senatorial pedigrees dating back to the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Sulpitius Severus is likely such a case, given lack of *clarissimi* and *illustres* among earlier Gallic Sulpicii.

²³ Paschoud (1998), 314 n. 5. Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 93: *Dum diversa in Oriente per Thracias geruntur in Gallia status publicus perturbabatur*.

²⁴ Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 87–88 interpret the description of this expedition as intentionally reminiscent of the battle of the Teutoburg Forest. They admit there are no direct allusions, and the main evidence is the broad outlook of the narrative. Yet an arrogant commander leading his men into a disastrous defeat is not an entirely uncommon motif in Roman historiography. Even if Sulpicius Alexander alluded to Varus' ill-fated campaign his narrative does not seem to have relied too heavily on it.

At the break of dawn, they entered the forest for the battle with Quintinus in command. Around noon, they were completely lost, confused by their ignorance of the roads. At last, finding everything solidly closed off with enormous fences, they tried to clear a path to the marshy fields that lie next to the woods. Here and there enemies appeared who, secured to tree trunks or standing on barriers, as if from the tops of towers, threw arrows covered with poison made of herbs as missiles, so that wounds inflicted on the surface of the skin and not in vital places would undoubtedly lead to death. Then the army, encircled by a greater multitude of enemies, rushed hurriedly to the open ground of the fields, which the Franks had left accessible. And the first horseman plunged into the abyss, where bodies of men and animals were mixed up, and they were, in turn, all pushed down by the fall of their own [horses]. The infantrymen, too, who were not pushed down by the weight of their horses, got stuck in the mud, struggling to free their feet, and, scared, hid again in the woods that they had barely left moments ago. With the ranks thus in disarray, the legions were slaughtered. **Heraclius, tribune of the Joviniani, and almost everyone who commanded the soldiers, was killed, and the night and hiding places in the woods provided safe refuge for few.** This he tells in the third book of his *History*.²⁵

The criticism of how the campaign was conducted, commentary on tactics and placing its failure with Quintinus and the soldiers' foolishness may imply an emotional attitude stemming from either a personal involvement in this expedition or some kind of association through joint military service with officers engaged in it. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that if Sulpicius Alexander participated in said campaign, then he certainly did not employ the experience in the way Ammianus Marcellinus had instrumentalised autopsy as a narrative tool in his history.²⁶

However, there is a different, distinct trait that Sulpicius' prose shares with that of Ammianus. One that perhaps indicates that, much like Ammianus, Sulpicius Alexander had a military background: an interest in the battle losses of tribunes. Sulpicius Alexander not only included the information regarding the death of a tribune

25 Translation by Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b). Sulpicius Alexander, *Historia* F1: *Ac primo diluculo Quintino proelii duci ingressi saltus, in medium fere diem implicantes se erroribus viarum, toto pervagati sunt. Tandem cum ingentibus saeptis omnia a solido clause offendissent, in palustres campus, qui silvis iungebantur, prorumpere molientibus, hostium rare apparuere, qui coniuncti arborum truncis vel concidibus superstantes, velut e fastigiis turrium sagittas turmentorum ritu effudere inlitas herbarum venenis, ut summe cutis neque letalibus inflicta locis vulnera aut dubiae mortis sequerentur. Dehinc maiore multitudine hostium circumfusus exercitus, in aperta camporum, quae libera Franci reliquerant, avido effusus est. Ac primi equites voraginibus inmersi, permixtis hominum iumentorumque corporibus, ruinam invicem suorum oppraessi sunt. Pedites etiam, quos nulla onera equorum calcaverant, implicati limo, egre explecantes gressum, rursus se, qui paulo ante vix emergerant, silvis trepidantes occultabant. Perturbatis ergo ordinibus, caesae legionis. **Heraclio Iovinianorum tribuno ac paene omnibus qui militibus praerant extinctis, paucis effugium totum nox et latibula silvarum praestiterunt.** Haec in tertio Historiae libro narravit.*

26 Kelly (2008), particularly 65–103.

next to otherwise unspecified military leaders, who also fell during said battle, but named him and the unit he belonged to. He offers no further explanation on why Heraclius' death should be of particular interest to his audience, nor is there any indication that this tribune appeared in the remainder of the historical narrative that was preserved. It is unlikely that this oddity is a result of Gregory's intervention in the cited text – quoted passages served him to consider the historiographic material on the Franks, not Late Roman officers. This is a rather uncommon characteristic throughout Latin historiography, but one that, as already stated, Sulpicius shares with Ammianus Marcellinus, who reported such losses several times throughout his narrative: after an Alammanic ambush on Arbitio's troops; at the battle of Argentoratum; at the conclusion of the siege of Amida; over the course of Julian's campaign against Persia; and in skirmishes against the Goths preceding the battle of Adrianople, as well as in the battle itself.²⁷ In a number of cases Ammianus reported the names and the units of tribunes who fell in battle or were otherwise killed; this seems to have been done in a manner very similar to that of Sulpicius Alexander's mention of tribune Heraclius' demise. The question is whether we are dealing with an imitation or an independent development of a literary characteristic. A characteristic of their prose that would be conditioned by the military background of both authors.

Paschoud associated Ammianus Marcellinus with Sulpicius Alexander, speculating that the latter wrote a continuation of the historical narrative of the former.²⁸ However, if that was the case then there were no traces of that in Sulpicius' style, which is clear, concise and brief in contrast to Ammianus' more flowery writing.²⁹ It is also likely that the time that had passed between the composition of both works had been relatively brief. Ammianus finished his work before Valentinian II's death in 392, while there are reasons to believe Sulpicius' history did not deal with events beyond Theodosius' reign and was likely produced before his death in 395 or not long after.³⁰

Even if Sulpicius was inspired by Ammianus and took on his interest in battle losses of tribunes for no other reason than imitation, which taking into account the above mentioned considerations is rather unlikely, he would still require sources that could provide him with such specific information. The name of the tribune,

27 Amm. Marc. 15.4.8; 16.12.63; 19.9.2; 24.3.1; 24.5.8; 25.6.3; 31.5.9; 31.13.18.

28 Paschoud (1998), 313–316.

29 Hansen (1982), 90. See also Zecchini (1993), 244, who argues that the difference in titles of both works suggests lack of a connection, to which Paschoud (1998) responded with a comparison to two continuations with differing titles: Amm. Marc. of Tac. and Eunap. of Dexippos. However, the hypothesis of Amm. Marc. continuing Tac. is not an uncontested one: see, e.g., Wilshire (1973).

30 Cameron (2012), 337–358; see also above.

Heraclius, and that of the unit, *legio Ioviniani*, is a very specific piece of detail placed next to a generalisation about other officers, who died in this battle: *paene omnibus qui militibus praeerant extinctis* (F1). Woods plausibly identified this legion as *legio Ioviani*, which usually operated in unison with *legio Herculiani*.³¹ These elite troops were originally established by Diocletian and are attested in multiple sources well into the fifth century when both legions are listed under the command of *comes Italiae*.³² Woods assumed that the *legio Ioviani* in question would be the *seniores* branch rather than *iuniores*, though he did not quite formulate the reasoning for his supposition. Wood's identification is followed by Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen in their commentary on the fragments of Sulpicius Alexander's narrative, but frankly may not be correct.³³

Yet the element of unit identification that is truly relevant for analysing Sulpicius Alexander's prose is not the ambiguous *seniores-iuniores* designation, but the very qualification of *legio Ioviani* as a palatine legion. The elite status of this unit explains why it and its tribune were singled out and mentioned by name in the historian's report on Roman battle losses, while deaths of other commanders who perished in the same clash were reported only in general, collective terms. Distinguishing the death of an elite palatine legion tribune at the hands of Franks served to emphasise the scale of this defeat. It also showed the interest of the author and

³¹ Woods (1995), 61–68.

³² Woods (1995), 65 n 7.

³³ Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020b), 87 n. 42. One indication in favour of Wood's assumption would be the already mentioned presence of *legio Ioviani seniores* in Italy in the 420s. However, Wood's interpretation also depends on a scholarly theory that is somewhat doubtful. Hoffmann (1969), 1.117–130 and Tomlin (1972) with minor differences hypothesised that the division of units into *seniores* and *iuniores* originated from the partition of the army conducted by the emperor Valentinian I and Valens. *Seniores* units would be allocated to the senior emperor Valentinian and travelling West, while *iuniores* remained with Valens, the junior emperor, and remained in the East. In accordance with this theory *legio Ioviani seniores* would be the more likely troop to find in the West, under Magnus Maximus. However, Drew-Bear (1977), 257–274 published an inscription from Nakolea illustrating that *seniores* and *iuniores* distinction was in use for military units as early as 356. Scharf (1991), 265–272 questioned Hoffmann and Tomlin's theory. He pointed out that even though the *Not. Dig.* offers evidence for the East and West from different periods, correspondingly 390s and 420s, it still suggests a parallel existence of units of the same name and designation in both regions of the Empire, with no clear pattern of *seniores-iuniores* signifying the West-East divide. This is exemplified, amongst other cases, by *legio Fortenses*, which appears as one of the *legiones comitatenses* in the West (there are in fact two such legions in the West: *Not. Dig. occ.* V 76.225, VII 130 and V 106–255, VII 152), but is listed as a *legio palatina* in the East (*Not. Dig. or.* V 5.45), Scharf (1991), 271 n. 57. The traditional view would require a demotion of a palatine legion and its transfer to the West to accommodate for this, but that seems highly unlikely, see Kulikowski (2000), 370–371. This theory is still accepted by some, see Lenski (2002), 32–33.

elements of his expected audience in specific commanders of the units that constituted the elite even amongst the Imperial field army – their likely social network.

The combination of precise and generalised data runs in a similar fashion to the way that Ammianus reports battle losses.³⁴ There are several cases in which he notes deaths of tribunes in battle, sometimes providing his audience with a precise number (Amm. Marc. 15.4.8; 24.3.1; 31.13.18). There are a few mentions of lost tribunes by name, some of them commanded palatine units, much like Sulpicius Alexander's Heraclius: Bainobaudes, tribune of Cornuti (*auxilia palatina* according to the *Not. Dig.*) at Argentoratum; Iulianus, Macrobius, and Maximus in a clash with Persians during the Roman return from Julian's Persian expedition of 363; Potentius, tribune of Promoti (*vexillatio palatina*), who was the son of Ursicinus and therefore someone to whom Ammianus had a personal connection.³⁵ The passage concerning Iulianus, Macrobius and Maximus merits a short additional commentary. Deaths of these three tribunes are also reported by Zosimos: Ἀπέθανον δὲ καὶ Ῥωμαίων τρεῖς λοχαγοὶ γενναίως ἀγωνισάμενοι, Ἰουλιανὸς καὶ Μαξιμιανὸς καὶ Μακρόβιος (3.30.4). This raises an obvious question on how truly characteristic of a soldier-historian's perspective, which I am proposing, is the inclusion of the tribunes' deaths? Zosimos does not belong to the discussed category of historians of a military background, yet he still reports the same piece of information in a similar manner to Ammianus. However, neither Zosimos nor what remains of his main source – Eunapios' *Universal History* – account for that kind of details (tribunes' deaths, describing involvement of specific units) anywhere else outside the part of the narrative on Julian's expedition against Persia. Even in the case of Tribigild's rebellion in Phrygia, of which Eunapios had personal knowledge and could possibly provide that sort of details, Zosimos' narrative only mentions the death of Roman commander Leo (5.17.2; see below for further discussion).

In the case of Iulianus, Macrobius, and Maximus it is difficult to attribute specific units to them. They were mentioned in the context of involvement of *legiones Ioviani* and *Herculiani* in the battle, but also *Iovii* and *Victores*, called by Ammianus *legiones*, but in *Notitia dignitatum* listed as *auxilia palatina* (*Not. Dig. or.* 5.28, *occ.* 6.44). This gives the impression of the kind of knowledge obtained first-hand or through witnesses, rather than any official records. Sulpicius' access to similar kinds of information and his use of it reveals the character of the network he may

³⁴ Amm. Marc. 15.4.8; 16.12.63; 19.9.2 24.3.1; 24.5.8; 25.6.3; 31.5.9; 31.13.18.

³⁵ Amm. Marc. 16.12.63; 25.6.3; 31.13.18. Hanaghan and Woods (2022), 6 aptly observed that Potentius is the sole named tribune of the 35 tribunes who perished at the battle of Adrianople according to Amm. Marc. One could even argue that Amm. Marc. not only singled him out, but purposefully neglected to name any other, though surely he must have known by name at least some of them, in order to focus on Ursicinus' son.

have possessed. The interest in the final fate of tribunes shared with Ammianus also speaks to a perspective focused on military matters, one stemming from an understanding of the function of the mid-rank officers but also from a personal attitude towards men in that role and a desire to recognise their deaths.³⁶ Tribunes were an important element of the Roman imperial war machine in the middle of the command structure.³⁷ Oftentimes those chosen for the more prominent commands originated from among the *protectores* and therefore belonged to the elite of the Roman military.³⁸ Ammianus' understanding of this reality originating from his military background is expressed through the attention to the group and individual losses of tribunes.³⁹ Tribunes are the most often mentioned kind of Roman officers in Ammianus' narrative and their prominence in the narrative corresponds to the passages describing the time of Ammianus' active duty, diminishing in the later parts of his history.⁴⁰

Sulpicius Alexander seemingly shared such sensibilities. This is of course based merely on the material that was preserved via Gregory of Tours. F1 is the only fragment of Sulpicius Alexander's narrative to include that level of detail and it would be easy to dismiss the mention of tribune Heraclius' death as coincidental. Doing so, however, would require us to presuppose Sulpicius Alexander included that piece of information for no good reason. The passage offers no indication that Heraclius appeared in the earlier parts of the narrative nor does it immediately elaborate on his particular significance. One can only surmise that his interest is based on his command of an elite, palatine unit. If Sulpicius Alexander had been himself uninterested in such a detail or assumed it to be unwanted by his audience, but aimed to stress the magnitude of Roman losses, he could have used many other conventional literary devices to do so. The preserved material reveals Sulpicius Alexander as a fairly competent and intentional author. It is therefore more plausible to conceive of this element of the discussed passage as evidence for the type of information repeatedly included throughout the narrative. It would have a relevance within the

³⁶ Den Boeft, et al. (2002), 163 in a commentary to Amm. Marc. 24.5.9. They also consider Amm. Marc.'s background as a Roman officer as what preconditioned him to mention such details.

³⁷ Dixon and Southern (2014), 61 depending on the type of unit they belonged to, that title may have signified a different rank.

³⁸ Dixon and Southern (2014), 14.

³⁹ Harrel (2016), 121.

⁴⁰ Vogler (1995), 394. Whately (2022), 147 differs slightly, noting that tribunes are nearly as present in Amm. Marc.'s narrative as *magistri* and *duces*. The difference between these two perspectives perhaps stems from the fact that unlike *magistri* and *duces* tribunes are also mentioned in passing or as casualties. For the discussion of other idiosyncrasies of Amm. Marc.'s otherwise conventional narrative relating to his military background, see Lendon (2022).

context of the entire work, one that it somewhat lacks if only treated as a peculiar element of the passage pertaining to Quintinus' defeat.

Including tribunes in historical narrative in such a way hardly has a precedent in extant Latin historiography. The closest analogy may be found in Caesar's late Republican historical commentaries. Some late Republican centurions played a comparable tactical role on the battlefield to that of Late Imperial tribunes. The most senior centurion of the cohort commanded this tactical unit numbering 600 men roughly similar to the effective size of Late Antique *auxilia* (400–1200) or *legiones* (800–1200). Although Caesar mentions individual centurions by name in a number of instances, it is within the context of them conducting daring actions, not as Sulpicius Alexander or Ammianus Marcellinus do in reporting deaths of earlier unmentioned tribunes in their narratives (see, e.g., *BGall.* 3.5; 5.44; *BCiv.* 2.35). In fact, the only time Caesar accounts for the death of a centurion is in a case of a certain Caesarian centurion named Fabius attempting to kill Publius Attius Varus during the retreat of Pompeian forces during one of the skirmishes in Africa in 49 BC and dying in the process (*BCiv.* 2.35). In all the remaining cases of centurions' deaths, only numbers are given, serving as a narrative device to illustrate the gravity of skirmishes and battles (*BGall.* 6.40; 7.51; *BCiv.* 3.67; 3.71; 3.99). Ammianus Marcellinus, on the other hand, mentions the names of lost tribunes and their units for no apparent narrative reason other than relating the very fact. Sulpicius Alexander's mention of tribune Heraclius' death seems to be of the same kind, with no reference to earlier appearance of said Roman officer in Sulpicius' narrative. The similarity between Caesar's narrative and that of Ammianus and Sulpicius in this regard is therefore only superficial. This peculiar trait appears to be a new development in the Latin historiographic literature.

One could point to many other ancient authors who had military experience that they drew upon in their histories: Xenophon, Polybios, Velleius Paterculus and Arrian to name just a few. None of them, however, belonged to a fully professionalised cadre of soldiers. Military service was simply a stage of their public careers. Therefore, it is unsurprising that such authors and their audiences demonstrated little concern in reporting the kind of information about individual officers that could be possibly of interest to other members and former members of an officer cadre of the fully professional military of the Later Roman Empire. There are instances in the writing of Xenophon of reports of injuries to mid-ranking officers without such details having an obvious role in his narrative that could be compared to Sulpicius Alexander and Ammianus' works.⁴¹ Indeed Xenophon's experience as a "mercenary" could be perhaps likened in certain ways to that of a professional offi-

⁴¹ Xen., *An.* 7.4 on injuries of Hieronymos and Theogenes and 7.8 on the wounding of Agasias.

cer in the Later Roman military. However, there is little indication that Xenophon served as a direct model for Ammianus and other writers of his era.⁴²

The role of reporting tribunes' battle deaths for the portion of Ammianus' audience, significance for the author himself as well as the very access to that sort of information is consistent with his military background. It cannot be overstated how brimming with details on military matters and personalia Ammianus' narrative is. As noted by Woods, Ammianus did not aim to offer a thorough examination of the organisation and practice of the Roman army as an institution, nor did he intend to narrate histories of specific units.⁴³ Nevertheless, his work facilitates many modern studies of particular aspects of the Late Roman army, for example allowing us to put together lists of commanders of elite units of *scholae palatinae* or examining the roles of officers of different ranks not only just on the field of battle, but also within the broader structure of the imperial government.⁴⁴ It is difficult to find a comparable perspective and selection of information in any other earlier extant Roman history work. Yet was Ammianus Marcellinus and his history truly unique or perhaps a case of a broader phenomenon? Is Ammianus' example sufficient to draw conclusions in regard to Sulpicius Alexander's professional experiences and social networks? Pieces of the narrative of yet another "soldier historian" – Magnus of Carrhae – serve to strengthen these suppositions.

IV Magnus of Carrhae

Magnus of Carrhae is perhaps best known from John Malalas' *Chronographia*, which contains quotations of his work in part of the narrative devoted to emperor Julian's Persian campaign (13.21–23). The fourth-century author described said military expedition in detail drawing on his own experiences as a participant (13.21). His identification with the tribune Magnus, who during the course of the campaign heroically stormed Maiozamalcha through an underground tunnel, is not an uncontested one, but appears to be the still dominant view in the field.⁴⁵ Even if Magnus

⁴² Williams (2022).

⁴³ Woods (1997), 269.

⁴⁴ Vogler (1995); Woods (1997), 269.

⁴⁵ For the summary of the entire argument, see Janiszewski (2006), 125–129. For the point of view in favour of the identification, see Fornara (1991), 14–15; against the traditional identification, see Thompson (1947), 31. Bleckmann (2017), 125–126 does not necessarily question the identification itself, but undermines one of the arguments in favour of it, while – in a sense – reinforcing the identification as such. He argues against Amm. Marc.'s and Zos. dependency on Magnus of Carrhae work and their inclusion of the Maiozamalcha episode as evidence for it, by pointing out that a fragment erroneously

was not the tribune in question, a military background of this participant of Julian's campaign is readily apparent.⁴⁶

The characteristics of Magnus' work that can be inferred on the basis of surviving citations are terminological archaization, suggestive of a Classical education and inspiration from Classical models, and a very detailed narrative including toponyms, emperor's speeches, names of individual commanders, credible numbers of soldiers involved in the campaign and even engagements of specific units.⁴⁷ These are reminiscent of Ammianus Marcellinus' selection of details and, to an extent, the ones provided by Sulpicus Alexander. However, none of the fragments of the work of Magnus of Carrhae transmitted by John Malalas contain the distinct characteristic of both Sulpicius and Ammianus: the reporting of individual tribunes' deaths. The presence of such a piece of data in Magnus' work would further corroborate that such a selection of information is indeed conditioned by the military experience and service of the author.

Nonetheless, there is a piece of evidence that may suggest Magnus' description of Julian's expedition against Persia did in fact include such details. The already quoted passage of Ammianus Marcellinus concerning deaths of Julian, Macrobius and Maximus in a battle with Persians bears striking resemblance to that found in Zosimos' *Historia Nova*, differing only slightly in the order of listed tribunes and form of one of their names (Maximianus instead of Maximus).⁴⁸ The common source of Zosimos (through Eunapios) and Ammianus is nearly a matter of an academic consensus.⁴⁹ What is, however, a contested issue is the character of that source.

attributed to Eunapios actually elevates the efforts of tribune Magnus to a greater degree than Amm. Marc.'s and Zos. version, therefore making Magnus as their source the least likely option.

⁴⁶ John Malalas 13.23 sets an account of another author, Eutychianos, against Magnus' version of the emperor Julian's death. He specifically calls him a "ὁ χρονογράφος ... στρατιώτης ὢν καὶ βικάριος τοῦ ἰδίου ἀριθμοῦ τῶν Πρῖμοαρμενιακῶν". Eutychianos is attested as a soldier chronograph, but there is some doubt about the veracity of Malalas' reference: see Jeffreys (2006), 181, and the evidence is too scarce to include him in this discussion in a meaningful way. However, even if Eutychianos was merely a creation of Malalas' imagination, this still demonstrates that to the Late Antique literary audiences a former soldier could be as good of a historical author as any other.

⁴⁷ Janiszewski (2006), 125; John Malalas 13.21 in a manner resembling Amm. Marc.'s reporting of operations of pairs of units, Magnus recorded the involvement of *lanciarrii* and *mattiarrii* in a river crossing.

⁴⁸ Amm. Marc. 25.6.3: *in laevo proelio viri periere fortissimi, Iulianus et Macrobius et Maximus legionum tribuni*; Zos. 3.30.4: Ἀπέθανον δὲ καὶ Ῥωμαίων τρεῖς λοχαγοὶ γενναῖός τε ἀγωνισάμενοι, Ἰουλιανὸς καὶ Μαξιμιανὸς καὶ Μακρόβιος. Klein (1914), 126–127 listed these passages as F74 of his proposed new fragments of Magnus of Carrhae (see below). I would not go so far; but Magnus of Carrhae could still be the common source behind this particular piece of information.

⁴⁹ With a notable exception of Fornara (1991), who argues that similarities between the two are merely the result of Julian's expedition itinerary and details of the war being too widely known to be

Engaging thoroughly in this discussion exceeds the subject of this article, but a broad description of existing positions is not out of order.⁵⁰ The two main proposed identifications name either Oreibasios of Pergamon or Magnus of Carrhae as the common sources of Eunapios/Zosimos and Ammianus Marcellinus.⁵¹ A more recent hypothesis proposed by Bleckmann is based on a model of complex literary relationships in which authors derive their material from many sources engaging in a wider historiographic discussion between each other.⁵² According to his hypothetical stemma of textual relationships, that he describes as more of an illustration of his model rather than a reconstruction, the common “branch” of an influence of Ammianus Marcellinus and Eunapios/Zosimos would be Nicomachus Flavianus, Oreibasios, and, finally, the diary of Philagrios. Philagrios was a participant of the campaign and Libanios’ addressee, who would also be the source for Magnus of Carrhae. However, no direct relation between Eunapios/Zosimos’ histories and that of Magnus of Carrhae would exist within this model.

A definite solution to this problem is certainly out of reach with the current evidence. However, Oreibasios as a source of the piece of information on the tribunes’ death, which is of interest to our topic, is the less likely candidate. Eunapios’ testimony on his composition presents it as a *ὑπόμνημα* written for the sole purpose of assisting him in working on his history (F15). There is little to suggest his work was known to contemporary authors beyond Eunapios himself and any later evidence for it appears to be dependent on the transmission of Eunapios.⁵³ That attestation also describes the work as biographical in nature with focus on the deeds of Julian, rather than details of his campaign against Persia and military matters. Finally, the narrative of Zosimos based on Eunapios’ shows little interest in details such as battle losses of tribunes, the only such mention belonging to the part of his narrative on the Persian campaign. This raises the question – would Oreibasios in-

distorted in a significant manner. Bleckmann (2017), 120 rather soberly points out that Fornara hardly refuted the evidence collected and analysed by Sudhaus (1870) in favour of the hypothesis of a common source.

50 A summary of that discussion can be found in Janiszewski (2006), 127–129, 388–389.

51 A major proponent of Magnus as that source was Klein (1914), 58–134, going as far as listing 81 new fragments of Magnus on the basis of comparison between Amm. Marc.’s and Zos.’ narratives as well as Lib.’s work. Jacoby, *FGrH* 2:633–638 disparagingly rejected Klein’s evidence, but clearly believed in some relationship between Magnus’ work and that of Amm. Marc. and Zos.; Thompson (1947), 28–33; Matthews (1989), 163–164 allowed for Magnus to be a supplemental source for Eunapios, but deemed it unprovable and excluded a possibility for Zos. to have used that source on his own. See Chalmers (1960) who favours Oreibasios.

52 Bleckmann (2017), 127.

53 Janiszewski (2006), 385–387.

clude such information in a collection of notes intended for his friend, who demonstrated indifference towards such details?

The exclusion of Oreibasios does not immediately mean the piece of information noted both by Zosimos and Ammianus originated from the history of Magnus of Carrhae. Given the characteristics of his work known through John Malalas' citation, however, he remains the most likely source for this information. He was, after all, the author interested in individual commanders and specific units operating during Julian's campaign. If such is the case, then his work shared with Ammianus Marcellinus and Sulpicius Alexander the very same characteristic discussed above.

V *Literati* in arms

Ammianus Marcellinus and Magnus of Carrhae were by no means the only cases of (ex)soldiers displaying both literary ambitions and skills necessary for composing such works in this period. It seems the final separation of military and civil elites ushered in by Constantine's reforms created a societal landscape from which a new group of Late Antique literary authors and audiences came to be.⁵⁴ In the fourth and fifth centuries there are a few cases either of *literati*, who used to be soldiers, or of men in active military service, who exercised skill and literary talent or were assumed to possess such. *Magister equitum* Promotus had been requested by the famous fourth-century rhetorician Libanios to write an account of the emperor Theodosius' war against Magnus Maximus himself or have someone in his retinue to do it in his stead (*Ep.* 867). Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen ascribe to Libanios an assumption of the existence of a 'report' of that war in line with their own category of a 'report' as a kind of official dispatch.⁵⁵ However, Libanios' statement, ἡ φωνὴ δὲ ἔστω σὴ τοῦ μηδὲν τῶν πεπραγμένων ἀγνοοῦντος μήτε μείζον μήτε ἔλαττον, "but let your voice be not one ignorant of any action, neither greater nor lesser," should be rather interpreted as one indicating that he asks for composition of such a work rather than presupposes its existence. Though the letter expressing this request is not specific on the character of the work, the description of it as a favour (χάρις) not just to Libanios, but to the emperor Theodosius himself, implies something more than just an epistolary report – a literary piece that could be circulated further. That Libanios expected Promotus to be capable of composing this potential Ὑπόμνημα or have someone in his retinue who could do so demonstrate that military men were seen as potential authors, who possessed rudimentary skills for the task.

⁵⁴ Jones (1964), 1:100–101.

⁵⁵ Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020a), 407, LXIII–LXIV.

Attesting the existence of capable writers amongst the Later Roman military is another case – Victricius of Rouen. The bishop of Rouen's reason for fame among modern scholars is his only surviving work, a sermon *De laude sanctorum*. Composed for the occasion of introducing to Rouen relics given to the bishop by Ambrose of Milan, this text displayed familiarity with such works as Cicero's *Pro Caelio* and Porphyry's Εἰσαγωγή through its allusions and references, as well as standard philosophical arguments betraying the rhetorical education of its author.⁵⁶ As reported by Paulinus of Nola, prior to his clerical career Victricius served as a soldier, likely during the reign of the emperor Julian (*Ep.* 18.7). If Paulinus' account is to be trusted, Victricius was a military man of low enough rank to answer to a tribune. However, given that bishop of Nola aimed to pen a laudatory confessor-story about his addressee that, according to his own admission, he barely knew, the accuracy of his description is somewhat questionable. Regardless of that, Victricius is evidence of an (ex)military man of a rhetorical education and literary skill. Such individuals were certainly not unheard of in the following decades.

Flavius Merobaudes, originating from a family with military traditions, combined his own military career at the side of Late Roman 'generalissimo' Aetius with composing encomiac poetry for the benefit of his patron and commander (*PLRE* 2:756–758). The inscription accompanying a statue erected in his honour by the emperor and senate in the Forum of Trajan praised him both for his strength and learning, focusing on this combination of literary and military skills (*CIL* VI 1724). He was not an isolated case even among Aetius' retinue. Quintianus, a soldier and a poet of a Ligurian origin, accompanied Aetius in his Gallic campaigns and wrote poetry praising him as well. An anonymous author from a similar milieu wrote compositions of a seemingly comparable type for the rival of Aetius – Bonifatius.⁵⁷ All three were celebrated and praised by Sidonius Apollinaris in one of his poems (*Carm.* XI 277–301). Seemingly, they were perceived as part of the same phenomenon already in the subsequent generation. Although their literary production had little in common with classically understood historiography beyond the subject of military conflicts and actors involved in those, yet it again illustrates the presence of capable *literati* among the Late Roman military men and their inclination to repurpose traditional literary genres for their group's needs and sensibilities.

This short survey demonstrates that the Roman military of the late fourth and early fifth centuries did not lack for men capable of producing literary compositions, which would imply that they could find at least a portion of their audience

⁵⁶ Clark (2001), 174–176; Gemeinhardt (2016), 108.

⁵⁷ For both Quintianus and Anonym and the possibility of them composing historical epics, see Janiszewski (2023), 244–247, 248–249.

among the active and former military men as well. Sulpicius Alexander's prose strongly indicates that he was such an author, demonstrating knowledge and sensibility that would resonate with other soldiers. Does this evidence support or rule out Seeck and Zecchini's hypothesis on identifying Sulpicius Alexander with the addressee of Symmachus – *tribunus et notarius* Alexander?

VI Sulpicius Alexander – *tribunus et notarius* of Magnus Maximus?

The point of concern Zecchini focused on with his identification is the critical view of Magnus Maximus and some of his commanders. The hostility towards the usurper echoing the Theodosian propaganda, as pointed out by Humphries, is at first glimpse somewhat problematic given *tribunus et notarius* Alexander's involvement with Magnus Maximus' regime. However, Zecchini correctly argues that disavowal of the usurper would be entirely fitting for a former official who tried to overcompensate by exhibiting loyalty to the winning side of the civil war.⁵⁸ The already discussed case of the shifting attitude in Sulpicius Severus' writings is perhaps a better illustration of concealed views of Maximian's supporters in the aftermath of Theodosius' victory. In his *Vita Martini* composed in 397, Sulpicius Severus presented Magnus Maximus as a usurper, who had a corrupting influence on bishops, only to adopt a more neutral stance in his *Chronicle* and eventually a eulogistic and apologetic one in his *Dialogues*.⁵⁹ This likely reflected the real widespread attitudes of Gallic elites and officials towards the emperor, whose base of support was in Gaul. The hostile tone of Sulpicius Alexander's *Historia* and references to the imperial propaganda would be entirely suitable if he had been part of Magnus Maximus' regime and sought to distance himself from that usurpation in the eyes of Theodosius' establishment. The vivid criticism of Quintinus' arrogance and incompetence, while presenting Nannienus as the more prudent of the *magistri militum*, implies some familiarity with military officials in Magnus Maximus' service and his own personal views of them, which would fit well with former involvement with that regime (Sulpicius Alexander, *Historia* F1).

What is, however, problematic about this identification in light of the military background argued here is the civil character of the office of *tribunus et notarius*.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Zecchini (1993), 245.

⁵⁹ Sulpicius Seveverus, *V. Mart.* 20.1–3, 8–9; *Chron.* 2.49.2, 2.50.2; *Dial.* 2.6.2–3; 3.11.2, 8–11; 3.12.2, 4; 3.13.1. See above for more details.

⁶⁰ Groß-Albenhausen, "Tribunus et notarius" *BNP*.

As high-ranking members of *schola notariorum*, *tribuni et notarii* had little to do with military matters, as they were usually sent on diplomatic missions next to their administrative duties. The only attested cases of involvement of *tribuni et notarii* with the military in the fourth century are instances of overseeing redeployment of troops, distribution of payment or inspecting Roman commanders' conduct.⁶¹ Although such an official could potentially have an opinion on Nannienus and Quintinus' handling of the Rhine campaign and access to the information on it either through official channels or through his own network, his interest in tribune Heraclius' death in a history penned by him would be puzzling. Another issue is that the Alexander known from Symmachus' letter is said to have been in service earlier to Valentinian II, which means that just like Symmachus, who probably knew him from his time as *praefectus urbi*, he only became part of Magnus Maximus' usurpation after the latter's invasion of Italy in 386/7 (Symm. *Ep.* 5.39). He would be part of the Italian administration and likely have little to do with the Rhine frontier that Sulpicius Alexander was so clearly familiar with. The identification suggested by Seeck and upheld by Zecchini solely based on the matching *cognomen* is therefore impossible set next to the argument presented here.

VII The phenomenon of soldier historians

Considering all the evidence, it would seem that Sulpicius Alexander was a former soldier, possibly aligned in some form with the regime of Magnus Maximus, likely originating from the provincial, curial elites of Gaul (see the Appendix). If this hypothesis about Sulpicius Alexander's military background and the military portion of the audience his work was meant for is correct, then there are at least three Roman historians of military background active in the second half of the fourth century, two of them composing in Latin in the final decades of that century. Such a concentration of a literary activity, historical works sharing otherwise unique characteristics, conducted by authors of seemingly similar professional experiences and social backgrounds, should be considered a cultural phenomenon emerging from the social realities of the Later Roman Empire. These were elite professional military men, who were educated well enough to participate in and appreciate the lit-

⁶¹ Amm. Marc. 20.4.2-11: Decentius sent by Constantius II to supervise the transfer of troops from Julian to the East; Amm. Marc. 28.6.12: Palladius was to distribute *donativum* to soldiers in Tripolitani; Amm. Marc. 28.6.17-22: he also inspected the conduct of *comes Africae* Romanus. Castillo (2004) is sceptical even of these passages as the evidence for an office of a *tribunus et notarius*, seeing in these cases a conflation of two functions rather than attestations of *tribuni et notarii* in action, which is perhaps too extreme of a position.

erary culture of the traditional Roman elite yet constituted now a group clearly defined by their career limits. Their interests in other individuals of military profession, including military tribunes, specific units and so on were provided for and reflected in history works of authors sharing their sensibilities and social background.

At the same time, writing a historical work that had any chance of becoming appreciated by Late Antique audiences enough to go beyond the initial circulation and survive until today, at least in a fragmentary form or as a mention, required a level of Classical education not necessarily possessed by most Roman military men. In the three discussed cases, there are indications of such an intersection of a military career and an earlier social background that would usually go hand in hand with an education needed for composing works of history. The fact that Magnus had been known by his city of origin rather than a rank or any other moniker may perhaps imply a civic background and self-identification with its characteristic of belonging to the curial class, which would correspond well with the literary skill and familiarity with Classical historiographic model displayed by him. The archaising style found in the fragments of his work suggests a relatively high level of education as well.⁶² The Antiochean origin of Ammianus, alleged on the belief he was the addressee of Libanios' letter, is currently in doubt. However, his curial background remains the most plausible of his proposed origins.⁶³ The seeming prevalence of the curial class amongst the bearers of the *nomen gentilicium* Sulpicius in the third and fourth centuries may in fact indicate a similar civic background of Sulpicius Alexander. These authors and their works were very much the product of the socio-cultural conditions unique to the fourth-century Roman Empire.

However, acknowledging the existence of this phenomenon leads us to another question – why there is no trace of later authors and works of that kind? The disappearance of this burgeoning strain of narrative political histories created by soldiers and, at least partially, for other soldiers in the Latin West, would be dependent on the same factors that made its development possible in the first place. The regionalisation of the Imperial professionalised military class, a social group that pro-

⁶² Janiszewski (2006), 125.

⁶³ Fornara (1992) convincingly argued against Amm. Marc.'s relationship with Lib. and approached the curial origin of the historian with a dose of scepticism. Kulikowski (2012), 81–82, 91–92 stresses the evident textual relationship and, on that basis, is much more accommodating to the idea of Amm. Marc.'s civic background and Antiochean origin, but remains sceptical of a close association between these two authors, unlike Sabbah (1978), 243–292, whose evidence for textual engagement he follows. Sabbah constructs his entire analysis of the textual relationship between Amm. Marc. and Lib. on the assumption that the former was the latter's correspondent and friend. However, the material collected by him hardly proves that connection on its own if studied without that presumption.

vided this subgenre of historiography with both authors and an important portion of its audience, decreased incentives for composing histories of that type such as advancing one's career and social standing within the hierarchy of the Empire. The same process lowered the chances of circulation of such works beyond the network of immediate recipients. The subsequent demise of the imperial military in the West in the late fifth century meant the death of this subgenre of political history before it fully developed and left a lasting mark on the Latin historiography. It appears Sulpicius Alexander was at the same time one of the first authors of his kind and one of the last.

Acknowledgement: I owe a debt of gratitude for all the helpful suggestions and advice I received regarding this article to Prof. Paweł Janiszewski, Dr. George Woudhuysen, Dr. Marzia Fiorentini, and last but not least, Dr. Karolina Frank. I would also like to thank the audiences of Ewa Wipszycka's Late Antique Seminar, The Lost Latin Historiography of Late Antiquity Session of IMC Leeds 2021 and Nottingham Classics and Archaeology Research Workshop for all the feedback they gave me on the occasion of delivering earlier versions of the argument presented in this article. The research for this article was conducted as part of the project, The Missing Link. The Lost Latin Historiography of the Later Roman Empire (3rd–5th century) 2018/29/B/HS3/00796 funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, through the grant scheme OPUS 15.

Appendix: What's in a name? Sulpicii of Late Antiquity

'Sulpicius' was not the most popular *nomen gentilicium* in Late Antiquity. Bearers of this *nomen* are not particularly numerous. Naming practices shifted significantly in the Later Roman Empire. The traditional system of *tria nomina* gave way to a more flexible set of practices, though it may have still been applied in certain contexts and situations. The official imperial correspondence with imperial officials often settled for the use of a single diacritical name. *Praenomina* disappeared, some *cognomina* effectively fulfilled the role of family *nomina* and *signa* were introduced and employed by certain social groups.⁶⁴ Therefore, it is meaningful on its own, although not entirely out of ordinary, that Sulpicius Alexander was identified by such a *nomen* at this point in time. Many other individuals utilised former *nomina*

⁶⁴ Cameron (1985); (1988); Salway (1994).

Flavius and Aurelius. The first one of these became a signifier of status and association with the imperial regime and the second a default formality to mark in legal documents those of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, who lacked a preexisting, distinctive *nomen*, particularly in the East. The name form under which Sulpicius Alexander is known retained distinguishable components of a *nomen* and *cognomen* and indicates an early establishment of a family name. Much like that of Sulpicius Severus. But how truly widespread was this *gentilicium* in the period in question? Perhaps there are other Sulpicii that could be connected to Sulpicius Alexander? Even though the surviving evidence is limited, there have been no attempts at compiling it for the purpose of exploring such possible backgrounds of Sulpicius Alexander. Admittedly, proving beyond doubt a connection between Sulpicius Alexander and any other of Late Antique Sulpicii, including Sulpicius Severus, is difficult, but collecting and examining cases of other individuals of that *nomen* allows for pinpointing their regional and social presence, offering in turn some indication of what the potential backgrounds for the historian were and a chance to assess their plausibility next to each other.

The patrician house of Sulpicii experienced a resurgence in the early Roman Empire, with Servius Sulpicius Galba becoming emperor for a brief time.⁶⁵ However, the sheer number and geographic span of attestations of bearers of this *nomen* in the early Empire as collected in *Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum* suggests the *nomen* was not limited to that particular family.⁶⁶ Even though the *Onomasticon* is a rather comprehensive collection of mainly epigraphic evidence, it does not attempt a categorisation of name attestations by date or social group; that is understandable given the impossibility of precise dating of the significant portion of the collected inscriptions or ascertaining social backgrounds of bearers of those named in them. It is also sadly limited to Europe. Yet combined with the majority of these inscriptions belonging to the earlier Empire, this limits the applicability of name diffusion demonstrated by *Onomasticon* for the question of Sulpicii geographic and social presence in the Later Roman Empire. According to the *Onomasticon*, the largest number of attestations of Sulpicii by far was found in the Spanish provinces with 68 cases.⁶⁷ The Gallic provinces of Narbonensis (15), Aquitania (19), and Lugdunensis (10), with a total of 44 cases, did not trail far behind. Nor did Italy with 43 attestations of this *gentilicium*. Not unexpectedly in the more peripheral European provinces of the Empire the evidence is much scarcer. Gallia Belgica and both Germania Superior and Inferior had merely 12 attestations with four belonging

⁶⁵ Syme (1989), 95–96, 229, 433–434.

⁶⁶ Lőrincz (2002), 98–99.

⁶⁷ Lőrincz (2002), 98–99.

to individuals known not to originate from these regions. In the Balkan provinces, there were even fewer, counted in single digits: Dalmatia 5; Pannonia 2; Dacia with a single attestation of a Sulpicius, who came from Spain (*CIL* 3.1196); Moesia Inferior 3; Moesia Superior 1 and Raetia 1. In a similar vein, the only two Sulpicii attested in Britain for this period were likely outsiders.⁶⁸

Such geographical dissemination of this *gentilicium* does broadly correspond to the evidence that can be discerned for Sulpicii in the Later Roman Empire, with the addition of a noticeable presence of Sulpicii in Africa, which is outside of the focus of *Onomasticon*. What is necessary to note is that, for this period, the nature of said sources may skew the perspective to a degree. Inscriptions constitute the main bulk of evidence for Late Antique Sulpicii. We can find some Sulpicii in the second- and third-century Roman Africa. Perhaps the most prominent of them was *praeses* of Mauretania Caesariensis Sulpicius Sacratu.⁶⁹ Gaius Sulpicius, a *praeses* of Lusitania sometime between 293–296, may have descended from the local Sulpicii.⁷⁰ Iulius Sulpicius Successus is attested in Italy as a procurator of the port of Puteoli from which he originated.⁷¹ Out of three Sulpicii known from Britain, only one can be securely dated to Late Antiquity and they are all military men of unknown origin.⁷² Geographic origins of two other Late Antique Roman governors, who bore that *nomen* cannot be established with certainty.⁷³ The changes in epigraphic customs in

68 Lőrincz (2002), 98–99; *RIB* 1035, 2057, 2058.

69 A cluster of Sulpicii at Sidi Mohammed el Azreg/Sidi Mohammed Lazrag site in northwest of modern Tunisia seems of little local significance or rank: *AE* 1998, 1576–1578 in contrast to the local curial elite attested at Thala: *CIL* 8.23291; *PLRE* 1:333. Sulpicius Sacratu may have originated from the Rhine frontier, see *AE* 2003, 2024; Christol and Laporte (2002–2003), 120.

70 Ramirez Sadaba (2003), no. 60, 106–110, with a note on a mistake in the sequence of imperial victory honorifics in the inscription; *LSA* n. 2009. *CIL* 2.481 offered a different reconstruction and reading of the inscription, followed by *PLRE* 1:1002, connecting the monument to Constantine rather than Maximian. For some cases of Sulpicii active in Emerita Augusta in the early Empire, see *AE* 1993, 909; *AE* 2006, 617. Although since 176, as reported by Cass. Dio 72.31.1 and confirmed by later legal texts, *Cod. Iust.* 1.41, a law forbidding governing a province of one's origin was in place, there were numerous cases when it was ignored or waived on the imperial authority: see Sijpesteijn (2006), 25–26.

71 Dated between 280 and 326 by Camodeca (1980–1981), 62, based on the rank of *vir egregius* held by Iulius Sulpicius Successus. *AE* 1972, p. 27–28 offers a different dating – circa 340 – based on the script of the inscription. However, Camodeca's dating takes into account that the rank of a *vir egregius* would be an anachronism in 340. The last attested individual titled *vir egregius* is Claudius Aurelius Genesius in 324, though the rank does appear in legal texts until 384: see Strothmann, “Vir egregius,” *BNP*.

72 Tribune of a cohort, Sulpicius Secundianus, dated to 251/3, see *RIB* 2057–2058; the two other possible attestations are of Sulpicius Victor of *ala Vettonum*, cavalry unit originally from Spain, *RIB* 1035 and prefect Sulpicius Pudens of *Cohors IV Gallorum*, *RIB* 1688, though they are not easily datable and may belong as well to an earlier period.

73 Lucius Sulpicius Paulus, *praeses* of Achaëa sometime in the period of 284–305: *LSA* n. 16, 26, 50. Given that surviving plaques appear similar in lettering and were probably erected at the same time,

the Later Roman Empire resulted in the curial classes or other local elites, who were prominent earlier in this sort of sources, becoming underrepresented in the fourth and fifth centuries dominated by the imperial and senatorial elites.⁷⁴ In the case of different clusters of the Sulpicii that means certain locally attested families often cannot be traced beyond the third century, while the period of Sulpicius Alexander's likely activity provides us with isolated mentions of *praesides* and other officials bearing that *nomen* sometimes without indication of their geographic origins. This thin evidence could support arguments for the origin and ties of Sulpicius Alexander to most of the regions of the Late Roman West, but largely in an unconvincing manner. There is, however, a region for which there are textual attestations of individuals bearing the *nomen* 'Sulpicius' that allow a more meaningful inspection – Gaul.

Other than Sulpicius Severus two individuals deserve a mention to paint the image of Gallic Sulpicii in this period. The first Sulpicius is to be perhaps associated with Troyes, in the second half of the fifth century. He is attested in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris addressed to him (*Ep.* 7.13). This letter is full of praise of Himerius, Sulpicius' son and a priest, whom Sidonius recently met. Mathisen (likely correctly) surmises this Sulpicius belonged to the Gallic curial class, given the lack of mentions of the addressee's social rank on one hand and his son's position as a priest and pupil of bishop Lupus of Troyes, enjoyment of a life in seclusion (implying sufficient position and wealth) and the very fact of receiving Sidonius' letter on the other.⁷⁵

The placing of the second one in the social and cultural landscape of Late Antique Gaul is regrettably far more tentative. The individual in question is Sulpicius Lupercus Servasius Iunior.⁷⁶ This author is only known for his two Latin poems, *De cupiditate* and *De vetustate*, found in *Codex Leidensis Vossianus* fol. 111, containing mostly works of Ausonius.⁷⁷ Any biographical information on him are inferences made based on these poems. His philosophical views have attracted the most attention, resulting in a discussion of his alleged epicureanism.⁷⁸ Hypotheses regarding his temporal and geographical place of activity are derived from his criticism of young Romans learning rhetoric and then serving barbarians for *barbaricae opes*

the dating of the statues and, therefore, Sulpicius Paulus' governorship should be narrowed to 293–305, see *LSA* n. 50; Sulpicius, *praeses* of Cappadocia Prima 370–378, see *PLRE* 1:860; Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 313; *Lib. Ep.* 777 also mentions this Sulpicius in his letter to Hyperechios. He may have originated from Asia Minor.

74 Roueché (1997); Salway (2015).

75 *Sid. Ap., Ep.* 7.13; Mathisen (2020), 122.

76 Readings of his final cognomen are disputed, see Ferguson (1958). Other variants are "Sebastus" or "Servastus". I am following the one selected in *PLRE* 2:997.

77 Ferguson (1958), 120. *Anth. Lat.* 1.2, 648–649.

78 Ferguson (1958) made an affirmative case for it; *contra*, Classen (1960).

and references to physical traits of said barbarians expressed in *De cupiditate*. It has been speculated that Sulpicius Lupercus Servasius Iunior referenced in his poem Romans in service of Roman commanders of barbarian descent (Bauto, Arbogast and Stilicho) at the end of the fourth century in Gaul and Italy; Roman courtiers under Gothic and Vandal rulers of the successor states in the second half of the fifth and beginning of the sixth centuries in Gaul or in Vandal Africa.⁷⁹ Attempts at precise dating are not conclusive, but assigning Sulpicius Lupercus Servasius Iunior to a period between the fourth and sixth centuries is the general consensus. Classen hypothesises that the popularity of the satire at the time would point to Gaul, but, again, assumes a more precise dating (fifth century).⁸⁰ Perhaps other Late Antique authors collected in the eighth-ninth-century manuscript could be some indication of the geographical zone of Sulpicius Lupercus Servasius Iunior's activity. Alongside poems of the already mentioned Ausonius and his correspondence with Symmachus and Paulinus, there are also fragments of works by Claudian, Cicero, Pseudo-Ovid, Augustus (manuscript attribution), Petronius and Sulpicius Carthaginiensis.⁸¹ It is likely Servasius Iunior's works followed the same patterns of dissemination as those of works of the primary author and closest in time within the collection – Ausonius – in which case perhaps we should place Servasius Iunior in Gaul?

One needs to consider Sulpicius Alexander's *cognomen* as well. The *cognomen* Alexander is a much weaker indication of Sulpicius Alexander's geographic and social origin than the *gentilicium* may be; however, it should not be entirely set aside. By this time the *cognomen* became the default diacritic for the vast swathes of individuals in the Empire.⁸² Rather unsurprisingly for a name of Greek origin, the use of Alexander as a *cognomen* is attested in significant numbers on the eastern fringes of the Latin-speaking part of the Empire. Yet individuals bearing it do appear in the West, particularly in Italy with its significant Greek-speaking popula-

⁷⁹ Ferguson (1958), 127; Classen (1960), 59–63.

⁸⁰ Classen (1960), 63.

⁸¹ Classen (1960), 62–63 suggested that his presence in the collection may have caused a misattribution of a *nomen* to Sulpicius Lupercus, who should be read then as 'Lupercus Serbastus Iunior', but that would be a rather unusual name. Sulpicius Carthaginiensis of Codex Leidensis Vossianus fol. 111 has been usually identified with Sulpicius Apollinaris, a second-century grammarian from Carthage, or a commentator of Verg. – Sulpicius Carthaginensis – known to Aelius Donatus and the *Scholion Veronensis*. For the summary of the academic discussion on the identity of Sulpicius Carthaginensis, see Stok (2007–2008). He argues against either identification, proposing instead that this is pseudo-Sulpicius Carthaginensis, a name taken by the Late Antique compiler after Sulpicius Carthaginensis the commentator.

⁸² Salway (1994), 130–131, 140–144.

tion, and also in significant numbers in Gaul.⁸³ The matter of Greek personal names used as *cognomina* in the Latin-speaking regions of the early Roman Empire has received some scholarly attention.⁸⁴ These discussions revolved mainly around the consideration of such *cognomina* as an indicator of a Greek freedman background, that has little applicability for the fourth- and fifth century socio-cultural landscape. By the time of Sulpicius Alexander's literary activity, his *cognomen* would be no more 'foreign' in the Western part of the Empire than the *cognomen* 'Apollinaris' in case of the famous Gallic bishop of Clermont in the following century.

To conclude, if one was to speculate about Sulpicius Alexander's background solely based on the evidence of his name in the context of the social realities of the Later Roman Empire, one could tentatively surmise that the man in question would be a representative of local, curial elite or lower layers of the imperial one in the West, belonging to a family that was around long enough to acquire and retain a less common *gentilicium*, possibly from Gaul. That is the limit to which it is possible to push the anthroponymic evidence in this particular case.

Bibliography

- Bleckmann, B. "Magnus von Karrhai: Zur Bedeutung der Malalas-Chronik für die Rekonstruktion der Zeitgeschichte Julians." In *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas*, edited by L. Carrara, M. Meier and C. Radtki, 99–133. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2017.
- den Boeft, J., J. Drijvers, D. den Hengst and H. Teitler. *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXIV*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Brennan, B. "Senators and social mobility in sixth-century Gaul." *Journal of Medieval History* 11 (1985): 145–161.
- Cameron, A. "Polyonymy in the Late Roman aristocracy: the case of Petronius Probus." *JRS* 75 (1985): 164–182.
- Cameron, A. "Flavius: a nicety of protocol." *Latomus* 47 (1988): 26–33.
- Cameron, A. "Nicomachus Flavianus and the date of Ammianus's last books." *Athenaeum* 100 (2012): 337–358.
- Camodeca, G. "Ricerche su Puteoli tardoromana (fine III-IV secolo)." *Puteoli* 4–5 (1980–1981): 59–128.
- Castillo, C. "Tribunos militares en Ammianus Marcellinus." In *L'armée romaine de Dioclétien à Valentinien I^{er}*, edited by Y. Le Bohec and C. Wolff, 43–54. Lyon: De Boccard, 2004.
- Chalmers, W. "Eunapius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zosimus on Julian's Persian expedition." *CQ* 54 (1960): 152–160.

⁸³ Lőrincz and Redó (1994), noted 23 Alexanders in Italy, 14 in Spanish provinces, 6 in Belgica and Germanic provinces, 16 in Narbonensis, 17 in Dalmatia, 13 in Pannonia, 3 in Noricum, 16 in Dacia, 4 in Britain, 8 in Lugdunensis, 27 in Moesia Inferior and 13 in Moesia Superior.

⁸⁴ For a concise summary of this discussion, see Kajanto (1968).

- Christol, M. and J.-P. Laporte. "Teniet-el-Meksen: un nouveau gouverneur de Maurétanie Césarienne dans les dernières décennies du III^e siècle et les luttes entre le pouvoir romain et les Bavares." *Ant. af.* 38–39 (2002–2003): 109–124.
- Clark, G. "Translating relics: Victricius of Rouen and fourth-century debate." *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 161–176.
- Classen, C. "Sulpicius Lupercus." *C&M* 21 (1960): 43–63.
- Dixon, K. and P. Southern. *The Late Roman Army*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Drew-Bear, T. "A fourth-century Latin soldier's epitaph at Nakolea." *Harv. Stud.* 81 (1977): 257–274.
- Fanning, S. "Reguli in the Roman Empire, Late Antiquity, and the early Medieval Germanic kingdoms." In *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World*, edited by R. Mathisen and D. Shanzer, 43–53. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.
- Ferguson, J. "Sulpicius Lupercus Serbastus Iunior." *C&M* 19 (1958): 120–128.
- Fornara, C. "Julian's Persian expedition in Ammianus and Zosimus." *JHS* 111 (1991): 1–15.
- Fornara, C. "Studies in Ammianus Marcellinus I: the letter of Libanius and Ammianus' connection with Antioch." *Hist.* 41 (1992): 328–344.
- Gemeinhardt, P. "Christian hagiography and the rhetorical tradition: Victricius of Rouen, In *Praise of the Saints*." In *Education and Religion in Late Antique Christianity*, edited by P. Gemeinhardt, L. Van Hoof and P. Van Nuffelen, 103–115. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.
- Ghizzoni, F. *Sulpicio Severo*. Rome: Bulzoni, 1983.
- Gilliard, F. "The senators of sixth-century Gaul." *Speculum* 54 (1979): 685–697.
- Hanaghan, M. and D. Woods, editors. *Ammianus Marcellinus from Soldier to Author*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.
- Hansen, G. "Sulpicius Alexander – ein Historiker nach Ammian." *Sitz. der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR* 15G (1982): 89–91.
- Harrel, J. *The Nisibis War, 337–363*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016.
- Hoffmann, D. *Das spätromische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia dignitatum, vol 1*. Düsseldorf: Rheinland, 1969.
- Humphries, M. "Chronicle and chronology: Prosper of Aquitaine, his methods and the development of early medieval chronography." *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1996): 155–175.
- Janiszewski, P. *The Missing Link*. Warsaw: Fundacja Rafała Taubenschlaga/Peeters, 2006.
- Janiszewski, P. *The Missing Link. The Lost Latin Historiography of the Later Roman Empire (3rd-5th century)*. Leuven: Peeters, 2023.
- Jeffreys, E. "Malalas' sources." In *Studies in John Malalas*, edited by E. Jeffreys, B. Croke and R. Scott, 167–216. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Jones, A. *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602. Vol 1*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964.
- de Jonge, P. *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XVI*. Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1972.
- Kajanto, I. "The significance of non-Latin *cognomina*." *Latomus* 27 (1968): 517–534.
- Kelly, G. *Ammianus Marcellinus*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2008.
- Klein, W. *Studien zu Ammianus Marcellinus*. Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914.
- Kulikowski, M. "The 'Notitia Dignitatum' as a historical source." *Hist.* 49 (2000): 358–377.
- Kulikowski, M. "Coded polemic in Ammianus Book 31 and the date and place of its composition." *JRS* 102 (2012): 79–102.
- Kurth, G. *Les sénateurs en Gaule au VI^e siècle in études franques*. Vol 1. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1919.
- London, J. "The face of convention: battle and siege description in Ammianus Marcellinus." In Hanaghan and Woods (2022), 231–261.
- Lenski, N. *Failure of Empire*. Berkeley: University of California, 2002.

- Lőrincz, B. and F. Redő, editors. *Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum*. 4 Vols. Vol. 1: Aba-Bysanus. Budapest: Archaeolingua, 1994.
- Lőrincz, B., editor. *Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum*. Vol 4: Quadratia-Zures. Wien: Forschungsgesellschaft Wiener Stadtarchäologie, 2002.
- LSA = *Last Statues of Antiquity*. Online database: <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk>
- Martinez Pizarro, J. "Gregory of Tours and the literary imagination: genre, narrative style, sources, and models in the *Histories*." In *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, edited by A. Murray, 337–374. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Mathisen, R. "A prosopography of Sidonius." In *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, edited by G. Kelly and J. van Waarden, 76–154. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., 2020.
- Matthews, J. *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*. London: Duckworth & Co, 1989.
- Omissi, A. *Emperors and Usurpers in the Later Roman Empire*. Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2018.
- Paschoud, F. "Note sur les relations de trois historiens des IV^e et V^e siècles: Sulpicius Alexander, Renatus Profutius Frigeridus et Olympiodore." *Antiquité Tardive* 6 (1998): 313–316.
- Ramirez Sadaba, J. *Catálogo de las inscripciones imperiales de Augusta Emerita*. Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2003.
- Rouché, C. "Benefactors in the Late Roman Period: the eastern empire." In *Actes du Xe Congrès International d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine, Nîmes, 4–9 Octobre 1992*, edited by M. Christol and O. Masson, 353–368. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997.
- Sabbah, G. *La méthode d'Ammien Marcellin*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978.
- Sánchez Vendramini, D. "The audience of Ammianus Marcellinus and the circulation of books in the Late Roman World." *Journal of Ancient History* 6 (2018): 234–259.
- Salway, B. "What's in a name? A survey of Roman onomastic practice from c. 700 BC to AD 700." *JRS* 84 (1994): 124–145.
- Salway, B. "Late Antiquity." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by C. Bruun and J. Edmondson, 364–394. Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2015.
- Scharf, R. "Seniores-iuniores und die Heeresteilung des Jahres 364." *ZPE* 89 (1991): 265–272.
- Slootjes, D. *The Governor and his Subjects in the Later Roman Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Stok, F. "Sulpicius Apollinaris/Carthaginiensis: un'identità problematica." *Incontri triestini di filologia classica* 7 (2007/2008): 201–218.
- Stover, J. and G. Woudhuysen. "Jordanes and the date of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*." *Histos* 15 (2021): 150–188.
- Stover, J. and G. Woudhuysen. *The Lost History of Sextus Aurelius Victor*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., 2023.
- Stroheker, K. *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien*. Tübingen: Alma Mater, 1948.
- Sudhaus, H. *De ratione quae intercedat inter Zosimi et Ammiani de bello a Iuliano imperatore cum Persis gesto relationes*. Diss. Bonn 1870.
- Syme, R. *The Augustan Aristocracy*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.
- Thompson, E. *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1947.
- Tomlin, R. "Seniores-iuniores in the Late-Roman field army." *AJPh* 93 (1972): 253–278.
- Van Hoof, L. and P. Van Nuffelen. *Clavis Historicorum Antiquitatis Posterioris*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2020a.
- Van Hoof, L. and P. Van Nuffelen. *The Fragmentary Latin Histories of Late Antiquity (AD 300–620)*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2020b.
- Vogler, C. "Les officiers de l'armée romaine dans l'oeuvre d'Ammien Marcellin." In *La hiérarchie (Rangordnung) de l'armée romaine sous le haut-empire*, edited by Y. Le Bohec, 389–404. Paris: De Boccard, 1995.
- Wachsmuth, C. "Pentadenbände der Handschriften klassischer Schriftsteller." *Rh. Mus.* 46 (1981): 329–331.

- Whately, C. "Ammianus' identification of named legions and its literary significance." In Hanaghan and Woods (2022), 140–169.
- Williams, G. "Xenophon and Ammianus: two soldier-historians and their Persian expeditions." In Hanaghan and Woods (2022), 377–402.
- Wilshire, L. "Did Ammianus Marcellinus write a continuation of Tacitus?" *CJ* 68 (1973): 221–227.
- Woods, D. "Julian, Arbogastes, and the *signa* of the Ioviani and Herculiani." *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 6 (1995): 61–68.
- Woods, D. "Ammianus and some *tribuni scholarum palatarum*, c. AD 353–64." *CQ* 47 (1997): 269–291.
- Wölfflin, E. "Die Hexadische Composition des Tacitus." *Hermes* 21 (1886): 157–159.
- Zecchini, G. "La fine della storiografia galloromana: Sulpicio Alessandro e Renato Profuturo Frigerido." In *Ricerche di storiografia latina tardoantica*, 241–250. Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1993.