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Sidonius' Presumed Epitaph: Two Manuscripts, Two Fragments of Stone, and Many Questions

The epitaph ascribed to Sidonius Apollinaris may not be the most famous text of late antique literature, but it is a fascinating witness in its own right to the survival of Romanness after the breakdown of the Western Empire. It is also a document at the intersection of several historical disciplines: philology, epigraphy, archaeology. Often quoted in introductory studies to Sidonius Apollinaris, this epitaph raises numerous questions.

1. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century: One manuscript for one inscription and different reading options (Tab. 1)

The first to publish Sidonius' epitaph, as far as we know, was Joseph Scaliger in the second edition (Leiden 1598) of his *De emendatione temporum*.[1] Scaliger explains that he got the text from one of his friends, Pierre Pithou, drawn 'from an old manuscript from Cluny', in which 'the fact that he died under the emperor Zeno had been added'. The text published by Scaliger consists of nineteen lines headed *'C. SOLLII APOLLINARIS MODESTI SIDONII'*. An undated handwritten note by Pierre Pithou from the Dupuy collection, now kept in the French National Library, contains the transcription of the epitaph.[2] It seems Pithou had in fact seen the manuscript because sometimes he records abbreviations which correspond to the manuscript, but are not acknowledged by subsequent editors. Scaliger faithfully copies Pithou's transcription, which accounts for his mistakes (*inlustris* instead of *illustris*; *dum* instead of *cum*) and for his keeping one correction of the original by Pithou (*hic* instead of *sic*). It is possible that Pithou corrected his transcription after the publication of Scaliger's work.

Pithou's note also indicates that the manuscript with the text of the epitaph was 'used by P. Faber, v.c.'.[3] 'P. Faber' could be Pierre du Faur de Saint-Jory called Petrus Faber[4],

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1 Scaliger 1598: 576 'Ex schedio veteri Cluniacensi, in quo erat scriptum eius epitaphium, additum erat obiisse, Zenone imperante'; see Prévot 1993: 223.

2 BNF Dupuy 449 (68); see Ill. 1.

3 'Vetus exemplar Cluniacense quo usus est P. Faber v.c.'; Dorez 1899: 409–10.

which would explain how the manuscript arrived in Toulouse, as we shall see. However, although Elie Vinet writes, in a letter to Pierre Daniel dated 15th February 1566: 'I wish M. de Saint-Jory had found a printer for Sidonius, whom he has corrected',[5] no edition of Sidonius by Pierre du Faur is known. And Vinet says nothing about Sidonius' epitaph in his edition of Sidonius published in 1552. Alternately, 'P. Faber' could designate Nicolas Le Fèvre, called Nicolaus Faber, who transcribes the text of the epitaph in a letter to Claude Dupuy dated 27 July 1593.[6] Marc-Antoine Muret, who was acquainted with both Le Fèvre and Pithou, calls him 'vir clarissimus, […] Nicolaus Faber Parisiensis'.[7] Besides this Nicolas Le Fèvre, there was a contemporary Nicolas Le Fèvre, and to distinguish them the former was called 'the Parisian'.[8] However, Pierre Dupuy designates Nicolas Le Fèvre as 'N. Faber' on two occasions,[9] never as 'P. Faber'. In the same collection, there is a letter from 'P. Faber' to Michel de l'Hospital,[10] probably being from Pierre du Faur.[11] So, there is every chance that Pithou's note was addressed to Pierre du Faur and that the latter owned the manuscript with Sidonius' epitaph in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Whatever the case, Nicolas Le Fèvre's 1593 letter to Claude Dupuy is the first dated witness of Sidonius' epitaph.[12] Le Fèvre only signals that the text comes from 'an old codex from Cluny'. He gives the correct reading *illustris* and provides the same title for the epitaph as in the manuscript, but writes *rogabit* instead of *rogabis*, as does Pithou before correcting it. It is possible that Le Fèvre had seen the manuscript, but also that he and Pithou received different versions of the text from Pierre du Faur. Below the epitaph, Le Fèvre wrote four lines in Latin, whereas the letter is in French. It is difficult to read this annotation because some words are crossed out and parts are missing as the lines sit on the edge of the letter, which is damaged. Léopold Delisle reads the first three words as 'Haec v(etus) c(odex)'.[13] On the letter, one discerns: '*Haec v.c.* | *quae martyrologia tunc?* | *[XII] kal. Septembris diem eius obitus cate[dram? …]*'. This annotation seems to refer to Sidonius.

In 1598, almost simultaneously with Scaliger (only a few months later), Jean Savaron also published Sidonius' epitaph in his edition, following a *Vita* of Sidonius.[14] Savaron

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4 Rivier 1881: 592.
5 'Je voudrois que monsieur de S. Jorry eust trouve ung imprimeur pour Sidonius, qu'il a corrige'; Desgraves 1977: 121–2.
6 BnF Dupuy 700 (90); see Ill. 2. See Delisle 1903a: 475–6.
7 Gruter 1595: 396.
8 Le Cointe 1716: 436; Rigoley de Juvigny 1772: 158.
9 BnF Dupuy 477 (136, 137).
10 BnF 490 (20).
11 Compare the letter from Pierre du Faur to the King: BnF Dupuy 63(15).
12 See above n. 6.
13 Delisle 1903a: 475.
14 Savaron 1598: n.p. 'Epitaphium S. Sidonii ex lib. et ms. Cluniacensium Sodalium'. See Furbetta 2015: 248, 2020: 552.

simply says the text comes 'from a manuscript codex of the Cluny community', without explanation. The following year, in the second edition, he provides the text with a commentary.[15] The epitaph as published by Savaron differs at some points from Scaliger's text, but is largely identical, including the mistakes of transcription (especially the reading *inlustris* instead of *illustris*, and *dum* instead of *cum*). There is no doubt that Savaron, like Scaliger, had not seen the manuscript. Either Savaron copied Scaliger or he, too, received a transcription of Sidonius' epitaph. Inasmuch as Savaron uses a *Vita* of Sidonius taken from 'a manuscript of Dupuy',[16] it is credible that he got the epitaph from Claude Dupuy (a letter in the Dupuy collection proves that Savaron was in touch with Dupuy),[17] but he was also sometimes accused of having stolen Jacques Sirmond's work.[18]

Indeed, more than fifteen years later, in 1614, Jacques Sirmond published Sidonius' works in a form very similar to Savaron's edition.[19] Here, too, Sidonius' epitaph follows the *Vita*. In his preface, Sirmond explains that he had intended to publish his work earlier but had not succeeded.[20] In a letter to Sirmond dated 1 February 1599,[21] Le Fèvre had already informed him that Savaron 'is about to have his notes on Sidonius printed', putting pressure on Sirmond to publish what he had ready: this proves that the work was already very advanced at the time. Sirmond's text of the epitaph is very similar to Scaliger's (with again the readings *inlustris* instead of *illustris* and *dum* instead of *cum*) while correcting some mistakes already corrected by Savaron. Sirmond does not explain how he came by the text. He only points out, like Savaron, that the text 'comes from an old codex from Cluny'.[22] Because of this formulation, very close to Le Fèvre's indication in his letter, Delisle thinks that 'a similar communication must have gone to Sirmond',[23] which is indirectly confirmed by Sirmond's notice in the *Sirmondi opera varia* edited by Jacques de la Baune.[24]

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15 Savaron 1599: xi. Furbetta 2020: 552.

16 Savaron 1598: n.p.

17 BnF Dupuy 837 (126).

18 'Le P. Sirmond, avant que d'aller à Rome, confia ses remarques sur Sidonius à Savaron, qui les fit imprimer sous son propre nom'; Michault 1754: 65. Grégoire and Colombet 1836: xxxv try to disprove the accusation as does A. Vernière in his biography of Jean Savaron, 1892: 22. According to them, Sirmond left his comments with Pithou and points out in a notice to the reader that these are often similar to Savaron's. This notice is actually only present in the edition of the works of Sirmond published by Jacques de la Baune in 1696, i.e., after Sirmond's death in 1651. Even if this notice is not signed, the reader understands that Sirmond is speaking, but we do not know how de la Baune came by it. Other notices in the edition of de la Baune are clearly not by Sirmond, because they refer to him.

19 Furbetta 2020: 556–7.

20 Sirmond 1614: *notae* p. 3.

21 Delisle 1903b: 19. Cabinet des lettres, Musée Condé de Chantilly, series J, case I.

22 Sirmond 1614: n.p. 'ex vetere codice Cluniacensi depromptum' (Lütjohann 1887: vi)

23 Delisle 1903a: 475 'Pareille communication dut être faite au P. Sirmond'.

24 See n. 18. It reads: 'Vicesimus quartus hic annus est, amice lector, cum ego Roman proficiscens harumce Notarum exemplar cum Sidonii antigrafo, quod multorum codicum collatione non indiligenter emedaram, P. Pitheo V. C. reliqui. Neque enim ferebat publica ejus temporis perturbatio, ut editionem meditari tum liceret. Interea pacatis rebus prodiit in lucem doctissimi Savaronis liber Commentarius. Quem cum avide a multis, nec immerito sane, legi probarique animadverterem, atque ea observatiorum copia conscriptum esse, ut reliqui nobis nihil factum videretur;

Summing up, like Scaliger before them, neither Savaron nor Sirmond probably ever saw the manuscript, and both depend on the readings of Pithou or Le Fèvre, in one way or another. Likewise, when Guillaume Colletet or the Sainte-Marthe brothers replace *inlustris* with *illustris*,[25] it is not because they consulted the manuscript, but because they adopt their own preferred orthography, deeming it unnecessary to give an exact transcription of the manuscript text.[26]

The same is the case with Joseph-Louis-Dominique de Cambis in 1770.[27] His text is the one closest to the manuscript before the *MGH* edition, for the simple reason that de Cambis had the manuscript to hand. Nevertheless, whereas the manuscript has *cu(m)*, he sticks to the reading *dum*. In the same way, de Cambis prints *Sydonius*, like Colletet, whereas the manuscript has the classical form *Sidoni(us)*. It is apparent that de Cambis reads the text of the manuscript through the prism of Sirmond (rather than of Savaron; he quotes Sirmond[28]) and perhaps also of Colletet. Incidentally, de Cambis thought that his manuscript was different from the Cluny codex used by Savaron and Sirmond, but he does not explain why – maybe because the date in Sirmond and the Sainte-Marthe brothers was abbreviated.

Except for de Cambis (and the distribution of his edition was limited to his friends and his version of the epitaph remained little-known), all scholars from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century copy the text of Sidonius' epitaph from Scaliger, Savaron or Sirmond, usually with their own modifications, as I have shown above. Sometimes, their corrections coincide with the manuscript text despite their not having seen it. This is the case of Colletet and the Sainte-Marthe brothers for *illustris*, but also of Philippe Labbe or Johannes von Vorburg with *seclis* instead of *saeclis* (the copyist of the manuscript did not write diphtongs). After de Cambis, Christian Lütjohann, who died in 1884 and did not live to see the publication of his edition in *MGH* in 1887, describes the manuscript with the text of Sidonius' epitaph studied in Madrid by Paul Ewald, who sent a copy to Berlin, as

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nunquam aliud Notis meis eventurum putavi, quam ut silentio suo latebrisque deinceps impune fruerentur. Sed cedendum tandem fuit amicorum seu judicio, seu voluntati: qui nec interire aiebant aportere, quae in Sidonii epistolis, carminibusque meliora quam in editis haberemus: et de Notis rursum, quas tum fama ipsa, tum evulgatis aliorum testimoniis publico deberi contendrent, frustra nos aut indulgentiam, aut longiores inducias sperare posse affirmabant. Itaque illorum hortatu ad has recognoscendas refingendasque operam nuper contuli. In qua quidem ita versatus sum, ut si adjecta interdum quaedam excipias, quae tempus exinde, ac Romana maxime commoratio suppeditarat, pristinam de caetero earum formam quam minimum interpolarim: ac ne omnia quidem detrahenda existimarim, in quibus Savaroniana cum nostris consentire et conspirare sentiebam quae fuerant sane plurima, restantque etiam nunc non pauca: nec mirum. Nam et forores Musae finguntur, et difficile est trita ab aliis via sic ingredi, ut in eorum vestigia nunquam incurras. Sed hujus, inquam, generis universa expungenda non duxi, qui memineram me non tam nova cudera, quam vetera recensere. Tu vero, letor, benigne omnia interpretare, et fave'; de la Baune 1696: n.p.

25 Colletet, *Hortus* 1648: n.p., according to Banderier 2004: 101. Sainte-Marthe 1656: 524.

26 Prévot 1993: 223.

27 Cambis 1770: 298.

28 Cambis 1770: 295.

follows: 'manuscript Madrid Ee102, kept in the National Library, parchment, of a squarish shape, written in an elegant hand in the tenth or eleventh century', featuring the epitaph 'in the inner margin of the last page, written by the same hand as the rest or at least one not much later'.[29]

This manuscript is certainly the same as that owned by the Marquis de Cambis at the end of eighteenth century, because the latter states that his manuscript bears an ownership mark at the bottom of the eighth leaf, 'Collegii Tolosani Soc. Jesu dono Illustrissimi Samuelis de Fermat Senatoris in Parlamento Tolosano',[30] and it is there in the manuscript kept in Madrid (now BnE 9448). There is also scarcely any doubt that this manuscript is at the origin of Pierre Pithou's transcription at the end of the sixteenth century. It arrived in Madrid, where Ewald saw it, from Avignon after having been in Toulouse. In 1770, de Cambis thought it had been bought by Pierre Fermat (died 1665, famous nowadays as a mathematician) and then came into the possession of Samuel de Fermat (1630–1690), Pierre's grandson (so de Cambis: he was actually Pierre's son), who gave it to the Jesuit college in Toulouse. Although we do not know how Samuel de Fermat came by the Cluniac manuscript, the du Faur family and Pierre Fermat's mother, Claire de Long, were connected via Jean de Bernuy[31] and the Toulouse parliament.[32]

According to Delisle, the Madrid manuscript corresponds to number 371 of the Cluny inventory of books from the twelfth century, where it is described as 'a manuscript containing the books of letters of Sidonius, bishop of Clermont, to various people, and the poetical oeuvre of the same'.[33] Delisle thought the manuscript was stolen from Cluny during the religious troubles in the sixteenth century. The library of Cluny was indeed ransacked in 1562 and 1575, but in the second half of the fifteenth century there had also been looting in Lourdon and Boutavant where the monks of Cluny kept part of their possessions.[34] The characteristics of the handwriting in the manuscript kept in Madrid from leaf 8v to 162v (the last leaf, with the epitaph) might well be compatible with it being produced in Cluny in the middle or at the end of the eleventh century. Franz Dolveck, however, thinks that its style 'does not fit the productions of the Cluniac scriptorium' and

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29 Lütjohann 1887: vi 'cod. Matritensis Ee 102, in bibliotheca nationali asservatus, membranaceus formae quadratae saeculo X vel XI nitidissime scriptus', 'in extremae paginae margine interiore, eadum manu qua cetera aut certe non multo recentiore scriptum'. See also Dolveck 2020: 518 #25.

30 Cambis 1770: 292.

31 Jean de Bernuy married Marguerite du Faur in 1505. One of their daughters, Eléonore de Bernuy, is the mother of Pierre du Faur de Saint-Jory. Presumably after Marguerite du Faur's death, Jean de Bernuy married Marguerite de Roux, great-grandmother of Claire de Long, the mother of Pierre Fermat.

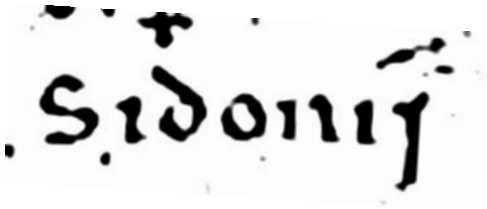
32 The Du Faur family provided many members of the Toulouse parliament, and Pierre Fermat married Louyse de Long, daughter of Clément de Long, counselor at the Toulouse parliament.

33 Delisle 1903a: 465 'Volumen in quo continentur libri epistolarum Sidonii, episcopi Arvernensis, ad diversos, et opus ejusdem metrice compositum'.

34 Barret 2009.

so 'it must have been an acquisition'.[35] Personally, I find it problematic to try and define 'the' style of Cluny as only a small part of the library was preserved after the looting and the Revolution. There are some similarities with the scribe identified as 'Clément' by Monique-Cécile Garand, but we cannot be certain. She rightly reminds us that, as Cluny was 'the headquarters of the order and the place where clerics coming from every corner of Christendom got their final education, stylistic variety came as no surprise'.[36] In any case, the identification with number 371 of the inventory of the twelfth century is very likely. The presence of Ausonius' *Caesares* at the beginning of leaf 8v is unproblematic as it was often attributed to Sidonius,[37] and it is natural that a twelfth-century inventory should not mention it separately. Moreover, the colophon at the end of leaf 6r, after Cicero's *De senectute*, is dedicated to 'do(m)nus Bernardus camerarius', which is also compatible with a Cluniac origin because a charter from Cluny dated to 1103 quotes a *domn[us] Bernard[us] camerari[us]*.[38]

It seems very probable that the hand that wrote the text of Sidonius' epitaph is the same as the one that wrote Sidonius' *Vita* by Gregory of Tours on leaves 7r to 8r. The characters D and H are identical; the scribe sometimes adds a vertical hasta to the letter S; he puts a horizontal hasta above the letter P to indicate an abbreviation. Also, the way he writes 'Sidonii' in the *explicit* of leaf 8r is the same as in the title of the epitaph.

Comparison of the word *Sidonii* in BnE 9448: in the Vita on the left and in the epitaph on the right	
BnE 9448 8r	BnE 9448 162v
	

However, Lütjohann dates the copy of Sidonius' *Vita* to the twelfth century.[39] Retracing the history of this manuscript is definitely not easy. The abridgement of Cicero's *De senectute*[40] in it is dedicated to one Bernardus apparently living at end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth centuries, and Lütjohann consequently dates its handwriting

35 Dolveck 2020: 518.
36 Garand 1977: 258 'la capitale de l'ordre et le lieu où achevaient de se former des religieux venus de tous les points de la chrétienté, la variété d'inspiration n'avait rien de surprenant'.
37 Conley 1976: 58. Franz Dolveck has shown that the Ausonius' *Caesares* were probably included after Sidonius' works in the archetype; Dolveck 2020: 484.
38 Brial 1806: 118.
39 Lütjohann 1887: vii.
40 Dolveck 2020: 518.

to the twelfth century.[41] Then, some S*ententiae* by Pseudo-Quintilian were copied on the verso of leaf 6, after *De senectute*, the scribe's idea apparently being to connect these two texts to the letters and poems of Sidonius, because on leaf 162v, after the Poems, there is a kind of signature in the same hand that copied the S*ententiae*. The question now is whether the *Vita* was written before the Letters. The *incipit* of the *Vita*, written in a corner between the end of the *Sententiae* and the beginning of the *Vita*, clearly by the same hand as the latter, proves that the *Vita* was written after the *Sententiae*. So, to conclude, it seems that, during the twelfth century, Cicero's *De senectute* was added to the works of Sidonius and that two copyists laboured to link both manuscripts with the help of Pseudo-Quintilian's *Sententiae* and the *Vita* of Sidonius. At that stage, the text of Sidonius' epitaph was copied at the end of Sidonius' works, but in a similar arrangement to the older one of the Poems. The scribes visibly aimed to provide the new manuscript with an overall coherence, combining Cicero with Sidonius and further additions. Finally, below Sidonius' epitaph, there are other annotations in later hands on this page.

When Theodor Mommsen published Lütjohann's work in 1887, the Madrid manuscript was the only source for Sidonius' epitaph. Lütjohann edited this text like any other manuscript, without indicating abbreviations, except for the dating, but he does point out that the manuscript contains 'abbreviations and ligatures'.[42] The text does indeed contain many abbreviations and is slightly erased here and there; however, there are no ligatures in evidence. For example, Lütjohann transcribes *militie* and *seclis*, as written in the manuscript, but all other scholars transcribed *militiae* and *saeclis*. Ten years after the *MGH* edition, Franz Bücheler finally chose to signal the abbreviations for these two words,[43] but the manuscript text contains at least forty more which he does not mention. For an inscription, an abbreviation can be significant as it could reflect the text on the stone and, consequently, affect the material restitution of the epitaph. However, that may be, at the time of Lütjohann, Mommsen and Bücheler, the text in the Madrid manuscript was the only witness of Sidonius' epitaph, and it is obvious that not all the abbreviations in the manuscript figured on the stone.

2. Two stone fragments and a second manuscript (Tab. 2)

In 1993, Françoise Prévot, under the title 'Deux fragments de l'épitaphe de Sidoine découverts à Clermont-Ferrand',[44] published two contiguous fragments of white limestone, kept in the archaeological museum of Clermont-Ferrand (n° 984-18-1), bearing the beginning of an epitaph corresponding exactly to the text of the epitaph known from the

[41] Lütjohann 1887: vi.
[42] Lütjohann 1887: vi 'compendia et ligaturas'.
[43] Bücheler 1897: 714–5.
[44] Prévot 1993.

manuscript in Madrid. As she noted, the palaeography of the inscription on these two fragments is consistent with a date in the fifth or the sixth century, and consequently with the presumed death date of Sidonius. This proves that the text of the manuscript is not an invention, and that the epitaph really existed. For her publication, Prévot relied on the text as established by Lütjohann, highlighting the letters figuring on the fragments. The fragments themselves, albeit incomplete, also provided information about the form of the epitaph, enabling Prévot to restore a text in two columns framed by a dovetailed cartouche. She already pointed out, however, that this reconstruction did not leave enough space to accommodate the date at the end. A few years later, in a volume of *RICG* put out in 1997, Prévot again published the epitaph with some additional textual commentary.[45] Ten years after Prévot's first article, I myself presented a visual reconstruction of the epitaph based on a statistical survey of the letters on the fragments and, of course, on the text of the *MGH* edition.[46]

Until 2014, therefore, the situation was relatively simple as we had a single witness of the full text of Sidonius' epitaph in the Madrid manuscript and two stone fragments discovered in Clermont-Ferrand showing exactly the same beginning of the text. There were, of course, some doubts lingering about the dating at the end, but the rest of the text was accepted by probably all scholars as being Sidonius' epitaph, the title given by the manuscript. However, in 2014, Luciana Furbetta published the results of her examination of another manuscript containing the epitaph.[47] This manuscript of the complete works of Sidonius came from a private collection and had never been really studied. It had only been on show a few times during the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. It was digitized by the IRHT in Paris and Furbetta was enabled to study this copy (shelfmark CP 347). In a second publication in 2015, she describes the origin of the manuscript in greater detail.[48]

It bears an ex-libris of Balthazar de Villars (1557–1627 or 1629), its first known owner. It appears next in 1874 in an inventory of the library of Lord Mostyn drawn up by Alfred Horwood.[49] According to him, the manuscript came from the 'Hobart collection'. A note in another manuscript of the Mostyn collection shows this to be Thomas Hobart (died 1726)[50] whose collection, composed of 'mostly French and Italian illuminated manuscripts', was acquired around 1730 by Sir Thomas Mostyn, 4th Baronet (1704–1758).[51] Thomas Hobart

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45 Prévot 1997.
46 Montzamir 2003.
47 Furbetta 2014.
48 Furbetta 2015: 244–6, briefly also Furbetta 2014: 138. See also Dolveck 2020: 527–8 #53. Until 2008, this manuscript was in the Schøyen collection, shelfmark 246.
49 Horwood 1874: 350.
50 Horwood 1874: 348.
51 Purcell 2017: 106.

was the tutor of Thomas Coke during his Grand Tour between 1712 and 1718,[52] and in 1724, as he wrote to Philippe Papillon, he 'bought several manuscripts in Lyon',[53] probably in 1715. The book that interested Papillon (*Histoire de Christine de France, Duchesse de Savoye*) was part of this batch and Hobart bought it from the Augustinians in Lyon.

There is little doubt that CP 347 was among these 'several manuscripts' bought by Hobart from the Augustinians of Lyon because, in 1874, Horwood mentions another manuscript from the Hobart collection ('Imperatoris Caesaris Maximiliani I de vita sua commentarii')[54] which can be traced in an inventory of the manuscripts of the Augustinians of Lyon, possibly printed in 1633.[55] This inventory also proves that they possessed the works of Sidonius and describes a 'vellum manuscript of a very ancient kind'.[56] After describing the manuscript, the anonymous author provides a short biography of Sidonius: 'Sidonius Apollinaris was born in Lyon, during the fifth century, and died in 482, aged about fifty-two; he was one of the greatest and most famous prelates of his time'.[57] This recalls the short biography of Sidonius in CP 347 which must be later than 1614 as it refers to Sirmond among others. So, there are serious reasons for thinking that, after the death of Balthazar de Villars, CP 347 came into the possession of the Augustinians of Lyon and then of Hobart.

Unfortunately, there is no information about the origin of CP 347 before Balthazar de Villars. Luciana Furbetta describes a parchment codex written 'by one hand, in an emerging Gothic style, with several corrections, perhaps by different though contemporary hands'. She proposes to date it to the second half of the twelfth century.[58] The origin of the manuscript, however, remains unclear; France and Spain have been proposed – Furbetta preferring northern Spain and Dolveck Aquitania.[59] Like BnE 9448, CP 347 contains the complete works of Sidonius, letters and poems, with an inversion of the letters in the seventh book, and also Ausonius' *Caesares*, except that the latter comes at the end whereas it precedes the main text in BnE 9448. Moreover, the *Caesares* is more complete in CP 347 than in BnE 9448. And, finally, after the *Caesares*, CP 347 gives the text of Sidonius' epitaph, but in a different version from BnE 9448 for verses 10 and 11, and for the date: *XII kal. septembris Zenone consule* (CP 347) as against *XII kal. septembris Zenone*

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52 Gibson 1987: 147.
53 Papillon 1742: 289.
54 Horwood 1874: 348.
55 Anonymous s.d.: 9.
56 Anonymous s.d.: 5 'manuscrit velin, d'un caractère fort ancien'.
57 'Sidonius Apollinaris étoit natif de Lyon, dans le cinquième siècle, & mourut l'an 482 âgé d'environ cinquante-deux ans, il a été un des plus grands & illustres Prélats de son siècle.' Cf. Furbetta 2015: 244.
58 Furbetta 2015: 246 'Il manoscritto, in pergamena […], è ascrivibile alla seconda metà inoltrata del XII secolo […], è vergato da un'unica mano in una gotica incipiente e presenta diversi interventi correttori di mani forse diverse ma contemporanee'.
59 Dolveck 2020: 516.

imperatore (BnE 9448). The text of CP 347 also has two mistakes which do not occur in BnE 9448: *Appolinaris* and *sobali*. Luciana Furbetta thinks it possible that the stone of the epitaph was damaged at the top on the right side, which would explain the differences between the manuscripts.

Since 2003, occupied by my professional life (not in academic research), I had gradually moved away from Sidonius, when Joop van Waarden contacted me to have my opinion about this new form of the epitaph (and without him, I would probably never have got back to Sidonius). The articles of Luciana Furbetta again involved me in the questions I had been pondering when studying Sidonius' epitaph, because they confirmed some of my doubts and made me eager to delve deeper into the problem. I discussed the matter with my former professor, Laurent Lamoine, epigraphist at Clermont-Ferrand University. By coincidence, the Association pour l'Antiquité Tardive was about to hold its annual session in Clermont-Ferrand in 2017, and I there presented the results of my new research on Sidonius' epitaph.[60] In what follows, I repeat this presentation, which has only been published in the Bulletin of the Association and online, and make some additions.

As the date at the end of the epitaph in BnE 9448, in the ablative case, resembles a consular dating, the first idea would be to follow CP 347, the more so as Mommsen already proposed to correct the dating of BnE 9448 to *Zenone consule*.[61] However, according to the *Fasti consulares* from the chronicle of Marius of Aventicum and of the *Chronicon Paschale*, Zeno was consul only three times, in 469, 475 and 479. Scholars, however, commonly think that Sidonius was still alive around 482.[62] So, I asked myself if CP 347 could be a fake based on the editions of Sidonius. In verse 14 in CP 347, *soboli* is written *sobali*, and I felt that this might also be the case in BnE 9448. After receiving a high resolution scan of folio 162v of BnE 9448, it proved impossible to be entirely sure of the reading because the word is slightly erased, but it seems that it is *soboli* after all. However, there are other elements to prove that CP 347 is not a modern fake.[63]

More generally, CP 347 is certainly not a copy of BnE 9448 concerning Sidonius' works. Indeed, it contains a mistake in the order of the verses of *Carm*. 9: leaf 112r, in the right hand column, contains the odd lines of verses 243–303, and, in the left column, the even

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60 Montzamir 2017a, 2017b.

61 Mommsen 1887: xlix.

62 Coville 1904: 275–6, Prévot 1997: 126, Mathisen 2020: 63. Kelly 2020: 188–9, however, has shown that this is not compelling, suggesting the possibility of a death date as early as 479. In this case, the date in the manuscripts could still be a later addition.

63 For instance, there are several abbreviations common to BnE 9448 and CP 347: *s(an)c(t)is; mili{t}ie; foriq(ue); int(er); causaru(m); mod(er)ans; discordantib(us); hec; int(er); tam(en); gr(ati)arum; cat{h}edra(m); quisq(ue); lac(r)imis; d(eu)m; dextru(m); pr(ec)es; sup(er); sepulcru(m); ti(bi)*. Further comparison of available bits of CP 347 and BnE 9448, for instance in *Carm*. 9, shows they have common mistakes or writing: *putet* for *pudet*; *sicca* for *sica*; *Siluuis* for *Silius*; *Stilla* for *Stella*; *exul* for *exsul*; *Hiancias* for *Hyantias*; *Mage* for *Maïae*; *modulamine* for *modulam ne*; *tercius* for *tertius*; *michi* for *mihi*; *temptes* for *tontes*.

lines of 244–318.[64] This proves that the scribe used an exemplar in which this poem was written in two columns whereas, in BnE 9448, it is written in one column. Dolveck too, in his stemma, shows that manuscripts *C* (BnE 9448) and *Sch* (CP 347) were not copied from each other although they ultimately derive from a common ancestor, manuscript α.[65] For the moment, it is impossible to find out how the text of the epitaph was transmitted: no other manuscript of Sidonius' works contains it. There is no evidence either to determine whether the text of the epitaph was copied from BnE 9448 to CP 347 or from CP 347 to BnE 9448.

As already said, Luciana Furbetta thought that the differences could be explained by damage to the stone. As we have no fragments with the verses in question it is impossible to be sure. We can only hope that, one day, luck or rescue archaeology will bring to light the missing part, but, for now, we have nothing else than the two fragments of the Bargoin museum. Nonetheless, damage to the upper part of the epitaph does not seem to be the most probable hypothesis because, unless the stone was cut, it is difficult to believe that a similar fracture affected only these two verses and even more so that verse 11 would have been completely destroyed as against only half of verse 10 which sat on top of the stone (there is no doubt about this because the two fragments in the Bargoin museum bear a cartouche, and the only possible reconstruction for the epitaph is in two columns). One might imagine that part of the epitaph was not readable because something hid it, but we have no proof of this whatsoever while it would also not solve the problem of the difference in dating. There is no indication that the copyists of BnE 9448 and CP 347 saw the stone themselves (which would have involved being in Clermont) and it seems more likely that the text came to their knowledge via another manuscript. The only certain fact is that the date in the manuscripts is the same as the one in the martyrology in use in Clermont-Ferrand to celebrate Sidonius.

3. Dating and martyrologies (Tab. 3)

Several scholars have expressed doubts about the dating of the epitaph. The first was Antoine Pagi who pointed out the unusual form of the dating referring to the eastern Roman emperor.[66] Indeed, in Gaul before 507, inscriptions are commonly dated with reference to the 'barbarian' kings.[67] Next, Edmond Leblant suggested that the dating was probably added by a copyist from the biography written by Gennadius.[68] Theodor

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64 Furbetta 2014: 152–3, 157.
65 Dolveck 2020: 504.
66 Pagi 1727: 421.
67 Leblant 1869: 125–6.
68 Leblant 1865: 352.

Mommsen was more nuanced and proposed to correct the date given by BnE 9448 to *Zenone Augusto II (iterum) consule*, meaning the year 479.[69] C.E. Stevens remarked that Sidonius is not known for any legislative activity for 'barbarian kingdoms', and thought that the epitaph was composed in Carolingian times.[70] W.B. Anderson, in his edition of Sidonius' poems and letters, said: 'I cordially agree with those who impugn the authority of this "epitaph"', referring to it as 'the so-called *Epitaphium Sidonii*'.[71]

The discovery of CP 347 seemed to confirm Mommsen's idea. But, as already indicated, Zeno was consul only three times, in 469, 475 and 479. The problem escapes solution unless the date given by BnE 9448 and CP 347, the XII of the Kalendae of September, is wrong. This date corresponds to the date of death of Sidonius given by two martyrologies from Clermont-Ferrand: one is from the cathedral chapter and dates to the tenth or the eleventh century (BnF Ms. Lat. 9085, f. 40v), the other from the abbey of Saint-Alyre and dates to the thirteenth or the fourteenth century (Ms. 674 Clermont-Ferrand library, f. 23v–24r). Also from Clermont-Ferrand, several breviaries[72] and a manuscript of the *Vitae sanctorum* (Ms. 149 Clermont-Ferrand library, f. 91v) provide the same date. However, it seems Sidonius was celebrated on 21 August only in Clermont-Ferrand and nowhere else, not even in the Auvergne. For example, in the south of the diocese of Clermont, Sidonius is absent from the martyrology of Saint-Julien of Brioude (Ms. 860 Clermont-Ferrand library, f. 7v), dating, for its oldest parts, to the eleventh century.

The martyrology in use in Clermont-Ferrand was made from a martyrology attributed to Florus of Lyon, with additions specific to Clermont. As Florus lived in the ninth century, these additions cannot be older, but we do not know their origin. According to Henri Quentin, the martyrology of Florus is linked to the martyrology of Bede,[73] which appears to have been empty on the tenth and eleventh of the Kalends of September. The martyrology of Florus is also linked with the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, but, according to Quentin, through a version similar to the Bernensis manuscript (Cod. Bern. 289) which he considers to be relatively remote from the archetype of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*,[74] probably made in Auxerre in the late sixth century.[75] In the Bernensis manuscript, dated to the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth, Sidonius is mentioned on the eleventh of the Kalends of September. However, in the closest version to the archetype, the manuscript of Echternach, perhaps copied by Willibrord and dating to the end of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth, Sidonius is found at the

69 Mommsen 1887: xlix.
70 Stevens 1933: 166.
71 Anderson 1963: xxxix.
72 Leroquais 1934a: 334, 339, 340; 1934b: 108, 110, 368, 370, 441, 443.
73 Quentin 1908: 222.
74 Quentin 1908: 325.
75 Duchesne 1885: 120.

tenth of the Kalends of September (BnF Lat. 10837, f. 24r; Sidonius is indicated with the words *Sinodi(i) epi(scopi)* but there is no doubt that it is him). In a manuscript of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* from Sankt-Gallen, dating to the ninth century, Sidonius has disappeared altogether (Cod. Sang. 914, f. 164r). To take another example than Sidonius, the Apostle Bartholomew is found at the eighth of the Kalends of September in the manuscript of Echternach, but at the ninth in the manuscript of Sankt-Gallen and two times in the manuscript of Bern, at the ninth and the tenth.

Moreover, on the twelfth of the Kalends of September, the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* mentions a place called *Sindo Pagus* or a person named *Sindofagus* or *Sindonius* (cf. tab. 3). As the oldest manuscript of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* calls Sidonius *Sinodius*, we can see how the confusion could happen. Finally, the manuscripts of Echternach, Bern and Sankt-Gallen contain a mysterious *Sodonius* at the eighth or seventh of the Kalends of February, a figure about whom nothing is known. On the other hand, there is, at the tenth of the Kalends of September, one Apollinaris, martyr in Reims and attested by Gregory of Tours (*Glor. mart.* 40) and Flodoard (*Hist. eccl. Rem.* I, 4).

Another Sidonius is celebrated in Provence who is supposed to have been the second bishop of Aix during the first century and to have been a disciple of Jesus. Since the eighteenth century, this Sidonius has been celebrated on 23 August, just like Sidonius Apollinaris in the oldest manuscript of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. Georges de Manteyer, after Germain Morin, thinks that this Sidonius of Aix is the same as Sidonius of Clermont.[76] His explanation is that Sidonius was one of the saints from the Auvergne probably imported by Bonitus,[77] *patricius* of Provence, then bishop of Clermont at the end of the seventh century. Several scholars nowadays accept the presence of Auvergnat saints in Provence by means of the 'Austrasian corridor', created to link the Auvergne and the southern possessions of the Austrasian kings with Aix, Fréjus, Grasse and Nice. However, in the martyrology of Aix, dating to the fourteenth century (kept in Méjanes library, Ms. 14), Sidonius is absent both from the tenth and the eleventh of the Kalends of September. Hence, it is conceivable that, when the cult of Sidonius was brought to Provence, in the course of the seventh century, the date of his death was not known in Clermont.

As a result, the dates given by the martyrologies for Sidonius are untrustworthy, especially the date of manuscript 9085 from the BnF, as the date of his death was apparently unknown in Clermont in the seventh century and does not appear in the city's martyrologies until the ninth century. However, the date of the twelfth of the Kalends of September is there in CP 347 and BnE 9448, and it is conceivable that it was introduced into the martyrologies of Clermont after these copies of the epitaph had been made.

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76 Manteyer 1908: 46.
77 Manteyer 1908: 47–8S.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand, in this case, why Sidonius is absent from the martyrology of Brioude in the eleventh century, if only by means of a later note. Only the discovery of (other fragments of) the stone containing the date, or showing its absence, can definitively solve this question. One thing is sure: the origin of the dating is in Clermont, but, for the moment, the oldest witness is from the tenth or the eleventh century.

It is also worth considering that Clermont-Ferrand library preserves a manuscript from the twelfth–fourteenth centuries with the *Vita* of Sidonius by Gregory of Tours (Ms 149, leaves 92r to 93r), the same as the one copied in BnE 9448 in the same hand as the epitaph, and the incipit of this *Vita* (folio 91v) bears the date of the twelfth of the Kalends of September. Unfortunately, we do not know the origin of this manuscript. The part with the *Vita* of Sidonius dates to the twelfth century and also contains *Vitae* of Martialis of Limoges (the beginning is missing), Gallus I bishop of Clermont, Turianus, Germanus of Auxerre, Taurinus, Avitus I bishop of Clermont, Aegidius the Hermit, Lupus of Sens, Augustine of Hippo, Nicolas (beginning is missing), Nectarius, Geraldus and Maiolus of Cluny. This part of the manuscript also reports on the translation of Martin of Tours with a poem by Sidonius, the discovery of the body of Ursinus of Bourges and the translation of Benedict. Only the *Vitae* of Sidonius, Gallus, Turianus, Germanus, Taurinus, Avitus, Aegidius, Lupus and Augustine as well as the discovery of Ursinus begin with a date. These *Vitae* may have been copied from a martyrology. After the seventh and eighth centuries, martyrologies used to be supplemented with texts of authors from antiquity, with *Vitae* or with acts.[78] All dated *Vitae* in manuscript 149 of Clermont were copied from existing sources. Albeit composed of passages from Gregory of Tours, the *Vita* of Avitus I is unique in presenting Avitus as the founder of the church of Notre-Dame-du-Port—a fact that is otherwise unknown. Hence, it is not inconsistent to suppose that these *Vitae* were copied from a martyrology from Notre-Dame-du-Port. As the *Vitae* of Turianus, Taurinus, Lupus and Aegidius were written in ninth or the tenth century, this supposed martyrology cannot be older.

Only the martyrologies of Clermont mention an Avitus on the twelfth of the Kalends of September, and another Avitus on the twelfth of the Kalends of February. In the *Martyrologium Hieronymanium*, we actually find only one Avitus, on the twelfth of the Kalends of February. According to Jean Savaron, this second Avitus is Avitus II, brother of Bonitus, and 'the church of Clermont celebrates him on 21 January'.[79] Savaron refers to the martyrology and the breviary of Clermont, but these simply copy the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* without any further indication. It is probably because of the *Vita* of Avitus I in manuscript 149 that Savaron thinks that the Avitus of February is Avitus II, but in fact

[78] Quentin 1908: 2–3.
[79] Savaron 1607: 152.

there is no proof of this supposition, and Bruno Krusch, for example, in his edition of Bonitus' *Vita*, remains silent about the death dates of Avitus I and II. The similarity of these dates is very suspect. In any case, Sidonius is linked to Avitus in the martyrologies of Clermont.

Without the complete tombstone it is impossible to be entirely sure of the dating. Recently, Ralph Mathisen supported my argument from 2017 that the dating 'was not part of the original epitaph' and 'might have been added to the inscription at a later date, with the day taken from the liturgical calendar and the year from Gennadius'.[80] However, if we read the epitaph without the date, the attribution to Sidonius Apollinaris could even be challenged.

4. The epitaph of Sidonius Apollinaris?

There is a great similarity between the epitaph given by BnE 9448 and CP 347, and the epitaph of Sidonius' grandfather (*Carm*. 28 in *Ep*. 3.12), not only in the vocabulary but also in the spirit of the text. While it is impossible that the epitaph of Bargoin museum belongs to him, BnE 9448 and CP 347 could very well apply to another member of Sidonius' family called Apollinaris, namely his own son.

V. 1–2: *Sanctis contiguus sacroque patri,* | *vivit sic meritis Apollinaris*[*Appolinaris* CP 347]

Françoise Prévot points out that, during his lifetime, Sidonius was not usually called Apollinaris.[81] Sidonius' son, on the other hand, was precisely called that by his father (*Ep*. 3.13), by Avitus of Vienne (*Ep*. 2, 4, 36, 51, 52) and by Ruricius (*Ep*. 2.26). Prévot also considered the 'venerated father' to be Sidonius' predecessor Eparchius because 'it is not logical for Sidonius' father, who came from Lyon, to be buried in Clermont or to be called *sacer*'.[82] We do not know where Eparchius was buried. There is no indication in the *Libellus de sanctis ecclesiis et monasteriis Claromontii*, a document from the tenth and eleventh century. If we suppose, however, that we are concerned with Sidonius' son, this 'venerated father' could be Sidonius himself. We do not know when Sidonius was first considered a saint, but according to Gregory of Tours this was already the case at the end of the sixth century (*Hist.* 2.22).

V. 3–4: *illustris titulis potens honore,* | *rector militie forique iudex*

Avitus of Vienne gives evidence that Sidonius' son was *vir illustris*, i.e. senator (*Ep*. 2, 4, 36, 51, 52). We also know that he participated in the battle of Vouillé in 507 (*Hist.* 2.37) and, according to Avitus of Vienne, he seems to have had a high military rank under Alaric II:

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80 Mathisen 2020: 64.

81 Prévot 1997: 120.

82 Prévot 1997: 121 'on ne voit pas pourquoi le père de Sidoine, qui était lyonnais, aurait été enterré à Clermont, ni pourquoi il serait qualifié de *sacer*'.

virum saeculo militantem […] inter arma (*Ep*. 51), exactly the same phrase – *inter arma* – as in BnE 9448 and CP 347 in verse 8. Moreover, he also seems to have followed duke Victorius in Rome in about 479–80 (*Glor. mart.* 1.45), where he may have performed other duties.[83]

V. 5–6: *mundi inter tumidas quietus undas,* | *causarum moderans subinde motus*

Avitus of Vienne refers in his letters 51 and 52 to the disgrace of Apollinaris who seems to have been forced to defend himself against accusations: 'our family was subject only to incriminations, not to actual charges […] Wherefore may God grant this – that just as it is nothing new for us to be assailed, so let no new turn of events cause us rightly to be accused'.[84] A few years before Vouillé, it seems Alaric II suspected part of the Roman aristocracy of Aquitaine of dealings with the Franks. According to Gregory of Tours, apparently after the failure of raids of 496 and 198, bishops Volusianus and Verus of Tours were sent into exile for their sympathy towards the Franks (*Hist.* 10.26). Ruricius, a relative of Apollinaris, may have been sent into exile too (*Ep*. 15.17). In 505, he met Caesarius of Arles in Bordeaux where the latter was exiled. Caesarius was pardoned, like Apollinaris, because he presided over the council of Agde in the following year. Arthur Malnory nevertheless thought that several bishops were still exiled at the time.[85]

V. 7: *leges barbarico dedit furori*

Apollinaris is not known to have been a lawmaker, but the date of the promulgation of the Breviary of Alaric in 506 is not incompatible with such activity. Indeed, we know that Alaric II had asked count Timotheus to collaborate with 'the bishops and the nobles consulted', and then to submit the law code to 'the assent of the venerable bishops and of the chosen provincials'.[86] Apollinaris must have been one of these 'nobles' or 'provincials', considering his role during Vouillé. It is no doubt significant that the epitaph employs the formula *leges barbarico dedit furori* because the Breviary of Alaric 'systematically replaces [the word *barbarus*] with others terms reflecting hostility but not barbarity',[87] and when it

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83 *PLRE* II: 114 'Apollinaris 3', Mathisen 2020: 81.

84 *Ep*. 51.7–8 *criminationi subiacuit familia nostra, non crimini […] quocirca illud Divinitas tribuat ut nobis quam novum non est talia obici, tam nos nulla novitas maestos faciat accusari*. Translation Shanzer and Wood 2002: 344–5.

85 Malnory 1894: 67–9.

86 *Regnante domino Alarico rege, ordinante viro illustri Goiarico comite. Exemplar auctoritatis. Commonitorium Timotheo v. s. comiti. Utilitates populi nostri propitia divinitate tractantes hoc quoque, quod in legibus videbatur iniquum, meliore deliberatione corrgimus, ut omnis legum Romanorum et antiqui iuris obscuritas* ***adhibitis sacerdotibus ac nobilibus viris*** *in lucem intelligentiae melioris deducta resplendeat et nihil habeatur ambiguum, unde se diuturna aut diversa iurgantium inpugnet obiectio. Quibus omnibus enuceatis atque in unum librum prudentium electione collectis haec quae excerpta sunt vel clariori interpretatione conposita* ***venerabilium episcoporum vel electorum provincialium nostrorum roboravit adsensus*** (*Lex Romana Visigothorum*, Haenel 1849: 2; Mommsen and Meyer 1905: xxxiii-xxxiv). See also Mathisen 2008: 42.

87 Huntzinger 2009: 76 'permute systématiquement [le mot *barbarus*] avec d'autres termes reflétant l'hostilité mais pas la barbarie'.

keeps the word for mixed unions it simply designates non-Romans without any particular hostility.[88]

V. 8–9: ***discordantibus inter arma regnis,* | *pacem consilio reduxit amplo***

The reference to the fighting kingdoms correlates well with the background of the battle of Vouillé, where Apollinaris was active. Although he is not known for have been engaged in making peace, Gregory of Tours shows him, at the end of his life in 515, close to Theoderic I (*Hist.* 3.2), suggesting that he had a working relationship with the Franks despite his engagement with the Visigoths in the past. As we have seen, he could even be suspected of sympathy for the Franks.

V. 10–11: ***haec inter tamen et philosophando* | *scripsit perpetuis habenda saeclis*** [BnE 9448]; ***haec inter tamen et facundus ore* | *libris excoluit vitam parentis*** [CP 347]

A letter of Ruricius tells us that Apollinaris sent him some of his father's writings for review (*Ep*. 2.26), but which is unknown. Ralph Mathisen thinks it could be a selection of Sidonius' letters or some writings nowadays lost.[89] In any event, Ruricius describes Apollinaris as 'the interpreter of the paternal eloquence, you who can produce everything that he wrote not so much from the leaves of a book as from the pages of your heart'.[90] Avitus of Vienne asks for Apollinaris' advice on his poems and writes: 'he is a man who among the joys of his father's eloquence will be disgusted at [the mediocrity of] my times'.[91] Avitus in a letter from Apollinaris also recognizes 'the declamatory style that is more than like your father's'.[92]

V. 12–14: ***et post talia dona gratiarum* | *summi pontificis sedens cathedram* | *mundanos soboli refudit actus*** [s*obali* CP 347]

Apollinaris seems to have been briefly bishop of Clermont in 515, just before his death (*Glor. mart.* 1.65; *Hist*. 3.2). He had a son, called Arcadius, who was negatively perceived by Gregory of Tours because of his role with Childebert and the murder of Clodomir's children (*Hist*. 3.18). According to Nicole Hecquet-Noti, Avitus places Arcadius in the lineage of Sidonius and Apollinaris, as Sidonius hoped his son would revive the soul of his great-grandfather.[93]

V. 15–18: ***quisque hic cum lacrimis Deum rogabis,* | *dextrum funde preces super sepulcrum:* | *nulli incognitus et legendus orbi* | *illic Sidonius tibi invocetur.***

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88 Chauvot 2008: 37–9.

89 Mathisen 1999: 183.

90 Ruric. *Ep*. 2.26.7 *paterni interpres eloquii, qui universa quae ille conscripsit non tam de codicis membrana quam de cordis potes pagina proferre*. Translation Mathisen 1999: 185.

91 Avit. *Ep*. 43.2 *inter facundiae paternae delicias meis temporibus nauseaturo*. Shanzer and Wood 2002: 342.

92 Avit. *Ep*. 51.4 *plus paternam declamationem*. Shanzer and Wood 2002: 343.

93 Hecquet-Noti 2005: 155. Sidon. *Ep*. 5.9.4 *si per Rusticum Apollinaremque proavorum praedicabilium tam reformentur corda quam nomina*, 'if Rusticus [the addressee's son] and Apollinaris were to reproduce the hearts as well as the names of their illustrious great-grandfathers' (transl. Anderson).

Françoise Prévot preferred translating *dextrum* with 'favourable' rather than 'on the right'.[94] However, if we retain the latter meaning, it becomes clear that the epitaph invites the visitor to invoke Sidonius who is buried on the right, consistent with the first verse.

5. The place of discovery

It is evident that the tombstone was cut in a more or less regular way at some point, but we do not know when and by whom. There is some hope, at least, that the epitaph was not melted to make lime but reused. For the moment, however, the only fragments we know of are in the Bargoin museum. When I was studying them in the early two-thousands, rumours were circulating that other fragments had been discovered in Clermont-Ferrand. Unfortunately, I have never found any substantiation of this claim. A fragment of an epitaph was effectively discovered during the restoration of the vaults of the church of Notre-Dame-du-Port whose palaeography is similar to the epitaph of the Bargoin museum to the point that it could have been engraved by the same carver. This inscription from Notre-Dame-du-Port was never properly published:[95]*[--- | vixit annos? ---]X'XV' tran[siit in pace? | ---]s anno [--- | regno domini no]stri [---]*. This heavily damaged text obviously does not match the epitaph attributed to Sidonius. David Morel dates this inscription to the seventh century.[96] In the *civitates* in the Arverni and Vellavi regions, identical dating formulas are in use, as far as we know, since the end of the fifth century and during the sixth, perhaps even the seventh (*RICG*-08, 00018; *RICG*-08, 00029; *RICG*-08, 00031; *RICG*-08, 00037; *RICG*-08, 00043; *RICG*-08, 00050; *RICG*-08, 00051; *RICG*-08, 00053; *RICG*-08, 00054; *AE* 2004, 00919). Palaeography apart, there are no arguments for linking this fragment to the epitaph of the Bargoin museum. The structure of the text does not suit an epitaph in verse, the age of the deceased does not fit with Sidonius or his son, and line spacing is different. And as the fragment does not bear the name of the king, it is impossible to date it correctly.

Because of the *Libellus de sanctis ecclesiis et monasteriis Claromontii*, which locates Sidonius' remains in the church of Saint-Saturnin, in the south of Clermont-Ferrand, many scholars, among them Françoise Prévot, consider this to be his original place of burial. However, the text of the *Libellus* is late. According to Christian Lauranson-Rozas, the list of the *Libellus* is, in any case, later than the mid-tenth century.[97] In 2003, I pointed out that the two fragments of the epitaph now kept in Bargoin museum were discovered during the demolition of a winegrower's shed and kept in a property in the Rue des Chanelles, in the northern district of Clermont-Ferrand, prior to being given to the museum in 1984. Since

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94 Prévot 1997: 125.
95 Morel 2009: 120, pl. 283.
96 Morel 2009: pl. 283.
97 Lauranson-Rosaz 2010: 47.

my article, Jean-Luc Boudartchouk and Patrice Cabau have defined the location of this shed more precisely, not far from the Rue des Chanelles, near the corner with Rue Abbé Prévost.[98] It was apparently destroyed during the sixties due to construction works. At the time, rescue archaeology did not exist, and if other fragments of the tombstone remained, they were probably destroyed. As I argued in 2003, this location suggests that Sidonius' tomb was in the *vicus Christianorum*, where most bishops of Clermont were buried. Christian Lauranson-Rosaz, following Pierre-François Fournier, thinks it 'very probable' that the initial cathedral complex was located in this area.[99]

Gregory of Tours' silence on Sidonius' tomb is surprising. In 2017, I linked this silence to a passage of the *Glory of the Confessors* about the basilica of Saint-Vénérand. Gregory says that, on the right, there is an unknown grave with a stone which he qualifies as *rusticiori*, but it has sacred qualities (*divinum aliquid*) and it is damaged.[100] The wording suggests that there was no inscription on this grave. Gregory also states that there are, in Saint-Vénérand, 'men of distinguished merits whose names are unknown to the inhabitants; but writings [about them] are [...] kept in heaven'[101] and 'many tombs sculpted from Parian marble, in which some holy men and ascetic women were buried'.[102] But, of course, this text of Gregory is not sufficiently specific to know where the grave of Sidonius was. After 2017, Jean-Luc Boudartchouk and Patrice Cabau have suggested that Sidonius and his son could have had a shared tomb and also a shared epitaph.[103] In any case, for the moment, the place of Sidonius' grave is still unknown.

Before the discovery of CP 347, the situation, as stated above, was relatively simple because we had only one witness of the full text of the epitaph attributed to Sidonius. With this new manuscript and its different readings, many questions have reappeared. I think there are serious reasons to doubt the dating given by the manuscripts. Firstly, because the date of the twelfth of the Kalends of September is only found in the martyrologies of Clermont and we have no proof of it before the tenth century, whereas the oldest martyrologies place Sidonius at the tenth. Secondly, because the text of the epitaph better

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98 Boudartchouk Paillet Montzamir 2020: 118.

99 Lauranson-Rosaz 2010: 50.

100 *Glor. conf* 35 *E regione autem hujus sepulcri, si ingrediaris per ostium in basilicam sancti Venerandi, dextra de parte sepulcrum parvulum contemplaberis super terram situm, rusticiori formatum lapide, sed ignotum est omnibus quis quiescat in eo. Nam haberi in eo divinum aliquid res ipsa quam dicturus sum pandit. Mendicus quidam, ut ipsi oculis nostris inspeximus, super ipsum erat solitus considere, sed credo eum, ut fragilitas humana praebet, in aliquod indignum facinus obvolutum: quia virtute quiescentis cum sonitu magno excussus, longe projectus est, sepulcrumque medium crepuit, quod usque nunc ita cernitur. Indignum quippe se hominem humatus existimavit, qui super hos artus deberet facere sessionem*.

101 *Glor. conf.* 35 *sunt enim ibi, ut diximus,* ***illustrium meritorum viri, quorum nomina ignola incolis, scripta tamen****, ut credimus,* ***retinentur in coelis*** (transl. Van Dam 2004: 29).

102 *Glor. conf.* 34 *in basilica autem sancti Venerandi, quae sancti Illidii est proxima, transvoluta cellula a parte occidentis fuit in qua* ***multa ex marmore Pario sepulcra sculpta sunt, in quibus nonnulli virorum sanctorum ac mulierum religiosarum quiescunt*** (transl. Van Dam 2004: 27).

103 Boudartchouk Paillet Montzamir 2020: 120.

suits Sidonius' son, even though his biography is incomplete. Of course, without the full stone of the epitaph, we will never be totally sure. For the moment, weighing everything, I am inclined to think that the epitaph attributed to Sidonius is rather the epitaph of his son, Apollinaris, or maybe, but less probably, their shared epitaph. Finally, it seems difficult to choose between the text of BnE 9448 and that of CP 347, and I prefer to offer two hypotheses of reconstitution (Ill. 3).[104]

Some philological and archaeological elements point to the church of Notre-Dame-du-Port in Clermont-Ferrand (links with Avitus in martyrologies; discovery of an inscription with identical traits in the writing) but there is no conclusive evidence. It is feasible that Avitus I, going by his name, was a member of the Aviti family and a relative of the senator Eparchius Avitus, and then also of Sidonius and his son. His *Vita* and a lost text of the second half of the ninth century present him as the founder of Notre-Dame-du-Port. Recently, however, a student of Clermont-Ferrand University, Alain Tourreau, in his Master's thesis qualified this version on the grounds that a foundation of Notre-Dame-du-Port during the sixth century would be inconsistent with the silence of Gregory of Tours. He argues that it is impossible to envisage Notre-Dame-du-Port as a church before the middle of the tenth century and thinks it more probable that the building constructed and consecrated under bishop Avitus was a burial chapel dedicated to him rather than a full-size basilica.[105] Digs have discovered a shrine built along a road of the fourth century and elements from Antiquity reused in the church, possibly a moulded entablature and a fragment of a fluted column.[106] Could this be the burial chapel of the Aviti family? On the other hand, according to the *Libellus de sanctis ecclesiis et monasteriis Claromontii*, there was an Avitus in Saint-Vénérand. For the moment, there are no proofs, no certainties, but many questions.

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[104] Nevertheless one might wonder, as I did, if a copyist of BnE 9448 could have seen *sobali* in place of *soboli*, because the letter O looks a bit like an A in the manuscript. In this case, we should consider that the epitaph of CP 347 is derived from BnE 9448.

[105] Tourreau 2010.

[106] Morel 2009: 24, 120, pl. 280–3. According to Morel, these 'éléments antiques en remploi […] peuvent confirmer la présence de vestiges du bas Empire' (Morel 2009: 120). It is possible that the architectural elements come from the chapel which preceded the church but there is no certainty, especially because Notre-Dame-du-Port is about 200 meters from the late antique wall of Clermont, which was reconstructed between the mid-10th century and the mid-11th century (see Fournier 1970 and Martinez 2017: 313–27).

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