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Whatever You Bestow on Him, You Will Bestow on Me: Key Motifs of Early Byzantine Letters of Recommendation

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The letter of recommendation was known in Antiquity as a separate genre of letter writing for which a certain set of compositional techniques and formulae were developed. In Byzantium, too, the letter of recommendation was in great demand: letters in which the author presents his protégé to the addressee and, as a rule, asks him to perform something for him are not difficult to find in the epistolary collections of many authors from the 4th to the 15th century. Meanwhile, while the ancient letter of recommendation is well studied, the etiquette of this genre in the Byzantine tradition has hardly been investigated yet. The purpose of this piece is to characterize the etiquette norms of Greek letter of recommendation in the early Byzantine period (4th — early 7th centuries). The subject of the study are, first of all, *literarische Privatbriefe*, belonging to Libanius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Synesius of Cyrene, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Procopius of Gaza and others, but also private papyrus letters. Their analysis leads to the conclusion that there is a wide variability of the canons of the letter of recommendation, the absence of any rigid scheme that presupposes a clear sequence of structural elements. At the same time, it reveals six recurrent etiquette motifs, all of which are subordinated to a single goal — to persuade the addressee to patronize the recommended person. These motifs are analyzed in detail, and stable formulas are indicated for some of them. An attempt is made to determine to what extent the canons of Greek letters of recommendation of the 4th–7th centuries go back to the ancient tradition. The letters of recommendation of Cicero and Pliny the Younger, as well as letters preserved on late antique papyri, are used as material for comparative analysis.

Keywords: Early Byzantine letter-writing, epistolary etiquette, letter of recommendation, ancient letter-writing, papyrus letters.

1. Introduction

The letter of recommendation (ἡ συστατικὴ ἐπιστολή, *litterae commendaticiae*) was known in Antiquity as a separate genre form of letter writing, for which a certain set of compositional techniques, standard formulas and clichés was developed. This genre was widespread both in Greek and Latin epistolography: many examples of it have survived, both among business correspondence proper, which has survived on papyri, and among "literary" epistles, e. g., in Cicero's epistolary collection. In Byzantium the letter of recommendation was also in great demand — it is not difficult to find letters of this type in the epistolary collections of many authors from the 4th to the 15th century. However, while ancient letters of recommendation are well studied,[1] the etiquette of this genre in the Byzantine tradition has hardly been studied yet. In general, Byzantine epistolary etiquette[2] is currently under active research. Byzantine letters of consolation were examined in detail (Σαρρής 2005), etiquette norms developed for praising a letter received, interpretation of a gift and other situations have been analyzed.[3] Meanwhile, no special studies on the etiquette of letters of recommendation in Byzantium have been written yet. We can only point to scholarly works that examine letters of recommendation by individual authors, e. g., Libanius or Synesius of Cyrene, focusing on their style, motifs and functions.[4]

The aim of this article is to characterize the etiquette norms of Greek letter of recommendation in the early Byzantine period (4th — early 7th centuries), to identify its key motifs and stable formulas in which these motifs could be clothed, and to determine the measure of continuity between the ancient and Byzantine tradition. In the center of our attention will be "literarische Privatbriefe" (according to the terminology of H. Hunger),[5] preserved in epistolary collections and belonging to such Greek *literati* as Libanius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Synesius of Cyrene and others.[6] However, along with them we also analyze absolutely private letters that have survived on papyri. Epistolary practice is examined in comparison with the epistolary theory represented by the treatise "Epistolary Types" by Pseudo-Demetrius and "Epistolary Styles" by Pseudo-Libanius/Pseudo-Proclus. The treatise of Pseudo-Demetrius belongs to an earlier epoch (presumably the 1st century B. C. / 1st century A. D.), but was used in Byzantium, while Pseudo-Libanius' manual had been already created in the period under our consideration — at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries.[7]

As we have already mentioned, it was a common practice to compose letters of recommendation. Letters of this type can be easily discovered in most epistolary collections of the Early Byzantine period. Thus, we could find them in the letters of Libanius, Basil the

[1] On the letter of recommendation in ancient Greek epistolography see: Keyes 1935; Kim 1972; Reinard 2016, 88–96; Yoon 2016 (with special attention to New Testament letters of recommendation). On the Latin tradition see: Cotton 1981; Cotton 1985; Rees 2007. On the rhetorical rules of petition, an epistolary type close to a letter of recommendation, see Kovel'man 1988, 30–61.

[2] On the Byzantine letter-writing and Byzantine epistolary etiquette see Sykutris 1932; Koskenniemi 1956; Karlsson 1962; Hunger 1978, 199–242; Τωμαδάκης 1993; Riehle 2020.

[3] See, e. g.: Chernoglazov 2010; Chernoglazov 2011.

[4] See: Cabouret 2010; Miroshnichenko 2021, 123–128. For some remarks on letters of recommendation from the Middle Byzantine period, see: Bourbouhakis 2020.

[5] Hunger 1978, 206–207.

[6] On epistolary collections of the early Byzantine period see: Sogno, Storin, Watts 2017.

[7] On the ancient Greek epistolary theory see: Malherbe 1988; Malosse 2004. On the treatise of Pseudo-Libanius see: Chernoglazov 2021.

Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Synesius of Cyrene, Firmus of Caesarea, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Procopius of Gaza, and Aeneas of Gaza. The share of recommendation letters in some letter collections is quite noticeable: for example, among 249 letters of Gregory we found 26 letters of recommendation,[8] among 156 letters of Synesius — 28,[9] among 166 letters of Procopius — 21.[10]

Letters of recommendation were written for a wide variety of reasons: as a rule, the author not only introduced the recommended person to the addressee (in most cases, he was the letter bearer), but also asked the recipient to do something for his protégé — to give him hospitality, to arrange for his employment, to help him win a lawsuit, to take him under protection and do whatever he asks, etc. Sometimes the addressee was asked not to personally undertake to help the letter bearer (he might not have had such an opportunity), but to introduce him to other powerful men to whom he had access.[11] If a person maintained connections with influential people, he had no shortage of petitioners.[12] It is not surprising that letters were given not only to close friends or relatives, but also to people which the author did not know well, and sometimes even to strangers, if author's acquaintance interceded for them,[13] or if they managed to win author's favor by cunning or eloquence and persuade him to give them a letter to a powerful friend.[14] This custom was also used by swindlers. Thus, Procopius of Gaza in a letter to his brothers Zacharias and Philip warns them that the man who had previously come to them with his recommendation turned out to be a thief and had already robbed the house of a certain man who had sheltered him, and therefore he should not be presented to anyone else (Proc. 61).

2. Basic motifs and structural items

Characterizing the etiquette norms of the ancient letter of recommendation, Chan-Hie Kim distinguishes several structural units. Thus, in addition to the opening salutation and closing one, the letter usually contained the following parts: (1) "the background", containing "identification formula" and "background proper", (2) "the request period" and (3) "the appreciation" (Kim 1972, 7). These elements can also be found in the letters of the Early Byzantine period — they correspond to the very nature of the recommendation letter — but they do not constitute structural items. The identification formula was almost never separated from the background proper, whereas the appreciation was often not expressed at all. The only regularity is that the writer first introduced the recommended person and then expressed the request, but even those two elements sometimes were inseparable from each other and made up a complete text.[15] As an important and prominent part of the letter of recommendation we should also mention the *prooimion*, which contained, for example, *captatio benevolentiae*, an apology for disturbing the addressee, or

[8] Greg. 15; 21–24; 28; 37–39; 84; 85; 91; 104; 128; 134; 137; 140; 150; 151; 157; 159; 169; 170; 181; 189; 198.

[9] Syn. 13; 18–21; 27; 35; 39; 40; 47; 59; 68; 75; 82; 83; 87; 91; 99; 100; 102; 116; 118; 119; 131; 135; 144; 150; 155.

[10] Proc. 12; 16; 21; 22; 25; 35; 43; 45; 73; 82; 83; 93; 111; 116; 122; 136; 143; 145; 154; 157; 158.

[11] E. g.: Bas. 147; Greg. 15; 91; Syn. 131; Theod. 34.

[12] E. g.: Bas. 35; 37; 177.

[13] E. g.: Lib. 742; Firm. 22.

[14] Bas. 231; Proc. 154.

[15] E. g. Lib. 6; Greg. 85; Syn. 119.

some general idea justifying the legitimacy of the following recommendation. However, the *prooimion* was far from obligatory, and the letter bearer was often introduced immediately, without any preface.

Thus, in the letters of the period we are interested in, we cannot identify any uniform scheme that presupposes a clear sequence of structural elements. However, the reading of hundreds of letters, quite different in style, composition and context, still allows us to identify some regularities. The letters of various authors, from the pagan rhetorician Libanius to the Christian theologian John Chrysostom, use a number of recurring etiquette motifs, almost all of which are subordinated to a single goal — to persuade the addressee to show favor to the recommended person, to arrange his service or to support him in any way. We'll consider a small letter by Procopius of Gaza, in which almost all of these motifs are represented:

> "If the ancient word says that friends should have everything in common, and the learned Peter is my friend, he may justly be considered your friend too. Whether I value him by merit, experience will repeatedly show, but for now his appearance will testify to his character. Addressing us with some request and definitely wanting to achieve his goal, he encouraged us to write this letter, because he believes that I have such an influence on you that you will certainly not refuse me anything. So, if his opinion is true, then confirm it, and if it is false, then still do me a favor, so that it does not appear that we are pretending to be friends in front of others. Justice, which pleases you even when no one asks you [to stand up for it], is also in alliance with him. Meanwhile, if someone can prevent injustice, but neglects it, this is the same as committing injustice, which is alien to your mind. Know that you will agree in any case, convinced either by my letter or by my presence. You can only upset me with one thing — if you make virtue weaker by delaying [your intervention]" (Proc. 35).

So, Procopius asks Ilasius to help Peter, who will deliver this letter. The letter is rhetorically flawless: the author formulates five arguments designed to convince, if not force, the addressee to do him a favor. First, Peter is a friend of Procopius', which means that he must also be a friend of Ilasius'. Second, Peter has a decent disposition, which the addressee will be convinced of at first sight. Thirdly, Procopius is of the opinion that his word is omnipotent before Ilasius, and if he refuses him, their friendship will look like a disguise and Procopius' influence will be questioned. Fourthly, Peter had suffered an injustice — the author does not specify what kind of injustice, for of course the letter bearer himself will tell Ilasius about it — and now that Ilasius already knows about it, his inaction will be interpreted as support of the crime. Finally, there is a fifth argument, formulated indirectly: the author praises the addressee for his commitment to justice — even a letter to him urging justice seems superfluous — but this compliment turns out to be obliging: after such words, Ilasius will have to intervene and help Peter to prove that he is indeed a justful person. This argumentation is crowned by a phrase that allows no objection: the author is absolutely certain that the addressee will show mercy to Peter, and the only thing that can upset him is delay.

The five arguments used by Procopius in his letter to Ilasius correspond to five key motifs of early Byzantine letters of recommendation. The roots and specifics of the use of these and other motifs are the subject of our further observations.

3. Personal ties

Characterizing the ancient letter of recommendation, the researcher notes the following: "we can readily see that the social status or personal qualification of the recommended doesn't count for much. The family ties with the writer with a well-known person are regarded as more valuable than one's own credentials" (Kim 1972, 51). This is not quite true for the letters of the period we are interested in — as we will see below, the moral qualities of the recommended person play an important role in letters of recommendation — but the basic, key motif in the mouth of the author is that the recommended is related to him personally. The author could indicate that the letter bearer is a relative, friend, student, acquaintance, ward, spiritual son, daughter, brother, sister, etc., and on this basis ask the addressee to help him or her. The connection between the author and the one recommended could be indirect: he could be, for example, a relative of the best friend[16] or the husband of the favorite sister.[17] The word φίλος was most often used to denote friendship, less often ἑταῖρος.[18] The extremely broad term οἰκεῖος[19] was also used, denoting a person of the same household, a kinsman or a friend. The most abstract designation of any personal relationship was the pronoun ἐμός "my", e. g. ὁ ἐμὸς Εὐσέβιος "my Eusebius" in a letter of Synesius (Syn. 116.5).

However, to say φίλος or οἰκεῖος meant to say almost nothing. These words were clichés and did not indicate a truly friendly relationship. What did Byzantine authors do when it was necessary to emphasize that the recommended person was dear to the author and should be treated with special attention? Let us turn to the letter of Basil the Great, in which he asks a certain person to take care of the house of his friend Leontius. The letter begins with the following words:

> "I have written to you about many who engage my interest, and in the future I shall write about still more. For neither can the supply of the needy fail, nor is it possible for us to refuse them the favour. There is assuredly no one more dear to me, or more able to relieve me with whatever means fortune may bring him, than our most reverend brother Leontius. Treat his household as you would my own, in case you should find me, not in this state of poverty in which I now live with God, but seized of some measure of prosperity and in the possession of a landed estate. For in that case you surely would not reduce me to poverty, but you would guard my present possessions, or even increase my prosperity. This accordingly we beg you to do in the case of the aforesaid household of Leontius" (Bas. 35.1.1–12).[20]

We see that Basil uses two techniques. First, he elevates Leontius above the others whom he provides with letters of recommendation, and with the exaggeration typical of rhetoric declares that there is no one who is closer to him than Leontius. Secondly — and this technique is particularly important and convincing — Basil introduces the motif "friend as *alter ego*", which is common in ancient and Byzantine epistolography: if the recommended person is the "second self" of the author, the recipient should take care of him in the same way as the author himself, just as rejecting him would mean rejecting the

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[16] E. g. Lib. 72; Greg. 37.

[17] Syn. 75.

[18] E. g. Lib. 720.1; Syn. 82.3; Proc. 16.15; 21.

[19] E. g. Lib. 1355.3.3; Bas. 280.1.4; Greg. 84.1.2; Proc. 73.2.

[20] Here and below Basil's letters are quoted in the translation by Roy J. Deferrari (Deferrari 1926–1934).

author. Other epistolographers use a similar method. Gregory of Nazianzus ends his letter of recommendation with a brief but expressive formula: "In whatever way you do well by him, you'll be performing me a service".[21] A similar phrase appears in another of his letters: "Whatever you bestow on the young man, you will by all means bestow on me".[22] The same formula, but in a simpler version, is also found in a private letter of the 3rd/4th century: "What you do to them, you do to me".[23]

It should be noted that both of the techniques we encountered in Basil's letter — the elevation of this recommended person above the others as especially close and the motif "friend as *alter ego*" — were used in a similar way in Antiquity. Examples can be found in Cicero's correspondence. Thus, for example, the beginning of his letter to Publius Servilius is reminiscent of Basil's letter quoted above: Cicero confesses that "it is inevitable" that he "should recommend many persons" to the addressee, and he is "bound to wish well to all" whom he recommends, but Titus Agusius, who "was by my side during the most miserable time of my life", is recommended "as one of my own household and of those most closely united to me" (Fam., XIII, 71).[24] Equating the recommended person to himself is also used. Thus, in a letter to the same addressee, Cicero writes: "Wherefore I beg you with more than common earnestness to look upon Gaius Curtius's affair as mine; and whatever you do for my sake, I beg you to consider, though you have done it for Gaius Curtius, that I have from your hand what he has obtained through my influence".[25] A century later, the motif "friend as *alter ego*" appears in a letter of recommendation of a very different kind — in Apostle Paul's Epistle to Philemon. Introducing Onesimos to Philemon, the author writes: "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself" (Ep. Philem. 17).

"Friends have everything in common" is another traditional motif used in early Byzantine letters of recommendation to persuade the addressee to treat the recommended person favorably. If friends have everything in common, then my friend (i. e., the letter bearer) is your friend — this is the reasoning of Procopius of Gaza in the letter to Ilasius quoted above. A century and a half before Procopius, the same technique is used by Libanius. In a letter to Anatolius, the rhetor declares that he rejoices in the successes of the addressee as his own, and expresses confidence that Anatolius feels the same feelings towards him. This serves as an introduction to the recommendation of a friend: "So, it is natural that you should consider my friends as your own. If this be so, then Letoius, who is in no respect inferior to those who are close to me, and even superior to some of them, is your friend as well" (Lib. 552. 9–10).

The most peculiar development of the friendship motif is found in Synesius' letter to Pilemenus. Like Libanius and Procopius, Synesius seeks to prove to the addressee that he should make the recommended person his friend, but his proof is based not on the commonplaces of epistolary etiquette, but on the laws of geometry:

> "Know well that the definitions of geometry are infallibly true. Moreover, the other branches of knowledge are very proud when they are able, for their demonstration, to borrow some-

[21] Ὡς ὅ τι ἂν τοῦτον εὖ ποιήσῃς, εὐεργετήσων εἶ ἡμᾶς: Greg. 84.2.3–4. Here and below Gregory's letters are quoted in the translation by Bradley K. Storin (Storin 2019).

[22] Πάντως ὅ τι ἂν εἰσενέγκῃς τῷ νέῳ, ἡμῖν τοῦτο εἰσοίσεις: Greg. 189.3.1–2.

[23] καὶ εἴ τι αὐτοῖς ποιεῖς ἐμο[ὶ] ἐποίησας: P. Oxy. 31. 2603. 28–29

[24] Here and below Cicero's letters are quoted in the translation by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (Shuckburgh, 1908–1909).

[25] Existimes, quod ille per me habuerit, id me habere abs te: Fam. 13.5.3. See also Plin. 2.9.1.

thing, however slight, from geometry. Now there is a certain principle, of course, that two things which are equal to a third thing are equal to each other. I am bound to you by the link of association, and to the wonderful Diogenes by temperament also. Both of you are friends of the one man. You must then be united to one another, even as you are united to the middle link, myself. I attach you, therefore, the one to the other by this letter…" (Syn. 131. 1–10).[26]

Some connection with the recommended is a strong, but by no means the only argument from the part of the author. As a rule, it is supported by other arguments, among which the most frequent one is a positive characterization of the recommended one.

4. Enkomion of the recommended person

In ancient epistolography, personal characteristics of the recommended play a small and clearly subordinate role — this is indicated by Cicero's letters, in most of which nothing is said about the recommended at all, except that he is author's *familiaris*. Only at the decline of Antiquity the letter is transformed: it tends to amplify the characteristic of the subject, and the praise of the recommended person is built according to the rules of rhetoric (Rees 2007). We can observe examples of such encomia in the letters of Pliny the Younger, telling in detail about the recommended person, sometimes starting from his origin.[27] This tendency continues in the early Byzantine tradition. Most often the subject is characterized briefly, as, for example, in the letter of Synesius, who presents his protégé as "prudent, orderly, well educated, and religious" (Syn. 82. 2-3). But there are also cases where this characterization grows into a small encomium. Libanius' letter to Florentius is a case in point. The letter opens with a typically rhetorical *prooimion*:

"You will hear many people praising this Parthenius in many speeches, so that you will not doubt [his merits], nor will you argue that this man is not worthy of good deeds. But I gave him this letter, not because those speeches were not sufficient, but because it would have been shameful for me, if I alone kept silent about him" (Lib. 72.1).

Then, having mentioned that the fate of Parthenius concerns him because he is his countryman and the son of his best friend, Libanius begins to describe Parthenius' character:

"But he is worthy of care even without this, but because of his moral virtues. To help a friend he can enter the fire, and when a friend goes astray he prevents him from doing this, for he does not know how to flatter but is able to censure him frankly. Through intelligence he can avoid unjust dangers, and through the elegance of his nature he can make an assembly more pleasant. He cares rather to spend money than to get it. I am a witness to this, for I have recognized his qualities from what he has done to me. So, if a man of whom this may be said should be entrusted with the administration of cities, he will, I trust, preserve what he is accustomed to, and shut the mouths of those who are fond of blaming" (Lib. 72. 3–5).

Of course, a praise for a close relative or friend could be questioned, and authors emphasized in various ways that the letter bearer did indeed have virtues. One such way was to express confidence that the addressee himself would be convinced of his virtues if given

[26] Here and below Synesius' letters are quoted in the translation by A. Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald 1926).
[27] E. g. Plin. 2.13; 7.31.

a chance to show them. The letter of Gregory of Nazianzus in which he recommends his friend Eudoxius to Themistius is illustrative:

> "If you were to learn, though, about the man for whom I intercede, you would immediately approve of my confidence. Let me present him to you: Eudoxius, the child of the famous Eudoxius but my most outstanding son in conduct and speech, as you'll discover for yourself when you bring the stone up to the measuring line, as the proverb goes (and what measure could be fairer than you?). He is my friend in the highest degree, no less because of his virtue than because of my friendship with his father" (Greg. 38.3).

Thus, Gregory assumes that Themistius will evaluate the merits of Eudoxius, but modestly leaves the final judgment about him to the addressee, taking this opportunity to call Themistius the "measuring line" of virtue. Procopius of Gaza uses the same technique, for example, in his letter to Ilasius: the author allegedly evades a final judgment about Peter ("experience will show" how good he is), but is sure that his good temper will be noticeable as soon as the addressee looks at him. In another letter, Procopius expresses even more confidence that the addressee, his brother Philip, will admire the recommended. At first he states that "moral virtues are enough for good men to recommend themselves". However, since getting acquainted still requires some sort of occasion, Procopius has handed Theon a letter to Philip, and now he is convinced: "at first you will look upon him favorably because of the letter, but then you will find the letter excessive, and, as I think, you will admire this man because of his own qualities" (Proc. 25). In the ancient tradition, this technique was used, for example, by Pseudo-Demetrius. The author of the model letter of recommendation persuades the addressee: "you will not be sorry if you entrust to him, in any matter you wish, either words or deeds of a confidential nature. Indeed, you, too, will praise him to others when you see how useful he can be in everything".[28] Similarly, Cicero often begins characterizing his protégé with the words "you will see" or "you will know" and expresses confidence that the addressee will find him worthy of his friendship.[29]

The assurance that the person recommended will bring the addressee benefit or pleasure could have been expressed more strongly: the recommended is so good that his acquaintance with the addressee will be a favor not to him (as is assumed in most letters of recommendation), but to the addressee. One of Synesius' letters begins as follows:

> "This is a new practice of mine in use of letters. I have written not to recommend the bearer of this to your friendly offices, but rather to give you the benefit of the acquaintance of a man who will be very useful both to you and to your beloved friend the great Diogenes. Do not be angry with me if I believe, and if I say, that the advantage will be on your side, and not on Theotimus'" (Syn. 99. 1–7).

Synesius claims that this letter is a "new practice" of his own, but a similar technique had been used before him. Thus, Libanius begins the letter with the following preamble: "When I asked you for the others, I thought I was doing them a favor (χάριν). But if you do something favorable (κεχαρισμένον) for Olympius, you will, I believe, take the favor (χάριν) rather than do it" (Lib. 70.1). What follows, however, is a detailed laudatory characterization of the recommended.

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[28] PD. 2. 7–10. Translation by Abraham J. Malherbe (Malherbe 1988).

[29] E. g. Cic. Fam. XIII. 10.4; 17.3; 23.2; 78.2.

Finally, another way to show that the author recommends someone not because of friendship but for the sake of his merits is to state it directly. Thus, Synesius' letter to Chryses begins with the words: "Not because this charming Gerontius is related to my children, do I recommend the young man to your friendship, although it is also true. It is rather because he is worthy of the golden Chryses in his manners…" (Syn. 83. 1–4). In this way Synesius manages to indicate to the addressee that Gerontius is his relative, but without compromising his positive evaluation by doing so.

5. Iliad of disasters

Along with the fact that the letter bearer was close to the author and was characterized by virtues, it was often noted that he was a victim of injustice or guilty of something, but deserved leniency — an argument designed to persuade the addressee to use his influence to help him. The report of the misfortune that befell the recommended could vary in length from a single word (e. g., ἀδικεῖται — Syn. 144.2) to a lengthy passage, as, for example, in two letters of Basil the Great, where he asks the addressees to intercede for Maximus, the former ruler of Cappadocia. In the letter to Trajan his troubles are compared to the Iliad (Bas. 148), and in the letter to Aburgius to the Odyssey (Bas. 147). The passage from the letter to Aburgius is particularly revealing:

> "I used to think the works of Homer fable, whenever I read the second part of his poem in which he gives his strange version of the sufferings of Odysseus. But what formerly seemed to me fabulous and incredible the calamity which has befallen our most excellent Maximus has taught me to consider as altogether probable. For Maximus was a ruler over no mean people, just as Odysseus was the war-chief of the Cephallenians. Odysseus took with him great riches, but on his return was empty-handed, and Maximus has been reduced by his misfortune to such a plight that he is very likely to appear to his people at home in borrowed rags. And all this he has suffered, perhaps because he has aroused some Laestrygones against himself, or has fallen in with a Scylla, woman in shape but dog in savagery and fierceness. Since, then, he has barely been able to swim out of this present engulfing sea of trouble, he supplicates you through us, asking you to respect our common kind and out of compassion for his unmerited sufferings not to hide his affairs in silence… " (Bas. 147. 1. 1–16).

Whether brief or lengthy, accounts of the misfortunes of the recommended are generally very poor in specific details. The passage quoted above, which consists entirely of circumlocutions, does not contain any clear information about what happened to Maxim. A necessary supplement to this letter, as well as to many other letters of recommendation, was the oral explanations of the letter bearer himself. Having read the enigmatic text of the letter, the intrigued recipient was all the more interested to hear a concrete story. Some letters directly informed the recipient that the recommended would explain what had happened to him or her and what he or she needed.[30]

There are letters in which the story of the injustice suffered by the recommended is, in fact, the only reason to help him (e. g. Proc. 157), but as a rule this argument is combined with others, and among them, first of all, with the basic argument: the letter submitter is a person close to the author. In such cases, it is an appeal to friendship, rather than an extent to which the recommended has suffered unjustly, that turns out to be the decisive

[30] E. g., Bas. 178. 1. 6–8; Syn. 155. 10–12.

factor. Two letters, those of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus, attest to this. In his letter to Nemesius, Gregory intercedes for Valentinian, his relative, and asks the addressee not to penalize him, since Valentinian suffers punishment not for his negligence. Further on, however, Gregory writes:

> "Being able to convince you as a judge would be best, but if I can't do that, let me appeal to our friendship and recite to Your Eloquence what someone supposedly wrote to his friend: 'As to so-and-so, if he has committed no crime, then release him on account of justice. But if he has committed a crime, release him to me'. Certainly, release him once you've realized that, on the one hand, an additional penalty of two horses would bring no substantial boost to the public treasury but, on the other, the favor would be registered to my account" (Greg. 198. 3–4).

Gregory quotes almost verbatim the words of Agesilaus from Plutarch's dialog (cf. Plut. Ages. 13.4) to convey a simple idea to the addressee: in his opinion, if Valentinian is still worthy of punishment, he could release him on the basis of friendship. A similar thought is expressed more succinctly in Basil the Great's letter to the prefect Modestus, where he asks for help for a certain friend involved in a legal battle. Basil asks the addressee, "that, if the man has done no wrong, he may be saved through the influence of the truth itself, but if he has indeed sinned, that his sin may be forgiven him through us who make supplication" (Bas. 111. 1. 9–11). Thus, Basil and Gregory frankly admit that the basic argument — "this person is my friend/relative" — occupies the highest position in the hierarchy of motifs for a letter of recommendation.

6. Author's reputation at stake

"What you do to him, you do to me": if such a letter went unheeded and the unfortunate letter bearer left with nothing, the letter-writer's reputation was jeopardized. On the contrary, if someone's letters of recommendation to noblemen were always successful, his authority among his friends, students, or compatriots was strengthened, and everyone was eager to get his invaluable messages. Not surprisingly, this theme was reflected in many letters of recommendation: another reason to help the recommended person was to show him that it was the letter he delivered that helped him, and thus to take care of the good name of the author of the letter and not to dishonor him by refusal or neglect. Here are some examples.

Basil the Great asks the prefect Modestus to intercede for the letter bearer and formulates three arguments. First, this man stands for him "in place of a son", second, he has moral virtues, and third, if the petitioner gets what he wants, then, as the author writes, it will "be within my power to boast that there has been given me by the grace of God such a champion, who regards those who are related to me as his personal suppliants and clients" (Bas. 280. 1. 13–15). John Chrysostom asks his addressee to show the recommended "that our letter has helped him to gain favour and just assistance on your part. In this way he will receive a good deed, and I will enjoy honour because he has received this good deed" (PG 52. 712.51–713.4).

In the letters of several authors one can also find requests not to spoil their reputation. Thus, Gregory of Nazianzus, interceding before Caesarius for Amphilochius, asks "not to bring dishonor upon" his "gray hair", but to "respect" his "testimony" (Greg. 23.5).

In Synesius' letter, such a request is not formulated *expressis verbis*, but in the form of a transparent hint. Synesius asks the addressee to help a certain Phoebamon. Having mentioned that Phoebamon is his friend, a worthy man and is subjected to injustice, the author adds the following:

> "So, then, let it be. He himself probably counts very much upon the friendship which unites us. For in the need that he has of you, it is to me that he has come for help, thinking himself assured of gaining support by my intervention. Thus, as I promised him, he can, thanks to Synesius, count upon Herculian, and, thanks to the sacred and honored person of Herculian, he can triumph over his adversaries" (Syn. 144. 4–10).

Why does Synesius write this? It is not difficult to guess what is meant here: if Herculian does not fulfill the request of Phoebamon, Synesius will be shamed: people will think that his influence on Herculian is negligible, and his word is worthless. Several illustrative examples can be found in the letters of Procopius of Gaza. One of them is the letter to Ilasius quoted at the beginning of this article: even if the author's arguments do not influence the addressee, as everyone thinks they should, Ilasius can at least maintain the illusion that they do, so that the author's reputation is not damaged. In the form of a joke, the same motif is presented in Procopius' letter to Apollonius. Asking the addressee to help Martyrius, who had fallen into poverty, Procopius relays a conversation he allegedly had with the petitioner:

> "He said confidently that if you received a letter from me, there would be nothing you would not easily do, and when I smiled and asked how he knew this, he was ready to vouchsafe (κατεγγυᾶσθαι) that it would happen. Therefore, fulfill his hopes so that if need calls him he will not vouchsafe that I will achieve nothing from you" (Proc. 93. 7–11).

Here too, the epistolographer directly tells the addressee what worries him: if he does not take care of Martyrius, the latter will spread the rumor that Procopius has no influence on Apollonius.

The motif we have now considered is widely represented not only in the early Byzantine but also in the ancient tradition. As early as in a letter of 257 B. C., preserved in P. Cair. Zen. 1. 59101 the author, a certain Melanippus, asks the addressee not only to help the letter bearer in what he needs, but also to "make it clear to him that we have written to you about him" (φανερὸν αὐτῶι ποιήσας ὅτι γεγράφαμέν σοι περὶ αὐτοῦ), i. e., that his letter had been effective. The late antique fictitious letter attributed to Aeschines appeals directly to the author's reputation: the author asks Philocrates to help Ariston, "so that he might realize that he has by no means protected a man thoroughly bereft of friends, and that in Athens instead still retains some memory and notion of Aeschines".[31] It is also important to Cicero that the recommended person feels the measure of his personal influence and does not doubt how strong his word is, and he writes about it directly. Thus, one of his letters ends with these words: "But while I am eager that he should come by his own without difficulty, I am also anxious that he should think that he owes his success in no small degree to my recommendation".[32] In general, Cicero often urges his addressees "to make it clear" to the recommended "how highly he values" Cicero, and that this par-

[31] Aeschin. Ep. 6.1.7 (transl. by Z. Guo). A detailed analysis of this letter see in: Guo 2018, 286–289.
[32] ut non minimum hac mea commendatione se consecutum arbitretur: Cic. Fam. 13.26.4.

ticular recommendation "has been of great service to him".[33] The most illustrating is a letter addressed to Quintus Valerius Orca. Cicero asks the recipient to help his friend and briefly recounts the injustice the latter has suffered, but then notes: "But I don't so much care to write at length on the legal merits of the case, lest I should be thought to have had influence with you owing to its strength rather than from your personal feeling for me".[34] Equally interesting is another letter to the same addressee recommending Lucius Julius. Cicero writes that Publius Cuspius asked him to write about Lucius Julius not as he usually did, but in a new way:

> "He asks for something out of the common way from me, and thinks I have a special knack in that style of writing. I have promised him to produce a masterpiece of commendation — a specimen of my choicest work. Since I cannot reach that standard, however, I would beg you to make him think that some astonishing effect has been produced by the style of my letter" (Cic. Fam. 13.6.3–4).

So, Cicero, as he "modestly" claims, did not succeed in writing an unusual letter of recommendation, but he asks to give Lucius Julius such support that no one will doubt the power of his eloquence. In a similar way Procopius of Gaza will reason in his letter to Ilasius: even if Peter is wrong and Procopius' word is not powerful before the addressee, Ilasius should still support Peter, so that no one doubts the power of Procopius' influence.

7. Obliging compliments

The four main motifs which we have already considered usually represent explicit arguments inducing the addressee to treat favorably the recommended: "help him for my sake," "stand up for this worthy man who has been unjustly wronged," etc. The motif, to which we are now turning, does not induce the addressee to anything *expressis verbis*, but, in our opinion, it could well function as an indirect argument serving the same purpose. The author praises the addressee for kindness, humanity, justice or some other virtue, and this is presented by him as a reason for writing a letter of recommendation. The function of such praises seems to be twofold: first, they played the role of *captatio benevolentiae* and justified the author's boldness or persistence, and second, they actually obliged the addressee to fulfill the author's request: if he treated the petitioner with disdain, he *eo ipso* refuted the praiseworthy characteristic with which he had been honored. It should be borne in mind that this praise was public — letters, especially in the high society of the Byzantine era, were usually read aloud in the circle of friends and clients. In other words: if the addressee fulfilled the request and helped the petitioner, his fame as a merciful nobleman would increase, and if not — this reputation would be questioned.

The words "you are merciful and therefore I ask you to show mercy to the bearer of the letter" could actually mean: "if you are really merciful, you should show him mercy". The motif is expressed in such a direct form only once — in the preamble of Gregory's letter to the famous rhetorician Themistius. Intending to intercede for Amphilochius, "the philosopher," Gregory states: "Eloquence is in danger and the opportunity is yours, if you are indeed the king of eloquence" (Greg. 24.1). In other cases where this technique is used,

[33] E. g. Cic. Fam. 13.30.2; 35.2; 36.2; 46; 58; 67.2.

[34] sed mihi minus libet multa de aequitate rei scribere, ne causa potius apud te valuisse videar quam gratia: Cic. Fam. 13.5.3.

the compliment is not called into question by the conjunction "if", but it does not become less obliging. Let us consider an example from the epistolary collection of Theodoret of Cyrrhus. Recommending Celestiacus, who has suddenly become poor and now needs help, and begins the letter with the following words:

> "All kinds of goodness are praiseworthy, but all are made more beautiful by love towards mankind (φιλανθρωπία). For it we earnestly pray the God of all; through it alone we obtain forgiveness when we err; it makes wealth stoop to the poor, and because I know that your Excellency is richly endowed with it I confidently commend to you the most admirable and excellent Celestinianus…" (Theod. 34. 1–7).

So, Theodoret "knows" that his addressee is "endowed" with "love towards mankind", the greatest of virtues, and so he "confidently" presents Celestiacus to him, who is in dire need of his φιλανθρωπία. Had the recipient ignored this request, the praise expressed to him beforehand would have been doubtful. In Gregory's letter to Caesarius, the same motif is expressed in a half-joking way. The author asks the addressee to condescend to Amphilochius, who committed a transgression, and, apparently anticipating hesitation on the part of Caesarius, begins the letter as follows:

> "If what I'm asking is great, don't be surprised, since I'm asking it from a great person and the request should correspond in magnitude to the person being asked. For it's just as inappropriate to seek important things from an unimportant person as it is to seek unimportant things from an important person — indeed, the former is unseemly, the latter frivolous" (Greg. 23.1).

Caesarius finds himself in a logical trap: if he replies that Gregory asked too much, he thereby admits that he is μικρός.

Sometimes the motif takes an even bolder and more expressive form. The author is sure not only that the addressee will fulfill his request, but also that he will be glad to fulfill it and will be grateful to the author for the reason to do a good deed. The motif is most fully expressed in the letter of Procopius of Gaza to his brother Zacharias, where the author petitions for Alexander, who is suffering from the persecution of a certain *concussor*, i. e. extortionist. The petition itself has the following preface:

> "Behold, time again demands of you the favor of petitioners, and the occasion for it is given you again by me, so that, as I know well, you will acknowledge gratitude (χάριν ὁμολογήσεις) twice — for having found an opportunity to do good, and for having obtained it with my help. For you are indeed more pleased (χαίρεις) to do good than others are pleased to experience it, and you will even call a benefactor the one who gave you the occasion to do it. Wherefore I am so proud that I will rather do you a favor than receive it (χάριν δώσων μᾶλλον ἢ ληψόμενος)" (Proc. 12.1–6).

The *prooimion* is based on a paradox: if in a normal situation the author asks the addressee to do him a favor and calls him a benefactor, here he is convinced that he himself is a benefactor who does a favor for the addressee. A similar paradox was introduced two centuries earlier by Basil the Great, who was sure "that he [i. e. the recommended] on his part will receive all that he seeks and that we shall be accounted with you among your benefactors because we procure for your good-will occasions for well-doing" (Bas. 279. 1. 5–8). The addressee, instead of the benefactor, becomes the recipient of the favor: let us recall that this motif — also containing a pun with the word χάρις — has already been

noticed by us in some letters, where it was emphasized that the merits of the recommended person are a better favor to the addressee than the patronage of the addressee is to the recommended person.

The addressee loves people so much that it gives him joy to do good to people — Synesius expresses this compliment in his own way. The letter to Dometian, where the author asks for help to his relative who is left a widow with a small child, begins with the following words:

> "I know quite clearly, from the facts themselves, that your greatest pleasure is to do good, and that you are always ready to hold out a helping hand to the needy. I appeal to you with this very purpose, thinking to turn, as they say, the horse to the plain" (Syn. 155. 1–6).

A well-known proverb is used for greater expressiveness: it is as characteristic of Dometian to show mercy as it is for a horse to run in the field. The obliging nature of this praise is indicated by a phrase closer to the end of the letter: "I beg you, therefore, my friend, to come to her aid, because that would be a good deed, and one fitting for you (τὸ σοὶ πρέπον), and I ask for my sake as well" (12–14). If Dometian is known to be a merciful man, he must now perform acts "fitting for" him.[35] A similar formula is contained in the model letter of recommendation found in Pseudo-Libanius' treatise: "Receive this highly honored and much sought-after man, and do not hesitate to treat him hospitably, thus doing what is fitting for you (σεαυτῷ πρέποντα) and what pleases me".[36] The brief letter doesn't specify any virtues of the addressee, but it is assumed that he possesses virtues because of which it is fitting for him to extend hospitality to the letter bearer.

Is it worth giving a letter to a petitioner if the addressee will help him anyway? In the letter of Synesius we can guess another motif, which in some other letters is outspoken explicitly: the author could express confidence that the addressee, because of his virtues, does good deeds himself, without any external stimulus, and therefore there is simply no need for letters of recommendation to him. The most illustrative example is the letter of Basil the Great, which begins as follows:

> "Quite convinced though I am that those who have recourse to your Benignity have no need of letters, because you do more out of the nobility of your character than all that anyone by exhortation could induce you to do for a good end, nevertheless, because of the exceeding anxiety which I feel for this son, I have been induced to write to your pure and guileless soul, introducing this man to you…" (Bas. 316. 1. 1–6).

So, the author is convinced that the recipient's moral excellence is far more likely to induce him to do favors than anyone else's letters. Why, then, does he write? To show that he is supremely concerned about the fate of the recommended. A similar passage can be found in an anonymous letter from 548. After mentioning that the "admirable" Dioscorus had suffered injustice and asked the author for a letter to the addressee, the author states: "I know that, even without my request, justice is given to him and to all others by your sublimity. I urge however that a little more zeal be bestowed on the admirable Dioscorus…" (sb. 4. 7438. 9–12). We are dealing with a certain technique provided for by the etiquette norms of the time. Both epistolographers — Basil the Great and an unknown author of

[35] See also Libanius' letter of recommendation, where he praises the addressee for previous favors and asks him once again to follow "his own law" (Lib. 339.1).

[36] PL. 55. Translation by Abraham J. Malherbe (Malherbe 1988).

the 6th century — praise the addressees for their virtue and therefore consider letters of recommendation unnecessary, and explain the existence of the letter by the fact that this case is of exceptional importance to them. In this way two purposes are combined — to express praise to the addressee, which will oblige him to conform to the high estimate, and to elevate his protégé above the rest of the petitioners.

Unlike the other basic motifs of recommendation letters, the motif of obliging praise is characteristic of the early Byzantine tradition, but single similar examples can also be found in ancient letters. Thus, the author of a letter from 255 B. C. E. makes it clear to the addressee that he is being touted as a good man: the person recommended has learned of his ἐπιείκεια and, through some friends, has asked the author to write him a letter of recommendation (P. Cair. Zen. 2.59192. 4–5). In P. Oxy. 7.1064 (after 218/219) the author himself "knows the goodness" (εἰδώς σου τὸ σπουδαῖον) of the addressee and therefore asks him to help the letter bearer (6–7). An indicative but the only one example can also be found in one of Cicero's letters. The request is formulated as follows:

> "I ask with all my might as a favor from you… that you would allow a letter from me to add a finishing stroke to what, without anyone's recommendation, you would have spontaneously done for a man of such high and noble character, labouring under so heavy a calamity" (Cic. Fam. 13.66.1).

We see here the same thing as in Basil's letter: the author knows "how indulgent to men in calamity" he usually is, and is sure that he would have helped the petitioner without any letter of recommendation, but nevertheless takes up his pen because the one recommended is especially valuable to him.

8. Earthly and heavenly rewards

In addition to the five main motifs discussed above, there is another one, not so widespread, but also repeated in the letters of different authors. Asking the addressee to support his protégé, the author could promise him a reward that awaits him for this favor. This is another argument designed to persuade the addressee to be diligent in helping the recommended.[37] What kind of reward do Byzantine authors promise in letters of recommendation? Two main approaches can be distinguished here.

The first approach assumes that the addressee gains good fame for his beneficence. Thus, Gregory of Nazianzus asks Sophronius to help his nephew Nicobulus in whatever he asks, and adds the following: "As for me, I'll pay you back with the best of what I possess. I have eloquence and can be a herald of your virtue, even if I'm far from your worth, at least as best I can" (Greg. 21.5). Procopius of Gaza asks the addressee to help the recommended in court and promises that he will "admire" him as a judge (Proc. 111. 15–16). Basil, in his letter to Aburgius, also promises that the addressee's deed will be glorified, but it is not Basil himself who will become "perpetual herald" of his "benefits," but the recommended (Bas. 178.1.15).

However, what does worldly glory mean compared to heavenly reward? The second approach, peculiar to the Christian tradition, is the promise of reward from God. The motif is most fully represented in Basil's letter to an unknown person. Asking for help for

[37] Failure to repay a favor, on the other hand, may have been a reason for apologizing, as, for example, in the letter of Libanius: Lib. 9.1.

the letter bearer, the author concludes the letter as follows: "And it is clear that for good works there are the rewards, not from us insignificant beings, but from the Lord who requites good purposes" (Bas. 318.1.9–11). The purpose of such an ending seems to be not only to promise the addressee a divine reward, but also to make him realize that the author himself has nothing to thank him with. Sometimes the reward from God is stated directly — as, for example, in the papyrus letter from 548 (sb. 4. 7438. 12–13) — and sometimes in the form of a hint, absolutely transparent to any Christian reader, as in a letter by John Chrysostom: "You know what reward awaits you if you try to help a person who is being vainly and maliciously slandered".[38]

The presence of this motif in early Byzantine letters is not surprising. Rather, what is surprising is that the authors resort to it relatively rarely. It is also noteworthy that the formula common in ancient epistolography is not typical of the period in question. It was customary to let the addressee understand that the author would be ready to return the favor, as, for example, in a letter of the 2nd century BC: "If you want anything, write to me and I won't hesitate to do it".[39] A similar motif can be found also in Cicero's letter: "On my side, whatever I think that you wish or is to your interest, I will see to with zeal and activity" (Cic. Fam. 13.69.2). Epistolographers of the early Byzantine period, on the other hand, are not inclined to assure the addressee that they are ready for mutual favors. Why? We can only speculate: epistolary art was increasingly influenced by rhetoric, and authors tried to avoid trivial formulas that meant what was evident without them.

9. Conclusion: etiquette norms and originality

Letters of recommendation of the early Byzantine period are a huge corpus of diverse texts, and within this paper we have been able to identify only the main motifs that recur more or less regularly in the letters of different authors. We have found six main motifs, acting as direct or indirect arguments, persuading the addressee to help the recommended person. So, why should the recipient show favor to the letter bearer?

1. *The recommended is a friend or relative of the author or his friend or relative.* To make the request sound more convincing, the motif was often combined with other common themes of a friendly letter — "friends have everything in common" and "a friend is alter ego". Since friends have everything in common, the addressee should consider the author's friend as his own; since a friend is alter ego, the addressee should treat the author's friend as the author himself.

2. *The recommended has moral virtues.* Sometimes the praise of the recommended person grew into his lengthy encomium. Praise for a close relative or friend could be questioned as biased, and authors used various techniques to emphasize that the letter bearer was indeed worthy of attention.

3. *The recommended has suffered injustice or is guilty of something, but deserves leniency.* Most often this argument served as a supplement to the main one: the letter bearer is a close person of the author. In such cases, the appeal to personal ties was decisive: if the recommended person is not guilty, he should be released for the sake of justice, and if he is guilty, he should be forgiven for the sake of friendship.

[38] PG 52.643.21–23. See also in the letter of Theodoret of Cyrrhus: "You will win greater gain by giving many a lesson in kindness" (Theod. 34. 13–14).

[39] P. Oxy. 4. 743. 38–40. Other examples see in: Keyes 1935, 94–97.

4. *If the addressee rejects the recommendation, the author's reputation will suffer.* If a letter of recommendation addressed to an influential person was successful, it strengthened the author's authority among his friends or compatriots. The epistolographer could ask the addressee to show favor to the letter bearer so that the author would be "proud" of such a "patron", so that he would be respected, or so that his influence would not appear insignificant and his "gray hair" would not be "dishonored".

5. *The recipient should support the recommended person, in order to confirm his own positive image given by the author*. The motive was expressed in the form of an obliging compliment and could be presented in different variants: the addressee's virtue inspires the author with courage and confidence that his request will be satisfied; the author is convinced that the addressee will be grateful to him for the reason to do a good deed; the author doubts that it is necessary to write a letter of recommendation at all, since the addressee does good deeds without any inducement.

6. *The recipient will be rewarded for his good deeds*, which can be either praise from men or recompense from God. This motif is relatively rare in early Byzantine epistolography.

We tried to show that all these motifs go back to ancient letters. To the least extent this applies to the fifth and sixth motifs: the fifth in the Byzantine epoch seems to spread much more widely than before, and the sixth, on the contrary, loses popularity and is seriously transformed by the introduction of the Christian motif of divine reward. In general, the etiquette of recommendation letters changes insignificantly, and we can observe the existence of a certain common tradition, manifested both in Greek and Latin epistolography both in business letters and in rhetorically refined epistles. The same formula with slight variations is used by an unknown author from Egypt, by Cicero, and by Gregory of Nazianzus. The parallels between Byzantine authors and Cicero, of course, do not mean direct borrowing. It is a question of common etiquette norms that were formed in the Roman era, when Greek and Latin epistolary traditions were still open to mutual influence. These norms were inherited by the early Byzantine letter-writing, which — due to the preservation of a large number of literary letters — is much better known to us than Greek epistolography before the 4th century.

The spread of Christianity, of course, transforms the etiquette norms, but these adjustments seem to be superficial. Firstly, sometimes (but infrequently) the motif of divine recompense is introduced; secondly, Christian authors use the terms "brother", "sister", "son", and "daughter" to denote a spiritual connection with the recommended; thirdly, instead of εὔνοια towards the recommended, which is commonly asked of Libanius, Christians more often speak of φιλανθρωπία (Cabouret 2008, 197). On the whole, however, Christian motifs do not yet dominate, as will be seen in many letters of the next, Middle Byzantine period. The analysis of recommendation letters of the 8th–12th centuries will be the subject of our future study.

Meanwhile, we should not think that early Byzantine letters of recommendation consisted entirely of etiquette motifs and were always written strictly according to the rules. The success of a recommendation could be due to the originality of the letter, the rhetorical art and wit of the author. As an example, consider the unusual letter of recommendation of Procopius of Gaza addressed to his brother Zacharias:

> "I do not know who the people are who will deliver the letter to you, but since they admire you, I define them as those closest [to me]. For when they saw me and noticed some traits,

similar [with yours], they guessed what was really so: saying something to each other and sharing with each other their judgments about what they saw, [they realized] that I am a brother to you, my beloved. And when these people came to a common opinion, they ran up and spoke to me and, looking at me affably, immediately began to admire you in every possible way, calling you a righteous judge, a just ruler, and every other honorable name. Their words may have been weaker than what you deserve, but it was clear that they wanted to say more than they could express, showing that their opinion of you exceeded the power of their words. I was crowned with so much praise — for I took the praise of you to my own account — and when they asked for a reward, I gave them this letter" (Proc. 154).

A letter of recommendation, by its definition, presupposes that the writer knows the person being recommended and introduces him to the addressee. Procopius, on the other hand, declares to Zacharias that he does not know the letter bearers and frankly admits that the letter of recommendation was a reward for their praise of Zacharias. Instead of repeating traditional *topoi*, Procopius paints a vivid scene of his meeting with the recommended and, instead of praising them, gives an ironic image: they lacked the eloquence to express all that they wanted to say about the addressee, and therefore their praise was insufficient. What we have above is a letter of recommendation written not according to the rules, but rather against them. In the intellectual milieu of early Byzantium, the success of a recommendation sometimes lay not in its conformity to the canon, but in its originality and wit. Cicero was once asked to write an unusual letter to bring special attention to the recommended, and he succeeded in doing so by recounting the very request and his own failure (Fam. 13.6).[40] Originality was equally a characteristic feature of early Byzantine letter writers' style.

Abbreviations

Bas.: Courtonne Y. (ed.) *Saint Basile. Lettres*. Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1957–1966.
Firm.: Calvet-Sebasti M.-A., Gatier P.-L. (eds) *Firmus de Césarée, Lettres.* Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1989.
Greg.: Gallay P. (ed.) *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres*. Vols 1–2. Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1964–1967.
Lib.: Foerster R., Richtsteig E. (eds) *Libanii Opera omnia*. Vols 10–11. Leipzig, Teubner, 1921–1922.
PD: Weichert V. (ed.) *Demetrii et Libanii qui feruntur Τύποι ἐπιστολικοί et Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι χαρακτῆρες*. Lipsiae, 1910. P. 1–12.
PL: Foerster R., Richtsteig E. (eds) *Libanii Opera omnia*. Vol. 9. Leipzig, Teubner, 1927. P. 1–47.
Proc.: Garzya A., Loenertz R.-J. (eds) *Procopii Gazaei epistolae et declamations.* Ettal, Buch-Kunstverlag, 1963.
Syn.: Garzya A. (ed.) *Synésios de Cyrène. Correspondance.* Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2000.
Theod.: Azéma Y. (ed.) *Théodoret de Cyr. Correspondance*. I–III. Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1955–1965.

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[40] On Cicero's deliberate deviation from the standard clichés of recommendation letters, see: Cotton 1985, 331–334.

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«Что бы ты ни сделал для него, ты сделаешь это для меня»: ключевые мотивы ранневизантийского рекомендательного письма

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Рекомендательное письмо было известно в Античности как отдельная жанровая форма письма, для которой был разработан определенный набор композиционных приемов и формул. В Византии рекомендательное письмо было тоже весьма востребовано: послания, в которых автор представляет адресату своего протеже и, как правило, просит что-то для него исполнить, нетрудно найти в эпистолярных собраниях очень многих авторов от IV до XV в. Между тем как античное рекомендательное письмо неплохо изучено, этикет этого жанра в византийской традиции пока почти не исследовался. Задача настоящей статьи — охарактеризовать этикетные нормы греческого рекомендательного письма в ранневизантийскую эпоху (IV — начало VII вв.). Предметом исследования становятся в первую очередь literarische Privatbriefe, принадлежащие таким авторам, как Либаний, Василий Великий, Григорий Назианзин, Иоанн Златоуст, Синесий Киренский, Феодорит Киррский, Прокопий Газский и др., но также и частные письма, сохранившиеся на папирусах. Исследование приводит к заключению о широкой вариативности канонов рекомендательного письма, об отсутствии какой-либо жесткой схемы, предполагающей четкую последовательность структурных элементов. Вместе с тем представляется возможным выявить шесть повторяющихся этикетных мотивов, подчиненных одной-единственной цели — убедить адресата проявить благосклонность к рекомендуемому лицу. Эти мотивы подробно анализируются, для некоторых указываются устойчивые формулы. Предпринимается попытка определить, в какой мере каноны греческого рекомендательного письма IV–VII вв. восходят к античной традиции. Для сравнения привлекаются рекомендательные письма Цицерона и Плиния Младшего, послания апостола Павла, а также частные письма, сохранившиеся на позднеантичных папирусах.

Ключевые слова: ранневизантийская эпистолография, эпистолярный этикет, рекомендательное письмо, античная эпистолография, папирусные письма.

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