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INSCRIPTIONS PERTAINING TO THE PRAETORIAN
PREFECTS FROM 284 TO 395 AD.
PAPER EDITION

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA,
ELEONORA ANGIUS, ANDREA BERNIER,
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FUNERARY ALTAR OF THE PRAET.
 PREFECT VETTIUS AGORIUS PRAETEXTATUS
 AND OF HIS WIFE ACONIA PAULINA, FROM ROME¹

EDITIONS (main editions only): *CIL* VI 1779 (cf. pp. 3174, 3814, 4757-59); *ILS* 1259; *CLE* 111; Cholodniak 1904, pp. 20-22, nr. 55; Lambrechts 1955, pp. 4-6 = *AE* 1958, 152 (with Dutch translation); Polara 1967, pp. 43-46 (with Italian translation); Vermaseren 1977, pp. 62-64, nr. 246 (with photo, Tab. cxxxiii-cxxxv); Walser 1993, pp. 62 f., nr. 20 (only side a, with photo and German translation); Courtney 1995, pp. 56-61 (with English translation, commentary pp. 252-55); Niquet 2000, p. 240 = *AE* 2000, 102 (only side a, with photo, Taf. III-V); Polara 2000, pp. 124 f. = *AE* 2000, 161; Kahlos 2002, pp. 216-19 (with English translation by Croke, Harries 1982, pp. 106-8, nr. 67); Martínez-Maza 2003, pp. 66 f. = *AE* 2003, 151; Bricault 2005, pp. 551 f., nr. 501/018 (only side a, with French translation); Lassère 2005, pp. 735-40, nr. 413 (only side a, with French translation); Henriksen 2008, pp. 723 f., nr. 5 = *AE* 2008, 150; Kolb, Fugmann 2008, pp. 66-70, nr. 14 (only side a, with photo and German translation); La Rocca, Parisi Presicce 2010, pp. 344-47, nr. 2 (ed. A. Danti, with photo); Veletino 2016, pp. 72-76, nr. 22 (with photo of sides a and d, with Italian translation); Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, pp. 505 f., nr. 508 (with French translation); Lorito 2019, pp. 192-96 (with English translation); Campedelli 2022 (with photos and German translation)

PHOTOS: Stuart Jones 1912, p. 77, nr. 9, Pl. 15; *SupplIt-Imagines, Roma (CIL, VI)* 1, *Musei Capitolini*, nr. 36

LINKS: *EDCS* 18100593; *EDR* 121930; *EDH* 017684; *MQDQ* 111; *TM* 279392
 PLRE: I, pp. 722-24

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Vettius Agorius Praetextatus

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 384/385 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Roma. Modern city: Rome (Italy). Province: Urbs. Diocese: Italiciana. Regional prefecture: Italia Illyricum Africa.

1. The author would like to thank D. Veletino for helping him read the Latin text of the inscription in the Palazzo Nuovo, F. Bigi for the photographs that she took during that autopic examination, and C. Campedelli for generously sharing her studies on this inscription.

Provenance: Rome, found in 1750, findspot unknown. Current location: Rome, Musei Capitolini, Palazzo Nuovo, ground floor 3rd room on the right, inv. S 208 and NCE 2543. Ancient location: burial space.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: funerary altar. Material: marble.

Reuse of the inscribed field: no. Reuse of the monument: no. Opisthographic: no (below).

Dimensions of support: Height: 127 cm. Width: 73.5 cm. Breadth: 53 cm. Dimensions of letters: 1.5/3 cm.

Inscribed field: Four inscribed fields (*frons*, *latus sin.*, *latus dex.*, *retro*). The altar is broken in two; some of the letters along the break are illegible.

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm: prose (*frons*); poetry (iambic senaries: *latus sin.*, *latus dex.*, *retro*). Palaeography: late Roman monumental capitals.

TEXT CATEGORY: Burial inscription of Praetextatus and Paulina

LATIN TEXT

A: frons

(vac.) D(is) (vac.) M(anibus). (vac.)
 Vettius Agorius Praetextatus,
 augur, p[ro]ntifex Vestae,
 pontifex Sol[is], ((hedera)) quindecemvir,
 5 curialis Herc[ul]is, ((hedera)) sacratus
 Libero et Eleusiniis ((hedera)) hierophanta,
 neocorus, ((hedera)) tauroboliatus,
 pater patrum; ((hedera)) in [re] publica vero,
 quaestor candidatus,
 10 pretor (*sic*) urbanus,
 corrector Tusciae et Um[b]riae,
 consularis Lusitaniae,
 proconsule (*sic*) Achaiae,
 praefectus urbi,
 15 legatus a senatu missus V,
 praefectus praetorio II Italiae
 et Illyrici, consul ordinarius
 designatus, (vac.)
 et Aconia Fabia Paulina, c(larissima) f(emina),

20 sacrata Cereri et Eleusiniis,
 sacrata apud Eginam Hecatae,
 tauroboliata, hierophantia,
 hi coniuncti simul vixerunt ann(is) XL.

B: latus sin.

(*Under the urceus*)

 Vettius Agorius Praetextatus
 (vac.) Paulinae (vac.) coniugi. (vac.)
 Paulina nostri pectoris consortio,
 fomes pudoris, castitatis vinculum
 5 amorque purus et fides caelo sata,
 arcana mentis cui reclusa credidi,
 munus deorum qui maritalem torum
 nectunt amicis et pudicis nexibus,
 pietate matris, coniugali gratia,
 10 nexus sororis, filiae modestia
 et quanta amicis iungimur fiducia,
 aetatis usu, consecrandi foedere,
 iugi fidei simplici concordia
 iuvans maritum, diligens ornans
 15 colens. (vac.)

C: latus dex.

(*Under the patera*)

 Vettius Agorius Praetextatus
 (vac.) Paulinae (vac.) coniugi. (vac.)
 Paulina veri et castitatis conscia,
 dicata templis atq(ue) amica numinum,
 5 sibi maritum praeferebat, Romam viro,
 pudens fidelis pura mente et corpore,
 benigna cunctis, utilis penetibus
 credas n++++s++++[- ca. 7 -]ussent.

D: retro

 [Sple]ndor parentum nil (*sic*) mihi maius dedit,
 [ni] quod marito digna iam tum visa sum.
 [Se]d lumen omne vel decus nomen viri,
 Agori, superbo qui creatus germine
 5 patriam, senatum coniugemq(ue) inluminas
 probitate mentis, moribus, studiis simul
 virtutis apicem quis supremum nactus es.
 Tu namque quidquid lingua utraq(ue) est proditum
 cura soforum (*sic*), porta quis caeli patet,

10 vel quae periti condidere carmina
 vel quae solutis vocibus sunt edita,
 meliora reddis quam legendo sumpseras;
 sed ista parva: tu pius movestes (*sic*) sacris
 teletis reperta mentis arcano prēmīs
 15 divumque numen multiplex doctus colis,
 sociam benigne coniugem nectens sacris
 hominum deumque consciam ac fidam tibi.
 Quid nunc honores aut potestates loquar
 hominumque votis adpetita gaudia?
 20 Quae tu caduca ac parva semper autumans
 divum sacerdos infulis celsus clues.
 Tu me, marite, disciplinarum bono
 puram ac pudicam sorte mortis eximens
 in templa ducis ac famulam divis dicas.
 25 Te teste cunctis imbuor mysteriis:
 tu Dindymenes Atteosqui (*sic*) antistitem
 teletis honoras taureis consors pius,
 Hecates ministram trina secreta edoces,
 Cererisque Graiae tu sacris dignam paras.
 30 Te propter omnis me beatam, me piam
 celebrant, quod ipse me bonam disseminas,
 totum per orbem ignota noscor omnibus.
 Nam te marito cur placere non queam?
 Exempla de me Romulae matres petunt
 35 subolemque pulchram, si tuae similis, putant.
 Optant probantque nunc viri nunc feminae
 quae tu magister indidisti insignia.
 His nunc ademptis maesta coniunx maceror,
 felix, maritum si superstitem mihi
 40 divi dedissent, sed tamen felix, tua
 quia sum fuique postque mortem mox ero.

CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* VI 1779, *EDR* 121930, Velestino 2016, Campedelli 2022.
 Text was seen and verified by Porena in 2018.

A (*frons*)

1: line omitted, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010

2: *Praetextatus augur*, Lambrechts 1955

3: *pontifex*, Bricault 2005, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010; *p[on]tifi^fex*, Campedelli

4: *Solis*, Polara 2000; *quindecimvir*, Vermaseren 1977, Walser 1993, Courtney 1995, Henriksén 2008, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018; *ponti^fex Solli^s*, Campedelli 2022

5: *Herculis*, Polara 2000; *Herc(u)lis*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010; *Herc[ul]is*, Velestino 2016, Campedelli 2022

6: *Eleusi[ni]s*, Lambrechts 1955, Vermaseren 1977, Kahlos 2002, Martínez-Maza 2003, Bricault 2005; *Eleusinis*, Walser 1993, Lassère 2005, Henriksén 2008, Kolb Fugmann 2008, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, Lorito 2019, *HD*; *Eleusi(ni)s*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010; *Eleusi[ni]is*, Velestino 2016

7: *ta[u]roboliatus*, Campedelli 2022

8: *ver[o]*, Vermaseren 1977, Kahlos 2002, Martínez-Maza 2003, Bricault 2005, Henriksén 2008, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, Lorito 2019

10: *praetor*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010

11: *Umbriae*, Lambrechts 1955, Vermaseren 1977, Polara 2000, Martínez-Maza 2003, Bricault 2005, Lassère 2005, Henriksén 2008, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, Lorito 2019, *HD*, *EDR*; *Umbriae*, Velestino 2016

13: *proconsul*, Lambrechts 1955, Lassère 2005; *proconsul{e}*, Kolb Fugmann 2008

13-14: *Achaiae urbi*, Martínez-Maza 2003

15: *senatus*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010; *missu*, Martínez-Maza 2003; *V[II]*, Vermaseren 1977, Walser 1993, Kolb Fugmann 2008, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018

16: *pretorio*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010; *{II}*, Kolb Fugmann 2008; *Italiane*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010

17-18: *et Illyrici / consul ordinarius*, Bricault 2005; *Illirici*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, *HD*

20: *Eleusinis*, Vermaseren 1977

21: *[A]eginam*, Vermaseren 1977, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, *HD*

23: *annos*, Polara 2000, Kahlos 2002

B (*sin.*)

4: *atque*, Polara 2000

8: *pudicibus*, Velestino 2016

9: *pietati*, Martínez-Maza 2003

10: *sonoris*, Lambrechts 1955, Martínez-Maza 2003

14: *ornans colens*, Lambrechts 1955, Vermaseren 1977, Polara 2000, Kahlos 2002

1-15: Kahlos 2002 places the inscription on the opposite side and omits the first two lines with the dedication

C (*dex.*)

1: *Praetexstatus*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010

8: CALDASN/////s/////VS//NI///, *CIL* VI 1779; *caldas nus s.n...*, Lambrechts 1955, Vermaseren 1977, Polara 1967, Martínez-Maza 2003; *Calda* [- - -], Kahlos 2002; *caldas* [- - -], Henriksén 2008; *calda n*[- - -]us[- - -]n, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018; *caldas* [- - -]us [- - -]n, Lorito 2019; *cre[br]is* or *cre[den]s* [- - -]VSS[- - -]NI, *CLE* 111; *cre[scen]s* [i]n [aevum m]o[rum laudib]us [om]ni[bus], Cholodniak; *cae[le]s[tium iam sede semper me]q[u]m e]ri[s]*, Pighi 1944, p. 24, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, *HD*; *credas neq[ua]nq[ua]m sentio*, M.G. Schmidt *CIL* VI, p. 4758; *credas n+++++s(?)++++[- - -]ussent (?)*,

EDR 121930 (G. Crimi), Velestino 2016; *credas* ++[- 10? -]us [- 2? -]NT[- - -], Campedelli 2022

1-8: Kahlos 2002 places the inscription on the opposite side and omits the first two lines with the dedication

D (*retro*)

1: *Splendor*, Polara 2000

2: [*quam*] *quod*, all editors except Campedelli and Porena; *quam*, Polara 2000

3: [*S*]ed, Cholodniak; *sed*, Polara 2000

5: *coniugemque*, Polara 2000

8: *utraque*, Polara 2000

9: *portas*, Vermaseren 1977

13: *mystes*, *CLE* 111, Lambrechts 1955, Courtney 1995; *m[y]stes*, Cholodniak 1904, Vermaseren 1977, Kahlos 2002, Martínez-Maza 2003, Henriksén 2008, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, Lorito 2019

16: *coniuge*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, Lorito 2019, *HD*, *EDR*

26: *Dyndimenes*, Polara 2000; *Atteosque*, *CLE* 111, Courtney 1995, Campedelli 2022; *Atteosqu[e]*, Cholodniak 1904, Lambrechts 1955, Vermaseren 1977, Kahlos 2002, Martínez-Maza 2003, Henriksén 2008, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, Velestino 2016, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, Lorito 2019

31: *ipse bonam*, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, Lorito 2019, *HD*

34: *exemplum*, *CIL* VI 1779, Lambrechts 1955, Polara 1967, Vermaseren 1977, Courtney 1995, Polara 2000, Kahlos 2002, Martínez-Maza 2003, Henriksén 2008, La Rocca Parisi Presicce 2010, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, Lorito 2019, *HD*

35: *pulchrans*, Martínez-Maza 2003

37: *insignis*, Martínez-Maza 2003

TRANSLATIONS

– English (Croke, Harries 1982, pp. 106-8, nr. 67 = Kahlos 2002, pp. 216-19)

A (front): «To the Divine Shades. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, augur, priest of Vesta, priest of the Sun, *quindecimvir*, curial of Hercules, consecrated to Liber and the Eleusinian mysteries, high priest, temple overseer (*neocorus*), initiate of the taurobolium, Father of the Fathers [priest of Mithras]; but in public office: quaestor designate, urban praetor, governor (*corrector*) of Tuscia and Umbria, governor (*consularis*) of Lusitania, proconsul of Achaëa, Prefect of the City, seven** times sent by the Senate as ambassador, twice* Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Illyricum, designated *consul ordinarius*, and Aconia Fabia Paulina *c(larissima) f(emina)*, consecrated to Ceres and the Eleusinian mysteries, consecrated at Aegina to Hecate, initiate of the taurobolium, high priestess. These two lived together for forty years».

B (left): «Vettius Agorius Praetextatus to his wife Paulina. Paulina partner of my heart, nurse of modesty, bond of chastity, pure love and loyalty produced in heaven, to whom I have entrusted the deep hidden secrets of my heart, gift of the gods who

bind our marriage couch with friendly and modest ties; by the devotion of a mother, the gratitude of a wife, the bond of a sister, the modesty of a daughter, and by all the loyalty friends show we are united by the custom of age, the pact of consecration, by the yoke of the marriage vow and perfect harmony, helpmate of your husband, loving, adoring, devoted».

C (right): «Vettius Agorius Praetextatus to his wife Paulina. Paulina, associate of truth and chastity, dedicated in temples and friend of the divine powers, putting her husband before herself, Rome before her man, modest, faithful, pure in mind and body, kind to all, a blessing to her household».

D (back): «The glory of my parents gave me nothing greater than to have seemed already worthy of my husband; but all light and glory is my husband's name. Agorius, sprung of proud lineage, you illumine your country, the Senate and your wife by your integrity of mind, your character and your scholarship all at once. By these you attained the highest peak of virtue, for by translating whatever is proclaimed in either tongue by the thought of the wise, to whom the gate of heaven lies open, both the poems which the learned have composed and the prose works recited aloud, you have improved upon what you have found written down. Yet these things are of little account. You, a holy man, and priest of the mysteries, conceal in the secret places of your heart what you discovered in the sacred initiations and with your manifold learning you worship the divine power, uniting with your kindness your wife as your associate with the sacred objects, confidante of men and gods, and in one mind with you as she was. What may I now say of the offices and powers, joys sought by men in their prayers, which you who regard yourself as a priest of the gods and are marked out by your priestly headbands, always consider transient and trivial? You, O husband, deliver me pure and chaste from the lot of death by the goodness of your teaching, lead me into the temples and dedicate me to the gods as their handmaid. With you as witness I am initiated into all the mysteries. You, in your duty as husband, consecrate me as priestess of Didymenes [Cybele] and Attis through the rites of the bull. You instruct me, as a priestess of Hecate, in the three-fold secrets and you prepare me for being worthy of the rites of Greek Ceres. Because of you everyone proclaims me holy and blessed, since it is you who spread my goodness throughout the world. Although unknown I am known to all. With you as my husband how could I fail to please? The matrons of Romulus' city seek me as a model and regard their offspring as beautiful if it resembles yours. Men and women alike both seek after and acclaim the honours which you, my teacher, have given me. Now, robbed of all this I, your grief-stricken wife, am wasting away. Happy would I have been had the gods granted that my husband had outlived me. Yet I am happy because I am yours, was yours and soon shall be yours after death».

(other English transl.: Glover 1901 pp. 163 f. [*retro* = Purdie 1935, pp. 28-32]; Lefkowitz, Fant 1992, pp. 305 f.; Courtney 1995, pp. 56-61; Lorito 2019, pp. 194-96)

– French (Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, pp. 505 f.)

A (avers): «Aux dieux Mânes. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, augure, pontife de

Vesta, pontife de Sol, quindécemvir, curiale d'Hercule, hiérophoante consacré à Liber et aux déesses d'Eleusis, néocore, taurobolié, père des pères (de Mithra); et par ailleurs dans la vie publique: questeur candidat (de l'empereur), préteur urbain, correcteur de la Toscane et de l'Ombrie, consulaire de Lusitanie, proconsul d'Achaïe, préfet de la Ville, par sept fois ambassadeur envoyé par le Sénat, deux fois* préfet du prétoire en Italie et en Illyrie, consul ordinaire désigné, et Aconia Fabia Paulina, femme clarissime, consacrée à Cérès et aux déesses d'Eleusis, consacrée à l'Hécate d'Egine, tauroboliée, hiérophante; ils ont vécu comme époux quarante ans ensemble».

B (gauche): «Vettius Agorius Praetextatus à son épouse Paulina. Paulina, partenaire de notre cœur, flamme de pudeur, lien de chasteté et amour pur, loyauté engendrée par le ciel, toi à qui j'ai confié les secrets enfermés dans mon esprit, présent des dieux qui tissent le lit conjugal avec les liens de l'amitié et de la pudeur. C'est avec la pieuse affection d'une mère, la grâce d'une épouse, l'attachement d'une soeur, la docilité d'une fille, avec toute la confiance qui nous unit aux amis, avec l'expérience du temps de la vie, avec notre alliance dans les consécration, avec l'harmonie simple et fidèle de l'union que tu aides, que tu aimes, que tu honores ton mari et que tu prends soin de lui».

C (droite): «Vettius Agorius Praetextatus à son épouse Paulina. Paulina, consciente de la vérité et de la pudeur, consacrée aux temples et amie des divinités, faisant passer son époux avant elle et Rome avant son époux, réservée, fidèle, pure d'esprit et de corps, bienveillante envers tous, utile envers nos pénates, chaleureuse (?) ...».

D (revers): «La magnificence de mes parents ne m'a rien donné de plus grand que d'avoir paru dès lors digne de mon mari, mais tout mon éclat et ma gloire se trouvent dans ton nom, mon époux Agorius, qui, né d'une fière souche, illumines ta patrie, le Sénat et ton épouse de ton intégrité, de tes moeurs autant que de tes études, conditions grâce auxquelles tu as atteint le sommet du mérite. Quelle que soit celle des deux langues dans laquelle (?) un ouvrage a été édité, par les soins des sages pour qui la porte du ciel reste ouverte, quels que soient les poèmes écrits par un homme d'expérience ou produits en rythmes libres, tu les rends dans un meilleur état que tu ne les avais pris au début de ta lecture. Mais tout cela n'est rien: toi, pieux myste, tu gardes dans le secret de ton âme les découvertes que tu as faites lors des initiations sacrées, et, en homme instruit, tu honores la puissance des dieux aux aspects multiples en associant avec bonté ton épouse aux cultes, ayant la connaissance des hommes et des dieux et confiante en toi. A quoi bon parler maintenant des honneurs, de ta puissance et des satisfactions que les hommes appellent de leurs vœux? Tout cela, tu l'as toujours considéré comme caduc et infime. Prêtre des dieux, tu gagnes de haute réputation par tes bandelettes. Toi, mon époux, tu m'as soustraite pure et vertueuse par le bien de ton enseignement au destin de mortelle; tu me conduis dans les temples et tu me consacres servante des dieux; en ta présence, je m'imprègne de tous les mystères; toi, mon pieux époux, tu m'honores en tant que prêtresse de la déesse du Dindyme et d'Attis au moyen des initiations taurines; tu enseignes à la prêtresse d'Hécate que je suis, ses trois secrets et tu me

prépare à être digne du culte de Cérés la Grecque. Grâce à toi, tous me célèbrent comme une femme heureuse, comme une femme pieuse, parce que c'est toi-même qui répands une bonne image de moi dans le monde entier: bien qu'inconnue, je suis connue de tous. En effet pourquoi ne pourrais-je pas plaire par toi, mon époux ? Les matrones de Rome recherchent en moi un exemple et songent à une belle postérité, si elle ressemble à la tienne. Hommes et femmes choisissent et approuvent les marques de distinction que tu m'as délivrées en ta qualité d'enseignant. Maintenant que celles-ci ont été enlevées, je me consume en triste épouse; j'aurais été heureuse si les dieux m'avaient donné un mari qui m'aurait survécu, et pourtant je suis heureuse parce que tienne, je le suis, je l'ai été et je le serai bientôt après la mort».

– Italian

A (fronte): «Agli dèi Mani. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, augure, pontefice di Vesta, pontefice del Sole, quindecemviro, curiale di Ercole, consacrato a Libero e ai misteri Eleusini, ierofante, neocoro, tauroboliato, padre dei padri; e quanto alla repubblica: questore candidato, pretore urbano, correttore di Tuscia e Umbria, console di Lusitania, proconsole d'Acaia, prefetto urbano, legato inviato in missione dal senato 5 volte, prefetto del pretorio 'doppio'* d'Italia e d'Illirico, console ordinario designato; e la chiarissima Aconia Fabia Paulina, consacrata a Cerere e ai misteri Eleusini, consacrata a Ecate ad Egina, tauroboliata, ierofantria; essi, sposati, vissero insieme 40 anni».

B (sinistro): «Vettius Agorius Praetextatus alla moglie Paulina. Paulina, destino condiviso del nostro cuore, contegno che infiamma, purezza che frena gli istinti, amore incontaminato e fedeltà germogliata nel cielo, colei alla quale ho dischiuso con fiducia i segreti recessi della mia mente, regalo degli dèi, che vincolano il talamo matrimoniale con obblighi di amichevole purezza, lei, con l'amore devoto di una madre, con la delicatezza di una sposa, con l'attaccamento di una sorella, con la soggezione di una figlia e con quanta fiducia ci lega agli amici, aiuta, ama, impreziosisce, venera il marito nell'impegno consapevole del tempo, nella sintonia nel servizio alle divinità, nella reciproca fedele e sincera concordia».

C (destra): «Vettius Agorius Praetextatus alla moglie Paulina. Paulina, che conosce la verità e la purezza, votata ai templi e amica delle divinità, che antepone il marito a sé e Roma al marito, pudica, fedele, incorrotta nella mente e nel corpo, gentile verso tutti, al servizio dei Penati, crederesti ...».

D (retro): «Lo splendore degli avi non mi ha dato nulla di più grande dell'apparire degna di mio marito allora (al tempo delle nozze), ma ogni luce e prestigio sono il nome di lui: tu, o Agorius, che, generato da un superbo germoglio, illumini all'unisono la patria, il senato e la tua sposa con la perfetta integrità del tuo pensiero, con i tuoi comportamenti, con gli studi, grazie ai quali hai raggiunto il culmine eccelso della virtù. Tu infatti rendi migliore di quando lo hai selezionato per la lettura qualunque testo sia pubblicato in entrambe le lingue dalla cura dei sapienti, per i quali è aperta la porta del cielo, sia i poemi che gli esperti del verso fissarono, sia quanto

fu prodotto in parole sciolte. Ma questo è poca cosa: tu, devoto iniziato, trattieni nel segreto della tua mente quanto scoperto nelle sacre cerimonie iniziatiche, e, edotto, rendi culto al molteplice nume delle divinità, legando amabilmente la sposa, tua compagna, ai riti sacri, consapevole lei delle cose umane e delle cose divine, e a te fedele. Perché dovrei ora parlare delle cariche e dei poteri, traguardi cui gli uomini aspirano facendo voti? Tu, che affermi essere queste cose caduche e insignificanti, sei celebre come sacerdote degli dèi, inarrivabile nei paramenti sacri. Tu, o marito, che mi strappi a un destino di morte purificata e immacolata grazie al buon esito dei percorsi iniziatici, mi guidi nei templi e mi dichiaro serva delle divinità. Grazie alla tua testimonianza mi immergo in tutti i misteri: tu mi promuovi celebrante di Dindymenes e di Attis, devoto sodale delle consacrazioni taurine; tu insegna i tripli segreti a me ministra di Hecates; tu mi prepari a essere degna dei culti della Cere greca. Per merito tuo tutti mi celebrano come beata e devota, perché tu stesso diffondi la mia buona fama in tutto il mondo: ignota, sono conosciuta da tutti. Infatti essendo tu mio marito, come potrei non essere apprezzata? Le madri romulee prendono esempi da me, e ritengono bella la loro prole se è simile alla tua. Tanto gli uomini quanto le donne scelgono e apprezzano le insegne che tu maestro mi hai fatto indossare. Ora che queste cose mi sono state tolte, desolata sposa mi consumo, felice se gli dèi avessero concesso che mio marito mi sopravvivesse, eppure felice, perché tua sono e fui e dopo la morte tra poco sarò».

(other Italian transl.: Polara 1967, pp. 43-46; Storoni Mazzolani 1969, pp. 61 f. only side d [= Ensoli, La Rocca 2000, pp. 507 f.]; Velestino 2016, pp. 74 f.)

* «praetorian prefect at the same time over two seats», concerning the iteration see Commentary

** five is the number chiselled on the stone

THE INSCRIPTION AND ITS PREFECTS: CRITICAL COMMENTARY, UPDATING, OVERVIEWS

The funerary altar of Praetextatus and Paulina was found in 1750 in Rome in an unknown area (Kahlos 2002, pp. 10 and 219, mistakenly states that the altar was found in the Clivus Capitolinus, but there is no record concerning the place in which it was discovered; furthermore, the sepulchral inscription could not have been in the Roman Forum). In the same year, pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) located the monument in the Capitoline Museums where it can be seen today (Palazzo Nuovo, ground floor 3rd room on the right, cf. Arata 2013, pp. 127 and 141). The well-preserved and elegant marble altar is composed of two large matching fragments: it consists of a high plinth, a tall parallelepiped body, and a cymasa; an architectural decoration of columns and pilasters frames the front, left and right epigraphic

fields, but not the back. The altar was intended to be set against a wall, but was placed in a space that made the rear accessible (below). Since it is solid it could not contain cinerary urns (concerning the altar cf. Helbig 1966 [4a ed.], pp. 76-79; *CIL* VI, pp. 4757 f.; Ensoli, La Rocca 2000, pp. 507 f.; La Rocca, Parisi Presicce 2010, pp. 344-47; Velestino 2016, pp. 74 f.). Its four faces preserve four Latin inscriptions: therefore the altar was placed in a burial chamber in which it was accessible from all sides; the tomb housed both the sarcophagus or the urn containing the remains of the couple and the altar with its long inscribed message.

The main inscription is frontal (side a), funerary and in prose under the formula *Dis Manibus*. It commemorates the two deceased, first the husband then the wife, and relates the most significant moments of their religious life, while also referring to Praetextatus' senatorial career. The frontal inscription is framed by twisted columns surmounted by capitals, that are decorated with acanthus leaves and cornucopias, together with a frieze portraying eroti holding a garland.

Three verse inscriptions (iambic senaries) are chiselled on the left, right and back sides (= side b, c, d). On the left side, under the *urceus*, and on the right side, under the *patera*, without a specially delimited epigraphic field (the inscription is framed by the tortile column and a pilaster), are two verse inscriptions by Praetextatus in honour of his wife Paulina, which are introduced by a title with the dedication (VETTIVS AGORIVS PRAETEXTATVS PAVLINAЕ CONIVGI). On the back, which is completely smooth and devoid of frames, mouldings, epigraphic fields and delimitations, is the long verse inscription written by Paulina for her husband. Although is without any title, it was carefully chiselled and extols their marriage. The writing on the back fills the entire space from the upper limit of the altar block to the plinth at its base, so much so that the last few lines are difficult to read. The engraving of the inscription in the frontal epigraphic field (69.5 × 45.5 cm.) is perfectly orthogonal, and is aligned to the left. At l. 6 the last A of *hierophanta* is on the frame, at l. 8 the O of *vero* is dwarfed; these solutions show great care in the drafting of the text. There are no errors (a, l. 13 *proconsule* is a learned form: *pro consule*). The text at ll. 19-23, which mentions Paulina, is slightly displaced towards the left frame, compared to ll. 1-18, which mentions Praetextatus; however, the handwriting of the stone-cutter seems to be the same throughout the frontal inscription (conversely Niquet 2000, p. 246, and F. Mitthof, in *CIL* VI, p. 4758, believe that ll. 19-23 were chiselled later than ll. 1-18). The inscriptions on the left, right and back sides tend not to be orthogonal at the edges of the support, but tend to slope

down towards the right: they were probably chiselled when the altar was already upright. These three inscriptions, carved in the spaces between the two side decorations (*urceus* and *patera*) and all over the rear of the altar, are also aligned to the left and show no errors. The handwriting of the stone cutter who chiselled the inscription of the right side is different from the handwriting of the stone cutter who chiselled the left side and, perhaps, the back side, and they are different from the handwriting of the frontal inscription. On the rear, the fracture of the upper left corner of the altar has had some letters erased: at l. 2 at the beginning of the second line, all editors integrated [*quam*], but there is no space to the left of the pronoun *quod* to insert four letters; the alignment of the text suggests that we should accept Campedelli's proposal: [*ni*].

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FOUR INSCRIPTIONS

Examination of the content and structure of the four inscriptions can help us formulate hypotheses as to when the altar might have been engraved.

The inscription on the front (side a) deals with the couple during their lifetime. The monument was conceived and commissioned by husband and wife, and executed by Paulina. The memory of her husband Praetextatus is celebrated first, since he passed away first (his name contains the *signum* Agorius between the *gentilicium* Vettius and the *cognomen* Praetextatus, which is a feature of his onomastics; see PPRET 79, on the *corona*). Both in the inscription on the front of the altar and in the inscription exhibited at Palazzo Altemps in Rome (see PPRET 79) – which is devoid of the dedicator and which was probably placed in a private space (the tomb was also private) – the priestly offices (ll. 3-8) precede the civil offices (ll. 8-18), according to the order of importance that Praetextatus and Paulina gave to the two experiences. Praetextatus, a traditionalist but also a non-conformist, considered the dignities of a senatorial career to be somewhat 'vain' (*caduca*): Symmachus states this in his report to Valentinian II on the death of his friend (Symm. *rel.* 12, 2: *non quod ille praemia terrena desideret, qui gaudia corporis, etiam cum hominem ageret, ut caduca calcavit*) and also Paulina's poem on our altar states the same (side d, ll. 18-21, in particular l. 20: *Quae tu caduca ac parva semper autumans*). The decision to list (ll. 3-8) the priesthoods and initiations after the name and before the civil offices probably led to the abbreviation of the rank *v(iro) c(larissimo)* being omitted, a unique case in the epigraphy of our senator and justified in a strongly private context like this

(the rank appears in other inscriptions, see PPRET 20; 78; 79; 80; also *CIL* VI 102; *CIL* VI 2145). In the inscription on the front of the altar, Paulina's priesthoods and initiations mirror those of her husband: the reader immediately understands that more than any prestigious civil honour, it was their common religious activity that really bound this couple together. The duration of their marriage (l. 23) terminates a text authored by the couple themselves.

The sides of the altar (side b and c) bear two odes to Paulina by Praetextatus: they are not funeral poems, but panegyrics to his wife. They describe Paulina's virtues as seen through the eyes of Praetextatus, without a dialogue, but in the third person and with paratactic progression. The inscription on the left side (side b) of the altar exalts Paulina as a *matrona*, who outside the intimacy of the *domus*, is portrayed as a traditional lady devoted to the city and the gods. The inscription on the right side (side c) preserves the exaltation of Paulina as an ideal wife who lives in complete harmony, trust, devotion and concord with her husband; the relationship between the spouses is exalted within the *domus*.

The inscription on the back (side d), as mentioned, contains a long poem (41 verses) by Paulina for Praetextatus. Unlike the two poems by Praetextatus, it is dialogical: the wife addresses her husband in the present, delivering a genuine speech of praise, but ending with a reflection on widowhood. Paulina's poem is divided into three sections: the origin and virtues of Praetextatus (ll. 1-21), Praetextatus the teacher and guide of Paulina (ll. 22-37), Paulina's grief at his death (ll. 38-41).

The following themes are illustrated in the three sections: Praetextatus' nobility (ll. 1-13); his religious wisdom (ll. 13-17); the value of the senator's religious activity, which is superior to his administrative career which was brilliant nevertheless (ll. 18-21); Praetextatus guides and educates Paulina in her pagan religious instruction (ll. 22-37), offering her the privilege of initiations (ll. 22-29), which eventually leads to her own renown and glory (ll. 30-37); the closing (ll. 38-41) illustrates the widow Paulina's grief and her certainty of being reunited with her husband in the afterlife. The long poem chiselled on the back is attributable to Paulina and indeed does appear to express her point of view. Unlike the two poems on the left and right sides attributed to Praetextatus, the poem has no title, and like the front inscription, it does not mention the author explicitly, but Paulina's authorship is secured. On the altar there is no reference to the couple's children: it is highly probable that the epigraphic design of the altar reflects the wishes of the couple and was carried out by the widow, Paulina.

DATING AND THE ENGRAVING OF THE INSCRIPTIONS

This composite series of inscriptions was prepared and engraved after Praetextatus' death. The senator died after being discharged from the praetorian prefecture of Italy and Illyricum, which took place between September and October 384 AD (he is attested for the last time by *CI I* 54, 5 on September 9th 384 AD; his successor, Petronius Probus, was in office on October 26th 384 AD, *CTh VI* 30, 6). Praetextatus was then designated ordinary consul for 385 AD, but because of his death between October and December 384 AD, the western consul on January 1st of that year was Fl. Bauto (cf. *CLRE*, pp. 304 f.; the designation to the consulship of 385 AD is recorded in *Symm. rel.* 12, 5; *Hier. epist.* 23, 2; *c. Joh.* 8, *PL XXIII*, col. 361C; in all inscriptions, because the consulate was the pinnacle of the senatorial career: altar, side a, l. 18; PPRET 20, l. 3; PPRET 79, *frons*, col. II, ll. 13-14; PPRET 80, l. 5; certainly the consulship was mentioned in PPRET 78; on Praetextatus' death, see Vera 1983a, pp. 140-42, who dates the death between December 8th and 10th 384 AD; Cecconi 2002, pp. 266-81, who dates it between October and the first half of November 384 AD; see also Kahlos 2002, pp. 151-71; on Praetextatus' funeral, see Matthews 2009, pp. 131 f.). His death shocked the inhabitants of Rome, arousing conflicting manifestations of obsessive exaltation of the deceased (*Symm. rel.* 10-12, for the request for public statues, see PPRET 78; *Symm. epist.* II 36, on the posthumous honours bestowed by the Vestal Virgins upon the deceased, which appear in *CIL VI* 2145 = 32408 = *ILS* 1261 = *EDR* 151259 = *LSA* 1510, see PPRET 80; for his moral rectitude, cf. *Symm. rel.* 12, 3; *Amm.* XXVII 9, 8-9; regarding the grief of the city, see also *Hier. epist.* 23, 3). The Christians condemned him (*Hier. epist.* 23; *c. Joh.* 8, *PL XXIII*, col. 361C; the anonymous pagan senator attacked by the 'Carmen contra paganos' (cod. Paris. Lat. 8084) could be Praetextatus, cf. Cameron 2011, pp. 273-319, with Consolino 2013, pp. 94-107). The Roman people expected much from an esteemed, generous and beloved aristocrat of Rome, who would inaugurate in the ancient capital his high magistracy with magnificent games (concerning the grief of the Roman people for the death of the prefect of Rome, see PPRET 10). The *terminus post quem* for dating our altar is October/December 384 or the beginning of 385 AD. The *terminus ante quem* is difficult to establish, and could be placed before or after the death of the widow, Paulina, which occurred at an uncertain date after 385 AD.

As for the author of the composition of the four epigraphic texts on the faces of the altar, it is likely to be Paulina herself (on her see PPRET 20). In

the second half of the 4th Century AD women of senatorial rank had inscriptions carved in the great houses and sumptuous tombs of their families in Rome. There are further comparisons between the epigraphy of the pagan Fabia Aconia Paulina and the christian Anicia Faltonia Proba (*PLRE* I, pp. 732 f.; *PChBE* II, pp. 1831-33). Proba certainly played a role in the composition of the double epitaph of her husband Probus (see *PPRET* 64). Round about the same time (resp. 384/385 AD and 388/395 AD) the two noble women took care of the funerals, deposition and epitaphs of their husbands; both were then buried in the same sarcophagus (Paulina in a cinerary urn?) with their respective husbands. The sharing of the burial with her husband, the poem for Praetextatus engraved on the rear of the altar, Jerome's polemic (*Hier. epist.* 23, 3) and the base in honour of the chief Vestal Coelia Concordia (see *PPRET* 20 and 80) reveal just how much Paulina was involved in the organisation of Praetextatus' funeral celebration immediately after his death and in the management of posthumous honours for her husband. In our opinion she composed or commissioned and had chiselled the long epitaph in verse on the back of the funerary altar (side d) that commemorates her and her beloved husband Praetextatus. It is easy to note that the surviving inscriptions of Praetextatus and Paulina, excluding the fragmentary dedication from the Roman Forum (see *PPRET* 78), come from private contexts (study in Niquet 2000, pp. 237-52).

The question remains who designed and commissioned the altar? Were the inscriptions on the four sides of the altar engraved simultaneously? Were they chiselled soon after Praetextatus' death in 384/385 AD, or later after Paulina's death?

Lambrechts (1955) suspects that the poem chiselled on the back (side d) was part of the *laudatio* pronounced by Paulina at her husband's funeral and that Hieronymus, before August 385 AD, was already familiar with the altar inscriptions. However, these assumptions are untenable. On the contrary, Polara (1967 in part. p. 274, and 2000 in part. pp. 115 f.) considers the style of the three compositions to be homogenous and that Paulina was not up to the task of composing a poem in iambic; he therefore believes that the inscription on the front (side a) and the three poems on the other sides (sides b, c, d) were composed on commission from the couple's children by an anonymous poet in the names of the wife and of the husband and inscribed on the monument only after Paulina's death. Courtney (1995, p. 253) also inclines towards a monument created after Paulina's death. The attribution of the iambic poems to Praetextatus and Paulina would therefore be erro-

neous. This problem is not addressed by Kahlos (1994 and 2000). Niquet (2000, pp. 240 f., 246 f., 251) argues that in 384/385 AD, when Praetextatus was buried, only the section of the prose inscription on his forehead was engraved (side a, ll. 1-18); according to her, Paulina survived Praetextatus by three years and died in 387 AD (the inscriptions PPRET 20 and 79, in her opinion created on the occasion of her death, would testify to this); only at that moment the engraving of the altar inscriptions on the left (side b), right (side c) and back (side d) and ll. 19-23 on the frontal side relating to Paulina were completed. Consolino (2006, pp. 131 f.) envisages a unique and coherent epigraphic programme intended by Paulina to properly convey the dialogue between husband and wife. Paulina would have designed the altar in 385 AD, and would have left the front part (side a) to be engraved by Praetextatus alone, while leaving the bottom blank for her (perhaps ll. 19-23 on the *frons* would have been added after the widow's death). She would have had the poem for Praetextatus composed and engraved on the rear (side d) immediately; this poem was commissioned by her from a poet (it is in fact untitled and carries Paulina's name as the author); after her death, her heirs would have added the lower part of the front (side a) and the two short poems written by Praetextatus for Paulina (side b and c). The reconstruction is followed by Velestino 2016. Cameron (2011, pp. 301-7, esp. pp. 302 f.) rightly believes that the three poems (sides b, c, d) were originally not funerary, but a poetic exchange between the couple perhaps on the occasion of their 40th wedding anniversary, and that they were later engraved on the left, right and back sides of the altar. In 385 AD Paulina had the inscription chiselled on the front, minus the last five lines (side a, ll. 19-23), and the entire poem on the back of the altar, to which the last four lines were immediately added (side d, ll. 38-41). Later, when Paulina died, the last five lines in the prose inscription on the front (side a, ll. 19-23) and the two poems of Praetextatus for Paulina on the left and right sides (side b and c) were added. The length of the poem inscribed on the back (side d), compared to the two short poems on the left and right sides, and its content, which is wholly focused on Paulina, strongly suggest that Paulina was indeed the author of these verses (as argued by Lorito 2019, p. 197). According to DiLuzio (2017, p. 434), the different length and style of the three poems leads one to the conclusion that the verses on the left and right sides (sides b and c) were composed by Praetextatus, while the long poem on the back was composed by Paulina herself (side d); DiLuzio does not comment on the chronology of the altar's engravings. Campedelli (2022) believes that the entire inscription was prepared by Paulina while she was still alive, but that the monu-

ment was erected and engraved only after both she and her husband had died, following specifications in her will.

Regarding the attribution and chronology of the four inscriptions chiselled on the altar, it should be noted that in the three texts in verse (sides b, c, d) Paulina is alive and only in the prose text on the front is she referred to as being deceased. In fact, even in this prose text (side a) a chronological term determined by the death of Praetextatus is indicated: the duration of the 40 years of their marriage (l. 23). The couple's otherworldly fate and the location of their remains was decided at the end of 384 AD. In our opinion, Paulina had the altar built in 385 AD, after Praetextatus' funeral. The altar, intended for the interior of a joint tomb, where the couple would be laid to rest together, would have been located beyond the city walls; it was not intended to be seen publicly. Probably Paulina, in accordance with what had previously been established with Praetextatus before his death, had the texts engraved on all four sides simultaneously, including the prose inscription. It is difficult to say whether ll. 19-23 were added after Paulina's death, because palaeographically the inscription on the front appears to be the work of the same hand. It should be noted that Anicia Faltonia Proba is also mentioned in the epitaph of Petronius Probus as having already been laid to rest in the tomb (see PPRET 64, a, ll. 15-18). The two poems in honour of Paulina (left and right sides, b-c) and the poem for Praetextatus (back side, d) are the work of different authors (as argued by Cameron 2011, pp. 301 f.; DiLuzio 2017, p. 434): as Cameron speculated, they were not written for the funerary altar and tomb, unlike the inscription on the prose *frons* (side a), but for joyous occasions in married life. The author of the iambs for Paulina is the learned Praetextatus, as the *intitulatio* of the two poems attests. The *intitulatio* with Paulina's name in her poem on the back (side d) was never written. Whether the author of the long poem on the back is Paulina herself, as seems probable, or it is a poem written at Paulina's request, is a moot point. What is not in doubt is that she designed the form and content of this text and of the altar, which are unified, coherent, and very intimate and personal. The hand that engraved the inscriptions on the left, right and back sides is different, and perhaps the engraving was done at two different times, or by different stone cutters from the same workshop, but not necessarily after Paulina's death.

Paulina's prominence on the altar is preponderant, the intimate conjugal harmony between husband and wife are the common element of the four inscriptions, and this is certainly the woman's perspective. This is hardly surprising: whereas Praetextatus was honoured by numerous statues with

Latin and Greek inscriptions in public spaces in Rome and several cities of the Empire, not to mention the couple's residences in Rome together with those of family members and clients, it is highly likely that Paulina, on the other hand, only had monuments erected in her honour in private spaces. Of these, the most intimate and personal was the couple's tomb, in which the altar was placed. The inscriptions on the four sides of the altar evoke the special and happy relationship between husband and wife, a relationship which had been achieved through the observance of traditional Roman aristocratic marital practices, together with the sharing, albeit uneven (Praetextatus the master and Paulina his pupil) of numerous pagan cults and mysteries.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE COUPLE

In the poem engraved on the back of the altar (side d) at ll. 13-21 Paulina celebrates the exceptional religious wisdom of her husband Praetextatus, and at ll. 22-29 his role as guide and teacher in introducing and elevating her in the cults and mysteries. Such a balance was inevitable: Paulina as a woman was excluded from celebrating the traditional cults of Rome, but not from participating in certain foreign cults and mystery rites (see PPRET 20). Praetextatus was an expert and priest in both forms of worship and this sharing of religious experiences strengthened the marriage bond. The poem on the back of the altar states this explicitly.

The poem (side d) makes reference to the list of priesthoods and initiations of the two spouses which was chiselled in the prose inscription on the front (side a, ll. 3-8 and 20-22). And these two texts converse in turn with the two other inscriptions found in Rome in different places, one in honour of Praetextatus and one in honour of Paulina: the large base in honour of Praetextatus possibly from the Caelian hill now in the Palazzo Altemps (PPRET 79) and the lost base in honour of Paulina from Santi XII Apostoli (PPRET 20).

In the inscription on the front of the altar (side a), ll. 3-4 list the traditional priesthoods of the city of Rome held by Praetextatus, while ll. 5-8 list his initiations into mysteries and his priesthoods of cults of non-Roman origin. Praetextatus' primacy in matters of traditional and mystery religion was universally recognised (cf. Macr. *Sat.* I 17, 1), and his knowledge and practice of the *sacra* explains the conspicuous series of priesthoods and initiations, to which he also introduced Paulina (cf. Kalhos 2002, pp. 62-90; Rüpke 2005, II, p. 536; Massa 2018; on these different religious forms in late antique

Rome, cf. Salzman 2007; Iara 2015; on the inscriptions of late antique priests in Rome cf. Orlandi 2011). The traditional priesthoods of the city of Rome, reserved for males, listed perhaps in alphabetical order, are: *augur* (cf. Lizzi Testa 2009), *pontifex Vestae* (cf. Van Haepere 2002; Lizzi Testa 2007c), *pontifex Solis* (cf. Hijmans 2010; Salzman 2017), and *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* (cf. Granino Cecere 2019; for an overview of these colleges, cf. Kahlos 2002, pp. 65-68; Van Haepere 2019c). In the inscription from Palazzo Altemps, they are listed in another, possibly hierarchical, order, apparently according to the chronology of the institution of the priestly role, from most recent to oldest: *pontifex Vestae*, *pontifex Solis* (reorganised by the emperor Aurelian in 274 AD), *quindecimvir* (reorganised by Sulla in 81 BC), *augur* (royal age) (see PPRET 79, *frons*, col. I, ll. 1-4).

On the front of the altar (side a) are then listed (ll. 5-9) Praetextatus' initiations into the mysteries and priesthoods of cults of non-Roman origin or cults that were not *sacra publica*, in the order: *curialis Herculis* (uncertain, on the cult of Hercules in Late Antiquity, cf. Eppinger 2015; in general cf. Ogden ed. 2021); *sacrus Libero et Eleusiniis*, the mystery rites of the cycle of Demeter (= Ceres) and Persephonea (= Corae) in Attica (cf. Massa 2020); then the *sacra peregrina* celebrated in Rome: *hierophanta* which would appear to be the priest of the cult of Hecate; *neocorus*, priest of the cult of Sarapis (cf. Bricault 2018); *tauroboliatu*s, the bull sacrifice linked to the cult of the Magna Mater (Cybele/Dindymene with Attis) was widely practised by the pagan aristocracy of Rome in the 4th Century (cf. Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018; Van Haepere 2019c; see also PPRET 36 and 40); *pater patrum*, the sixth and highest degree of initiation, as an high priest in the cult of Mithras (cf. Bjornebye 2012; Walsh 2018). The senator shared these initiations with his wife Paulina (below), with the exception of the cult of Mithra, which was exclusively male, and that of Hercules, which was also possibly reserved for men. The series of foreign cults to which Praetextatus was initiated is different in the inscription from Palazzo Altemps (see PPRET 79, *frons*, col. I, ll. 5-9): *tauroboliatu*s, *curialis*, *neocorus*, *hierofanta*, *patri sacrorum* (not *patrum*). It seems likely that this order was determined by the increasing importance of the degree of initiation/priesthood achieved, similar to the same inscription for traditional Roman cults, perhaps arranged in order of seniority of institution.

The inscription on the *frons* (side a), ll. 20-22, lists Paulina's initiations. These religious achievements are also extolled in the verses of the poem engraved on the rear (side d) at ll. 20-29 and especially on the base from the basilica of the Santi XII Apostoli (PPRET 20). However, in the poem (side d) the author only dwells on the cults to which the woman had been initi-

ated by her husband in the city of Rome: the cult of the Magna Mater, with the *taurobolium* (l. 26-27), Hecate (l. 28), the Greek Ceres (Demeter, l. 29), the choice dictated by Praetextatus' role as both celebrant and teacher of these cults. Since Praetextatus was only a simple initiate of the mysteries to which the couple had had access in Greece, it is unlikely that he had instructed and guided his bride in these ceremonies. The prose inscription on the front (side a), first lists the initiations that Paulina had received in Greece: the Eleusinian Mysteries (l. 20 *sacrata Cereri et Eleusiniis*, corresponds to PPRET 20 l. 4 *sacratae apud Eleusinam deo Iaccho, Cereri et Corae* and at l. 5 *sacratae apud Laernam deo Libero et Cereri et Corae*); the mysteries of the 'trimorphic' goddess Hecate at Aegina (l. 21 *sacrata apud Eeginam Hecatae*, corresponds to PPRET 20 l. 6 *sacratae apud Aeginam deabus*). The initiations received by her in Rome are listed next: the bull sacrifice linked to the cult of the Magna Mater (l. 22 *tauroboliata*, corresponding to the back poem, side d, ll. 26-27: *tu Dindymenes Atteos qui antistitem teletis honoras taureis consors pius*), followed by the priesthood of the cult of Hecate (l. 22 *hierophantia*, corresponding to the back poem, side d, l. 28: *Hecates ministram trina secreta edoces*; and to PPRET 20 l. 7 *hierophantiae deae Hecatae*). Finally not in the front (side a), but only on the back of the funerary altar (side d, l. 29) Paulina claims to have been initiated by her husband into the *sacra Cererisque Graiae*, as Paulina's participation in the cult of the Greek Demeter in Rome (corresponding to PPRET 20 l. 7: *Graiae consacraneae deae Cereris*). Although Praetextatus was νεωκόρος, that is to say the high-priest of the temple of Serapis (and Isis) in Rome, the altar does not mention Paulina's adherence to the cult of Isis. Perhaps Paulina's role was too minor and the cult itself too widespread to merit a mention in the epitaph. Concerning the individual cults to which Paulina had access, see the commentary in PPRET 20; cf. Kahlos 2002, pp. 62-90.

THE CAREER OF PRAETEXTATUS

The prose inscription on the front (side a) ll. 8-18 lists Praetextatus' career in chronological order. Four inscriptions preserve Praetextatus' *cursus honorum* (besides the altar, see PPRET 78, 79, 80).

Although it was customary in the later Roman Empire for the *cursus* to be placed in chronological order, discrepancies can be found. While the *cursus* of the altar is identical to that of the inscription in Palazzo Altemps (PPRET 79), which includes the two magistracies of Rome (*quaestura* and *praetura*), the latter does not mention Praetextatus' embassies on behalf of the Senate. On the other hand, while the *cursus* of the inscription from Palazzo Massi-

mo alle Colonne (PPRET 80) does not indicate the magistracies, it does recall the senatorial embassies (ll. 6-8). In this instance, it records seven instead of five as in the funerary altar (side a, l. 15), and postpones them until after the praetorian prefecture, when they ought to have been inserted between the urban prefecture and the praetorian prefecture. The *cursus* of the fragmentary inscription from the Roman Forum (PPRET 78) does not indicate magistracies and perhaps not even senatorial embassies (but this option is uncertain). It is likely that the two inscriptions that mention the magistracies of Rome (the altar and PPRET 79) were placed in private spaces (sepulchre and *domus*) and were commissioned by the family; the two inscriptions that do not mention the magistracies of Rome (PPRET 78 and PPRET 80) were set up for public spaces. But it is not entirely certain.

We review Praetextatus' career in chronological order. The pagan senator was probably born between 310 and 320 AD, more likely towards 320. The *pontifex* named Praetextatus who together with the mature philosopher Sopater supervised the *consecratio* of Constantinople in 324 or 328 AD (cf. Lyd. *de mens.* IV 2; see Cameron Av. 2021) was too young in that moment to be our Roman senator (cf. Kalhos 2002, pp. 17-20). Praetextatus married Paulina in 344 AD (side a, l. 23; forty years of marriage in 384 AD). The couple lived in great harmony and had children (side d, l. 35), whose names we do not know, but the family onomastics are attested until the 6th Century (see PLRE II, pp. 736 f., 848, 901-4, 908). Praetextatus was a highly educated senator (side d, ll. 6-12), who was skilled in Latin and Greek literature and influential in the study of philosophy, with a particular emphasis on *res sacrae* and *res divinae*, as his numerous priesthoods show (above). After having held the traditional magistracies of Rome in his youth, *quaestor candidatus* (under the emperor Constantine or his son Constans) and *praetor urbanus*, he was *corrector Tusciae et Umbriae*, then *consularis Lusitaniae* in the decade 350/360 AD, before 362 AD. Between 362 and 364 AD he led a long proconsulate of Achaia at the behest of the emperor Julian (Amm. XXII 7, 6; Himer. or 51 Colonna; Groag 1946, pp. 45-48) and engaged in the defence of traditional cults and night sacrifices, which were then forbidden by the emperor Valentinian I (see Zos. IV 3, 2-3). The citizens of Thespieae placed a panegyric in Greek beneath his statue, that extolled not only his culture and high sense of justice, but also his loving care for Hellas (Plassart 1926, pp. 444-46, nr. 85 = AE 1928, 48 = SEG XV (1958), 322 = LSA 839 = Roesch 2007, nr. 418). Between August 18th 367 and September 20th 368 AD he was prefect of Rome (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 171-78; Kalhos 1995; six constitutions refer to him holding the post CTh VIII 14, 1; IX 40, 10; XIV 4, 4; VI 35, 7; XIII 3, 8; I

6, 6). During the prefecture he restored the statues and the temple of the *Dii Consentes* in the Roman Forum under the Capitoline hill (*CIL* VI 102 = *ILS* 4003 = *LSA* 1503 = *EDR* 135295; cf. Grossi 2016); fragments of an architrave chiselled in 410/418 AD and found behind the Curia in the Roman Forum possibly commemorates a building constructed by Praetextatus during his prefecture (*CIL* VI 41378 = *EDR* 073920). In 382/383 AD, fifteen years after the end of his prefecture in Rome, Praetextatus was honoured with a monument in the cycle of statues celebrating great Roman senators in the *Praetorium* of Gortyna; funded by the provincials of Crete the statue was erected by the *consularis Cretae* Oecumenius Dositheus Asclepiodotus (*ICret.* IV 316 = Bigi Tantillo 2020, pp. 192 f., nr. 3). Although the inscription in Greek records him as an urban prefect, it is likely that the beginning of his praetorian prefecture of Italia and Illyricum was imminent (see Tantillo 2020b, pp. 69, 74 f.; Porena 2020a, pp. 103-5; 113-17; 119 f.; Porena 2020b, p. 156; cf. Porena 2023a, pp. 118 f., 164-66, 182-87, 190-91, and below). Ammianus gives a long eulogy of Praetextatus' fairness, balance and administrative wisdom during the prefecture of Rome (*Amm.* XXVII 9, 8-9). He was able to govern the unstable city with balance even during the clash between the Christian supporters of Damasus and Ursinus (see Kahlos 1997 and 2002, pp. 115-23; Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 159-69; Reutter 2009, pp. 31-56).

Fifteen years of *otium* followed, during which he was able to indulge his cultural and religious passions, while carrying out numerous diplomatic missions on behalf of the Senate of Rome, most notably to the courts of the emperors Valentinian I and Gratian. As already stated, there are incoherencies in the number of embassies attributed to Praetextatus: while the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne gives him seven (PPRET 80, ll. 6-8), the funerary altar attributes him just five (side a, l. 15). In our opinion, five pertain to Praetextatus acting as head of a delegation, while the two others refer to delegations in which he was only a member. Thanks to Ammianus, one of Praetextatus' embassies on behalf of the Senate of Rome is known, that of 371 AD to Valentinian I in Trier to denounce abuses of the *vicarius Urbis* Maximinus (*Amm.* XXVIII 1, 24-25; cf. Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 247 f.). The senator and his wife became a model of traditional behaviour for the western aristocracy. Shortly before or after the assassination of the emperor Gratian in 383 or 384 AD, Praetextatus was appointed praetorian prefect only once. According to scholars, he was prefect of Italia Illyricum Africa. This important post, the pinnacle of his career, is attested in only two constitutions: *CTh* VI 5, 2 (May 1st 384 AD) and *CII* 54, 5 (September 9th 384 AD). Praetextatus received twelve letters from Symmachus (*Symm. epist.* I,

44-55, the last one was issued on occasion of his friend's appointment to this high prefecture). Symmachus' epistolary suggests an appointment to the praetorian prefecture before August 25th 383 AD, when Gratian was killed, because all letters to senators in the first book of his epistolary were only sent to praetorian prefects appointed by the emperor Gratian (376-383 AD) (concerning the relationship between Praetextatus praetorian prefect and Symmachus urban prefect in 384 AD, see Cecconi 2002, pp. 271 f.; Olszaniec 2014b). Praetextatus became praetorian prefect after May 28th 383 AD, when Hypatius was still in office (*CTh* II 19, 5, see *PLRE* I, p. 448). Between the second half of 382 and the beginning of 383 AD, the series of monuments to western senators in the *Praetorium* of Gortyna were decreed by provincial authorities: no less than ten statues on inscribed bases were erected by the Summer of 383 AD under the supervision of the *consularis* Asclepiodotus. Praetextatus was probably the new praetorian prefect who was about to begin or had just begun his office in the prefectural district that contained the province of Crete. Since he had not completed it (which would not to happen until late 384 AD, under Valentinian II), he could not, strictly speaking, receive honours from the provincials and the governor. Probably in Crete in the Summer of 383 AD, the provincial authorities knew that Hypatius' successor to the praetorian prefecture (of Illyricum where Crete was), would be Praetextatus, and wanted to include him in the gallery of illustrious portraits, but they could only represent him as a former prefect of Rome (concerning Asclepiodotus' statue cycle, see the contributions in Bigi, Tantillo 2020a).

Praetextatus' praetorian prefecture is celebrated four times in his epigraphic *cursus honorum*, which was engraved after his death. In fact, in the Autumn of 384 AD Praetextatus left the praetorian prefecture and was appointed consul for the following year, but he died suddenly, at the latest in December 384 AD (see above). How his praetorian prefecture is indicated in these *cursus honorum* is problematic. In the inscription on the front of the altar (side a, ll. 16-17) and in the inscription in Palazzo Altemps (PPRET 79 frons, col. II, ll. 11-12), the prefecture has a numeral 'two', *II*, between the post of *praefectus praetorio* and the regional determination designated *Italiae et Illyrici*. In the *cursus honorum* chiselled in the fragmentary inscription from the Roman Forum, after the lacuna, we can read (PPRET 78, l. 4): [*praef(ecto) praet(orio) Il]lyr[i]ci et Italia[e - -]*, but before the regional determination there is space for the narrow numeral 'two', *II*. The inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne has no iteration, but shows the formula: *praef(ecto) praetorii / Illyrici Italiae et Africae* (PPRET 80, ll. 4-5). Praetextatus held a single praeto-

rian prefecture, of Italy-Africa and Illyricum (below), in 384 AD, upon the conclusion of which (September/October 384), as mentioned, he died, in the first half of December at the latest. The senator never, therefore, held two praetorian prefectures. Scholars have considered the insertion of the numeral 'two', *II*, in the inscriptions carved on the altar and on the base in Palazzo Altemps to be an error by the stone cutters and consider only the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne to be correct (PPRET 80). In 1934 Palanque speculated that in the inscription on the front of the funerary altar (side a) the numeral *II* of the praetorian prefecture (l. 16) the stone cutter had mistakenly descended from the numeral *VII* of the upper line (l. 15), which was reduced to *V*; as a result the wrong iteration would have been copied from the inscription of the funerary altar onto the later honorary inscription of Palazzo Altemps (PPRET 79, dated February 387 AD). Although unlikely, this interpretation has been universally accepted (e.g. Niquet 2000, pp. 242 f., and transposed in *CIL* VI, pp. 4757-59). However, Palanque's theory contrasts with the perfection of the funerary altar and the large honorary base from Palazzo Altemps, opposite the small base from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, which is indeed very modest and has an unfinished text which is difficult to understand. The two splendid monuments erected in Rome for Praetextatus – the great posthumous honorary base that likely decorated a rich *domus* (now in Palazzo Altemps) and the famous magnificent funerary altar from a noble mausoleum (now in the Capitoline Museums) – are independent of each other in terms of workmanship, chronology, location and destination. The two inscriptions record Praetextatus as *praefectus praetorio II Italiae et Illyrici*, and this formula is accurate and chronologically very close to the senator's prefectorial office (end 384/beginning 387 AD). The confidence of the chiselling in two different places on two magnificent epigraphic fields with their studied, clear and tasteful layout decisively contradicts the hypothesis of the stone cutter making a mistake. This possibility seems even more remote in the case of the magnificent funerary altar, which comprises fifty-nine iambic senaries engraved on three sides without a single error. A repeated mistake in chiselling on several epigraphic texts of such a high quality, on pieces that were produced for both a Roman *domus* and mausoleum, belonging to such a powerful and successful aristocrat, is totally unthinkable. All the more since the senator being honoured was at the very peak of his career. Since Praetextatus undoubtedly only held a single praetorian prefecture, conferred after the battle of Adrianople (378 AD), it is plausible to assume that the numeral 'two', *II* – apparently *iterum* or *bis* – might indicate a duplication of

the prefectorial mandate. The numeral ‘two’, *II*, is anomalously placed between the office (*praefectus praetorio*) and the area administered (*Italiae et Illyrici*), and not after the entire formula as one would expect. In our opinion, the numeral in this case indicates a simultaneous accumulation of two prefectures within a single prefectorial mandate. It was conferred upon Praetextatus by either Gratian or Valentinian II and came about through his appointment to a praetorian prefecture in two neighbouring areas, an appointment contained in a single codicil. The formula would indicate that the senator had been made «praetorian prefect at the same time over two seats, of Italy (with the diocese of Africa governed by a *vicarius*) and of Illyricum». Each seat retained its independent prefectorial bureau, but shared the same prefect. The insertion of the numeral after the title *praefectus praetorio* is a characteristic that Praetextatus’ inscriptions share with the end-of-career and posthumous inscriptions in honour of Probus, a senator who had held two separate prefectorial mandates simultaneously (PPRET 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64). Moreover, the specification of the area in which Praetextatus exercised the prefectorial mandate, *Italiae et Illyrici*, constitutes a formula peculiar to the period of the reign of Gratian and Valentinian II, which does not seem to have been in use before the battle of Adrianople (378 AD), and which was not in use after the separation between Honorius and Arcadius (395 AD), when the (triple) formula for the *praefectus praetorio Italiae Illyrici Africae* (in the West) and the (single) formula for the *praefectus praetorio Illyrici* (in the East) were definitively established (on the possibility that Praetextatus held a prefecture on two separate seats, see Porena 2020a, pp. 113-17 and Porena 2020b, p. 156; 2023a, pp. 182-89, 118 f.). In our opinion, the numeral ‘two’, *II*, could also have been inscribed to indicate the praetorian prefecture in the fragment of the base in honour of Praetextatus in the Roman Forum (PPRET 78, l. 4), while the formula to indicate the praetorian prefecture of the senator in the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (PPRET 80, ll. 4-5) is probably a late (5th Century) update of the original titling engraved at the time of Praetextatus’ death. At that moment, the original titlature had become incomprehensible and was therefore updated in a poor monument, engraved long after the senator’s death.

On Praetextatus and his career, see in brief Seeck 1883, pp. LXXXIII-XC; Nistler 1910; Ensslin 1954b; *PLRE* I, pp. 722-24; Kuhoff 1997; extensively Kalhos 2002.

The inscriptions on the funerary altar (late 384/385 AD) and the inscription on the base in Palazzo Altemps (PPRET 79, 387 AD), which extol Praetextatus’ priesthood in the first position and Praetextatus’ *cursus honorum*

only in the second position, were made after his death and show Paulina's point of view. The phrase on the front face of the funerary altar (side a, l. 23): *hi coniuncti simul vixerunt ann(is) XL*, practically represents her signature on the couple's sepulchral monument. The widow of the late great senator undertook to exalt the figure of her husband after his death. This choice is also confirmed by Paulina's monument in honour of the chief Vestal, Coelia Concordia: the widow thanked her because the priestess had had a monument put up in honour of Praetextatus after his death (*CIL VI 2145 = ILS 1261 = LSA 1510 = EDR 151259*, see PPRET 20 and 80). The monument to Praetextatus from the Roman Forum (PPRET 78) and the monument now in the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (PPRET 80), made after the senator's death, show the desire of the Senate and the people of Rome to celebrate publicly Praetextatus, and their sorrow at losing him. The *Saturnalia* by Macrobius constitute the last phase of exaltation of the memory of a man who had marked the history of the society of Rome in the second half of the 4th Century (on Praetextatus protagonist of the *Saturnalia* cf. Kahlos 2002, pp. 180-92; Cameron 2011, pp. 231-72).

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