



Roma Tre

DIPARTIMENTO DI
STUDI UMANISTICI

RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM
STUDIES IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

QUADERNI

6

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Roma Tre-Press

2025

RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM • QUADERNI

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PPRET INSCRIPTIONS

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

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA,
ELEONORA ANGIUS, ANDREA BERNIER,
GIORDANA FRANCESCHINI, IRENE VAGIONAKIS

IN RE PUBLICA LITTERARUM
LIBERI NOS SUMUS



Roma Tre Press

2025

Coordinamento editoriale:
Gruppo di Lavoro *Roma TrE-Press*

Elaborazione grafica della copertina: **MOSQUITO**, mosquitoroma.it

Caratteri tipografici utilizzati:
Ahellya, Baskerville, Linux Libertine, Romanus (copertina e frontespizio)
Bembo, Times New Roman (testo)

Impaginazione e cura editoriale: Grafica Elettronica www.graficaelettronica.it

Edizioni: *Roma TrE-Press*®
Roma, dicembre 2025
ISBN: 979-12-5977-565-8
<http://romatrepress.uniroma3.it>

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L'attività della *Roma TrE-Press* è svolta nell'ambito della Fondazione Roma Tre- Education, piazza della Repubblica 10, 00185 Roma

DOI: [10.13134/979-12-5977-565-8](https://doi.org/10.13134/979-12-5977-565-8)

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FRAGMENTARY INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR
OF MAXIMIAN AUG. FROM THE ROMAN FORUM
BY TWO PRAET. PREFECTS

EDITIONS: *CIL* VI 36947 (p. 4354); *AE* 2000, 1540 (see Critical commentary)

LINKS: *EDCS* 19800521; *EDR* 135609; *LSA* 1364; *TM* 597316

PLRE: I, p. 1000 (... mus; ... nus)

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: [- - -]nus; [- - -]mus

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 298/305 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Roma. Modern city: Rome (Italy). Province: Urbs. Diocese: Italiciana. Regional prefecture: not regional before 326 AD.

Provenance: Statue base with inscription chiselled on the front face, found in the Roman Forum in 1899, «re-used as building material in an Early Medieval structure in front of the Curia» (Machado in *LSA* 1364). Current location: Roma, Roman Forum, in front of the Curia, to the right of the entrance staircase, Sopr. For.-Pal. inv. 12444. Ancient location: public space.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: white marble.

Reuse of the inscribed field: uncertain. Reuse of the monument: yes. Opisthographic: no.

Dimensions of support: Height: 105/99 cm. Width: 60/58 cm. Breadth: 54/52 cm. Dimensions of letters: 3/4,5 cm.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field (*frons*). Undamaged, although not erased, the surface of the whole epigraphic field has deteriorated.

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm: prose. Palaeography: rustic capitals.

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for the emperor Maximian

LATIN TEXT

Propagatori Romani [imp(eri)]
 [om]nium virtutum
 [princi]pi, d(omino) n(ostro) M(arco) Aurel(io)
 [Valeri]o Maximiano,
 5 [Pio], Fe[l]lici, semper
 [Augu]sto,
 [- -]nus et [- -]
 [- -]mus vv(iri) ee[mm(inentissimi)?]
 [pr(aefecti) p]raet(orio) devo[ti] n(umini) m(aiestati)q(ue)
 10 eius.

CRITICAL EDITION

The text is based on the M. Bang edition (*CIL* VI 36947), supplemented by Porena's conjectures. For I. Grossi (*EDR* 135609) the inscription was totally erased after being chiselled.

3: [comp]ti, Bang and other editors

5: [P(io)], Bang

5-6: *semper* [Augu]sto, Machado *LSA* 1364, I. Grossi *EDR* 135609. Bang was sure whether *Augusto* was written in the middle of the sixth line

8: *vv(iri) ee(gregii)*, Bang (who was able to read only the first E); G. Alföldy, A. Scheithauer *CIL* VI, p. 4354; Machado *LSA* 1364; *vv(iri) ee[mm(inentissimi)]*: *PLRE* I, Sartre 2000, Porena 2003, p. 104 n. 2

Text was seen and verified (where possible) by Porena in 1999.

TRANSLATIONS

– English: «To the extender of the Roman empire, to the prince endowed with all the virtues, to our master Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, Pius Felix always Augustus, [- -]nus and [- -]mus the [very eminent praetorian prefects] devoted to his spirit and majesty».

– French: «À l'auteur de l'extension de l'Empire romain, au prince doué de toutes les vertus, à notre seigneur Marcus Aurelius Valérius Maximianus, Pie Heureux toujours Auguste, [- -]nus et [- -]mus les [très éminents préfets du prétoire] dévoués à sa divinité et à sa majesté».

– Italian: «All'autore dell'espansione dell'impero romano, al principe dotato di tutte le virtù, al nostro signore Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, Pio Felice sempre Augusto, [- -]nus e [- -]mus gli e[minentissimi] prefetti del pretorio] devoti al nume e alla maestà sue».

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

The base of the statue is compact, but it has been severely damaged by building reuses on all its surfaces. The text inscribed in the epigraphic field is heavily eroded, but not erased after chiselling. Maximian's onomastics was readable by the publishers Gatti (in 1899a, p. 490, and 1899b, p. 220 f.) and Bang (in 1933), and this was still the case in 1999. Thus we can exclude that the inscription was erased in order to delete the memory of the Augustus Herculus. The surface of the epigraphic field has not been lowered to engrave a new inscription over ours.

The monuments of the Tetrarchs, especially those of the *Vicennalia* in the Roman Forum, would have remained intact in their place (Marlowe 2015; Kalas 2015, pp. 23-45). Furthermore Maximian was responsible for the reconstruction of the Diocletianic Curia after the terrible fire of 284 AD. The memory of the two Augusti was preserved in the area in front of the Senate: it is very likely that our base with its statue remained *in situ*. The crisis between Herculus and his son Maxentius in 308 AD, and with his son-in-law Constantine in 310 AD, does not seem to have affected the placement of Maximian's monument (on the location of our inscribed monument see Bauer 1996, pp. 16-19, 102 and 401).

About the text: at lines 2/3 after the expression *omnium virtutum*, Bang hypothesized the adjective *compos*, due to he reads the letters TI at line 3; however, such an expression is never attested in epigraphy. Vice versa *omnium virtutum principis* is the epithet of the emperors Pertinax in *CIL* XI 3873 = *ILS* 409 and Probus in *CIL* IP²/14, 20 = *ILS* 597. At line 6, the centered position of the *cognomen* Augustus, seen by Bang, is perfectly suited to the layout of the epigraphy of the time.

The examination of the photograph and my personal autoptic reading suggest that on line 9, before the word *devoti*, some letters were originally chiselled, and some vertical and horizontal strokes remain. Taking into account the difficulties in the reading, it seems – but caution is a must – possible to discern the letters RAET; these could be what remains of the abbreviation of the office [*pr(aefecti)* or *praef(ecti) p]raet(orio)*.

The authors of the *PLRE* (I, ...mus, p. 1000) have supposed that the dedication to Maximian Augustus was raised by the two leading praetorian prefects of the whole Empire, although T.D. Barnes makes no attempt to identify them (1982, p. 136 and n. 51; Barnes 1996, p. 547 n. 84). The abbreviation of the rank at line 8, VV EE, could be integrated: *vv(iri) ee[mm(inentissi-*

mi) praeff(ecti) or pr(aefecti) praet(orio)]. Several elements would support such a proposal. The dedication was raised collegially by two officials holding the same office; from the remains of the formula we must assume that this office was normally exercised in pairs. In fact, there does not seem to be enough space in the epigraphic field to contain the indication of two different positions that may have been held by the dedicators and not even for a position that is more extensive. The rank of the officials, the same for both, can only be integrated with *vv(iri) ee[gregii]*, or with *vv(iri) ee[minentissimi]*, the latter being the prerogative of praetorian prefects in the Tetrarchic Age. No egregiate function was collegial; no dedications to emperors – or other type of inscriptions in Rome – by two or more *egregii* have been observed. We know of single *viri egregii* in inscriptions from the Roman Forum, but they are not dedicants of statue bases for emperors (*CIL* VI 2132 = *ILS* 4928; *CIL* VI 2134 = *CIL* VI 32419; *CIL* VI 2136 = *CIL* VI 32405; *CIL* VI 2137 = *ILS* 4936; they are *fictores Virginum Vestalium*, cf. now Lindner 2015, pp. 64 and 135). To restore *vv(iri) ee(gregii)* is difficult, since it seems unlikely that in the late 3rd Century, when the *perfectissimatus* extended to most equestrian offices, simple *viri egregii* would raise monuments to an Augustus in such a prestigious place, not only in the Roman Forum itself, but in the area between the Curia and the Comitium, which had just been restored. The axis between the Curia, the Basilica Aemilia and the stretch of the Via Sacra towards the Velia was populated in the 4th Century with statues made by dignitaries for the emperors (Bauer 2012a; Machado 2006 and 2019, pp. 95-123). Dedications made in Rome by pairs of praetorian prefects (*eminentissimi*) prior to our inscription are not unknown: *CIL* VI 1009 (cf. p. 4315) = *ILS* 2012 (140 AD); *CIL* VI 1611 = *CIL* VI 31831 (241 AD); *CIL* VI 2388a fr. 5 = *CIL* VI 32600 = *EDR* 122374 (3rd Century AD); *CIL* VI 31352 = *CIL* VI 40710 (second half of the 3rd Century AD).

The ancient political centre of Rome still appears to be the most suitable place to erect a monument decreed by praetorian prefects. In fact, we know of two dedications to Maxentius placed by his praetorian prefect right in the Forum in 310/311 AD: one is now next to the Basilica Aemilia (*CIL* VI 40726 = PPRET 5), a few meters from our inscription to Maximian, the other one was found ‘summa via sacra’ near the Basilica of Maxentius (*CIL* VI 36949 = PPRET 4). Other inscriptions made by praetorian prefects for late Roman emperors were displayed in the Roman Forum during Late Antiquity, and by the emperors to a single prefect too. After these three statue bases of the Tetrarchic period, we can find in the area of the Basilica Aemilia: a fragmentary dedication in honour of a 4th Century Augustus by a praetorian

prefect whose name is lost (*CIL* VI 36678 = *CIL* VI 36990 = Panciera 1996a, nr. 195 = *EDR* 071778 = *PPRET* 99); a statue base for the emperor Valens made by Placidus Severus (*PLRE* I, Severus 28, pp. 836 f.) a *vicarius urbis, agens vices praefecti praetorio* in about 364/365 (*CIL* VI 36956 = *ILS* 8948 = *LSA* 1373 = *EDR* 071728). In other parts of the Roman Forum, not far from the basilica Aemilia, inscriptions in honour of praetorian prefects were found: from the area near the Column of Phocas comes the monument in honour of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyricum, erected in 384 AD (*CIL* VI 1779a = *CIL* VI 31929 = *PPRET* 78); from the zone in front of the Curia, near our base in honour of Maximianus Herculeus, comes the statue base in honour of Petronius Maximus praetorian prefect of Italia Illyricum Africa, put up in 433/437 AD by Theodosius II and Valentinian III Augusti (Panciera 1996b = *CIL* VI 41398 = *LSA* 1525 = *EDR* 093620); from an indeterminate space in the Roman Forum comes a fragmentary inscription in honour of an anonymous praetorian prefect, dated in the first half of the 5th Century AD (*CIL* VI 41346 = *PPRET* 96). Other potential fragmentary dedications of dignitaries of the late 3rd Century AD (prefects?) to emperors from the area of the Curia and the Basilica Aemilia exist: *CIL* VI 40707 (to Aurelian), *CIL* VI 40751 (to Probus). The north-eastern side of the Roman Forum between late 3rd and mid-5th Century hosted monuments related to praetorian prefects, namely between the Curia and the Basilica Aemilia. We can therefore hypothesize that what remains of the inscription *CIL* VI 36947 might well be a prefectural dedication in the Roman Forum, put up on the orders of the two leading praetorian prefects of the whole Empire to Maximian Augustus alone, probably for an event or an anniversary that concerned him. At the end of the military campaign in Africa (297-298 AD), in late 298 AD Maximianus Herculeus stayed in Rome, where he began construction of the Baths of Diocletian (Chastagnol 1980-1981); in 299 AD (oct./dec.) his *Quindecennalia* began: the prefectural monument for Herculeus in the Roman Forum may have been built in this period. The epithet *propagator* and the praise of his *virtus* were appropriate in the context of Maximian's recent victories.

This lead to the identity of the two praetorian prefects is to be found on lines 7-8, and consists of the final parts of the *cognomina*. We know four colleges of praetorian prefects of Diocletian and Maximian (only the Augusti had one prefect each), complete with their rank (cf. Porena 2003, pp. 103-52):

284?-286 AD Diocletian: Aristobulus and/then Hannibalianus
vv.eemm.

- 286-291 AD Diocletian: Hannibalianus v.em. (inscr. of Oescus, PPRET 1)
 Maximian: Asclepiodotus v.em.
- In 292 AD Hannibalianus et Asclepiodotus were ordinary consuls and became vv.cc. (two prefects clarissimi in *CIL* VI 1125 = *ILS* 619, in 293/296 AD)
- 292-294/96 AD Diocletian: Hannibalianus v.c. (then prefect of Rome in 297 AD)
 Maximian: Asclepiodotus v.c.
- 294/96-297/98 AD Maximian: Asclepiodotus v.c. (as prefect he defeated the usurper Adlectus in 296/97 AD)
 Diocletian: Hermogenianus v.em. (inscr. of Brescia, PPRET 2)
- 297/98?-305 AD Diocletian: Hermogenianus v.em. (he never became v.c.)
 Maximian: ? v.em. (two prefects eminentissimi in *CIL* XIV 4455, in 297/305 AD)

It seems likely that our inscription from the Roman Forum, pertains to two praetorian prefects belonging to the last phase of the Tetrarchy, between 298 and 305 AD. The first could be [Hermogenia]nus, prefect of Diocletian; the second could be the prefect appointed by Maximian after the departure of Asclepiodotus (there was no prefect ordinary consul between 293 and 305 AD, therefore after Hannibalianus and Asclepiodotus there were only prefects of eminentissimus rank). In 2000 M. Sartre proposed that the first praetorian prefect of our inscription was Aurelius Rufinus (2000, pp. 989 f. = *AE* 2000, 1540). His reconstruction is based on a reading of the sixth line of an inscription from Teyma (Arabia), commemorating the restoration of castra in 296 AD – *Aur(elio) Rufino p(raefecto) pr(aetorio) Ori[entis]* – but that reading was then rejected by Sartre himself (2007, p. 163 = *AE* 2007, 1619; *IGLS* XVI/3, 708). The position of Rufinus' name after that of the governor of Arabia and the mention of the Prefecture of the East before Constantine's reform hinder this interpretation.