



**Roma Tre**

DIPARTIMENTO DI  
STUDI UMANISTICI

**RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM**  
STUDIES IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

QUADERNI

6

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*In re publica litterarum liberi nos sumus*

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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

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IN RE PUBLICA LITTERARUM  
LIBERI NOS SUMUS

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FRAGMENTARY INSCRIPTION RELATING  
TO BUILDING WORKS IN PORTUS (OSTIA)  
PROBABLY MADE BY THE PRAET. AND URBAN  
PREFECT ULPIUS LIMENIUS

EDITIONS: Nuzzo 2013, pp. 498 f., nr. EP1 (with photo, fig. 11.4, 20) = *AE* 2014, 275; p. 499, nr. EP2 (with photo, fig. 11.4, 21) = *AE* 2014, 276; EP3 (with photo, fig. 11.4, 22); Caldelli 2025 (with photos)

LINKS: *EDCS* 71200590; *EDR* 178582

PLRE: NEW - inscription unknown to the *PLRE*

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Ulpian Limenius

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 347/349 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Portus (Ostia). Modern city: Fiumicino (Rome - Italy). Province: Urbs. Diocese: Italiciana. Regional prefecture: Italia Illyricum Africa.

Provenance: Christian Basilica of Portus (Ostia), South side of Trajan's port. Current location: Ostia antica (Rome), deposit of Portus: fr. EP1 inv. sc. 21a-e, 3013-3014; fr. EP2 inv. sc. 31; fr. EP3 inv. sc. 3632. Ancient location: public building.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: stone slab. Material: white marble (Luni).

Reuse of the inscribed field: no. Reuse of the monument: yes, reused in a pit tomb excavated after the 10th Century inside the Christian basilica. Opisthographic: no.

Dimensions of support: fr. EP1 Height: 34.5 cm. Width: 43 cm. Breadth: 4.5 cm.; fr. EP2 Height: 17 cm. Width: 17 cm. Breadth: cm. 4; fr. EP3 Height: 17.5 cm. Width: 17.5 cm. Breadth: cm. 4. Dimensions of letters: 7/6.5 cm.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field. Fragmentary. It consists of five joining fragments that form the lower left corner of an originally larger epigraphic field (EP1), and two other unjoined fragments of the same slab (EP2-3).

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm: prose. Palaeography: late antique elegant capital; elongated letters; 'A' with broken horizontal stroke.

TEXT CATEGORY: Building inscription

#### LATIN TEXT

- [Dd(omini) nn(ostri) Fl(avii) Iuli Constantius et Constans Augusti]  
 [..? h]orra [- 8/9 - p]orti[cus - 15/16 -]  
 [a ve]teri[bus princip]ibus [instituta? - 11 -]  
 restau[rari adque? - 6/9 - iusserunt, dedicante]  
 5 Ulpio Li[menio, v(iro) c(larissimo), praef(ecto) praetorio et praef(ecto) urbi],  
 curante [Aur(elio) Avianio Symmacho?, v(iro) c(larissimo), praef(ecto) annonae].

#### CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on Caldelli 2025.

l. 2: [---]+ORIF[---], Nuzzo

l. 3: [---]TERI[---], Nuzzo

l. 4: *restau[rav-]*, Nuzzo

#### TRANSLATIONS

– English: «[Our lords Flavi Iuli Constantius and Constans Augusti] ... the storehouses ... the porticus ... founded by the previous emperors ... [ordered to] restore, [dedicating the work] Ulpius Limenius [of clarissimus rank, praetorian prefect and prefect of the City], taking care of the restoration [Aurelius Avianius Symmachus, of clarissimus rank, prefect of the annona]».

– French: «[Nos seigneurs Flavi Iuli Constantius et Constans Augusti] ... les entrepôts ... le portique ... fondés par les princes d'auparavant ... [ordonnèrent de] restaurer, [en dédiant l'œuvre le clarissime] Ulpius Limenius [préfet du prétoire et préfet de Rome], en s'occupant de la restauration [le clarissime Aurelius Avianius Symmachus préfet de l'annone]».

– Italian: «[I nostri signori Flavi Iuli Constantius e Constans Augusti] ... i magazzini ... il portico ... fondati dai principi di un tempo ... [ordinarono di] restaurare, [dedicando l'opera il chiarissimo] Ulpius Limenius [prefetto del pretorio e prefetto di Roma], curando il restauro [il chiarissimo Aurelius Avianius Symmachus prefetto dell'annona]».

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

The five joining fragments and two other unjoined fragments of the inscription were found inside the Christian basilica of Portus. During the 2nd and 3rd Centuries AD, the town of Portus grew up around the harbour, built by the emperors Claudius and Trajan at the mouth of the Tiber (cf. Bruun, Gallina Zevi 2002; Keay, Millett, Paroli, Strutt 2005; Keay, Paroli 2011; Keay 2012; further recent and forthcoming bibliography, see the website Portus Project). After 313 AD, the town was elevated to the rank of city by the emperor Constantine (Civitas Flavia Constantiniana Portuensis), and a Christian community is attested here (Lenski 2016, pp. 144-47). Around 430 AD, a Christian basilica was built within the large hall of a *domus*, dating from the second half of the 4th Century. The basilica is located on the South-West side of Trajan's port and is North of the 'Fossa Traiana' (for the location, cf. Paroli 2013, p. 2, fig. 1.1). The Christian basilica was enlarged and restored several times during its long history, finally being abandoned in the 13th Century. It was re-discovered in 1865 during the excavations of the Torlonia family and was identified by G.B. De Rossi as the so-called 'Xenodochio di Pammachio'. Thanks to new excavations in 1991-2007, archaeologists have reconstructed the building's phases, uncovering more than 100 Latin inscriptions – including two Greek ones – together with the fragments pertaining to our inscription. The fragments of the inscription form a square stone slab, that had originally been cut from the lower left corner of a larger inscribed block. At some point, and no earlier than the 10th Century, the latter was cut for reuse in order to line in a subterranean tomb inside the Christian basilica. They are currently stored in the deposit of the Porto archaeological site (for the basilica and the findspot, cf. Paroli 2005 and 2013).

Although the fragmentary inscription does not explicitly mention the title of praetorian prefect, it does cite the name of Ulp[us] Li[menius]. We know that in 342 AD Ulp[us] Limenius was proconsul of Constantinople and that from June 12<sup>th</sup> 347 AD to April 8<sup>th</sup> 349 AD, he was exceptionally praetorian prefect of Italy, while being also prefect of Rome at the same time. He was honoured with the ordinary consulship in 349 AD (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 128-30; *PLRE I*, p. 510; *CLRE*, pp. 232 f. for whom he is a senator of Constantinople; according to Moser 2018, p. 100-2, he is a member of the Roman aristocracy, but originally from Greece). The source for this new dual office – praetorian prefecture of Italy together with the prefecture of

Rome – is, as always, the official list of the urban prefecture in the *Chronographus anni CCCLIII* (*MGH AA IX, chron. min.* I, pp. 68 f.; on this particular text, cf. Salzman 1990; Burgess 2012; Divjak, Wischmeyer 2014 with Burgess 2017). During his mandate, Limenius received two constitutions from the emperor Constans, *CTh IX 21, 6* (February 12<sup>th</sup> 349 AD) and *CTh IX 17, 2* (March 28<sup>th</sup> 349 AD). He held the consulship from January 1<sup>st</sup> 349 AD, but the *Chronographus anni CCCLIII* states that on April 8<sup>th</sup> 349 AD, Limenius left his dual office, which implies that there must have been 41 days in which no one holding either post (but cf. Jones 1964b, p. 82 for the replacement by Eustathius). Finally, on May 19<sup>th</sup> 349 AD, the emperor Constans appointed Hermogenes to the prefecture of both Italy and Rome (*PLRE I*, p. 423; he remained in office until February 27<sup>th</sup> 350 AD, when Rome and Italy were controlled by Magnentius). Perhaps Limenius was discharged and remained consul for the other eight months of the year, or maybe he just died while in office (see Chastagnol 1962, p. 129 with previous bibliography and *PLRE I*, p. 510; Machado 2019, p. 32).

The union of the praetorian prefecture of Italy with that of Rome was an innovation of the emperor Constans, which occurred during the last part of his reign (347-350 AD). It is highly probable that in 346/347 AD Constans assigned the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum to Anatolius (regarding the identity of this prefect and the existence of two homonymous praetorian prefects, Anatolius Azutrios and Vindaeonius Anatolius, see *PPRET 47*). Then, from at least 347 to 350 AD, the emperor assigned the Illyrian prefecture to Vulcacius Rufinus (see *PPRET 32, 33*). At the beginning of 350 AD, Constans was assassinated by Magnentius, who ruled Italy while Vetranion reigned in Illyricum. From 346 AD and until the beginning of Julian's principate, the praetorian prefecture of Italy (less Africa) and Illyricum, each had its own praetorian prefect, but the union of the praetorian prefectures of Italy and Rome remained an experiment by the emperor Constans, and was confined to the years 347-349 AD (the usurper Magnentius seems to have held a praetorian prefecture which was distinct from the urban prefecture in Rome). In the eastern part of the Empire, Cyrus of Panopolis, serving between 439 and 441 AD, is the only praetorian prefect of the East who was also prefect of Constantinople at the same time (see Mecella 2020, pp. 83-139). On the praetorian prefecture of Constantius II and Constans and on the double prefecture of Limenius and Hermogenes cf. the different interpretations of Palanque 1955; Jones 1964b, pp. 81 f.; Neri 1974; Vogler 1979, pp. 110-44; Barnes 1987a, pp. 17-22; Barnes 1992, pp. 255-59; Migl 1994, pp. 95-124 (but in his opinion the prefectures are not yet regional before 364

AD); for a mixture of ‘regional’ and ‘ministerial’ praetorian prefectures between 337 and 355 AD cf. Davenport 2016, in particular for Limenius pp. 228 f.; Moser 2018, for Limenius pp. 107-10 (prefect only of the southern part of the Italian diocese); on Constans’ relations with Rome cf. Harries 2012, pp. 189-96; Moser 2017, on how the prefectures shared power pp. 42-46.

A short clarification. The author of this entry does not agree with the hypothesis of the existence of a regional praetorian prefecture alongside a ministerial praetorian prefecture (Porena 2023a, pp. 1-66; Porena 2023b). Nor does the author agree with the idea that the offices of the praetorian prefects operated without any pre-defined and precise territorial limits. In our opinion, all praetorian prefectures from Constantine (only Augustus) onwards are regional and the prefects are no longer the internal officers of the *comitatus* of the Augusti (or of the Caesars). Despite the gaps in the documentation, in the seventy years from 326 to 395 AD, the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum tends to be distinct and autonomous from the praetorian prefecture of Italy. The two prefectures only appear united in the large prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in the periods 338-344 AD, i.e. in the first half of the principate of Constans, and 361-376 AD, that is to say, during the reigns of Julian and Valentinian I. Concerning the double prefecture of Limenius, a division of the Italian diocese between the praetorian prefects Vulcacius Rufinus in the North (*Annonaria regio*) and Ulpus Limenius then Hermogenes, in the South (*Suburbicaria regio*) is not considered possible.

The inscription, although fragmentary, clearly refers to building restorations in the city of Portus in Late Antiquity, while the praetorian prefects themselves are remembered as supervisors of civil and military constructions (see PPRET 8, 14, 15, 16, 30, 33, 42, 44, 49, 68, 69, 90). In the 4th Century, the praetorian prefects appear to be responsible for the construction and control of the proper functioning of *horrea*, in Illyricum (PPRET 33), in Italy (PPRET 56), in Lycia (PPRET 88). Significantly, Portus was in the district administered by Ulpus Limenius, praetorian prefect of Italy and prefect of Rome. From the 4th Century AD, the management of buildings and the infrastructure of Portus and Ostia fell within the competence of the prefect of Rome (cf. Chastagnol 1960, p. 368; for a former praetorian prefect who builds in Ostia, see PPRET 41 and 42). The harbour structures and warehouses of Portus experienced development during the reigns of Constantine and later of Constans (concerning *horrea* at Portus, see Bukowiecki, Mimmo 2023; in Italy, see Vera 2008). The dimensions and the elegance of the letters of our inscription and the presence of the verb in l. 4 would suggest a restoration financed by the (distant) Augusti, whose names occupied

the first position in the text, now lost. The restoration seems to have been supervised by the praetorian prefect of Italy and Rome (l. 5) and carried out in Portus by another authority, perhaps the prefect of the *annona* (l. 6; cf. Pavis d'Escurac 1976, pp. 287-89). The first editor of our inscription suggested that the inscription refers to works carried out by the prefect of the *annona* on building(s) in Portus (cf. Nuzzo 2013, pp. 498 f., with references to other late antique sources); this interpretation has been confirmed by Caldelli 2025. On the identification of the prefect of the *annona* (L. Aurelius Avianius Symmachus, the father of the writer), who may have cooperated in the restoration with Ulpius Limenius, in this inscription, see Caldelli 2025.

Given the incomplete onomastics and the lack of an explicit reference to Ulpius Li[menius] as the acting official, we cannot be totally sure that the personage referred to in the Portus inscribed fragments, is indeed the praetorian prefect of Italy and prefect of Rome and consul of Constans Augustus. Unfortunately, his title – which is also very rare – is missing. Furthermore, the palaeography of this inscription is such that a 5th, and even early 6th Century AD cannot be excluded. In this regard, I would like to thank M.L. Caldelli and M. Turci for the report concerning fragments of an inscribed slab from Ostia, which probably date to the late restoration of a part of the Baths of Porta Marina under king Theoderic (493/526 AD, see Caldelli, Turci 2021; Licordari, Pellegrino 2023, pp. 270 f.). Also in these fragments from Ostia, the curator of the work is named as Ulpius, but the senator's *cognomen* and office are unfortunately lost in a lacuna. The surviving letters of this inscription are elongated, while the stroke of the 'A' is broken, two characteristics which are similar to the letters of our inscription from Portus (see Licordari, Pellegrino 2023, pp. 270 f.). Caldelli made a clear distinction between the palaeography of the Portus inscription (4th Century) and the palaeography of the Ostia inscription (5/6th Century). Although most scholars attribute the restoration mentioned in the Portus fragments to Ulpius Li[menius], caution should still be exercised.

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