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6

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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
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INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF THE DECEASED PRAET.
 PREFECT VETTIUS AGORIUS PRAETEXTATUS
 FROM ROME (PAL. ALTEMPS)

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PHOTOS: Ohio State University (<http://hdl.handle.net/1811/98962>)

LINKS: *EDCS* 18100592; *EDR* 126995; *LSA* 1473; *TM* 570241

PLRE: I, pp. 722-24

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Vettius Agorius Praetextatus

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: February 1st, 387 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

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

Provenance: Rome, seen for the first time in the gardens of the Villa dei Mattei on the Caelian hill. Current location: Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps, ground floor, portico of the courtyard next to the theatre entrance, inv. 80733. Ancient location: private space.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: marble.

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

Dimensions of support: Height: 141 cm. Width: 94 cm. Breadth: 65 cm. Dimensions of letters: 1.4/5 cm.

Inscribed field: Two inscribed fields (*frons*: cymatium and writing arranged in two columns next to each other; *latus dex.*). Undamaged.

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm: prose. Palaeography: late Roman monumental capitals.

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for the praetorian prefect Praetextatus

LATIN TEXT

corona

Agorii.

frons

(in a line above the two columns of writing)

Vettio Agorio Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo)

col. I (sin.)

pontifici Vestae, ((hedera))
 pontifici Soli(s),
 quindecimviro,
 auguri,
 5 tauroboliato,
 curiali,
 neocoro,
 hierofantae,
 patri sacrorum.

col. II (dex.)

quaestori
 candidato,
 praetori ūrbano,
 correctori Tus=
 5 ciae et Ūmbriae,
 consulari
 Lusitaniae,
 proconsuli
 Achaiae,
 10 praefecto ūrbi,
 praef(ecto) praet(orio) II
 Italiae et Illyrici,
 consuli
 designato. ((hedera))

latus dex.

Dedicata Kal(endis) Febr(uariis)
d(omino) n(ostro) Fl(avio) Valentiniano Aug(usto) III
et Eutropio cons(ulibus).

CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* VI 1778, *EDR* 126995. Text was seen and verified by Porena in 2018.

frons col. I

- 2: *Solis*, Vermaseren 1956
- 3: *quindecimviro*, Vermaseren 1956
- 8: *hierofante*, Vermaseren 1956

frons col. II

- 1-2: *quaestori candidato*, Vermaseren 1956
- 4: *conrectori*, Duthoy 1969
- 8-9: *proconsuli Achaiae*, Duthoy 1969
- 10: PRAEEECTO, Gordon 1965, Gordon 1983
- 11: PRAEE, Gordon 1965, Gordon 1983, *LSA*; *praefecto*, Duthoy 1969; *praef^r(ecto)*, *EDR*, Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018
- 12: EI, Gordon 1965, Gordon 1983; YLLYRICI, Gordon 1965, Gordon 1983
- 13-14: *consuli designato*, Vermaseren 1956

lat. dex.

- 1: EEBR, Gordon 1965
- 2-3: a single line in Bricault 2005
- 3: *cons(ulibus)*, Vermaseren 1956, De Angelis D'Ossat 2011a

TRANSLATIONS

– English: «Agorius' (statue).

To Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, of clarissimus rank, pontifex of Vesta, pontifex of the Sun, quindecimvir, augur, tauroboliate, curialis, neocorus, hierophant, father of the sacred rites; candidate quaestor, urban praetor, corrector of Tuscia and Umbria, consularis of Lusitania, proconsul of Achaia, prefect of the City, praetorian prefect twice* of Italy and Illyricum, designated consul.

Dedicated on the Kalends of February, during the consulship of our master Flavius Valentinianus Augustus for the third time and of Eutropius (= February 1st 387 AD)».

(other English transl.: Croke, Harries 1982, p. 105, nr. 64; Gordon 1983, p. 178; Beard, North, Price 1998, p. 213, nr. 8.9)

– French: «(Statue) d'Agorius.

Au clarissime Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, pontife de Vesta, pontife du Soleil, quindecimvir, augure, taurobolié, curiale, néocore, hiérophante, père des cérémonies.

nies sacrées; questeur candidat, prêteur urbain, correcteur de Tuscie et d'Ombrie, consulaire de Lusitanie, proconsul d'Achaïe, préfet de la Ville, préfet du prétoire deux fois* d'Italie et d'Illyricum, consul désigné.

(Statue) dédiée le jour des calendes de février, sous le consulat de notre seigneur Flavius Valentinianus Auguste, pour la troisième fois, et d'Eutropius (= le 1^{er} février 387 ap. J.-C.)».

(other French transl.: Chastagnol 1991 (2nd ed.), pp. 157 f., nr. 41C; Bricault 2005, pp. 552 f., nr. 501/0181; Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018, pp. 504 f., nr. 107)

– Italian: «(Statua) di Agorius.

Al chiarissimo Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, pontefice di Vesta, pontefice del Sole, quindecimviro, augure, tauroboliato, curiale, neocoro, ierofante, padre dei sacri riti; questore candidato, pretore urbano, correttore di Tuscia ed Umbria, console della Lusitania, proconsole d'Acaia, prefetto urbano, prefetto del pretorio 'doppio'* dell'Italia e dell'Illyrico, console designato.

Dedicata alle Calende di febbraio durante il consolato del nostro signore Flavius Valentinianus Augustus per la terza volta e di Eutropius (= 1^o febbraio 387 d.C.)».

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

(German translation: Helbig 1969, pp. 53 f., nr. 2152)

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

The inscribed base was found in an unknown place in Rome. The artefact was first seen by J. Sirmond (1559-1651) in the gardens of the Villa dei Mattei on the Caelian hill sometime between 1590 and 1608. The base was part of the Mattei family's collection of Roman antiquities, which was begun in the 1550's and which was partially located on the Caelian hill, where, in 1580, Ciriaco Mattei (1545-1614), banker and collector, had built the Villa Celimontana with its vast park (Benocci 1991). Our base remained in these gardens for over three centuries. After the Mattei family eventually died out, the villa and its collection passed to the Bavarian Baron Richard von Hoffmann in 1869. However, in 1919, following the Italian victory in the First World War, the property was expropriated by the Kingdom of Italy, whereupon the antiquities including the inscribed base, were acquired by the Italian State (see De Angelis D'Ossat 2011b). Since 1925/26 the villa became the property of the Municipality of Rome – the park is public and the villa is the seat of the (Royal) Italian Geographical Society. In February 1923 the base in honour of Praetextatus was transferred to the Museo Nazionale

Romano alle Terme di Diocleziano and exhibited in room VII (inv. 80733). In December 1997 it was transferred to Palazzo Altemps, where it is currently exhibited in the North portico, at the end of the large courtyard on the ground floor of the palace, at the left of theatre entrance.

The base in honour of Praetextatus is originally a large funerary base or funerary altar, the decoration of which has been removed: only faint traces now remain of the *urceus* on its right side and the *patera* on the left. The epigraphic field was lowered and the previous funerary inscription all but cancelled in order to put in the present inscription (cf. Gordon 1965, pp. 144 f.; Helbig 1969, pp. 53-57, nr. 2152).

The base is engraved on two sides. The epigraphic field on the front, below the imposing statue and the senator's onomastics, carries an exceptionally well chiselled text in two columns: in the left-hand column, in the first position for the reader, Praetextatus' religious offices are listed; in the right-hand column, in the secondary position for the reader, the civil offices of his *cursus honorum* are listed. This kind of division of the senator's religious and civil duties in two parallel writing columns is almost unique. It is noteworthy that the writing in the left-hand column is aligned towards the left edge, while the writing in the right-hand column is aligned towards the right edge of the epigraphic field. Also the left-hand column, listing Praetextatus' religious offices is wider and the letters are more spaced apart; the right-hand column listing the senator's civil offices is narrower and the letters are chiselled very close to each other and are compressed towards the right edge. In addition, in the right-hand column the stone cutter had to join two letters with a nexus (three times: l. 3, U and R; l. 5, U and M; l. 10, U and R), and had to insert several dwarf letters (l. 3, letters A and O; l. 5, letters R and A; l. 12, letter C), because he was forced to chisel the *cursus* in a limited space (on the palaeography of our inscription, see Gordon 1965, pp. 145 f.). At the end of the right-hand column (ll. 13-14) the office of *consul designatus* was written in larger letters, because it was the highest and most prestigious office of the senatorial career in the late empire.

The base from Palazzo Altemps has many elements in common with the funerary altar of Praetextatus and Paulina (PPRET 77). Both in the inscription on the front of the altar (side a, ll. 3-18) and in the inscription exhibited at Palazzo Altemps the priestly offices precede the civil offices (on the altar, the transition from the list of Praetextatus' priesthoods to the offices of his *cursus* is explained in l. 8: *in re publica vero*). This is precisely the order of importance that Praetextatus and Paulina gave to the two careers. Praetextatus, a traditionalist but also a non-conformist, considered the dignities of a sen-

atorial career to be ‘vanity’ (*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 inscriptions on the funerary altar (late 384/385 AD) and the inscription on the base in Palazzo Altemps, which extol Praetextatus’ priesthoods 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.

On the right side of the base in Palazzo Altemps, the date of the dedication of the monument was inserted: February 1st 387 AD. Praetextatus’ died between December 8th and 10th 384 AD (see Vera 1983a, pp. 140–42), or between October and the first half of November 384 AD (Ceccconi 2002, pp. 266–81; see also Kahlos 2002, pp. 151–71). Not only was he still praetorian prefect on September 9th 384 AD (*CII* 54, 5), but he was also the ordinary consul designated for 385 AD. Nevertheless, on January 1st of that year Fl. Bauto was made the western consul since Praetextatus had died (see *CLRE*, pp. 304 f.). Our inscription was prepared and chiselled just over two years after the senator’s death. The date of the dedication does not seem to be connected with any known events related to the biography of Paulina, wife and later widow of Praetextatus (on Paulina see *PLRE* I, p. 675, and *PPRET* 20). The name of the dedicator(s) seems never to have been chiselled at the end of the inscription, while the pagan cults of the devout senator are emphasised. The absence of the dedicator is common to most of the inscriptions of Praetextatus and his wife Paulina in Rome: the name of the dedicator of the couple’s funeral altar is of course missing (see *PPRET* 77); nor is it to be found in the inscription in honour of Paulina in the basilica of the Santi XII Apostoli (see *PPRET* 20); it was deliberately omitted from the inscription in honour of Praetextatus in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (see *PPRET* 80), while it was accidentally dropped in the inscription in honour of the senator from the Roman Forum, the only one that was certainly public (see *PPRET* 78). Given the absence of a dedicator and the listing of Praetextatus’ priesthoods, Niquet (2000, pp. 242–46 and 251), who considers the numbering of the praetorian prefecture to be an error (for a contrary view see below), thinks that the funerary altar was the model for the Palazzo Altemps inscription, and that the latter was made together with the inscription in honour of Paulina by the Santi XII Apostoli. In her opinion, Paulina died on February 1st 387 AD and was immortalised beside her husband on the funeral altar. But she was also honoured with a memorial statue (bear-

ing the inscription in the basilica of Santi XII Apostoli, PPRET 20), that was erected close to her husband's statue that carries our inscription in Palazzo Altemps, while both were located in their *domus* in the area of the Villa Celimontana (later Paulina's inscribed base was moved from here to the Quirinal hill; cf. also F. Mitthof and H. Niquet in *CIL* VI, p. 4759). In our opinion this connection is far from certain. Praetextatus' inscription in Palazzo Altemps seems to have been simply copied in the Mattei family gardens on the Caelian hill, while the inscription for Paulina was copied in the basilica of the Santi XII Apostoli on the Quirinal hill, the two places being very far apart. The private setting of Paulina's monument is confirmed by other surviving inscriptions in honour of Praetextatus and Paulina: their funerary altar was located in the family tomb outside Rome (PPRET 77); the inscription exhibited in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne declares that the monument was located in a *domus* and it was actually found in a residential area on the Aventine hill (PPRET 80, l. 10); the *tabula ansata* (*CIL* VI 1781, cf. p. 4760 = *EDR* 111561) and two *fistulae* (*CIL* XV 7563 = *EDR* 149417) both mentioning Praetextatus and Paulina were found in 19th Century on the Esquiline hill and almost certainly come from their urban *domus* (concerning the *domus* of Praetextatus and Paulina, see Guidobaldi 1995d; Kahlos 2002, p. 25; a *domus* was probably inherited by Paulina on the Esquiline hill, see Ensoli 2000, pp. 279 f.; Carucci 2008). The theory that Praetextatus and Paulina's *domus* was situated somewhere on either the Caelian and Quirinal hills is hard to substantiate. Although it is highly likely that Praetextatus and Paulina's monuments (without a dedicator) were destined for a private setting within their *domus*, it cannot be said that they were joint monuments of the couple. The date of February 1st 387 AD engraved on the base for the husband hardly indicates the date of his wife's death. The interpretation of the date of the inscription on the right side of the base from the Palazzo Altemps as a memorial of Paulina's death is purely speculative.

In 4th Century AD Rome the aristocratic wives of praetorian prefects were celebrated by inscribed monuments both in their *domus* and in those of their relatives (see the inscription in honour of Tyrrania Anicia Iuliana, PPRET 70). The adult children of Sex. Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba celebrated their father and mother with individual inscribed monuments in their *domus*: they had (at least) five elegant monuments built for their illustrious parents, all of which would have been put up sometime after the beginning of 395 AD (see PPRET 65 and 66). But in the inscriptions of Praetextatus and Paulina there is no trace of their children (concerning the dedicator of the inscription in Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, see

PPRET 80). Otherwise, in the funerary sphere, aristocratic widows commissioned epitaphs. In similar periods (resp. 384/385 AD and 388/395 AD) the two noble women, Paulina and Proba, 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. Paulina composed or commissioned and had chiselled the long epitaph in verse on the funerary altar that commemorates her and her beloved husband Praetextatus (see PPRET 77, side d); Proba certainly played a role in the composition of the double epitaph of her husband Probus (see PPRET 64). In the second half of the 4th Century AD women of senatorial rank had inscriptions carved and received them in the great houses and sumptuous tombs of their families in Rome.

The lack of the dedicator's name pleads strongly in favour of the Palazzo Altemps monument being situated inside of one of the couple's private properties in Rome. Another important factor to take into consideration is that the two inscriptions that mention the magistracies of Rome, *quaestura* and *praetura* – the altar PPRET 77, side a, ll. 9-10, and the Palazzo Altemps inscription, col. II, ll. 1-3 – were likely placed in private settings (that is to say the sepulchre and a *domus*) and were commissioned by the family. The two inscriptions that do not mention the magistracies of Rome – the fragmentary inscription from the Roman Forum (PPRET 78) and the base from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (PPRET 80) – had public settings. The first inscription was erected in a prestigious monumental public place and has accidentally lost the dedicator's name; the second inscription appears to be a late copy of a text chiselled soon after Praetextatus' death, probably in a public place, this too having failed to preserve the dedicator's name (the name was deliberately omitted when the inscription was chiselled). A third element is also worthy of examination. Praetextatus' onomastic contains the *signum* Agorius between the *gentilicium* Vettius and the *cognomen* Praetextatus, and this is a feature of his name. Only the inscription in Palazzo Altemps (see the *corona*) and the verse inscription on the back of the funerary altar (PPRET 77, side d, l. 4) extoll the *signum* Agorius. This rather Hellenic sounding 'nickname' crops up in the Greek inscriptions of Thespieae where our senator is cited (Plassart 1926, pp. 444-46, nr. 85 = *AE* 1928, 48 = *SEG XV* (1958), 322 = *LSA* 839 = Roesch 2007, nr. 418, l. 6) and Crete (*ICret.* IV 316 = Bigi Tantillo 2020, pp. 192 f., nr. 3, l. 1), while the *cognomen* Praetextatus is widespread in historical works, official documents, and the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius. The *signum* alone appears in texts pertaining to the family sphere or in which there is a deep familiarity with the senator.

A list of Praetextatus' priesthoods and initiations into the mysteries opens the Palazzo Altemps inscription (left-hand column). At the beginning the public priests of the city of Rome are listed (ll. 1-4), followed by the foreign cults and mysteries practised in Rome (ll. 5-9). Only one other epigraphic source celebrates the senator's rich religious life: the inscription engraved on the funerary altar (PPRET 77), in the prose inscription on the front (side a, ll. 3-8) and in the eulogy in iambic verse on the back (side d, ll. 13-29) (concerning Praetextatus' religious activity cf. Rüpke 2005, pp. 1363 f., nr. 3468; Massa 2020). In the inscription in Palazzo Altemps the public priests of the city of Rome might well be listed in a hierarchical order (ll. 1-4) according to when each priesthood was established, from the most recent to the oldest: *pontifex Vestae* (4th Century AD?, cf. Van Haepere 2002; Lizzi Testa 2007c), *pontifex Solis* (reorganised by the emperor Aurelian in 274 AD, cf. Hijmans 2010; Salzman 2017), *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* (reorganised by Sulla in 81 BC, cf. Granino Cecere 2019), *augur* (royal age, cf. Lizzi Testa 2009). On the front of the funerary altar the traditional priestships of the city of Rome are listed perhaps in alphabetical order: *augur*, *pontifex Vestae*, *pontifex Solis*, and *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* (for an overview of these colleges cf. Kahlos 2002, pp. 65-68; Van Haepere 2019c).

Immediately after the public priestships, several exclusive religious initiations and various *sacra peregrina*, regularly celebrated by the senator in Rome, are listed (ll. 5-9). It seems likely that this order is determined by the increasing importance of the initiation or priestship achieved in the same way that the traditional Roman cults were perhaps arranged in order of venerability: the *tauroboliatus*, the bull sacrifice linked to the cult of the Magna Mater (Cybele/Dindymene with Attis) was widely practiced by the 4th Century pagan aristocracy of Rome (cf. Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018; Van Haepere 2019c; see also PPRET 36 and 40); the barely known *curialis*, which on the altar is named *curialis Herculis* (side a, l. 5; on the cult of Hercules in Late Antiquity cf. Eppinger 2015); the *neocorus* «temple overseer» (the same as on the altar, side a, l. 7) is the title of the priest of the cult of Sarapis (cf. Bricault 2018); the *hierofanta* «he who reveals sacred things» (the same as on the altar, side a, l. 6) who would appear to be the priest of the cult of Hecate; the *pater sacrorum*, which on the altar is referred to as *pater partum* (side a, l. 8), is the sixth and highest degree of initiation of a high priest in the cult of Mithras (cf. Bjornebye 2012; Walsh 2018).

The Palazzo Altemps inscription lacks any mention of Praetextatus' initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, which instead appears on the list of the senator's religious initiations on the front of the altar (side a, ll. 5-6: *sacratu*

Libero et Eleusiniis). The inscription in Palazzo Altemps does not include the initiations received by the senator and his wife in Greece, but only the priesthoods and ritual practices performed in Rome (in the lower part of the left-hand column there was room to add more of the senator's priests/initiations: their exclusion was deliberate). This choice differentiates the content of this inscription from the content of the base inscribed in Paulina's honour in the basilica of Santi XII Apostoli (PPRET 20, ll. 4-7) and from the couple's funerary altar (PPRET 77, side a, ll. 20-22; side d, ll. 22-29), where Paulina's initiations are extolled as a key element of matrimonial concord, and where Praetextatus is praised as his wife's guide and teacher in religious matters. This also makes it less likely that the Palazzo Altemps base (for Praetextatus) and the Santi XII Apostoli base (for Paulina) were conceived together in 387 AD to be erected in the same setting (concerning the initiations and cults shared by Praetextatus with his wife Paulina, see PPRET 20 and 77).

The inscription in the right-hand column of the frontal epigraphic field of the base in Palazzo Altemps lists Praetextatus' entire *cursus honorum* in chronological order, beginning with his two traditional magistracies held in Rome (*quaestura* and *praetura*) and ending with his glorious elevation to the ordinary consulate, which, in the end was never held, but highlighted by the larger letters (ll. 13-14). Concerning the similarities and differences between the four surviving epigraphic *cursus* of Praetextatus (besides ours, see PPRET 77, 78, 80) and for a broader analysis, see discussion in PPRET 77.

We shall review Praetextatus' career in chronological order. After having held the traditional magistracies of Rome in his youth, *quaestor candidatus* and *praetor urbanus* (ll. 1-3), 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 (Groag 1946, pp. 45-48). He became prefect of Rome between the Summer 367 and the Summer 368 AD (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 171-78; Kalhos 1995). He was active in improving monumental and sacred buildings in Rome (see *CIL* VI 102 = *ILS* 4003 = *LSA* 1503 = *EDR* 135295; *CIL* VI 41378 = *EDR* 073920). He governed the city impartially (*Amm.* XXVII 9, 8-9) above all during the clash between the Christian supporters of Damasus and Ursinus (Kalhos 1997 and 2002, pp. 115-23; Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 159-69; Reutter 2009, pp. 31-56). In 382/383 AD, fifteen years after the end of his prefecture of Rome, Praetextatus was honoured in Gortyna by a monument in the cycle of statues celebrating great Roman senators in the local *Praetorium* made by the provincials of Crete under the aegis of the *consularis Cretae* Oecumenius

Dositheus Asclepiodotus (*ICret.* IV 316 = Bigi Tantillo 2020, pp. 192 f., nr. 3): the inscription in Greek records him as an urban prefect, but it is likely that the beginning of his praetorian prefecture of *Italia et 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). After the end of his urban prefecture in September 368 AD, he spent the following fifteen years indulging himself in cultural and religious *otium*. During this period he carried out numerous diplomatic missions to the courts of the emperors Valentinian I and Gratian on behalf of the Senate of Rome. It is difficult to say whether such senatorial embassies were commemorated in the Roman Forum inscription. The embassies are recorded in the inscriptions from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne (PPRET 80, ll. 6-8) and in the funerary altar (PPRET 77, side a, l. 15), but not in the inscription in Palazzo Altemps; Niquet (2000, p. 243) suggests that the legations for the Senate are omitted in the right-hand column of our inscription due to lack of space. The senator and his wife became a shining example of traditional western aristocratic values. In 383 or 384 AD, shortly before or after the assassination of the emperor Gratian, Praetextatus was, according to scholars, appointed praetorian prefect of Italia Illyricum Africa. In 384 AD Praetextatus held a single praetorian prefecture, shortly after the conclusion of which (September/October 384 AD), he died, his passing occurring in the first half of December at the latest (above). In the *cursus honorum* chiselled on the fragmentary inscription from the Roman Forum we are unfortunately only able to read after the lacuna (PPRET 78, l. 4): *[praef(ecto) praet(orio) II]lyr[i]ci et Italia[e]*. In the inscription on the front of the altar (PPRET 77, side a, ll. 16-17) and in the inscription in Palazzo Altemps (*frons*, col. II, ll. 11-12) – two inscriptions written at a later time but very close chronologically to Praetextatus’ praetorian prefecture – the prefecture has a numeral ‘two’, *II*, between *praefectus praetorio* and the regional determination *Italiae et Illyrici*. Considering the insertion of the numeral ‘two’, *II*, to be an error by the stone cutters, scholars postulate that only the text of the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne is correct (PPRET 80, ll. 4-5): *praef(ecto) praetorii / Illyrici Italiae et Africae*. In 1934 Palanque speculated that the numeral *II* of the praetorian prefecture (l. 16) on the inscription on the front of the funerary altar (side a) was in fact a stone cutter’s mistake, when the latter accidentally descended from the *VII* of the upper line (l. 15), to produce a *V*; from the inscription of the funerary altar the wrong iteration would have been copied into the later honorary inscription of Palazzo Altemps. Although unlikely, this interpretation has been universally accepted (see Ni-

quet 2000, pp. 242 f., and transposed in *CIL* VI, pp. 4757-59). However, Palanque's theory has inconsistencies. How could a seemingly perfect funerary altar contain such an elementary mistake for example? And how can one legitimately compare the large Palazzo Altemps honorary base, with the small base from the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, which is indeed very modest and has an unfinished text that is certainly lacking and difficult to understand? The two splendid monuments produced in Rome for Praetextatus – the great posthumous honorary base that in all likelihood originated from 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 usage. 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 confident chiselling in two different places of two magnificent epigraphic fields with their studied, clear and tasteful layout flies in the face of the hypothesis of a stone cutter's mistake. This possibility becomes 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 chiselling error on several inscriptions of such a high quality is inadmissible, particularly when they were destined to adorn structures belonging to a powerful and successful aristocrat at the very peak of his career.

In the crisis period after the catastrophe of Adrianople (August 9th 378 AD), emperor Gratian separated the prefecture of Illyricum from the prefecture of Italy and Africa. It seems likely that some senators simultaneously held both prefectures, by combining the two. We think that Praetextatus held a «double» prefecture and that the 'strange' numeral 'two', *II*, clearly chiselled in the beautiful inscriptions from both the sepulchre of Praetextatus and Paulina and from their *domus*, reflects this particular administrative situation, which appears to run from late 381 to late 384 AD (see Porena 2020a, pp. 113-17 and Porena 2020b, p. 156; 2023a, pp. 182-89, 118 f., and see PPRET 77). In our opinion, in the inscriptions in honour of Praetextatus made soon after his death, the numeral 'two', *II*, was chiselled between the title of praetorian prefect and the regional determination (two related but distinct regions thanks to the conjunction *et: Italiae et Illyrici* or *Illyrici et Italiae*) to show a single prefectorial mandate over two regional prefectures. As said, the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne has no iteration, but displays: *praef(ecto) praetorii / Illyrici Italiae et Africae* (PPRET 80, ll. 4-5); in our opinion this formula is probably a late (5th Century AD) update of the orig-

inal titling engraved at the time of Praetextatus' death. When the inscription from Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne was inscribed, the original titulature (the numeral 'two' followed by two regions only) had become incomprehensible and was therefore updated in a monument of lower quality, whose inscription has been engraved long after the senator's death.

In the Autumn of 384 AD Praetextatus left the praetorian prefecture and was appointed consul for the following year (*CLRE*, pp. 304 f.), but he died suddenly, as said, in December 384 AD at the latest (above). The senator is remembered as the appointed consul in all inscriptions made in his honour after his death, because it was the most prestigious office of his career. The monuments in his honour in Rome all seem to have been created after Praetextatus' sudden death, which shocked the city. 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.

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