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A Fragment of Severan History:
The Unusual Career of...atus, Praetorian Prefect of Elagabalus

I. ...ATVS

The peculiar career of a most enigmatic individual of the Severan age is recorded
by two inscriptions from the Esquiline hill in Rome which carry exactly the same
text, though differently arranged.1 On both inscriptions the name of the honorand
and the name and titles of the emperor whom he served have suffered deliberate
erasure, so that only [...]...e remains of what is presumed to be the honorand's
name in one of the two copies. The dedication commemo rates the gratitude of a

certain L. Julius Aurelius [H.]ermogenes for ...atus' intercession with the emperor,
thanks to which Hermogenes was granted an audience from which there was a
successful outcome. This favour was, no doubt, made possible through ...atus'
eminent position at court, his career having culminated with the post of praetorian
prefect to an emperor who bore the gentilicium Aurelius and the title of sacerdos
amplissimus. This particular combination of the spelling of Aurelius with a
double-L and the priesthood means that the reference here can be to none other than
M. Aurelius Antoninus sacerdos amplissimus des invicti Solis Elagabalae;2 the tecn-

1 I am indebted to Prof. A. R. Birley, Dr G. P. Burton and Dr D. H. Burton for various
improvements to the text and argument. I have used the following special abbreviations:
CERBELLAC-GERVASONI, ERIKSSON = M. CERBELLAC-GERVASONI, Apostilles a une inscription
de Portus T. Messius Exstrictus et les Saboarriens, PP 34, 1979, 267-277; DEVIVIER,
PMF = H. DEVIVIER, Prosopographia militum aequitatum quae fuerunt ab Augusto ad
Gallienum 1-5, Leuven 1976-93; HOWS, Pretorian Prefect = L. L. HOWS, The Pretorian Prefect
from Comodus to Diocletian (AD 180-305), Chicago 1942; PELAUM, CARRIÈRE = H.-
G. PELAUM, Les carrières procuratrices équestres sous le Haut-Empire roman I-III,
Paris 1960-61 & Supplément, Paris 1983; WHITTLER, HERODIAN = C.R. WHITTLER,

2 CIL VI 389a-b = ILS 1329, as originally read by G.B. BROSI and supplemented
with the aid of Th. KOMMSEN. Its reading was later revised and republished as CIL VI
3176a-b. In addition, a stray fragment of the same provenance, CIL VI 3861 = 31875, has
long been recognised to belong to 3176b (see S de RICCI, The Prefects of Egypt, Pro-
cedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 22, 1900, 382). See CERBELLAC-GERVASONI,
Exstrictus 270-271 for photographs of two fragments of CIL VI 3176a.

2 M. FRES, Untersuchungen zur Religion und Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabalus,
Stuttgart 1989, 80-81 and 85-86. Given the general damnation of his name, this complete ti-
age emperor of scandalous habits, known to posterity simply as Elagabalus after the Eumesene god of whom he was a fanatical devotee. Therefore, based upon Christian Hulten’s versions in CIL VI, 4, 2 (1902), we may restore the texts thus:  

CIL VI 31776a  
[----------------]  
[-]  
[-]  
[----------------]  
[----------------]  
[----------------]  
[----------------]  
[-]  
CIL VI 31776b + 31875  
[----------------]  
[-]  
[-]  
[----------------]  
[----------------]  
[----------------]  
[----------------]  
[-]  

Assuming that [--- lato represents the end of the honorand’s name, record of an honorific epithet such as the vir(um) eminens(is) appropriate to a praetorian prefect—he and of a prior office may have been lost in the lacuna at the beginning of the second line. Also, since both stones are broken at the bottom, at least one line has been lost from the end of the text, which probably concluded by referring to ...atus’ qualities as a patron (patrono optimo vel sim.).

Since ...atus was prefect of Elagabalus, he must have held his prefecture some time between the new Antoninus’ proclamation at Emea in Syria (16 May AD 218) and his execution and replacement by his younger cousin, Severus.

Alexander, in a palace coup (11/12 March 222). As praetorian prefect ...atus will have been amongst Elagabalus’ chief ministers and close personal collaborators, clearly a key figure of a reign which has been reported in a uniformly hostile manner by the historical tradition. Furthermore, the degree of erasure which ...atus’ name suffered, and its association with the erasure of Elagabalus’, has meant that he has with reasonable confidence been identified with one of the two prefects who succumbed, along with all but one of the collaborators in Elagabalus’ original usurpation, on the emperor’s fall; the other being a certain Antoninus, if the untrustworthy author of the Historia Augusta can be relied upon in this instance. The significance of ...atus’ appointment to the highest equestrian prefecture lies in the element of deliberate choice, which means that ...atus does not fall into that bland category, ‘Persons of station and rank who performed the normal functions whoever the ruler might be.’ Thus the very abnormality of ...atus’ career renders it a valuable document for the history of the period.

The first peculiarity of ...atus’ career lies in the way in which it mixes equestrian and senatorial functions and honours: a ‘hybrid’ in Michael Arnheim’s terminology. For, if the ordering of the offices in the texts of the dedications is taken at face value, it would seem that ...atus’ earliest recorded post was the equestrian...
palatine office a studii (i.e. the emperor’s chief literary aide). He, apparently, progressed (extraordinarily) to the senatorial post of legate (of an unknown legion), which itself implies an adhesion to the senate inter praetorios, before (according to Mommsen’s reasonable supplement) taking up the fasces as a suffet consul and being honoured as comes, carrying the specific implication that he was a fellow-member of the imperial retinue on its provincial travels, as well as amicus fideissimus, i.e. a regular member of the imperial consilium. At this point ...atus’ career changes tack, since he proceeded to the normally equestrian post of praefectus annonae and later praefectus praetorio, having meanwhile been co-opted into the college of (normally) equestrian pontifices minores.

There is no dispute that the historical context of the later stages, at least, of ...atus’ career is the early years of the Severan restoration, overseen by Iulia Maesa, grandmother of Elagabalus and aunt of the late emperor Caracalla. It was discontent at the latter’s murder and replacement by one of his praetorian prefects, M. Opellius Macrinus, which led to the usurper’s challenge and defeat by forces promoting the candidacy of Maesa’s fourteen-year-old grandson, Varus Avitus. The teenager’s claim was reinforced by the suggestion that he was a bastard son of the late Caracalla; hence his acclamation as M. Aurelius Antoninus. The significant aspect of these events for the present discussion is that the entire drama played out in the general region of Syria in a period of little more than fourteen months; Caracalla was murdered on the road between Edessa and Carrhae in Mesopotamia on 8 April 217, Elagabalus proclaimed in the camp at Raphanae in Phoenicia in May 218, and Macrinus defeated (probably at Imaica) twenty-four miles from Antioch, where he had spent most of the past year, on 8 June. The new emperor’s youth necessitated his grandmother’s effective regency, aided by her daughter, Elagabalus’ mother, Soaemias. Our fundamental source for this whole episode is the account of a contemporary, Cassius Dio, supplemented to a slight extent by the largely derivative and somewhat confused version of Herodian.

From the literary record one might easily gain the impression that the bestraw of equestrian and senatorial honours upon his favourites, without taking any account of the qualifications required by traditional administrative procedure, was typical of Elagabalus’ reign. The extraordinary colloquial offices presented by ...atus’ career has only reinforced this impression. Accordingly, in the opinion of John Crook, the period was ‘in the serious business of governing the empire ... a mere lacuna’. Certainly the teenage emperor’s fanatical dedication to Elagabalus’ and his unconventional sexual activities dominate Cassius Dio’s account and are the consistent feature of those historians who relied on the now lost Latin history known as the Kaisergeschichte. This evil reputation was no doubt officially

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Cassius Dio 79, 4, 1-40, 6, 3, for which section we possess the original, occasionally lacunose, text, cf. Herodian 1.13.21 – 5.5.2. The relevant evocae of the Phoenician Augustus, even when they may draw on the lost work of Marius Maximus, are of no value for the reconstruction of political history; on which see the comments of A. Chastagnol, Histoire Auguste. Les empereurs romains des IIe et IIIe siecles, Paris 1994, lxi-lii. See F.G.B. Millar, The Roman East 31 BC – AD 337, Princeton 1993, 144-147 for a consolidated narrative of these events.

18 E.g. the commentary of E. Bornmann and G. Henzen, CIL VI 1, Berlin 1876, 3393, ‘... huiuque setati [sc. Elagabalii] conventum officia equestria et senatoria confessum’ cf. H. Dessau, ILS I 1892, 1329 (p. 296) n. 1, ‘Nota confusione honorum senatorii et equestrium, a temporibus Elagabalii non alienam’, followed by Durbuy (as n. 8) 180 n. 5, who said of this inscription ‘elle semble rafler l’époque de désarroi ou s’évite Elagabalii’, and S.N. Miller, The Army and the Imperial House, chapter 1 in: S.A. Cook – P.E. Adamcik – M.P. Charlesworth – N.H. Bates (edd.). The Cambridge Ancient History XII. The Imperial Crisis and Recovery A.D. 193-323, Cambridge 1939, 54, who cited ILS 1329 as reporting a career characteristic of the times. Arnheim (as n. 11) 86-88, considered ...atus’ career ‘the product of a period of transition from one system of appointments to another’. His discussion is, however, otherwise vitiated by the fact that he considers both the praef. amnis and the minor pontificate to be senatorial posts.

18 Crook (as n. 16) 86, who discerned to discuss the period at all on this basis, considering that only ‘with men like Ulpian and Dio [do] we return to serious administration’.

21 Cassius Dio [Niph.] 80 [79] 11,1–29, 3; Aurelius Victor, De Caes. 23, 1–3 and the Epitome de Caesibus 23, 1–7 agree that Elagabalus’ transsexual tendencies, self-mutilation, novelty of religion and general exhibitionism constitute the catalogue of his crimes; summed up in Eutropius’ Breviarium (8, 22) by the terse report that in podicidiam at obscenissime
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of the HA constructs a major influential and corrupting figure in Elagabalus’ reign (Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80[79],16,1–5; cf. Vita Elagabal 10,2–6). Thus there is no reason to credit the wilder claims of the Vita (6,3–4; 12,1; 15,1–2) that charioteers were honoured as corres (Postagens, surely inspired by Calligula’s notorious freedman Dio [Xiph.] 59,26,1–2; 60,4,5; though cf. T.D. BARNES, Ultima Antoninorum, in J. STRAUB (ed.), Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1970, Bonn 1972, 58–59) and praef. vexillor. (Corinus), a dancer as praetorian prefect, a barber as praef. aedaeon (Claudius) and a mule-driver, courier and locksmith as procuratores XX hereditatibus; cf. Whittaker, Herodian II. 63 n.3 and BARNES, op. cit. 56–57, who accept, at least partly, the accuracy of this account.


(b) H. BENGSTON, Republik und Kaiserzeit bis 284 n.Chr., Munich 1967, 374; cf. GRANT (as n.27) 24–25.

(c) E.g., BARNES (as n.26) 67 explicitly adduces... atus’ career as illustration of the claim in the Vita Elagabal that the emperor enrolled individuals in the senate sive discriminatu status, censibus, genere白雪。(6.2)

(d) PELLAUM, Carribres II, 756–762, No 293, followed by H. PAVIS D’ESCUER, Le préfecture de l’imprisonne: service administratif impérial d’Auguste à Constantin, Rome 1976, 360. However, P. VON RÖHREN & H. DESSAU had offered no estimate of the timescale of... atus’ career in IR. III, incentus 51, though BARBERI (as n.8) 235, No. 1202, considered his cursus to belong «certo suntu Elagabal».

(e) PELLAUM, Carribres II, 762 & II, 996, No 293, pointing out in support that the nomina of... atus’ client Hermogenes are strongly indicative of an Ebesene or Palmyrene origin (cf. D. SCHLUMBERGER, Les gentiles romains Palmyrénéens, BEQ 1942/43, 52–82 and H. SIEBRE, Antonius Uranus. Use d’authenticité, RN VI série 1, 1958, 56 n.1).
and thus should be located in Syria, specifically with either the legion III Cythica or the II Gallica, whose loyalty was dubious in the light of the revolt of their commanders in the winter of 218/219.13 Hence ...atus' loyal service was recognized by his title amicus fidissimus. The consulship, he thought, also belonged to 218 (thus necessarily subject and in absentia), being a measure designed to reinforce ...atus' authority with the troops. Having presumably arrived in Rome in Eligabalus' train by early autumn 219, ...atus was then favoured with the subsequent promotions as profectus annonae and praetorius.

The crucial weakness of PELAUM's interpretation was his claim that, «malgré son commandement d’une léon dans une province à gouverneur sénatorial et malgré son consulat, ...atus continue à être chevalier». It is true that the incompatibility of ...atus' pontificate with membership of the senate does strongly suggest that he was still an equestrian at this stage. However, the corollary, that his consulship is to be considered in some way «honorific» so that it did not confer or imply senatorial membership, seems unacceptable. It would certainly be unprecedented. Moreover, PELAUM stressed that, ignoring the interlude of legate and consul, ...atus' career from palatine office to profectus annonae and then praetorius, did progress in a regular manner, including the lesser pontificate. In fact, PELAUM's own works demonstrate that the a studii was not amongst the top rank of palatine officials and would not normally expect to preface the prefecture of the grain supply, let alone the praetorian prefecture.17 But, of course, is not the unexpected to be expected of Eligabalus?

There might, nevertheless, be another way of explaining ...atus' promotion into the senate as illusory. For, the letters of following the lacuna in line 3 of CIL VI 31776b, from which the consulship has been surmised, could be understood as referring to ornamenta consularia (i.e. resting, ...ornamenta, e.g.),18 which were an established honour for the praetorian prefects19 and, furthermore, were extended to those in lesser prefectures in the later Severan period.20 Since such ornamenta alone did confer actual membership of the senate, this would avoid the apparent contradiction of ...atus' tenure of a genuine consulship with his subsequent enrolment in the college of pontifices minores. Following this reasoning, ...atus' post of legatus legionis, as engraved, might be understood as standing in the place of the correct equestrian title for legionary command, profectus legionis; the consequence of technical inexactitude on Hermogenes' part.21 Analogous examples of an equestrian official being erroneously credited with the title of the

13 Cassius Dio 80,7,1. The III Gallica was even temporarily disbanded as a punishment; on which see E. Dąbrowa, The commanders of Syrian legions, 1st-3rd c. A.D., in: D. L. KENNY (ed.), The Roman Army in the East, Ann Arbor 1996, 278.
14 HALBMAN (as n.15) 231, favours July/August for Eligabalus' arrival. CIL VI 31 162 = ILS 2188, a dedication pro reditu domini nostri by the equites singulares, dated 29 September 219, provides a terminus ante quem. The slowness of progress is at least partly due to the emperor's desire to take the stone of Elagabal with him, on which see PREY (as n.7) 73-93, 101-106.
15 PELAUM, Carrières II, 761.
16 Nevertheless, following PELAUM's reconstruction, A. CHASTAGNOL, Le sénat romain à l’époque impériale. Recherches sur la composition de l’Assemblée et le statut de ses membres, Paris 1992, 223, seems to have no problem accepting the concept in ...atus' case. Cf. idem, op. cit. 97-120 for standard practice.
17 The promotion from a palatine official to the prefecture of the annonae and an accompanying enrolment as a pontifices minor is quite well paralleled in the later second and early third centuries: M. PERNOT, Honoratus, proc. a rationibus, pontif. minor, praef. annon., before AD 147, CIL XIV 4458; PIR² P 207; PELAUM, Carrières I, 285-286, No 117; DEVIVIER, PME 2, 241; L. VOGELSANG, a libellis et a consibus, pontif. minor, praef. annon., c.152/161 (CIL XIV 5347; PIR² V 657; PELAUM, Carrières I, 333-336, No 141; DEVIVIER, PME 2, V 133); ANONYMOUS, ab epistulis, a libellis, a rationibus, praef. annon., pontif. minor, probably between 169 and 198 (Ann Epiq 1965, 163 & 164; PELAUM, Carrières II, 804, No 271; DEVIVIER, PME 2, incertus 255); cf. PAV. O'SCURAC (as n.30) 70-71; but identified with Dioga, praef. vigilum c. 212/217, by M. CHRISTOL, Un fidèle de Caracalla: Q. MARCUS Dioga, CCQ 2, 1991, 165-188.
18 The tables of H. G. PELAUM, Essai sur les procurateurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain, Paris 1950, 255, 292; show that an a studii might except to advance to a curationibus, ab epistulis or a libellis and (op. cit. 257, cf. 294-295) that the palatine office which most regularly gave access to the profectura annonae was a rationibus, less often a libellis (see previous note), but that, apart from ...atus, not a single a studii is known to have been so favoured.
19 J. CIL XII 5842 = ILS 1321: ornat[us] in consula[re] (or), in honour of Sex. Afranius Burnus and CIL V 3340 = ILS 1336: ornamenta consularia, for P. Gracchus Laco, both of the Julio-Claudian period, for the order, if not the level of the embellishment. Note, however, the word-order of CIL IX 5358 = ILS 1325: consularibus ornamentis ornato, for M. Gavius Maximus under Tiberius, and CIL VI 31 828 = ILS 1326: consularibus ornamentis honorato, for M. Bassaeus Rufus c. AD 180, both of which are closer in date to the Esquiline texts.
21 For an ex-profectus vigilum who probably received senatorial ornamenta, see Ann Epigr 16979/70, 193, as analysed by M. CHRISTOL, La carrière de Q.Cerullius Apollinaris, prêtre des vigiles de Caracalla, in: J. TEFRED (ed.), Mélanges d’histoire ancienne offerts à William Sermon, Paris 1974, 126, PELAUM, Carrières, Supplément, 59-62, No 237 A; but cf. CHASTAGNOL (as n.35) 120, who considers Apollinaris to have benefited from an admission inter praesides. On the general inflation of honours and titles amongst the high equestrian officials, especially between 207 and 223, see G. GROSSE, Ricerca su Plauziano e gli avvenimenti del suo tempo, RAI, 23, 1968, 24 n.97, PAV. O'SCURAC (as n.30) 60-61 and M. CERRULLI-CERVASONI – P. ZEVI, Révisions et nouveautés pour trois inscriptions d'Ostie, MEPRA 88, 1976, 625 n.2.
22 R. J. A. TALBERT, The Senate of Imperial Rome, Princeton 1984, 366; CHASTAGNOL (as n.35) 221-222.
23 In fact the indubitably equestrian commanders of the legion II Parthica were regularly referred to as legati in the early third century; on which see J.-C. BATTY, Apanage in Syria in the Second and Third Centuries AD, JRS 78, 1988, 101-102.
senatorial legate can be found in the ranks of provincial governors of the Severan period. Moreover, a similar lapidical or drafting error, which replaced praef(ectus) alimentorum with proves the most convincing explanation for another famous, apparently mixed, senatorial and equestrian curatus; namely, that of T. Atius Sanclus under Commodus.44 However, despite the attractiveness of the interpretation of this stage of ... atus career as praefectus legionis, ornamenti consularibus (honoratus), comparison of the two copies of the dedication reveals that the space available between the remains of leg. leg. and cos. (leaving aside the problem of construing cos. - the regular abbreviation for consul - as consularibus here) is hardly sufficient to allow both the expected indication of the number and, perhaps, ephebet of the legion and even a severe abbreviation of ornamenti. There seems, then, no plausible way of accommodating ... atus' career to a more traditional pattern on this basis.

Quite clearly, whatever the precise explanation for his extraordinary offices, we are here in the presence of a close associate of Elagabalus and one of the most powerful figures of his reign. Thus, understandably, scholars have not been able to refrain from the obvious, and reciprocally satisfying, temptation of uniting the mysterious ... atus' career with a known name. Hence a search for other clearly eminent figures of the period who bear cognomina with a similar termination but of whose careers we have only sketchy details. Already at the beginning of this century Seymour de Ricci identified ... atus with the Honoratus honoured as prætorian prefect at Alexandria sometime in the reign of Elagabalus' successor, Severus Alexander.45 This dedication belongs to Domitius Honoratus, who is elsewhere attested as prefect of Egypt and is plausibly identified as the L. Domitius Honoratus who is named fifth in the list of patro[ni]s (larissimi) e[ri]tis of Canusium in Apulia and who was thus alive and well in AD 223.46 Arthur Stein, therefore, swiftly and rightly rejected the identification with Honoratus because ... atus

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44 Note the discussion of Aedicianus Iulianus leg. Aug. pro Cons. Leg. xii, 220 (CIL XIII 3162, side 1, 21) by C. E. Pflaum, Le marbre de Thouraya, Paris 1948, 35, and now the case of Aurelius Basilus (plausibly the praefectus Aegyptis of 242/245) recorded by two milestones as governor of Cappadocia in 221/222 once as leg. Aug. pro praetore (CIL III 14184) and once as praesae provinciae (AnnEpigr 1899, 730) - the latter title being a shorthand for the more correct praesae pro legato [cf. AnnEpigr 1899, 911]. Cf. also the list of second/third-century equestrian governors with their attestations in PRAEUM (as n.37) x114-115.


46 CIL III 12052, cf. 14127: Honoratus praef. prætoriorum (eminentissimum) vi(n)u, Paulinus Tychaeus centurio leg. II Traiani Florinitis Germaniae Severanae, de Ricci (as n. 1) 382.


never held the prefecture of Egypt and was, in all likelihood, executed along with Elagabalus in March 222.47

II. [Extirpatus]

However, another possibility was opened up by the discovery in 1959 on the site of ancient Portus of an inscription naming a certain Messius Extirpatus as s(ignifer) pr(ectores) ann(onae) and dated precisely to 26 kal(endis) octob(eri) Faustino et Rupino col(ni) (alibus), that is 17 September AD 210.48 For, in his notice of the publication in L’Année épigraphique for 1977, PRAEUM suggested that this praefectus annonae should be identified with T. Messius Extirpatus consul ordinarius (posterior) in AD 217, whose career was otherwise unknown but whose extraction was probably Tripolitanian.49 It had already been noted that this consulship probably belonged to an ex-equestrian official who had been previously granted the ornamenti consularia, seeing that there appeared to be some contemporaneous ambiguity as to whether his ordinary consulship should be counted as an iteration or not.50 For in some contemporary documents he is credited as cos. II, in others not.51 Moreover, it should be observed that, had Extirpatus’ consulship in 217 been a genuine second one, his colleague, C. Bruttius Praeans, cer...
certainly a patrician but still consul for the first time only, ought to have ceased precedence to him. It seemed thus a simple step for Mireille Cébeillac-Gervasoni, with the evident encouragement of Pêlaus, to identify Exricatus, equestrian praefectus annonae of 210, the subsequent holder of consular ornamenta and then ordinary consulship in 217, with ... atus the praetorian prefect of Elagabalus. According to this hypothesis T. Messius Exricatus will have been a studii to his fellow Tripolitanian, Septimius Severus, some time before AD 210, when he exercised the prefecture of the grain supply and entered the number of the pontifices minor. Having gained the favour of Caracalla, at some point between 210 and 217 he was adlected inter praetorios and entrusted with the command of an unknown legion as well as being favoured as comes and amicus fidissimus. If the context was Caracalla's Raetic expedition of 213, then this would indeed put Exricatus in the company of C. Iulius Avitus Albinianus, comes imp. Antoninus in Germania, husband of Julia Maesa and grandfather of the future emperor Elagabalus.55 Messius Exricatus must next, she proposes, have been adlected inter consularia before assuming the ordinary consulship for 217,56 perhaps awarded on return from his military command. However, after the fall of Caracalla he had to wait until the Severan restoration for his appointment to the praetorian prefecture by Elagabalus in AD 221 as the colleague of Antochianus, with whom he was to die in March 222. Indeed, this apparently attractive identification has received general consent.58

three of whom Cassius Dio specifically states (79,13,1; 83,4,2) had received prior ornamenta, is compelling.

52 Cf. Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Exricatus, 273 n. 15, who claimed «On doit pas s'étonner que Bruttius Praesens, bien que consul pour la première fois, soit cité en premier car de toutes façons était patricien il était supérieur en dignité à son collègue, cor. II».

53 Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Exricatus, 267, 272 n. 11 and 273 n. 13.

54 Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Exricatus, 272-274. Thé Exricatus was definitely still an equestrian in 210 is certified by the title vir perfectissimus, which is proper to the highest equestrian grades (on which see H.-G. Pêlaus, Titulature et rang social sous le Haut-Empire, in: C. Niclot [ed.], Recherches sur les structures sociales dans l'Antiquité classique. Colloque national sur «Groupes sociaux, ordres et classes dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine» du CNRS, à la Faculté des Lettres de Caen, 26-24 avril 1989, Paris 1990, 179-179).

55 PIR II 192; Haflmann (as n. 15) 251, Appendix No 70.

56 Cf. Haflmann (as n. 15) 351, Appendix No 72, who thus restores [adlecto inter c]et in line 3 of CIL VI 31776 b, surely mistakenly.

57 Even if Messius Exricatus' ordinary consulship had been genuinely iterated, the lack of indication of iteration in CIL VI 31776 a-b would not (as correctly noted by Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Exricatus, 273 n. 15) preclude its referring to a second consulship, because this is not always indicated in this class of epigraphy.

58 Reported without dissent in AnnEpi 1979, 95. Pêlaus, Carrières, Supplement, 72-75, completely rewrites his entry for No 293 (T. Messius Exricatus, previously ... atus; cf. Carrières II, 756-62 & III, 996) in the light of this identification, which is also registered by Peterein in PIR II M 518, p. 260. Pêlaus (op. cit.) 73 went as far as to say «C'est le mé-

However, problems subsist. Indeed Cébeillac-Gervasoni conceded «notre démonstration comporte, et nous en sommes consciente, des points faibles», specifically, that Exricatus is the only praetorian prefect known to have held a consulship prior to the prefecture. However, far more fundamental, despite Cébeillac-Gervasoni's claim that her reconstruction «rende compte de la manière la plus simple de cet imbroglio», is the difficulty that her chronology of T. Messius Exricatus' career requires us to ignore the word-order of the twin dedications from the Esquiline. This is problematic because, if the dater of these dedications had deliberately ignored chronological order in recording ... atus' career, then we might expect the office of greatest dignity to have been put first, followed by an enumeration of his offices in either ascending or descending order, perhaps grouping religious functions separately — a common alternative to strictly chronological ordering with such inscriptions. This might have produced, for example: [ ... atus, comis, pontificii minoris, comitatu amico fidissimo, praefet. praet. imp. Caes. M. Aurelii Antonini pi satelliti Aug. pont. max. sacerdos amplissimus, praefet. ann., leg. leg. [...], a studii, [...].] etc. The stark contrast between this and the actual texts of CIL VI 31776 a-b, demonstrates that it is not really plausible to interpret them as having been arranged upon a non-chronological or thematic basis. The simple fact alone that the consulship (the office traditionally considered to be of highest dignity) is sandwiched between the palatine office a studii and the higher equestrian prefaces precludes an arrangement by order of ascending dignity as well as by one which separated service in the public interest (legatus legionis, consul) from service directly to the emperor (a studii, praefet. ann., praefet. praet.). Nevertheless, Pêlaus was prepared to ignore these difficulties for the sake of an identification of...
...atus with Extriactus.62 However, in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, there is no option but to understand the ordering of the offices in the Esquiline dedications as chronological. Hence ...atus, consul before his prefecture of the grain supply, cannot be identical with Extriactus, proef. ann. in 210, cos. in 217.

A second objection to the creation of [Extri]catus is that it requires us to believe that the uncertainty over whether his consulate was a genuine iteration arose from the possibility of counting a previous adlection inter consules (rather than the more plausible ornamenta consularia) as equivalent to a first consulship. This would be a most singular event. If this were not enough, it should be added that a contemporary reader of the Esquiline texts would expect the term comes (and also amicus) to be qualified by a possessive indicating into whose company (and friendship) ...atus had been admitted.63 Thus it is most natural to understand all the posts from comes, amicus fidissimus to praefectus praetorio as belonging to the principate of Elagabalus. Needless to say T. Messius Extriactus' candidacy must yet again be excluded by this consideration.64 A lesser objection is the difficulty of discovering plausible circumstances under which Caracalla would have returned to appointing his chief literary aide to the command of a legion, whether as a senator or not. None of the scenarios offered by CÉRÉLLAC-GERVASONI for the period 211–21766 seems as compelling as the turbulent events of the years 217–218 (see section III below). It is simply not good enough to claim that «si l'on refuse cette hypothèse [i.e. the identity of ...atus and Extriactus] il est, dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances, impossible de proposer une solution de rechange, car on ne sait à qui d'autre identifier ...-catus; il n'existe pas un autre personnage, sinon T. Messius Extriactus». For that there is no better candidate known to us is not an argument in favour of identification with T. Messius Extriactus. Rather we should dissociate the two and accept that we are ignorant of ...atus' true identity.

III. ...atus redivivus

In a more positive vein, having now restored to ...atus his individuality, what can we reasonably conjecture about the circumstances of his career? Despite the evidence of only three surviving letters, if the cognomen was Latin, then an African origin might plausibly be ventured, which would hardly make him atypical of the age.65 Since ...atus need no longer belong to the gens Messia (however, a Greek cognomen (e.g., Callistratus) was still) and an eastern origin, according to that of his client Hermogenes, is once again a distinct possibility.66 As noted above, it is an inescapable deduction that the Esquiline dedications give ...atus' career in chronological order. As also noted above, it is almost certain that he was Comes, amicus fidissimus, proef. annonae, enrolled as a pontifex minor as well as appointed praefectus praetorio under Elagabalus. Conversely there is no need to assume, as did Pylaem originally, that his service as a studii or his appointments as legatus legioni and consul (necessarily suffocating now that Extriactus is excluded) belonged to that emperor’s reign. In fact, if we extend the chronological arc of ...atus’ attested office-holding a little further back, then it will be found to encompass a series of political events quite extraordinary enough to account for the vicissitudes of his career.

There is nothing to prevent our imagining ...atus in office as a studii towards the end of the reign of Caracalla and thus a familiar of the Severan imperial household, including Julia Maesa and her daughter Severus,67 under whose patronage, of course, his career was destined to reach its peak. Before this, if his career had followed a normal pattern, we may conjecture that ...atus held one of the less prestigious procuratorships.68 In any event ...atus' service as a studii to Caracalla would imply that he was in the imperial entourage in Syria when that emperor was murdered on 8 April 217 and, of course, replaced from within that circle by Macrinus three days later.69 Now it is significant that in his account of the rebellions of the legates [...] Verus, of the legion III Gallica (in Syria Phoenice), and Gellius Maximus, of the III Scythica (in Coele Syria), against Elagabalus in the winter of 217/218, Carusius Dio digresses on the extraordinary nature of their appointments and adlection into the senate.70 Verus, he remarks, was promoted di-
rectly from centurion (primus pilus bis, no doubt), while Maximus' only real crime is that of being the son of a doctor. These promotions have generally been ascribed to Elagabalus but this is not a necessary conclusion from the context. In fact, the evident and early dissatisfaction of these particular legates with Elagabalus leads me to suspect that they may have owed their advancement to Maximus. Moreover, such a pattern of appointment accords well with what Dio has to say about Maximus' infringement of social protocol is his nomination of his fellow ex-prefect, M. Ocatinus Advenatus, to the post of prefect of the city (traditionally the prerogative of senior ex-consuls), while Advenatus was still technically an eques, not to mention Maximus' own promotion directly from the equestrian order to the throne. In fact, since Dio relates that on the death of Caracalla the only senator present in the imperial entourage was an ex-consul named Aurelianus, whose death the troops were demanding, Maximus would have been desperately short of conventionally qualified candidates to appoint to legateships. Does not...atius' irregular promotion from a studitius to legatus legionis fit this context admirably? As for the question of which particular legions he commanded, of those based in the Syrian theatre requiring a senatorial commander the III Gallica (over 300 km away at Raphanae) and IIIID Scythica (at Zeugma, 80 km away) are already accounted for (with...a Verus and Bellius Maximus, mentioned above); plausibly, then, XVI Flavia Firmia based at Samosota, only 90 km or so from the site of Caracalla's murder. The extraordinary move from a studitius to military command may thus be explained by Maximus' urgent desire to have a trusted colleague in charge of one of the two legions closest to events at this sensitive time.

Since it is reasonable to assume that Maximus did not violate protocol entirely, we may conjecture that, having benefited from an adlection inter praetorios in order to qualify him for the legate ship...atius then enjoyed the honour of a (suffect) consulate in aversia (for a two-month period some time in late 217 or the first half of 218). Maximus may have felt that the consularship was a necessary compensation in social terms for the move to legate, which at the praetorian level would have been considered in practical terms a demotion from a patrician office.

How then to explain the survival and further advancement of an obvious collaborator of Maximus' under Elagabalus? Observation of the fortune of another commander of a legion close to the action in the summer of 218 is instructive; namely P. Valerius Comazon, in charge of the II Parthica, stationed at Apamea in the Orontes valley. Comazon had also received an extraordinarily swift promotion — directly to praefectus castrorum, having held no other prefecture or procuratorship prior to this, according to Dio. In this case the appointment was certainly due to Maximus since Comazon succeeded Flaccus Tricianus, promoted by that emperor to the governorship of Pannonia. Although Comazon was not involved in the initial proclamation of Elagabalus (which happened further up the

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77 See Cassius Dio 79,11,2, on Maximus' general respect for precedent and cf. 79,13,1, on his adlection of people inter consules specifically in order to confer upon them the command of consulary provinces.

78 See Cassius Dio 43,46,5-6, for contemporary evidence on the normal duration of the consulate. Pace L. Peterssen, PIR 2 V.2, p. 411, although Elagabalus replaced Maximus as ordinarius with Advenatus from 5 June 218, this does not mean that the ordinarii were still in office in June, which would leave no space for suffectus, for Dio (80,6,2) specifically notes the irregularity by which Elagabalus inserted his name into the list retrospectively as one of the ordinarii, despite the fact that their period of office had already expired.

79 Cf. Cassius Dio 79,13,4, on the case of Marcus Agrippa, ab epistulis of Caracalla, denoted (dramaturgio) by adlection to the senate inter praetorios as a punishment for obtaining underage recruits to the army; recruitment being a regular function of the ab epistulis according to A. R. Birley, Locus virtutis epi stokes? Zum Beförderungssystem in der Holken Kaiserzeit, Rheinisches-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G318, Opladen 1992, 46, where he discusses this case.

80 Howe, Pretorian Prefect, Appendix IIIB, 92-100, PFLAUM, Carrières II, 752-756, No 290; KETTENHOFEN (as n.17) 31. The identification of Comazon's position is not absolutely certain because, although we have Dio's full text at this point, it is unfortunately lacunose. In the context, however, the hypothesis is highly plausible.

81 In legions such as this, lacking a senatorial legate, this equestrian prefect assumed overall command (see DAIKOSON [as n.72] 68-74, on the well-documented example of the praefectus castrorum of the legion II Traiani in Egypt). As in the case of Verus (see above) we can imagine that Comazon sprung from the centurionate.

82 Cassius Dio 80,4,1, employs the technical term exaquiprætorius (for procuratorship) and equoquiprætorius (for prefecture), though this latter term could also connote patrician procuratorship, as is clear from a letter of Commodus to the Athenians, AnnEpig 1952, 6 = J. H. Olivius, Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri, Philadelphia 1989, 422, No 209, lines 18-19. [The wōv συνάντουται ἡγούμενοι in LXXI describes the MS gives the former Decius Tricianus, through epigraphy was revealed the name's corruption (cf. PIR 2 A 271, where, however, Tricianus' command of the II Parthica is erroneously located in Italy rather than in Syria).
Oorontes valley at Raphanaea, the camp of the legion III Gallica\(^{43}\) the beheading by Comazon's troops of Macrinus' praetorian prefect, Ulpius Julianus, who had ignominiously retreated from Raphanaea, heralded the downfall in that emperor's fortunes.\(^{45}\) The defection of a second legion gave Elagabalus a credible military force and at the same time deprived Macrinus of his military advantage. For these two legions not only gave the pretender unchallenged control of the Oorontes valley but were also considerably closer to Macrinus' base at Antioch than were the remaining two Syrian legions on the Euphrates. Such a crucial switch of allegiance is surely the explanation for Comazon's subsequent appointment as one of Elagabalus' first praetorian prefects.\(^{46}\) Nevertheless, he received 

*ornamenta consularia*, and was later even honoured with both an ordinary consularship (for AD 220) and the prefecture of the city, as Dio relates.\(^{47}\) Thus, like ...atus, Comazon experienced two stages of extraordinary promotion – from (probably) centurion *principilis* to *praefectus leg. II Parthicae* and again thence directly to *praefectus praetorio* – corresponding to the ascensions of Macrinus and Elagabalus respectively. These two characters were no doubt in Dio's mind when he said that some became powerful and were repeatedly honoured because they had supported Elagabalus' rebellion.\(^{48}\) Unlike the unfortunate ...atus, however, Comazon survived the fall of Elagabalus, going on to play a leading role in the early years of Severus Alexander's reign.\(^{49}\)

Following the pattern established for Comazon, we can conjecture that ...atus also prudently chose his moment to change sides or, Macrinus having already been defeated, proved his loyalty when others around (cf. Verus and Gellius Maximi above) were having second thoughts. Perhaps as an old familiar of the Severan household, he was welcomed at Elagabalus' court on its slow journey from Antioch to Rome via Nicomedia, where it spent the winter of 218/219, a time of some tribulation for the new regime.\(^{50}\) Hence ...atus duly acquired the right to be counted a *comes* and *amicus fidissimus* of Elagabalus.

The change of regime, from that of Macrinus, notorious for its abuse of traditional protocol, to the Severan restoration, provides the key, in my opinion, to the apparent change of tack taken by ...atus' career from the summer of 218. It is reasonable enough to suppose that the new regime, wishing to appease the distant senate (in much the same way as Macrinus had attempted),\(^{51}\) might advertise a change by the revocation of the recent adlections felt contrary to protocol, of the sort which proved so upsetting to the likes of Cassius Dio. Herodian reports analogous action taken against Elagabalus' own favourites after his fall in 222 and such a move certainly accords with the tone of the letter condemning Macrinus, as reported by Dio, which was sent to the senate on Elagabalus' accession.\(^{52}\) Also, in a similar vein, the wholesale cancellation of arrears owed to the imperial fisc dramatically advertised the change in regime.\(^{53}\) Poor ...atus, then, would have suffered the minimal social demotion of having his adlection to the senate nullified. However, one could not take away from him a consulship already perfomed and entered in the *fasti*;\(^{54}\) hence the fact that ...atus still advertised his tenure in the Esquiline dedications. Once again an equestrian, his appointment to the prefecture of the grain supply (presumably in 219/220) demonstrates that he was held in continued favour by Julia Maesa. His regained equestrian status also permitted the enrollment as a *pontifex minor* before, finally, his promotion to the praetorian prefecture. His unhappy end in that office suggests that he was more closely associated with his fellow victims, Elagabalus and Soaemias, than Maesa herself. In fact, Cassius Dio reports that, of those who had been highly rewarded for their collabora-

\(^{43}\) Cassius Dio 79,31–32,4. It was amongst the soldiers of this camp at Raphanaea that the rising in favour of Elagabalus was first fomented by a gymnast named Euthychianus and then led by Soaemias' lover, Gannys (Dio 79,38,3; 79,39,4; 80,3,1 and 6,1–2). On Comazon's role see further KETTENHOFEN (as n. 17) 29–31.

\(^{45}\) Herodian 5,4,3–4 (somewhat confused); cf. Cassius Dio 79,31,6 and 34,4.

\(^{46}\) He is named as prefect with a certain Julius Phocasus by a dedication from Histria in Moesia (Anon. Leg. 161, 86 = Inscrip. din Scyppia Minor 199), which plausibly belongs to the first half of 219, in the context of Elagabalus' tour of the Balkan provinces of Thrace, Moesia, and the Pannoniae (Cassius Dio 80,3,2), prior to his arrival in Rome.

\(^{47}\) Cassius Dio 80,4,1–2.

\(^{48}\) Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80,79,15,3.

\(^{49}\) Comazon was called upon to act again as *praefectus urbi* in March 221 and went on subsequently to fill the office for an unprecedented third time (Cassius Dio 80,4,2); though cf. LIMONNIER (as n. 58) 310–311, who prefers to place his second term as *praefectus urbi* already under Elagabalus. Although the consular historian would have resisted the suggestion, Comazon's fortune is paralleled in a more modest way by that of Dio, whose flagging career was revived by Macrinus, furthered under Elagabalus and crowned (with an iterated consularship) under Severus Alexander; on which see WHITTAKER, Herodian II, 81 n.3 and SYME (as n. 10) 143–145.

\(^{50}\) Cassius Dio 80,7,3.

\(^{51}\) Macrinus tried to curry favour by taking action against those senators who had falsely accused their fellows in order to gain preference from Caracalla (Dio 79,18,1–2; 79,21,1–2,2) but in their eyes he presumptuously in seizing the throne at all ensured that he would never be fully accepted (79,41,2).

\(^{52}\) Herodian 6,1,3. Cassius Dio 80,1,2. Since the latter stresses the breach of protocol perpetrated by Macrinus in elevating himself to the throne without even possessing senatorial membership, it is not beyond reason that Elagabalus should attempt to curry the senators' favour by abolishing similar breaches of protocol in respect of Macrinus' favours.

\(^{53}\) Descriptio consularis, s. a. 218 (ed. R. W. BURGESS, The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitanis, Oxford 1931, 232 = T. MOWAT (ed.), Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII. vol. I, MGHAA, vol. 9, Berlin 1892, 220); Antanino et Avdotino. *His cons. instrumenta debitorum fisco in foro Romano essent per dies XXX. There being no diurnal date attached to the notice we cannot be sure that it was the action of Elagabalus rather than Macrinus, but there is no reason to doubt the reality of the incident since the notice belongs within a section, covering the years 161–312, which was actually drafted in Rome in 314 (see BURGESS, op. cit. 188–191).

\(^{54}\) TALBERT (as n. 41) 27–29.
tion in Elagabalus' elevation, only one survived the purge following the emperor's downfall.90 the reference is clearly to Comazon.

The revised interpretation of... atus' career can be illustrated thus:

R. W. B. Salway 1997

M. C. Bearellac-Gervasoni H.-G. Pflaum 1960

1979

...a studii to Caracalla until 217

(duelleurs inter pret.) 217

...a studii to Severus until c. 210

(duelleurs inter pret.) 210-

...a studii to Elagabalus 218

(prof. aseonac) 210-2

...a studii to Caracalla 218

(prof. aseonac) 210-222

(duelleurs inter pret.)

...a studii to Elagabalus 218-219

(ctih Gallio) 210-217

...a studii to Caracalla 218

(prof. aseonac) 210-222

...a studii to Elagabalus 218-219

(prof. aseonac) 220-221

...a studii to Comazon 218

(prof. aseonac) 220-221

...a studii to Elagabalus 218-219

(prof. aseonac) 221-222

...a studii to Comazon 221-222

(prof. aseonac) 221-222

Moreover, on the basis of the proposed interpretation of... atus' career, we may supplement the opening lines of the Esquiline dedications in the following manner (based upon CIL VI 31776a):

[[--- .......]..... ATO []

[prof. A JTVDBS LEG LEG-

[xvi s: f. c OS. GOMITI - AMICO-

(fidi SIMO PRAEP-ANN-

[primici MNOFI PRAF-PRAE]) etc. ...

From the preceding argument it should be clear that I am in effect advocating an interpretation of... atus' career which improves upon previous attempts both in requiring no completely unprecedented or unparalleled phenomena and in providing a chronological context which is adequate to explain his career's extraordinary aspect, while at the same time respecting the word-order and grammar of the epigraphic texts.

IV. Conclusions

In the light of Sir Ronald Syme's maxim that 'Roman history, Republican or Imperial, is the history of the governing class', how might the reinterpretation of... atus' career alter our view of the brief reigns of Macrinus and Elagabalus?91 It is no surprise to find... atus employed by both Caracalla and Macrinus. For there is no evidence that the usurper indulged in any general purge of persons prominent under the previous regime, from which group he himself had sprung, of course. Indeed, with hindsight, one can see that Macrinus' greatest political misjudgment was probably his failure to remove the remnants of the Severan dynasty. Nor is it any great surprise to find... atus, as an equestrian official, being irregularly promoted to a senatorial post by Macrinus, given that emperor's own background and similar action in respect of his fellow-profet Aventius. The promotion of... atus to legionary legate was perhaps necessary as a consequence, not of a purge of current commanders, but rather of their promotion to higher things in order to ensure or reward their loyalty (e.g. the case of Aelius Tricennius, appointed to the governorship of Pannonia).92 And, as noted above (see section III) Macrinus' decision to appoint he... studii to a legionary command is made explicable by the lack of conventionally qualified candidates at his disposal. In addition, the repeating of... atus' legionary command adds further weight to an argument for believing in a higher degree of continuity of personnel between the reigns of Macrinus and Elagabalus than might have been expected, given the latter's attested purge amongst incumbents in the eastern provinces.93 Amongst the adherents of Elagabalus,... atus and Valerius Comazon are revealed as similar creatures. Their survival and promotion strengthen the impression of the whole affair as the internal wrangling of the imperial entourage.94 The sharp contrast between the extraordinary favour shown to... atus and Comazon and the fate of their colleagues, Verus and Gallio Maximi, further underlines the fundamental significance of the support of the commanders in the support of the Severan restoration.

Now located within its appropriate context, the career of... atus' helps to shed further light on the particular circumstances under which Macrinus was first promoted and then deposed in favour of Elagabalus. In fact the double reversal of im-

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90 Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80[79],20-21,1. Other than the anonymous prefects, Dio names Elagabalus' mothe, Soemias, his Juster, Hierocles, the proc. summariam rationum, Eubulus and the urban prefect, Fulvius, as victims.


93 Cassius Dio 79,13,3.

94 Cassius Dio 79,36,1; 80,3,4. As well as Macrinus' prefects, Iulianus Nestor and Aurelius Basilius, Elagabalus (or rather Iulia Maeza) had executed Fabius Agrapeinus, Marcus Secundus and Pisa Carrianus, governors of Syria Coele, Syria Pheceice and Arabia respectively.

95 A considerable continuity in the staff of the familia Caesaris throughout is demonstrated by the example of M. Aurelius Epagathus: a freedman of Caracalla, entrusted with Diadematiuns' safety by Macrinus in 218, he was, under Severus Alexander, instrumental in Ulpius' downfall in 223/224, appointed prefect of Egypt in 224 and then exiled to Crete and executed (Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 78[77],21,2; 80,2,4; Cassius Dio 79,39,1), on the chronology of which see the commentary of J. R. REA, Oxy. XXXI, 1966, 102, on No 2565 and SYME (as n.12) 153.
Epilogue: T. Messius Extricatus

Now that the personality of ...atus has been retrieved from amalgamation with that of Extricatus, it is perhaps worth restating what is known and what can be reasonably conjectured concerning the latter. A prefecture of the grain supply in 210 and an iterated consulship in 217; nothing more stands on record. Contradictory pieces of information, had they belonged to an earlier age.

In fact, the contemporary ambiguity over the precise calculation of Extricatus’ iteration is attributable to the importation of prior ornamenta consularia into the equation, for such was, as Dio relates, the practice established for and, I suggest, arising from the particular circumstances of the consular pairing of 205, C. Fulvius Plautianus <II>, P. Septimius Geta II: Severus’ praefectus praetorio and brother respectively. In consequence of the preeminent position into which

102 The promotion of Claudius Pollio from centurion to consular legate (see above n. 24) is no more irregular than that of Gellius Maximus, ... Verus (see above) and ...atus, and the case of Valerius Comazon, praetorian prefect, urban prefect and cons. <II> is prefaced by that of Ocelianius Adventus; all of which are attributable to Macrinus.

103 I.e. Aurelius Zoticus, the athlete made a custos (Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 79 [80], 16, 1-6).

104 PlR? M 518.

105 As seen in this instance long ago by Passerini (as n. 9) 222-223.

106 Cassius Dio 79,13,1, says that the practice was established by Septimius Severus and, since Plautianus is the only such example from that emperor’s reign, the reference must be to that occasion.

107 On the elder Geta’s career see Birley 1988 (as n. 27) Appendix 2, 218, No 21. He

Plautianus had manoeuvred himself, as sole praetorian prefect and father-in-law to Caracalla, a means was sought by which he might decently take precedence over a blood-relation of the imperial house. Hence the convenient fiction that his previous consular ornamenta should be considered equivalent to the genuine article. Plautianus’ own honoriad may have been short-lived but the precedent of his iterated consulship is a helpful legacy. For, were there any lingering doubts, it certifies T. Messius Extricatus cos. <II> in 217 as an earlier recipient of the consular ornamenta and, therefore, someone whose senatorial membership was of no great antiquity; thus the positive indication that he is one and the same as the s(r) p(eregrinus) praefectus annonae of 210. Indeed, the iteration on the basis of ornamenta puts Extricatus among select company: Q. Macrius Lactus (praetorian prefect with the juris Papianus after Plautianus’ fall in 205) cos. <II> in 215,104 Macrinus and Adventus in 218109 and P. Valerius Comazon in 220, after whom the practice fell into disuse.110 Given these parallels and Extricatus’ recorded prefecture of the annona, it is apparent that we are here dealing with one of the chief figures of Caracalla’s reign. All the more lamentable then that Extricatus has failed to attract the attention of Cassius Dio or, rather, his epitomators.

Is it possible to put any flesh on these bare bones? Messius Extricatus’ probable Tripolitanian origin has already been noted in discussing ...atus above (see section II). What of office after the annona? His fellow cos. <II>6, Adventus and Co-

would certainly have been senior to Plautianus in terms of senatorial protocol, even if he had not also been the emperor’s brother.

102 Quite how powerful Plautianus had become is illustrated by the way in which the equites singulares treated him as part of the domus divina in their dedication, CIL VI 227 = ILS 427, pro salute et victoria et reductio of Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Julia Domna and, lines 8-9; [C. Fulvius Plautianus] pr. pr. c. v. et necessit. [Angel.], and how his estates were managed, like imperial ones, by an equestrian procurator (e.g. Ulpian [I] prom. ad honorem Plautiae of CIL III 1364 = ILS 1370 and the future emperor Macrinus). Cf. the account of Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 76 [75], 14, 1-77 [76], 6, 3.

103 CIL VI 228 = ILS 2187, lines 21-22: Macrius Lactus et Aemilio Papianino p[i]r[i] f[r]r[er] v[n] or., which is dated precisely to 28 May 205.

104 Degrassi (as n. 50) 60 certainly reckoned Macrius Lactus’ iteration based upon prior ornamenta.

105 Despite Dio’s claim (79,13,1-2) that Macrinus refused to have their consuls in AD 218 considered as iterations, these are only partial exceptions. On attestations of Macrinus as cos. <II> see, in the latest instance, M. G. Granino Cuceri, Dizionario epigrafico V,7, Rome 1991, 194, and, in any case, after Elagabalus’ succession Adventus seems to have been permitted his iteration (e.g. CIL III 6161 = Inscriptio in Scythia Minor V 247).

106 Although the iterated consulship of the emperor Carus in 283 has been noted as a latter-day example of calculation upon the basis of ornamenta, it is far more likely that he assumed a first consulship for the last days of the preceding year in order to celebrate his succession. Cf. the comment of J. R. Rea, P. Oxy. XXXIV, 1968, 97, on Macrianus II et Quinto [II] cos. in No.2710, lines 8-9.
mazon, both cumulated their consulates with the prefecture of the city. Thus, on
the basis of his iterated consulsip, Pylaenum initially considered an urban prefec
ture likely also for Execlitus, as he had also argued earlier for Maccius La
tus. However, none of the four prececlents adduced for Lactus by Pylaenum,
which exhibit a coincidence of iteration and prefecture, are valid because in every
case these particular double honours crowned conventional senatorial careers. In
fact, shorn of his urban prefecture, Lactus resembles nothing more than a
more successful version of his Antonine predecessors, L. Volusius Maccianus and
T. Atius Sancius. They both, like Lactus, ascended by way of the prefecture of
Egypt, but, lacking the extra prestige of the praetorian prefecture, secured only
suffice consulships. Thus deprived of a precedent, it would be unsound prosopog
graphic method to import the later examples in support of an urban prefecture
for Execlitus, especially since the distance expressed by Dio at Adventus’ appoint
ment in 217 to that office suggests that this promotion was an innovation. It is
safer to look to the antecedents than the sequel.

In fact, the one common factor in the careers of all five other spuriously iterated
consuls, both those before and after Execlitus, is their tenure at some time or
other of the praetorian prefecture. Moreover, barring the exceptional case of Plau
tianus, all had laid aside the office before taking up the fasces, which by analogy
would imply a tenure for Execlitus commencing sometime after 17 September
210 and finishing before 1 January 217. It would not be impossible that Execlitus
moved from the aemilia to the prefecture of Egypt as an intermediate stage, since
it would fit a well-established pattern. However, it is far from necessary and the
faste are already quite crowded. So a praetorian prefecture in the period
210/217 would make Execlitus first a junior colleague of Lactus, then a senior

111 H. G. Pylaenum in AnnEpig 1977, 171, reporting the publication of the inscription
from Portus.

112 Pylaenum, Carrii II, 583, No 219; a conjecture accepted by P. A. Brunt, The Adminis
trators of Roman Egypt, JRS 64, 1974, 146 (= Roman Imperial Themes, Oxford 1990,
No 10, 253).

113 Cf. Pylaenum, Carrii II, 583, No 219, cf. 667 n.5.

114 Pylaenum, Carrii I, 333-336, No 141 = Desvijer, PME 2, V 133 and Pylaenum, Carri
rii III, 1001-1006, No 178 his.

115 Maccius in AD 161, Sancius in 178-180 and Lactus in 200-203 (G. Bastianini, Lista
del prefetti d’Egitto dal 30° al 299°, ZPE 17, 1975, 299, 299, 306, idem, Aggiunte e corretto

116 Cassius Dio 79,14,1.

117 On which see Brunt (as n.112) 130-131 (= 226-227).

118 It would, in theory, be possible to squeeze a short tenure between that of T. Cl. Sub
stantianus Aquila (last attested 23 July 210) and L. Hadrius Aurelius Iuncinus (first attested
some time in 29 January 212) or between Iuncinus (last attested November 213) and his suc
cessor, Att. Seplinianus Herculius (first attested in March 215); cf. G. Bastianini 1975 (as
n.115) 304-307 and 1980 (as n.115) 85-86.

119 There was certainly a vacancy in the prefecture consequent upon the downfall of Patruuis, the ephemeral successor of Papinian, along
with the emperor Geta, in 212. On his own retirement Execlitus would then,
have been succeeded by Maccius—so in close company with a jurist and an advo
cate. This item excites interest as to possible officers prior to the aemilia. There is
indeed a jurist of the Severan period on record: a certain Messius, who is men
tioned only once by Julius Paulus, in a passage from his Liber decretorum (itself
preserved only in Justinian’s Digest under the heading de iure fisci). The context is,
moreover, extremely suggestive, being the record of a debate in the consiliun
of an unnamed emperor over the allocation of the harvest, disputed between tenant
and buyer, from an estate recently sold by the fisc, in which Messius and Papinian
jointly propose a new solution to the question. This Messius is otherwise
as enigmatic a personality as Execlitus. In fact, WOLFGANG KUNKEL has already sug
gested that the jurist should be identified with Execlitus ‘cos. II’. However,
most scholars have preferred an identification with a certain P. Messius Saturninus
from Pheradai Maius in Africa, who served as procurator a studii, advocate fisci
sacri audiendori and a declamationibus Latinius, despite the fact, in particular,
that his office suggests eloquence rather than legal expertise and, secondly, that his career
might belong somewhat later. In short, there is no evidence that makes Saturni

120 That Adventus had served longer than his colleague in 217, Maccius, is a reasonable
supposition from his considerable seniority in age, reported by Cassius Dio 79,14,2.

121 Cassius Dio [Petrus Patricius] 78[77],4,4. I follow Howa, Praetorian Prefect, 70-71, in
considering Patruuis to be the successor of Papinian, whom Caracalla had dismissed on his
accession (Dio [Xiph.] 78[77],1,1), rather than his colleague in 212 as does Pylaenum,
Carrii, Supplément, 57, 220 A. That the praetorianists should demand Papinian’s head as well
as Patruuis in 212 (Dio [Pet. Pair loc. cit.] does not necessarily entail that the former
was still then their commander, since waiting for an opportunity for revenge upon an
ex-commander seems to have been a habit of the times; cf. the cases of the consulare Aurelius
us and his ex-troupers in 217 [Dio 79,12,2], of the legion II Parthica and Apollon Tricitanus in 218
[Dio 80,4,3] and the evident fear which still shadowed Dio in Italy in 226, some time after
his Pannonian troops had complained about him (Dio [Xiph.] 80,4,2-5).

122 It was Maccius’ skills as an advocate that first brought him to the attention of his pa
tron, Pautianus, who made him procureur of his estates (Cassius Dio 79,11,2); cf. D. Liebs,
Juristen in der europäischen Tradition: Symposium aus Anlass des 70. Geburtstages von
Franz Weissaker, Ebelbach 1980, 167-168, No 18, and Granville (as n.27) 22, who wrongly
think him a jurist (see the case of Messius Saturninus below).

123 Digre, 49,14,50 = O. Linn, Palingeniae Iuris Civiles I, Leipzig 1889, 965, Paulus
frg. 75: Papinianus et Messius novum sistematum indexaverunt.

124 W. Kunker, Hechtnak und soziale Stellung der römischen Juristen 3, Gese-Wien-Köln
1967, 229-230.

125 AnnEpig 1932, 34 = ILTun 250. Crook (as n.16) 174, No 229; Pylaenum, Carrii II,
613-20, No 231 = Desvijer, PME 2, M 47; BIXLEY 1971 (as n.27) App. III, 355; Liebs (as
n.121) 164-166, No 171; L. Peterkin in PIR 192, 1983, M 514 & 527.

126 Pace Pylaenum, Carrii II, 761, a studii was not a post requiring juristic training (see
nus a stronger candidate than Exstrictus to be the jurist Messius and certain considerations that make him a positively weaker one. Even if T. Messius Exstrictus was a jurist and whether or not he is the same man as Paulus' Messius, a tenure of the post of a libellis before the prefecture of the annona may be ruled out on chronological grounds, if Tony Honoré's stylistic individuations and associated identifications are accepted.126

It is too simplistic to think that, reverting to a collegiate prefecture after the deposition of Plautianus, Severus and Caracalla deliberately paired soldiers and jurists.127 Nevertheless the pattern is striking. However, it might be better described as a balance between soldier and bureaucrat; perhaps a deliberate attempt to satisfy the conflicting demands of the office.128 It was incidentally, a lesson from which another jurist, Ulpian, who appointed a sole prefecture in the early years of Severus Alexander's reign, evidently failed to learn, seeing that he fell victim at the hands of his own soldiers. Lest this schema appear overly complicated, we may tabulate the fasti of the praetorian prefecture from the death of Plautianus to that of Caracalla (italics indicate the extent of conjecture):129

above n. (12), thus Saturinus' offices are consonant with training as an advocate, on the distinction of which from jurisprudence see J. A. Crook, Legal Advocacy in the Roman World, London 1995, 40-43. In fact the latter stages of his career are best paralleled by those of M. Aurelius Hermogenes in the 260s (Pylaia, Carrières II, 935-936, No 352, cf. 617).

126 A. M. Honoré, Emperors and Lawyers, Oxford 1996, 79-89, 192, where No 1 (AD 209-211) is identified as Aemilius Papianus, No 2 (AD 203-209) as Aelius Corcanus Domitius Ulpianus, and No 3 (AD 209-211) is unnamed, but impossible since Exstrictus was the then praef. annona. It should, however, be noted that this schema is far from certain. For, despite the fact that Aelius Corcanus is thought to have been a libellis on the basis of I. Eph. 206 (8 τὴν ἐγγύησαν τόν ἄδεσποταν περιτομημένον) before his exile in 205 (Dio Xiph. 77 [76], 5, 3-5), because Honoré detects a stylistic continuity through the whole period 203-209 with the private legal writings of Ulpian, he produces the compromise of having a period from 203 to 205, when Corcanus was assisted by Ulpian, then one from 205 to 209, when Ulpian composed the rescripts alone. It may be that the prosopographic problem here undermines Honoré's identification of the a libellis himself as prime composer of rescripts.

127 See the sensible discussion of Howse, Praetorian Prefect, 47-48, who emphasises that the idea of the jurist-prefect as typical of the Severan age is misconceived. See Birley 1988 (as n. 27) 164, on the pairing of Lactant and Papianus.

128 Lactarius and Adventus were clearly military men (Howse, Praetorian Prefect, 71, No 21; Pylaia, Carrières II, 662-667, No 247; cf. Cassius Dio 79,14,1), while Papianus is famous as a jurist, Patruinus was an ex-procurator (identifying him as the Valerius Patruinus who brought the case of the disputed harvest to Septimius Severus' consilium, Dio. 49,14,50), and Macrinus was an ex-advocate (Pylaia, op. cit.II, 667-672, No 248), on which see above n.121. On the dual nature of the responsibilities of the prefecture by the early third century see Howse, op. cit. 21-42.

129 This list is essentially that of Howse, Praetorian Prefect, 71-73, Nos 21-26, with the exception of the prefecture there ascribed to Cn. Marcus Rustius Rufinus, which must now be expunged after the re-interpretation of CIL XIV 4389 as belonging to Q. Marcus Dioga,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date of appointment</th>
<th>soldier</th>
<th>bureaucrat</th>
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<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>Q. Maceius Lactus</td>
<td>(J) Aemilius Papianus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>(J) Valerius Patruinus</td>
<td>T. Messius Exstrictus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>M. Oclatinius Adventus</td>
<td>M. Opellius Macrinus</td>
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<td>213</td>
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<td>215</td>
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If one accepts this hypothesis, T. Messius Exstrictus, jurist, prefect of the grain supply (210), praetorian prefect (c. 212-215) and subsequently consul (217), is revealed as a more fortunate precursor of Ulpian, jurist, praefectus annona (222), praefectus praetorio (222-c.224).

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