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INDEX

	HEIKKI SOLIN	<i>Rolf Westman in Memoriam</i>	9
	RIA BERG	<i>Toiletries and Taverns. Cosmetic Sets in Small Houses, Hospitia and Lupanaria at Pompeii</i>	13
	MAURIZIO COLOMBO	<i>Il prezzo dell'oro dal 300 al 325/330 e ILS 9420 = SupplIt V, 253–255 nr. 3</i>	41
	LEE FRATANTUONO	<i>Pallasne Exurere Classem: Minerva in the Aeneid</i>	63
	JANNE IKÄHEIMO JARI-MATTI KUUSELA & EERO JARVA	<i>Buried Under? Re-examining the Topography and Geology of the Allia Battlefield</i>	89
	BORIS KAYACHEV	<i>Ciris 204: an Emendation</i>	111
	OLLI SALOMIES	<i>An Inscription from Pheradi Maius in Africa (AE 1927, 28 = ILTun. 25)</i>	115
	UMBERTO SOLDOVIERI	<i>Una nuova dedica a Iuppiter da Pompei e l'origine di L. Ninnius Quadratus, tribunus plebis 58 a.C.</i>	135
	DIVNA SOLEIL	<i>Héraclès le premier mélancolique : Origines d'une figure exemplaire</i>	147
	HEIKKI SOLIN	<i>Analecta epigraphica 319–321</i>	167
	HOLGER THESLEFF	<i>Pivotal Play and Irony in Platonic Dialogues</i>	179
		<i>De novis libris iudicia</i>	220
		<i>Index librorum in hoc volumine recensorum</i>	277
		<i>Libri nobis missi</i>	283
		<i>Index scriptorum</i>	286

AN INSCRIPTION FROM PHERADI MAIUS IN AFRICA (*AE* 1927, 28 = *ILTUN.* 25)*

OLLI SALOMIES

In this article, my aim is to discuss some features and the interpretation of the fourth-century inscription *AE* 1927, 28, inscribed on a statue base found, along with the statue itself (cf. n. 2), in the forum of Pheradi Maius,¹ a Roman city of no great importance now situated in Tunisia near the village of Sidi Khelifa between Hammamet and Sousse. This inscription is in my view of great interest, as it includes, as I will try to show in this article, a notable number of features which seem unique.

The statue base, measuring 150 x 56 x 45 cm. and inscribed with large letters (4.5–5 cm.) indicating a date in late Antiquity, i.e., most probably in the fourth century (cf. below), a date also implied by the contents, the orthography and the style of the inscription, was published by L. Poinssot in *BACTH* 1927, 58–60 no. 5.² On the basis of this edition, the text was reproduced in *AE* 1927, 28 and *ILTun.* 251. The inscription runs as follows:³

* Thanks are due to two anonymous referees.

¹ For the finds from the forum of Pheradi Maius see C. Kleinwächter, *Platzanlagen nordafrikanischer Städte* (2001) 196–8.

² On p. 56, Poinssot says that the honorand's statue, "of mediocre quality", was found beside the statue base: "La statue de Didius Prejectus à côté de la base à 1 mètre environ au-dessus du sol antique ... En marbre gris, de travail médiocre, elle est du " type municipal " le plus courant : la tête manque". The statue has been registered (by U. Gehn – cf. n. 6) as LSA-1744 (unfortunately without a photo).

³ As this is a fourth-century text, there seems no point in adding a "sic" to each instance of "vulgar" or "late" orthography (e.g., *adque* for *atque*, common from the second century onwards). But note *probabimus* = *probavimus* in l. 8.

- Didi Preiecti fl(aminis) p(er)p(etui).
 Probatissimo adque integerrimo
 viro, cuius multa praeclara
 venefactorum praemia retinen-
 5 tur, quem adornat integritas,
 quem fides vera commendat, a cu-
 ius cunabulis titulis obsequentem
 probabimus liberalitatem et ita
 sumtu proprio indulgentem,
 10 ut et fastigia moenibus dede-
 rit et colomina repararit; qui-
 bus rebus Didio Preiecto fl(amini) p(er)p(etuo),
 amplissimo proceri nostrae
 curiae, quem et laus familiae
 15 et eloqui commendat instruc-
 tio, ordo s[plendissim]ae
 coloni[ae Phera]dam(aiensis?)⁴
 PRO[----]
 DE[----].⁵*

As I shall propose new interpretations of some passages of the text, a translation incorporating my suggestions, discussed in what follows, will be presented at the end of this article (for other translations see n. 6).

Earlier studies of this inscription are not numerous.⁶ It is not exactly

⁴ For this adjective cf. the parallels cited by Poinssot p. 60.

⁵ Lepelley (n. 6) suggests *pro [--- statuam] / de[dit et dedicavit]* (with a questionmark at the end) as a possible restoration of the end of the text (the same restoration is reproduced by U. Gehn – see n. 6 – in LSA) and seems to understand *pro* as the preposition (although this is not made clear in the French translation "[a offert et dédié cette statue]"), a suggestion which seems plausible, as the author of the text may well have added another justification, overlooked by him earlier, for the erection of the statue. One could think, e.g., of *pro [meritis]* or *pro [munificentia]* etc. (the list of expressions that could come into question here is long).

⁶ In addition to some comments in the original edition by Poinssot, there is a short commentary and a French translation of the inscription in C. Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire*, II (1981) 301 with n. 10. Furthermore, the inscription is studied or at least mentioned in the following books and articles: T. Kotula, *Ant. Afr.* 8 (1974) 123 no. 10; M. S. Bassignano, *Il flaminato*

datable, but, as mentioned above, every detail of the inscription points to a date in the fourth century, as agreed upon by all those who have offered an opinion on the date.⁷ The text contains many features typical of fourth-century inscriptions, of which one of the most obvious are the many abstract terms used to describe the merits of the honorand (their presence was already pointed out by Poinssot p. 60). On the other hand, the inscription does present some features which seem to merit more attention, and these features are the subject of this article. As for the honorand Didius Praeiectus – one must of course understand *Praeiectus*, the form I shall use in the following – the name seems to point to the fact that he was a Christian, for the name seems to belong to the category of (Christian) "names of humility", and Kajanto, who equates this name with *Proiectus*, mentions only certainly or possibly Christian instances.⁸ Moreover, an African bishop ca. 416/426 called *Praeiectus* is registered in the prosopography of African Christians by A. Mandouze,⁹ and there is also the fact that *fides vera* is attributed to the honorand in l. 6 (although this could mean anything in

nelle province romane dell'Africa (1974) 83; J. Gascoü, *ANRW* II 10, 2 (1982) 306 with n. 478; H. Jouffroy, *La construction publique en Italie et dans l'Afrique romaine* (1986) 291 and 423; C. Kleinwächter, *Platzanlagen nordafrikanischer Städte* (2001) 197 no. 5 (with a photo of the statue base, where the inscription is not legible, in Tafel 63,2); N. Tlili, in M. Milanese & al. (eds.), *L'Africa romana* 18 (2010), III, 2047f. (with the text of the inscription and Lepelley's translation). Finally, the inscription is registered in the Heidelberg (A. Scheithauer, HD024832: <http://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD024832>, with photos), Clauss-Slaby (EDCS-08201944), and Last Statues of Antiquity (LSA) databases (U. Gehn, LSA-2305, with photos by the author, a few comments and an English translation: <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk/database/detail.php?record=2305>). In the record proper, it is said that the current location is "Not known", but in the "Discussion" attached to the same record (<http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk/database/discussion.php?id=2679>), it is said that the stone now lies "at the western side of the forum". Note that there is a mistake in the text l. 11 (*reparaverit*, with a "(sic)" following, instead of the correct *repararit*, for which see below n. 52).

⁷ Thus, in some cases with a questionmark, Kotula, Bassignano, Lepelley, Gascoü, Jouffroy, Kleinwächter, Tlili, LSA-2305 (indicating a date between AD 300 and 400). Lepelley, who adduces some strange arguments, attributes the same view regarding the date to Poinssot, but I am unable to locate a clear pronouncement of the date by Poinssot, who, however, does present the inscription after three inscriptions in honour of fourth-century emperors).

⁸ I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (1965) 287. On the "names of humility" cf. Kajanto's paper in *Arctos* 3 (1962) 45–53; *The Latin Cognomina* 70.

⁹ A. Mandouze, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire. I. Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303–533)* (1982) p. 899 (this bishop is mentioned by Augustine). Mandouze does not register our man Didius Pr(ae)iectus.

an inscription like this).¹⁰ However, in the case of many fourth-century African municipal inscriptions the fact that an honorand is or may be a Christian does not really affect the contents of the text,¹¹ and so we may dismiss the question of the honorand's religion as not relevant from the point of view of this article.

To start with, the peculiar structure of the text is striking. It begins, as so many fourth-century honorific inscriptions, with the name, or one of the names (often the *signum*), of the honorand in the genitive; sometimes, as in this case, a title is added.¹² In some rare cases, this mention with the name in the genitive is the only mention of the name of the honorand in an inscription.¹³ But normally the name is repeated in the dative in the part of the inscription in which the career and the merits of the honorand are set out, either immediately after the introductory part with the names in the genitive,¹⁴ or only later, subsequent to statements meant to describe the honorand.¹⁵ But in this case, the text is divided into two parts, a first part with several lines of text setting out a number of merits, but not the name, of the honorand, and a second part starting with "because of these things".¹⁶ This latter section is ostensibly meant to be an exposition of the honours – i.e., the statue – *resulting from* these merits, but at the same time this section curiously adds, before arriving at the subject of the statue, some further description of the honorand that was omitted in the first part (*amplissimo*

¹⁰ Lepelley translates *fides vera* as "la véritable bonne foi"; Gehrke seems to take the expression to refer to Christianity, for he translates *fides vera* as "true faith".

¹¹ For *flamines perpetui*, many of them Christian, attested in late-antique African inscriptions see A. Leone, *The End of the Pagan City: Religion, Economy, and Urbanism in Late Antique North Africa* (2013) 245–54.

¹² Cf., e.g., *CIL* VI 41382; *IRT* 111, 475, 526, 571.

¹³ Thus in *AE* 1976, 141 from Puteoli: *Tannoni Chrysanti v(iri) p(erfectissimi), patroni. Magnificae adque praeclare stirpis viro, provisorii civium, defensori integro, gloriam (sic) praepollenti ... devotissimus populus ornamenta ... decrevit.*

¹⁴ Thus, e.g., *AE* 1968, 115 (Puteoli): *Aemilianii. Audentio Aemiliano v(iro) c(larissimo) cons(ulari) Camp(aniae) (...)*. Also, e.g., *ILS* 1224a–1226. 1229. 1230. 1238. 1239. 1240. 1256. 1257. 1262. 1281. 1282. 1284; *CIL* VI 1722; *AE* 1969/70, 108 (Puteoli); *IRT* 475. 526. 565.

¹⁵ Thus, e.g., *CIL* VI 1769 (*Asterii; constantiae, abstinentiae testimonium sempiternum (sic) L. Turcio Aproniano*). 41383; *IRT* 562. 565. 566. 574. 575. *AE* 2002, 1676 (Bulla Regia).

¹⁶ A similar structure can be observed in the extremely wordy inscription of AD 435 in honour of the poet Merobaudes (*CIL* VI 1724 = *ILS* 2950), where the topic of the poet's statue, preceded by an exposition of his merits, is introduced by the adverb *ideo*.

proceri etc.). Moreover, the fact that descriptions kept in the dative (*probatissimo ... viro, amplissimo proceri*) are interspersed with relative clauses with relative pronouns both in the genitive and in the accusative is striking indeed.

Moreover, it is most notable that in the beginning of the second section the phrase "because of these things" is expressed not with a preposition (e.g., *ob, propter*) or an adverb (e.g., *ideo*) but with *quibus rebus*, which must be an *ablativus causae*, an ablative not normally encountered in Latin inscriptions. This, too, indicates, considered together with the vocabulary and the style in general, that the author of the text had, like many authors of late-antique honorific inscriptions, higher literary ambitions as well as an extreme urge to use unusual and striking expressions wherever he could think of something. The author of this inscription may not have been quite on the same, possibly unattainable, level as the author of another African inscription, *CIL* VIII 2391 = *ILS* 2937 from Thamugadi,¹⁷ who was able to produce a text I once described as "a monument of obscure eccentricity",¹⁸ but clearly he has been able to produce something out of the ordinary, as I hope to show in this paper.

The description of Praeiectus begins in l. 2f. with *probatissimo adque integerrimo viro* ("to the most worthy and most blameless man"). The superlative *integerrimus* is common, but *probatissimus* is striking. In epigraphical Latin, the superlative is in any case most uncommon, but the few attestations of it seem to indicate that it was used mainly in situations in which someone was said to be "approved" by someone else, either mentioned in the same context or implied. It follows that *probatissimus -a* was seen as a suitable description of women¹⁹ and of either younger men or of men in some way subordinated to others.²⁰ One can discern a similar tendency in the instances of *probatissimus -a*

¹⁷ *Vocontio; / P. Fl(avio) Pudenti Pompo/niano c(larissimo) v(iro), erga / civeis patriamque / prolixo cultori, ex/ercitiis militaribus / effecto, multifari/am loquentes lit/teras ampliati, At/ticam facundiam ad/aequanti Romano / nitori, / ordo incola fontis / patrono oris uberis / et fluentis, nostr[o] / alteri fonti.*

¹⁸ O. Salomies, in G. Paci (ed.), *Ἐπιγραφαί. Miscellanea epigrafica in onore di Lidio Gasperini* (2000) 934 (this assessment is quoted, apparently with approval, by A. Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy* (2012) 151 n. 97).

¹⁹ Wives: *CIL* VIII 7080 = *ILS* 6855 = *ILAlg.* II 695 (*uxori probatissimae*); female relatives: *CIL* II² 5, 900 (the *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone*, line 138, with Agrippina said to have been *probatissima* to Augustus); others: *ICVR* V 13920 (*bonis probatissi[ma]*).

²⁰ *CIL* II 1282b = *CILA* II 3, 930b (a young senator being *Aemilio Papo clarissimo ac severissimo*

in the literary sources as registered in the *Thesaurus*.²¹ The inscription in honour of Didius Praeiectus thus seems to be something of an exception; and certainly only one single parallel for an honorand being described as *probatissimus* can be produced, namely the inscription *CIL* XI 15 from Ravenna in honour of the (probably) early fifth-century senator C. Marius Eventius (*PLRE* II Eventius 2), described in the dative as *probatissim(o) defensori*.²²

This description of the honorand in the dative is followed by the first relative clause: *cuius multa praeclara venefactorum praemia retinentur* (l. 3–5; "of whose benefactions many and excellent benefits are remembered"). As for *venefactorum praemia*, both the expressions *benefactum* and *praemium* and their combination are of some interest. The term *benefactum* or *bene factum* is of course attested. From the material in the *Thesaurus* (*TLL* II 1876, 31ff.) it seems to emerge that – if one ignores the attestations in, say, the early comedy – it is often used in contexts where the point of view is on the somewhat philosophical side and the word is sometimes contrasted with *male facta* or coupled with *bene dicta*. If compared to *beneficia*, *bene facta*, although sometimes obviously identical with *beneficia*,²³ often seem to refer to good deeds in general for which normally no exact details are given, whereas the term *beneficium* seems to be preferred when a writer has something more specific on his or her mind. In inscriptions, especially honorific inscriptions, this is obviously normally the case, and so it is the expression *beneficium*, often accompanied by some explanatory particulars,²⁴ which dominates in epigraphical language. Whereas a search in

viro avonculo suo ... probatissimus; *CIL* XIII 3162 (the honorand T. Sennius Sollemnis said to have been *cliens probatissimus Aedini Iuliani leg(ati) Augusti*); *ILCV* 1230 = *ILAlg.* I 1174 (a certain Rogatianus said to have been *probatissimus Deo*).

²¹ See *TLL* X 2, 1474, 67ff. Note, e.g., Cic. *Cael.* 73 *Caelius ... Pompei iudicio probatissimus*; *Planc.* 27 *miles ... Q. Metelli*; *cui cum fuerit probatissimus (...)*. The positive *probat*-*a* seems to have been used in much the same way.

²² A bit later in the inscription, Eventius' *defensio* itself is described as *probatissima*. For a roughly contemporary parallel in a literary source cf. Symm. *rel.* 34,7 *a v(iro) c(larissimo) ac probatissimo Anicio Basso*.

²³ E.g. Sall. *Jug.* 85,5 *mea benefacta rei publicae procedunt*. As for metrical texts, it must be noted that the term *beneficium* cannot be fitted into a hexameter and many other metres and must thus be replaced with (e.g.) *benefactum*.

²⁴ These consist most often of the identification of the exact recipients of the *beneficia* (e.g., *erga se*, *CIL* VI 1067; *in rem p(ublicam) nos[tra]m*, inscription cited below), but also sometimes of the

the Clauss-Slaby database with the search term "benefici", but excluding "beneficiar", produces 251 results,²⁵ another search with the search terms "benefact" and "bene fact" produces only twelve results, of which only two cases of the use of *bene factum* can be described as being somehow comparable to our text, namely *AE* 2014, 149 (Rome) and *CIL* X 1909 (Puteoli).²⁶ This is obviously not very much, and one can say that the author of the text has succeeded in locating a most *recherché* term.

One cannot really say the same about *praemium*, but certainly it must be pointed out that the word *praemium* is here interestingly used not in its normal meaning "reward",²⁷ but in the less common, although not unparalleled,²⁸ meaning "advantage", "benefit", indicating the consequences of Praeictus' *bene facta*. But also the combination of *benefacta* and *praemia*, resulting in *venefactorum praemia*, is notable inasmuch as it illustrates the late-antique tendency to use a significant noun not as such (e.g., *statuam*) but to put it in the genitive, with the genitive defining another noun with a more general meaning (e.g., *or-*

description of the nature of the same (e.g., *CIL* V 532 = *ILS* 6680, [*S*]everum ... [*m*]ulta iam pridem in rem p[ublicam] nos[tra]m beneficia contulisse, ut qui ... id ege[r]it, uti in ad[iuva]nda patria sua ...; *CIL* VI 2131 = *ILS* 4929, pro ... beneficiis equestr[is] ord[inis] item secundae militiae).

²⁵ It must, however, be admitted that these results include some instances of other terms than *beneficium* (e.g., *beneficientia* in *AE* 1926, 134).

²⁶ *AE* 2014, 149 is a fifth-century inscription found in the Basilica Ulpia in Rome, citing a letter of an emperor to a certain Postumianus, dealing with the erection of a statue in honour of a man called Castus and mentioning the latter person's [*bene*]facta; *CIL* X 1909 (Puteoli, perhaps about Severan) is the funerary inscription set up by a man to his wife, both being slaves. A very positive detailed evaluation of this wife's virtues is offered, these including *plura mirabilia bene facta* which the husband cannot describe *per singula*. The other instances of *bene factum* are either from metrical inscriptions, as *beneficium* can (as observed in n. 23) not be used in dactylic verse (*CIL* V 3653 = *CLE* 1943; *CIL* III 9623 = *CLE* 627 = *ILCV* 3363; *CIL* XIII 2629 = *CLE* 2262 = *ILCV* 1717) or from texts with which nothing can be done (*ICVR* II 6449,3). In other inscriptions, the presence of the term is based only on a restoration (*CIL* XIV 4698 – why not *ben[eficia]*?) or the term is not *bene factum* but *bene factor/benefactor*. In *AE* 1925, 25 = *ILTun.* 1107, *bene factum* is the description of a *factum* (*o factum bene factum!*).

²⁷ In this meaning the term *praemium* is used, e.g., in the inscription in honour of Merobaudes (n. 16), where it is stressed that Merobaudes' *praemium* for his merits is not just a *verbena vilis* or an *otiosa hedera, honor capitis Heliconius* but an *imago aere formata*.

²⁸ See *TLL* X 2, 714, 12ff. ("*de bonis ab alio collatis, donis sim. (sc. non meriti remunerandi causa)*"), citing, e.g., Cic. *ac.* 2, 1 *absens factus aedilis, continuo praetor – licebat enim celerius legis praemio*.

namenta statuae).²⁹ In this particular case, *multa praeclara beneficia* would, I think, have been quite enough; but *multa praeclara beneficiorum praemia* does add some force to the whole, an effect very much sought after by authors of late-antique honorific inscriptions.

To conclude with the clause *cuius multa praeclara venefactorum praemia retinentur*, it must also be observed that while this is not the only late-antique honorific inscription setting out the honorand's merits in a relative clause beginning with *cuius*,³⁰ it is certainly the only one which says that the merits are being "remembered"³¹ and about the only one to use the verb *retinere* in this way and with this particular meaning.³²

The two relative clauses³³ beginning with *quem* which follow, *quem*

²⁹ Thus *AE* 1976, 141 (Puteoli, fourth century). Cf. *Arctos* 28 (1994) 93f., where I also quote, e.g., *statuae monumentum* (= *statuam*) and *insignia remediorum genera* (= *insignia remedia*).

³⁰ For other instances note, e.g., *CIL* VI 1682 = *ILS* 1220 *cuius providentia ... corporis corariorum insulas ad pristinum statum suum ... restaurari ... providit*; *CIL* VI 1759 = *ILS* 1272, *cuius primaevitas ... fidem iunxit ingenio, prudentiae miscuit libertatem ita, ut (...)*; cf. *CIL* VI 1706, 1793; X 5200. In a most notable way, relative clauses beginning with *cuius* are common in inscriptions honouring Vestal Virgins, beginning with the inscription in honour of Campia Severina in the middle of the third century (*CIL* VI 2132; cf. 2133ff.). It seems obvious that the authors of the later inscriptions in honour of Vestals, all located in the same location in the forum, have been inspired by this first instance.

³¹ If taken literally, this could be interpreted as referring to banquets, distributions of *sportulae*, etc. rather than to buildings etc. But I'm not sure this must be taken literally and would be prepared to believe that the author of the text is just saying that Praeictus had been lavish in his benefactions and that the clause *cuius multa praeclara venefactorum praemia retinentur* is just a summary of sorts of what is going to follow.

³² I have only been able to find the inscription from Praeneste, *CIL* XIV 2934 = *ILS* 8375, where the expression is not just *retinere* but *memoria retinere* and where it is used in quite a different context. In this text, the honorand, already deceased, is said to have bequeathed some property to the citizens of the city *honorificentiae n[ostr]ae* (the genitive comes from the preceding *memor*, forgotten by the author by the time he added what follows) *memoria{e} retine[n]s*. In the only other honorific inscription to use the verb *retinere*, *CIL* XI 15 (Ravenna, surely from the fourth century), the verb has the meaning "retain, perpetuate (the memory of something)": *perpetuitat[i] eius nominis posteris retinenda[e]* (*perpetuitat[i] ... retinenda[e]* seems to be a "final" dative, "in order to ...", unless one wishes to restore *perpetuitat[is]* and to add <*causa*> at the end). This meaning is not uncommon in other types of inscriptions, especially dactylic metrical texts, which are in need of words with a sequence of two short syllables.

³³ Only the second one seems to have been translated by Lepelley, followed by Tlili (but not by

adornat integritas, quem fides vera commendat (l. 6f.; "whom integrity adorns, whom true faith commends") are also of some interest. As for *adornat integritas* (note that the honorand's integrity has already been touched upon in l. 2), the verb *adornare* is attested in literary sources in similar contexts, for instance in Vell. 2,2,2 *vir ... tantis ... adornatus virtutibus*,³⁴ but in inscriptions the use of this verb is restricted mainly to building and similar inscriptions in which it is used in the meaning "to decorate" buildings and other structures (with statues, etc.),³⁵ and I do not seem to be able to locate another inscription applying this verb to persons.

As for *quem fides vera commendat* (*commendat*³⁶ is repeated in l. 15, the subjects being *laus* and *instructio*), "lui que recommande la véritable bonne foi" (Lepelley),³⁷ the combination *fides* + *commendare* is in fact attested twice in addition to our inscription, namely in Optatus Milevitanus, the fourth-century African bishop (Optat. 1,1, p. 3,2 *Ziwsa cunctos nos Christianos ... omnipotenti deo fides una commendat*) and in an inscription from Brigetio in Pannonia Superior.³⁸ In this inscription, however, the expression *fides* is not used in the same meaning as in our inscription, where it may well (as in the passage of Optatus)

Gehn, who translates "whom integrity adorns").

³⁴ Cf. Sen. *dial.* 7,20,2 *ingenti animo adornatis*; Plin. *epist.* 4,27,5, *pro ingenio tali, quod ille moribus adornat*.

³⁵ Thus, e.g., to quote some instances from Rome, *CIL* VI 1682 (*insulas*), 4712 (*genium*), 8418 (*sarcophagum*), 10237 (*ea loca quae T. p(atronus) decurionibus suis adtribuerat*), 10302 (*zothecam*), 30717 (*aed[icul]am de suo marmore*). The verb *ornare* is sometimes used in the same way (e.g., *CIL* VIII 26569); *exornare* is used in a different context in the meaning "to 'decorate'", i.e. to "honour" someone with a new position or status (e.g., with a priesthood or the membership in the equestrian order), as, e.g., in *exorn(ato) sacerdot(otio) fet(itali)* (*AE* 1954, 58) or in the common expression *equo publico exornatus*.

³⁶ Note the "etymologizing" orthography, common in late-antique inscriptions (for an extreme example note *thermae Conmodianae* in an honorific inscription from Beneventum, *CIL* IX 1596 = *ILS* 5511 = *EDR*128690), which should not be corrected.

³⁷ The term *fides vera* should perhaps be understood as referring to Christianity (cf. above at n. 10).

³⁸ *CIL* III 11009 = *ILS* 3955 = *RIU* II 474, *Terr(ae) matr(i) et m(inistrae) Priscill(a)e ob commendatam et restitutam fidem Ael(ius) Stratonicus v(otum) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito) Brigeti(one)*. For the interpretation of this text (obviously not relevant from our point of view) see P. Veyne, *Latomus* 23 (1964) 30–32 (p. 31: "Ici *fides* est synonyme de *depositum* ; l'inscription de Brigetio est l'ex-voto d'un voyageur ou d'un marchand qui, à son passage, avait déposé de l'argent au sanctuaire local de la Terre Mère").

refer to the honorand's Christian faith but may, on the other hand, also simply mean something like "goodwill" (towards the city), as implied in Lepelley's translation. But despite the existence of the passage in Optatus the formulation *quem fides vera commendat* remains most striking, on the one hand because the verb *commendare* appears in epigraphical Latin mainly in some epitaphs and in *defixiones*³⁹ and not in contexts such as we find in this inscription, and on the other hand because the *Thesaurus* can produce only three instances of the scenario "[commend]ant res aliquem", i.e. something (a characteristic trait, etc.) "recommending" a person, all of them adding, unlike our inscription, a dative indicating to whom one is being recommended (*TLL* III 1842, 67–9).⁴⁰

The inscription goes on to observe "*a cuius cunabulis titulis obsequentem (sic) probabimus (i.e., probavimus) liberalitatem*" (l. 6–8). This is translated by Lepelley as "lui dont nous avons manifesté la générosité propice par des inscriptions (visibles ici) dans son lieu de naissance", by Gehn as "of whose generosity following from his birthplace name (= family tradition) we give approval" (to me this seems a bit mysterious). To judge from the translation, Lepelley understands *titulis* as an instrumental ablative and takes *titulus* here to mean "inscription"; moreover, he sees *obsequentem* as being used absolutely, i.e. without being followed, as is normally the case, by a dative, in the meaning "propice" (e.g., "beneficial"). Finally, he seems to interpret *a cunabulis* as if it stood for *in cunabulis* and *cunabula* as meaning "hometown". As for Gehn, he seems to take *titulis* as meaning "name" and as a dative explaining *obsequentem* and to translate *obsequentem* as "following (from)"; he, too, interprets *cunabula* as "birthplace". However, I do not think that the Latin formulation *a cuius cunabulis titulis obsequentem* could admit the translation "following from his birthplace name", and as I also consider Lepelley's interpretation to be debatable, I would like to offer here a slightly different interpretation.

The noun *cunabula,-orum* "cradle", which according to the Claus-Slaby database is the *only* attestation in an epigraphical text, can certainly be used,

³⁹ As for epitaphs (e.g., *CIL* VI 4656 = *ILS* 7991 *ossa et cineres commendarunt*), note the section in the *TLL* "*de morientibus, fere i(d) q(uod) relinquere*" (III 1843, 54ff.). For *defixiones*, in which a person is "recommended" for something unpleasant, cf., e.g., *CIL* I² 1012 = A. Kropp, *Defixiones. Ein aktuelles Corpus lateinischer Fluchtafeln* (2008) 1-4-4-3 *Dite Pater, Rhodine(m) tibi commendo, uti semper odio sit M. Licinio Fausto*; Kropp 3-22-34; 5-1-3-1; 11-1-1-14b, etc.

⁴⁰ In addition to the passage in Optatianus, the *TLL* cites *Stat. Theb.* 8,558 and *Amm.* 24,4,5.

obviously mainly in poetic texts, figuratively in the sense "(someone's) home".⁴¹ However, in this context and in this formulation, where the ablative *cunabulis* depends of the preposition *a(b)* which is clearly temporal, I am sure we must be dealing rather with the meaning "infancy", "childhood",⁴² and thus the phrase *a cuius cunabulis* must mean something like "since his childhood".⁴³ What the author of the text is saying is that Praeictus has exercised his *liberalitas*, observed with approval by the *ordo*, since his early childhood (obviously his father and other relatives may have been of some help), and there is thus no reference whatsoever to Praeictus' birthplace (in any case of no relevance in this context). That an honorand has been occupied with beneficial activities since the early childhood is in fact pointed out in some late-antique honorific inscriptions (e.g., *CIL* VI 1730f. = *ILS* 1278 *ab ineunte aetate*).

To go on with *titulis obsequentem*, let us start with *obsequentem* which obviously defines *liberalitatem*. As seen above, Lepelley takes this participle to have been used absolutely. The participle *obsequens* can certainly be used in this way, and apparently even in the meaning "propice" postulated by Lepelley.⁴⁴ But in most of the examples cited in the *Thesaurus* (n. 46), and also in the cases in which the participle governs a dative (cf. below), *obsequens* seems to have the meaning "obedient", "docile",⁴⁵ a meaning which is not at all convenient in this context. Moreover, although *obsequens* can be used absolutely, it is more often used with an accompanying dative indicating to whom or to what one is obedient.⁴⁶ This takes one's thoughts to *titulis*. Interpreting *titulis* as an instrumental ablative indicating the source of the information of the members of the *ordo* regarding Praeictus' *liberalitas*, namely (thus apparently in Lepelley's interpretation) the inscriptions of the buildings he had built, would result

⁴¹ *TLL* IV 1389, 2ff. ("latiore sensu i(d) q(uod) patria"), citing, e.g., *Sil.* 3,81 *per cunabula nostra* (referring to Hannibal's *cunabula*, i.e. Carthage).

⁴² See *TLL* IV 1389, 10ff., where the passages cited are divided into "de personis", "de urbibus" (ibid. 32ff.; in this case the meaning of *cunabula* would be, e.g., "beginnings"), "de virtutibus, honoribus, institutis, etc., i(d) q(uod) principia, fundamenta" (ibid. 43ff.).

⁴³ Cf., to cite prose texts, *a primis cunabulis* *Colum.* 1,3,5 and *Apul. met.* 2,31 (here referring to the beginnings of the city of Hypata).

⁴⁴ For the absolute use of *obsequens* see *TLL* IX 2, 188, 73ff., citing *Plaut. Rud.* 261, where *obsequentem*, coupled with *bonam*, clearly has a meaning corresponding to "propice".

⁴⁵ E.g., *Sen. contr.* 7,6,17, *subiectus et obsequens maritus*.

⁴⁶ *TLL* IX 2, 188, 46ff.

in a most unlikely scenario where the dedicators would be implying that they knew Praeictus' euergetic activities not from what they saw with their own eyes but from what they had read in the inscriptions attached to Praeictus' works. I thus wonder whether *titulis* could be, rather than an instrumental ablative, a dative governed by *obsequentem* (as in Gehn's interpretation). In that case, *titulus* would obviously have to mean not "inscription" – for there seems to be no point in saying that someone is obedient to inscriptions – but something else. Gehn with his translation "birthplace name (= family tradition)" may have been on the right track, although the translation seems awkward and must in any case be incorrect in this form, as *a cuius cunabulis* must be taken separately from *titulis*.

The *Thesaurus* has not yet arrived at the letter *T*, but the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* furnishes (under *Titulus* 7) some translations of *titulus* which could be relevant here, for instance "distinction", "reputation".⁴⁷ In these cases, *titulus* is normally accompanied by a genitive indicating on what the distinction was based, but I suggest that we could assume that the author of this inscription, who was obviously, as already pointed out, a person striving for *recherché* expressions, could have ignored this requirement in order to use *titulus*, with no genitive attached, in the meaning (say) "reputation". If this interpretation were accepted, then we could assume that the *tituli*, which could perhaps be translated as "achievements of distinctive merit", would be those of Praeictus' forefathers and that the author of the inscription wanted to say that Praeictus' *liberalitas* was exercised to the advantage of the city of Pheradi in imitation of the similar behaviour of earlier Didii. The author in any case points out later, by referring (in l. 14) to the *laus familiae*, that Praeictus' forefathers had been distinguished persons, and in fourth-century honorific inscription it is in fact common to refer to the honorand's ancestors.⁴⁸ This passage could, then, be translated, e.g., as follows: "from whose childhood onwards we have approved of his munificence imitating the achievements of distinctive merit (of his forefathers)".

The inscription goes on to define Praeictus' *liberalitas* with another participle, *indulgentem: ita sumtu (sic) proprio indulgentem*, this being followed

⁴⁷ The 1913 edition of the Georges dictionary has a corresponding section II, 1), b), where *titulus* is translated as "Ansehen", "Glanz", with references to Liv. 7,1,10 (*par titulo tantae gloriae fuit*) and Stat. *silv.* 2,7,62.

⁴⁸ Thus, e.g., in the expression *patronus originalis* (ILS 8984, 8985, etc.), where *origo* refers to the honorands' "origins", i.e. ancestors.

by the consecutive clause *ut et fastigia moenibus dederit et colomina repararit*. As for the words *sumtu proprio indulgentem*, at first sight the normal meanings of *indulgere* ("to be indulgent or lenient to", etc.) would not seem to suit very well if this verb were applied to *sumptus* ("expenses"). Accordingly, this particular passage is in the *Thesaurus* article on *indulgere* initially declared as being "interpr(etationis) inc(ertae)" (*TLL* VII 1, 1250, 60f.), but then later placed, surely correctly, under the heading "*fere i(d) q(uod) liberum cursum dare*" (ibid. 1251, 56ff.; this must correspond to *OLD*'s section 2, "to allow free play (to ...)"), where we also find, e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 4,51 *indulge hospitio causamque innecte morandi* and Stat. *Theb.* 11,447 *non tamen indulsit pugnae ... Fortuna*. With this interpretation, where *sumtu* must obviously be taken as a dative,⁴⁹ the writer of the text would basically be saying that Praeictus, when exercising his *liberalitas*, did not try to save any expenses.⁵⁰

In the consecutive clause⁵¹ indicating the consequence of Praeictus' munificence, *ut et fastigia moenibus dederit et colomina repararit*,⁵² at first sight one would assume that the author of the text is trying to distinguish between two activities, the building of *fastigia* and the restoration of *colomina*.⁵³ The *moenia*

⁴⁹ According to M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (1977) 442f., the dative in *-ū* (instead of *-uī*) was "recht häufig"; among the examples cited by him, there is also Cic. *fam.* 16,4,2 *sumptu ne parcas*. For an epigraphical instance note, e.g., *Bono Eventu CIL* XIII 6670 (Moguntiacum).

⁵⁰ In the translations of Lepelley and Gehn, although they can certainly not be described as literal translations of the original Latin, the author of the text is in fact made to say exactly this.

⁵¹ For another fourth-century honorific inscription containing a consecutive clause (not a common phenomenon of epigraphic style) see *CIL* VI 1759 = *ILS* 1272, *cuius primaevitas ... prudentiae miscuit libertatem ita, ut nemo de eius industria ... formidaret*. For a funerary inscription note *CIL* XI 831 = *ILS* 1218, *cuius vita ... tam clara exstitit, ut admirabilia veteris probitatis exempla superarit*.

⁵² Note the use of the contracted perfect instead of *reparaverit*, the use of which is common both in late antique authors (cf., e.g., Å. Fridh, *Études critiques et syntaxiques sur les Variae de Cassiodore* [1950] 16) and in honorific and similar inscriptions, surely often, although apparently not in this particular case (cf. below), in order to attain a desirable clausula, as, e.g., in *CIL* XI 831 = *ILS* 1218, cited in n. 51, where *exempla superarit* produces the *esse videatur* clausula, or in *CIL* VI 1736 = *ILS* 1256, where *antea postularit* at the end of the clause *quod nulli proconsulum ... antea postularit* produces a double creticus, a popular clausula. (In our inscription *colomina repararit* = uuuuuu-x does not seem to produce anything of interest.)

⁵³ *colomen* (for *columen*) is perhaps another attempt at "etymologizing". Under *columen*, the *OLD* cites the form *colomen* from Acc. *trag.* 660 as a "varia lectio". According to Poinsot (p. 59), the

are surely, as seen by Lepelley, public buildings rather than the city walls;⁵⁴ the problem is, however, that both *fastigia* and *colomina* (i.e., *columina*) would seem to mean about the same thing. Lepelley tries to solve this problem by translating *fastigia* as "toits" ("roofs") and *colomina* by "charpentes" (perhaps here thought of as "structures"): "il a donné des toits aux bâtiments (publics) et ... il en a réparé les charpentes"; for his part, Gehn translates the two terms as "roofs" and "summits". But the fact is that, as the *Thesaurus* puts it, in speaking of houses a *columen* is "*i(d) q(uod) fastigium*".⁵⁵ I thus suspect that what the author is trying to do is just to imitate the wordiness of late antique honorific inscriptions and late antique prose style, as produced, e.g., by writers of legal texts from Diocletian onwards, in general and to say the same thing with two words of the same meaning.⁵⁶ As for *fastigia* and *colomina*, both *fastigium* and *columen* can mean "roof,"⁵⁷ but I find it quite impossible to believe that the author of the text would have wished to say that Praeictus had spent his money on just either building or repairing roofs, for although it must be admitted that building or repairing roofs is a most laudable activity, references in honorific inscriptions of this period tend to be to works on a somewhat grander scale, say the building of (almost) the whole city.⁵⁸ Moreover, saying that the activities of Praeictus concentrated on roofs would seem to imply that Pheradi Maius was, at least before Praeictus' operations began, a city full of buildings with either

stonecutter had begun by inscribing *COLOMA*, later corrected. (The photos are not clear enough at this point.)

⁵⁴ See *TLL* VIII 1328, 30–59, "de aedificiis publicis", the examples all being from the fourth century or later. Kleinwächter l. 1., accepting this interpretation, speaks of "Reparaturmaßnahmen", Gehn simply of "buildings".

⁵⁵ *TLL* III 1736, 11. The same article (l. 30ff.) quotes passages from Vitruvius in which *columen* means "contignatio tecti" (in 4,7,5, *columen* is distinguished from *fastigium*; this distinction is also made in *Obsequens* 41, cited in l. 18f.), but I find it hard to assume that a fourth-century African author of honorific inscriptions could be expected to know technical details of this precision.

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., *ILS* 770 (in honour of Valentinian), *victis superatisque Gothis*.

⁵⁷ *TLL* VI 1, 320, 16ff. (cf. *OLD* s. v. *Fastigium* 4); *TLL* III 1736, 11 (cf. *OLD* s. v. *Columen* 1).

⁵⁸ Umbonius Mannachus, a fourth-century senator (*PLRE* I Mannachus), is in Aeclanum said to have been the *fabricator ex maxima parte etiam civitatis nostrae* (*CIL* IX 1128 = *ILS* 5506, cf. *AE* 2005, 423, an inscription which also attributes *eloquentia* to the honorand); the honorand of the inscription from Beneventum cited in n. 36 is praised among other things as *totius prope civitatis [post h]ostile incendium conditor*.

nonexistent or ruined roofs, a scenario which in my view does not seem very likely. My conclusion is, then, that the author of the text in fact means not roofs but whole buildings, and that he had simply happened to come up with a striking expression for saying this; I thus suggest that the consecutive clause should be translated approximately as "(to the point) that he has both erected and repaired public buildings"

The text now (l. 11ff.) seems to move on to an enarration of the honours resulting from Praeiectus' munificence; unfortunately the details have been lost, as the final lines of the text are no longer legible, but obviously the honours consisted above all of the statue which may well have been described with a few words in the passage now lost.⁵⁹ In any case, what is interesting is that this section is not introduced with a preposition, i.e. with *ob*, *propter* or *pro*,⁶⁰ but with the causal ablative *quibus rebus*. In epigraphical Latin, causal ablatives are in any case extreme rare, and the formulation *quibus rebus* is in fact without a single parallel.⁶¹ This section is, however, striking also because it begins by saying "because of these things (i.e., merits)", these words appearing to be an introduction to an exposition of reciprocal activities of the *ordo*, but then falls back to the subject of the honorand's merits as if the writer of the text had forgotten to include the items now presented – Praeiectus' status, his family and his education – when formulating the previous section devoted precisely to the subject of Praeiectus' merits.

Of some interest in this section is the term *procer* used to define Praeiectus along with the superlative *amplissimus*, for in classical Latin before Juvenal this word was used only in the plural *proceres* ("leading men"); according to the *Thesaurus* (X 2, 1515, 22ff.), the singular is found once in Juvenal,⁶² and then "*raro inde a saec. IV*". As for inscriptions, the Clauss-Slaby database produces 20 results for *procer*, almost all of them in fourth-century and later Christian

⁵⁹ The statue might, for instance, have been described as *aurata*.

⁶⁰ For prepositions introducing similar sections dealing with the consequences of an honorand's benefactions, cf., e.g., *CIL* VI 1736 = *ILS* 1256, *ob quae eadem provincia Africa ... statuam ... postulandam ... esse credit;* *CIL* IX 3160 = *ILS* 6530 *huius propter morum gravem patientiam ...; huius ob merita ordo populusque ...; IAM* II 307, *pro quibus rebus ac moribus et pridem nos Sulpicio Felici decurionatum decrevisse et nunc ... placere erga talem virum non volgata decernere ...*

⁶¹ For *quibus rebus* preceded by the preposition *pro* cf. *IAM* II 307, quoted in the previous note.

⁶² 8,26 *Agnosco procerem! Salve, Gaetulice, seu tu / Silanus* etc.

poetical texts,⁶³ the only earlier instance is in the *carmen* sung at the Severan secular games in 204 (*AE* 1932, 70, p. 22). In most of these texts, the word is used in the plural; it is only in *CIL* VI 41434 = *ILCV* 56 = *CLE* 904 = *ICVR* X 27256 (*procerem*) and *CIL* XII 2115 = *ILCV* 2172 = *CLE* 1445 (*Martini ... proceris*) that one finds it used in the singular. The inscription in honour of Praeiectus is thus the *only* Latin prose inscription in which the term *procer* is used in the singular.

However, the fact that the superlative *amplissimus* ("eminent") is applied to *procer* is also striking. In literary sources, the superlative *amplissimus* is quite commonly used to describe various men of merit at least from Cicero onwards;⁶⁴ but the term comes into use in epigraphical Latin only later, both as a definition of persons and as a definition of institutions. Even in the case of *ordo*, often described as *amplissimus* by Cicero and other authors,⁶⁵ the earlier instances of the senatorial order being described with this attribute do not seem to be earlier than the second century.⁶⁶ As for men described as *amplissimi*, the instances seem to begin in the time of Pius with *CIL* V 532 = *ILS* 6680 = *Inscr. It.* X 4, 31 (Tergeste), a decree concerning the honours of the local senator L. Fabius Severus,⁶⁷ where Severus is once called [*vi*]r *amplissimus adque clarissimus* and once just *amplissimus vir*.⁶⁸ At about the same time, in AD 144, in the famous decree from Sala in Mauretania Tingitana in honour of the prefect M. Sulpicius Felix (*IAM*

⁶³ For the only prose inscription see the *Fasti Polemii Silvii*, *Inscr. It.* XIII 2, p. 270, where we find this notice (based on Plutarch) illustrating July 7: *ancillarum feriae quarum celebritas instituta est ideo quia capto urbe a Gallis cum finitimi prius victi tradi sibi Romanorum procerum coniuges postularent et consilio Philotidis ancillae famulae dominarum vestibis adornatae datae illis fuissent.*

⁶⁴ See *TLL* I 2011, 45ff.

⁶⁵ See *TLL* I 2010, 62ff.

⁶⁶ E. g. *ILS* 1064. 1454. 6772; *CIL* XIV 4548; *CIL* II²/14, 981 = *AE* 1999, 968; *CIL* XII 2452. 2453; *CIL* VIII 27949; *AE* 1956, 124; *ILAFr.* 281; *AE* 1969/70, 595a = *I. Ephesos* 620,

⁶⁷ It must, however, be observed that the style of decrees differs at least until the fourth century from that of "normal" inscriptions.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, the title *amplissimus vir* resurfaces, amplified with *clarissimus*, in Africa in Thubursicu Numidarum in ca. 361, when the proconsul Clodius Hermogenianus (*PLRE* I Olybrius 3) is referred to as *amplissimus et c(larissimus) v(ir)* in two inscriptions (*ILAlg.* II 1229, 1247; Hermogenianus' proconsulate is referred to as *ampli[ssimus] proconsu[latus]* in Calama, *CIL* VIII 5334 = *ILAlg.* I 252).

II 307), the senatorial⁶⁹ governor Uttedius Honoratus is referred to as *amplissimus praeses*. From this time onwards until the Severan period, the superlative *amplissimus* is now and then applied to governors of senatorial rank, whether called *praeses*⁷⁰ or *consul*⁷¹ or *consularis*.⁷² Under Elagabalus, this epithet reaches imperial heights, as it is now applied to the emperor himself, the official titlature of whom includes the item *sacerdos amplissimus dei Invicti Solis Elagabali*.⁷³ But it is only in the fourth century when we can observe this epithet being used more frequently, but only in Africa and applied exclusively to a very special category of persons, namely proconsuls of Africa.⁷⁴ The only exception I have been able to locate is the inscription of Praeiectus we are discussing. We may thus conclude that, among all fourth-century inscriptions from Africa, and in fact among all Latin inscriptions in general, it is *only* Didius Praeiectus who is

⁶⁹ See B. E. Thomasson, *Fasti Africani* (1996) 228f. no. 11; *PIR*² V 1018.

⁷⁰ *CIL* III 1457 = *ILS* 1097, the inscription in honour of M. Claudius Fronto, governor of Dacia under Marcus Aurelius) ending with *amplissim(o) praesidi*.

⁷¹ *AE* 1934, 40 (Thamugadi, reign of Commodus) *M. Valerius Maximianus leg(atus) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore), v(ir) c(larissimus), co(n)s(ul) amplissimus; ILAlg.* II 3604 (reign of Severus Alexander) *ex auct(oritate) ... Martia[l]iani leg(ati) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore), c(larissimi) v(iri), [c]o(n)s(ulis) amplissimi, prae[s]idis et patroni nostri*. The consuls are apparently described as *amplissimi* also in the acts of the Severan *ludi saeculares* (*CIL* VI 32326 l. 5: *an[te] suggestum a[m]plissim[orum] consulum*).

⁷² In African inscriptions, this epithet seems to have been reserved for Q. Anicius Faustus, the famous Severan governor known from a very large number of inscriptions (Thomasson [n. 69] 170–6 no. 50), who is often called *leg(atus) Augg(ustorum) pr(o) pr(aetore), c(larissimus) v(ir), co(n)s(ularis) amplissimus* (there is some variation in this title). Surely it must have been Faustus himself who had insisted on the use of this epithet. In an inscription from Britain (*RIB* 3215), the governor C. Valerius Pudens, attested in AD 205 (A. R. Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain* [2005] 186–8 no. 38), is referred to simply as *amplissimus cosularis* (sic), and it seems probable that this was the title also used of Pudens' successor L. Alfenus Senecio in *RIB* 722 and 723, although in both cases the text breaks off after *amplissimi*; but Senecio is called *consularis* in several British inscriptions (see Birley, op. cit. 188–92 no. 39). Incidentally, Valerius Pudens may have been referred to as *amplissimus* also as praetorian governor of Lower Pannonia, for the inscription *RIU* V 1180 now ends with *[mi]ssus honesta m[issione a] Val(erio) Pudente c(larissimo) v(iro) am[---]*, where the editors supplement *am[pl]issim(o?) praes(ide?)*.

⁷³ Thus, e.g., the military diplomas *CIL* XVI 139ff.; see *PIR*² V 273 p. 148.

⁷⁴ See *CIL* VIII 1358. 5341. 12440. 14398. 14431. 15269. 23124. 25525. 25528. 27571; *ILTun.* 622. 1538b. 1557 (= *AE* 2005, 1691); *AE* 1957, 72; 1968, 602; 2002, 1676; 2006, 1767. Note also *ampl[ssimus] proconsul[atus]* (n. 68).

not of senatorial rank who is referred to as *amplissimus*, a designation to which in his lifetime *only* proconsuls of Africa were entitled.

The rest of the description of Praeiectus, before the text moves on to the mention of the dedicator, consists of the relative clause *quem et laus familiae et eloqui commendat instructio* ("whom the glory of his family as well as his eloquence recommends"), where one observes the elegant phrasing with chiasmus and everything ending in the sought-after clausula consisting of a double cretic. However, one might wonder whether the author should not have thought of a verb not identical with *commendare* which he had already used in l. 6. The author thus both returns to a subject adumbrated earlier (cf. above on *titulis*) and adds a new dimension to Praeiectus' personality, namely his eloquence, a distinction mentioned also in other late-antique inscriptions.⁷⁵ It is of some interest that the author of the text has chosen to use the term *eloquium* rather than its more common synonym *eloquentia*,⁷⁶ as *eloquium*, used (and perhaps invented)⁷⁷ by dactylic poets who cannot accommodate *eloquentia*, is extremely rare in prose inscriptions. In addition to our text, the Claus-Slaby database includes only three prose inscriptions in which this expression is found.⁷⁸ As for the expression *eloqui ... instructio*, it is surely to be interpreted as meaning simply the same as *eloquium/eloquentia*, not, e.g., as implying that Praeiectus' eloquence was based on instruction and training rather than on his

⁷⁵ E. g. *ILS* 1221. 1230. 1237. 1262. 1265. 1274. 1282. 5506 (cf. above n. 58); cf. V. Neri, L'elogio della cultura e l'elogio delle virtù politiche nell'epigrafia latina del IV secolo d. C., *Epigraphica* 43 (1981) 175–201; A. Chastagnol, in A. Donati (ed.), *Atti del convegno La terza età dell'epigrafia* (1988) 54, and, concentrating on the inscription of Praeiectus, N. Tlili, in M. Milanese & al. (eds.), *L'Africa romana* 18 (2010), III, 2047f., an article already referred to above (n. 6). Some of the texts mentioned above include, as the inscription of Praeiectus, references also to the honorand's ancestors (*ILS* 1221: *nobilitas*; 1262: *natales, claritas generis, nobilis*).

⁷⁶ The doctrine found in some grammarians etc. (see *TLL* V 2, 412, 18ff.) according to which there is a difference of meaning between *eloquentia* and *eloquium* does certainly not apply to epigraphical texts.

⁷⁷ Cf. *TLL* V 2, 412, 29–33.

⁷⁸ *CIL* VI 1683 = *ILS* 1221 (in honour of Anicius Paulinus, consul in AD 334), *ob meritum nobilitatis, eloquii, iustitiae atq(ue) censurae*; *CIL* VI 1724 = *ILS* 2950 (AD 435, in honour of Merobaudes the poet), *inter arma litteris militabat et in Alpibus acuebat eloquium* (the text also includes a reference to Merobaudes' *eloquentiae cura*); *CIL* VI 33904 = *ILS* 7773, *D(is) M(anibus) M. Romani Iovini rhetoris eloquii Latini* (the choice of this expression may have been influenced by the fact that the text quoted above is followed immediately by a dactylic poem).

natural abilities; the author just needed an expression to correspond to *laus in laus familiae*.

To conclude, I hope to have shown that this inscription from an insignificant town in Roman Africa contains some features worthy of the attention of at least those scholars who are interested in the peculiarities of the "official" (rather than of the "vulgar") variety of late Latin. Even among late-antique honorific inscriptions, this is in many ways a unique text. As I observed above, this is the *only* Latin inscription saying that the honorand's merits are "remembered" (above at n. 31) and the *only* inscription applying the verb *adornare* to an honorand (above at n. 35); this is also the *only* epigraphical text using the expression *cunabula, -orum* (above at n. 41) and the *only* Latin prose inscription in which the term *procer* appears in the singular (above at n. 63). Among African late-antique inscriptions, this is the *only* one in which the superlative *amplissimus* is used to describe someone who is *not* proconsul of Africa (above at n. 74). As for the honorand being described as *probatissimus*, in this case one can produce one parallel (above at n. 22), and there are two parallels for the use of *bene factum* in the same way as in our text (above at n. 26); but the existence of these parallels does not really affect the impression of uniqueness left by the inscription, an interesting testimony to the aspirations of the persons who wrote the texts of the honorific inscriptions set up in the fourth-century African city of Pheradi.

Proposed translation of the text (based, with a number of modifications, on the translation of Gehn [n. 6]):

(Statue of) Didius Praeictus, priest in perpetuity. To a most worthy and most blameless man, of whose benefactions many and excellent benefits are remembered, whom integrity adorns, whom true faith commends, from whose childhood onwards we have esteemed his generosity imitating that of his forefathers and allowing free play with expenses to the point that he has both erected and repaired public buildings; because of these things, the *ordo* of the most splendid colony of Pheradi Maius has [dedicated (?) ...] to Didius Praeictus, priest in perpetuity, eminent leader of our *curia*, whom the glory of his family as well as his eloquence recommends."