

# CHIRON

MITTEILUNGEN  
DER KOMMISSION FÜR  
ALTE GESCHICHTE UND  
EPIGRAPHIK  
DES DEUTSCHEN  
ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN  
INSTITUTS

*Sonderdruck aus Band 27 · 1997*



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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.<sup>1</sup> 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 [. . .]ato remains of what is presumed to be the honorand's name in one of the two copies. The dedication commemorates the gratitude of a certain L. Julius Aurelius [He]rmogenes 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 dei invicti Solis Elagabali*,<sup>2</sup> the teen-

\* 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: CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, *Extrictatus* = M. CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, *Apostilles à une inscription de Portus: T. Messius Extrictatus et les Sabotarii*, PP 34, 1979, 267–277; DEVIJVER, PME = H. DEVIJVER, *Prosopographia militiarum equestrium quae fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum 1–5*, Leuven 1976–93; HOWE, *Praetorian Prefect* = L. L. HOWE, *The Praetorian Prefect from Commodus to Diocletian (AD 180–305)*, Chicago 1942; PFLAUM, *Carrières* = H. G. PFLAUM, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain I–III*, Paris 1960–61 & *Supplément*, Paris 1983; WHITTAKER, *Herodian* = C. R. WHITTAKER, *Herodian I–II*, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge Mass. 1969–70.

<sup>1</sup> CIL VI 3839 a–b = ILS 1329, as originally read by G. B. DE ROSSI and supplemented with the aid of TH. MOMMSEN. Its reading was later revised and republished as CIL VI 31776 a–b. In addition, a stray fragment of the same provenance, CIL VI 3861 = 31875, has long been recognised to belong to 31776 b (see S. DE RICCI, *The Praefects of Egypt*, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 22, 1900, 382). See CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, *Extrictatus* 270–271 for photographs of two fragments of CIL VI 31776 a.

<sup>2</sup> M. FREY, *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 Emesene god of whom he was a fanatical dedicatee. Therefore, based upon CHRISTIAN HÜLSEN'S versions in CIL VI, 4, 2 (1902), we may restore the texts thus:<sup>3</sup>

CIL VI 31776 a	CIL VI 31776 b + 31875
[[-----]. . . . . ATO.]	[-----]
[-----A S]TVDIS·LEG·LEG·	[-----]A·S[TVDI]S·
[. . . . . cOS C]OMITI·AMICO·	[LEG·LEG·. . . . c]OS·COMITI·
[ <i>fidis</i> SIMO P]RAEF·ANN·	[AMICO <i>fidis</i> ]SIMO·PRAEF·
[[ <i>pontifici</i> CI MINO]RI·PRAEF·PRAET·]	[[ANN· <i>pontifi</i> ]CI·MINORI·]
[[i]MP·CAES·M·A]VRELLI·]	[ p ] R A E F · P R A E T ·
[[ <i>an</i> TONINI PI]I·FELICIS·AVG·]	[i]M·P·CAES·M·AVRELLI·
[[ <i>pontificis</i> ]M AXIMI·]	[[ <i>an</i> ]TONINI·PII·FELICIS·AVG·]
[[SACERDOTIS]AMPLISSIMI·]	[[ <i>pont. max.</i> ]SACERDOTIS·]
[[L·IVL·AVR· <i>be</i> ]RMOGENES·]	[[AMPLISSIMI]L·IVL·AVR·]
[oB INSIGNEM]EIVS·ERGA·SE·	[[ <i>be</i> RMOGENES O]B·INSIGNEM·EIVS·]
[ <i>benevo</i> LEN]TIAM·QVA·	[[ERGA SE <i>benevo</i> ]LENTIAM·QVA·SIBI·]
[SIBI <i>par</i> ]AVIT·IN·	[ <i>par</i> AVIT·IN·]DVLGENTIAM·
[DVLGENTIA]M·SACRAM·	[SACRAM <i>allogu</i> ]II·DIVINI·HONORE·
[ <i>allogu</i> II DIVINI HONORE]	[ <i>obtento obla</i> ]TIS·COMMENTARIS·
[ <i>obtento obla</i> TIS COMMENTARIIS]	[-----]

Assuming that [---]ato represents the end of the honorand's name, record of an honorific epithet – such as the *v(ir) em(inentissimus)* appropriate to a praetorian prefect<sup>4</sup> – 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.*)<sup>5</sup>

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

tulature has been preserved only in military diplomata: CIL XVI 139–141 (ILS 475, 2008, 9058), M. M. ROXAN, *Roman Military Diplomas 1954–1977*, London 1978, 75 and W. ECK, *Ein neues Militärdiplom für die Misene Flotte und Severus Alexanders Rechtsstellung im J. 221/222*, ZPE 108, 1995, 16–17; cf. CIL X 5827 = ILS 473.

<sup>3</sup> Within the brackets indicating the lacunae I have employed capitalised letters to indicate sections attested by either stone, reserving the use of italics for those sections which rely purely upon conjecture.

<sup>4</sup> On the use of this title see O. HIRSCHFELD, *Rangtitel der römischen Kaiserzeit*, SBAW 1901, 584–587 (= *Kleine Schriften*, Berlin 1913, 652–655).

<sup>5</sup> *Optimus* was the most common epithet for a *patronus* in this context in this period, e.g. CIL VIII 7044 (= ILS 1330), III 1464 (= ILS 1370) and XIII 1807 (= ILS 1330), though *incomparabilis* is used in CIL VI 1367 = ILS 1161, a text very close in date to the Esquiline dedications.

Alexander, in a palace coup (11/12 March 222).<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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;<sup>8</sup> the other being a certain Antiochianus, if the untrustworthy author of the *Historia Augusta* can be relied upon in this instance.<sup>9</sup> 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 repute [who] performed the normal functions whoever the ruler might be.»<sup>10</sup> Hence 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.<sup>11</sup> 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

<sup>6</sup> D. KIENAST, *Römische Kaisertabelle: Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*, Darmstadt 1990, 172.

<sup>7</sup> On the centrality of the role of the prefects to imperial government under the principate see F. G. B. MILLAR, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC – AD 337)*, London 1977, 123–31. For a critical survey of the ancient literary tradition relating to Elagabalus' reign and a balanced account of events thereof see FREY (as n. 2) 9–14 and 73–93 respectively.

<sup>8</sup> Cassius Dio [Xiphilinus] 80 [79], 21, 1 & 3, and thus one of the anonymous prefects honoured in CIL VI 323 = ILS 474 by a *b(ene)fic(i)arius pr. pr. [e]m[m.] v[v.]* in 221–222. B. BORGHESI (E. CUQ), *Praefecti praetorio*, in: BORGHESI, *Oeuvres complètes* X, Paris 1896, No 75; PIR<sup>1</sup> III, 1898, 501, incertus 51; A. STEIN, *Der römische Ritterstand*, Munich 1927, 263, 269; PFLAUM, *Carrières II*, 759–762 & *Supplément*, 74, No 293; WHITTAKER, *Herodian II*, 71 n. 2; cf. M. DURRY, *Les cohortes prétoriennes*, Paris 1938, 180 n. 5; A. PASSERINI, *Le coorti pretorie*, Rome 1939, 323–324, No 72; G. BARBIERI, *L'albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino*, AD 193–285, Rome 1952, 235, No 1202, who ascribes his prefecture simply to the reign of Elagabalus, and HOWE, *Pretorian Prefect*, 74, No 31 and W. ENSSLIN, RE 22, 2, 1954, s.v. *Praefectus praetorio*, col. 2424, who are positively cautious about declaring him the colleague of Antiochianus.

<sup>9</sup> *Vita Elagabali* 14, 7; cf. the comments of HOWE, *Pretorian Prefect*, Appendix II.F, 112–114. E. BIRLEY, *Some militaria in the Historia Augusta*, in: J. STRAUB (ed.), *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1966/67*, Bonn 1968, 47–48 surveys the appropriately-named individuals of the Severan age, though the position of the «Antiochene» as an associate of the «Syrian» might counsel caution.

<sup>10</sup> R. SYME, *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta*, Oxford 1971, 145.

<sup>11</sup> M. T. W. ARNHEIM, *Third Century Praetorian Prefects of Senatorial Origin: Fact or Fiction?*, *Athenaeum* n. s. 49, 1971, 87.

palatine office *a studiis* (i.e. the emperor's chief literary aide).<sup>12</sup> He, apparently, progressed (extraordinarily) to the senatorial post of legate (of an unknown legion), which itself implies an adlection to the senate *inter praetorios*,<sup>13</sup> before (according to MOMMSEN's reasonable supplement) taking up the fasces as a suffect consul<sup>14</sup> and being honoured as *comes*, carrying the specific implication that he was a fellow-member of the imperial retinue on its provincial travels,<sup>15</sup> as well as *amicus fidissimus*, i.e. a regular member of the imperial *consilium*.<sup>16</sup> 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 Julia 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, Varius 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 was 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 Raphanea in Phoenicia in May 218, and Macrinus defeated (probably at Immae) 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

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the rôle of the *a studiis*, which is not exactly certain, see B. KÜBLER, RE 4 A. 1, 1931, s.v. *a studiis*, cols. 397–398; MILLAR (as n. 7) 205. A translation of the title into Greek as ἐπί τῆς παιδείας in IG XIV 1085 = IGR I 136 = OGIS 679, as MILLAR points out, is somewhat more illuminating. But cf. PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 761, who considered the *a studiis* as «directeur des recherches d'ordre juridique».

<sup>13</sup> Although this is not mentioned in the Esquiline dedications, it is to be inferred as necessary from the fact that legionary command was reserved to those senators with the standing of ex-praetors (as is made explicit in the case of C. Salvius Liberalis Nonius Bassus: CIL IX 5533 = ILS 311); cf. STEIN (as n. 8) 269.

<sup>14</sup> The consulship is necessarily suffect because the only possibility amongst the *ordinarii* of Elagabalus' reign is C. Vettius Gratus Sabinianus, *cos.* 220 (PIR<sup>1</sup> V 331), whose noble ancestry (cf. PIR<sup>1</sup> V 322, 328–331, 339, with stemma p. 412) makes a tenure of the equestrian palatine office *a studiis* unlikely, to say the least.

<sup>15</sup> The nature of the *comitiva Augusti* is discussed by H. HALFMANN, *Itinera principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im römischen Reich*, Stuttgart 1986, 92–103.

<sup>16</sup> On which see J. A. CROOK, *Consilium Principis. Imperial councils and counsellors from Augustus to Diocletian*, Cambridge 1955, 21–30, though ...atus himself is missing from CROOK's catalogue of *amici principis* (op. cit. 148–190).

her daughter, Elagabalus' mother, Soaemias.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

From the literary record one might easily gain the impression that the bestowal 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 collocation of offices presented by ...atus' career has only reinforced this impression.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, in the opinion of JOHN CROOK, the period was «in the serious business of governing the empire ... a mere lacuna».<sup>20</sup> Certainly the teenage emperor's fanatical dedication to Elagabal 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*.<sup>21</sup> This evil reputation was no doubt officially

<sup>17</sup> E. KETTENHOFEN, *Die syrischen Augustae in der historischen Überlieferung. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Orientalisierung*, Bonn 1979, 33–36. Just how much the ladies of the Severan house dominated the new regime is evident from a dedication of 218 from Lambaesis, CIL VIII 2564 = ILS 470: [[*pro salute imp. Caes. M. Aurelli Antonini pii fel. Aug. pont. max. III*]] | *p. trib. pot. cos. | procons. divi Magni | Antonini fil., divi Pii | Severi nepoti et* [[*Iuliae | Maesae [Aug. avi]ae*]] *Aug. | n. matris castrorum | et senatus et* [[*Iuliae So | aemiadis Bassianae*]] *Aug. | [matris] Aug. [n.]* . . .

<sup>18</sup> Cassius Dio 79, 4, 1–80, 8, 3, for which section we possess the original, occasionally lacunose, text; cf. Herodian 4,12,1 – 5,5,2. The relevant *vitae* of the *Historia Augusta*, 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 II<sup>e</sup> et III<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1994, lii–liix. See F. G. B. MILLAR, *The Roman Near East 31 BC – AD 337*, Princeton 1993, 144–147 for a consolidated narrative of these events.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. the commentary of E. BORMANN and G. HENZEN, CIL VI.1, Berlin 1876, 3839, «... huicque aetati [sc. Elagabali] convenit quod officia equestria et senatoria confusa sunt.» cf. H. DESSAU, ILS I, Berlin 1892, 1329 (p. 296) n. 1, «Nota confusionem honorum senatorium et equestrium, a temporibus Elagabali non alienam», followed by DÜRRY (as n. 8) 180 n. 5, who said of this inscription «elle semble refléter l'époque de désarroi où sévit Elagabal», and S. N. MILLER, *The Army and the Imperial House*, chapter 1 in: S. A. COOK – F. E. ADCOCK – M. P. CHARLESWORTH – N. H. BAYNES (edd.), *The Cambridge Ancient History XII. The Imperial Crisis and Recovery A.D. 193–324*, 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. annon.* and the minor pontificate to be senatorial posts.

<sup>20</sup> CROOK (as n. 16) 86, who disdained to discuss the period at all on this basis, considering that only «with men like Ulpian and Dio [do] we return to serious administration».

<sup>21</sup> Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80 [79], 11, 1–29, 3. Aurelius Victor, *de Caes.* 23, 1–3 and the *Epitome de Caesaribus* 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 *impudicissime at obscenissime*

encouraged in order to make Severus Alexander, under whom Dio was writing, look better by contrast.<sup>22</sup> In this light, Herodian, writing in the late 240s, was able to misinterpret Dio's text to attribute to one of Elagabalus' prefects the original profession of dancer.<sup>23</sup> Dio indignantly complains of the undue influence of Elagabalus' male lover, the freedman Hierocles, but of irregular appointments he reports (besides the rapid promotion of two military officers as a reward for services rendered in support of his usurpation) only one: Aurelius Zoticus, an athlete and cook's son from Smyrna, chosen as chamberlain because of his reputed sexual prowess.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it should be noted, Zoticus is not, as might have been expected, attested as a freedman and was nominated to a palatine, not a public, post. In contrast Herodian talks in generalised and exaggerated terms of favourite slaves and freedmen being appointed to the government of consular provinces.<sup>25</sup> It need hardly be said that this was fertile ground for the imagination of the author of the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>26</sup> Thus viewed through the distorting prism of the later his-

*vixit*. Cf. Festus' *Breviarium*, which is so compressed that, given the lack of serious military or political events of long-term significance, Elagabalus' reign does not even earn a mention.

<sup>22</sup> Cassius Dio's history culminates, after a brief synopsis of Alexander's reign, in AD 229 with the historian's own second consulship (a rare honour which implies especial favour and closeness to the regime), which suggests a date for its completion soon thereafter. On the chronology of its composition see T.D. BARNES, *The Composition of Cassius Dio's Roman History*, Phoenix 38, 1984, 251–253. That Dio continuously refers to Elagabalus by the scornful names Pseudantoninus or Sardanapalus, is symptomatic of the «official» line which he represents at this point.

<sup>23</sup> Herodian, 5, 7, 6–8, refers to the appointment of a dancer (ὄρχηστής) who had performed publicly in the Roman theatre (δημοσίᾳ ἐν τῷ Ῥωμαίων θεάτρῳ ὄρχησάμενον) to the prefecture «of the camps», a claim which must arise from Cassius Dio's remark, at 80, 4, 1, that the cognomen of Valerius Comazon who was appointed to the praetorian prefecture in 218 (on which see further n.27 below) was typical of characters in comedy and mime. On the likely date of the composition of Herodian's history see WHITTAKER, *Herodian* I, xiv–xix, whose favourable judgement of Herodian's accuracy (op. cit. xxxix) I cannot entirely share. Cf. G. ALFÖLDY's highly sceptical view of Herodian's quality in, e.g., *Zeitgeschichte und Krisenempfindung bei Herodian*, *Hermes* 99, 1971, 431 (= *Die Krise des römischen Reiches*, Stuttgart 1989, 273) n.3, and the more moderate line taken by G. W. BOWER-SOCK, *Herodian and Elagabalus*, *YClS* 24, 1975, 429–449.

<sup>24</sup> On Hierocles see Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80[79], 15, 1–16, 1; 80[79], 16, 6 and 19, 3–21, 1; for Zoticus *a cubiculo*, Dio [Xiph.] 80 [79], 16, 1–6. Claudius Pollio, the centurion who arrested Macrinus' son Diadumenianus, was adlected *inter consulares* and sent to the governorship of Germania Inferior (Dio 79, 40, 1; 80, 2, 4 & 3, 1, cf. *CIL* XIII 6807) and, in what the historian considered to be the greatest breach of precedent, P. Valerius Comazon received a rapid promotion to praetorian prefect and was subsequently consul and thrice urban prefect (Dio 80, 4, 1–2). Dio [Xiph.] 80[79], 21, 1, complained of the conduct of the Emesene, Aurelius Eubulus, as *procurator summarum rationum* but not, as far as we know, his appointment, though admittedly the latter part of Elagabalus' reign survives only in epitome.

<sup>25</sup> Herodian 5, 7, 7.

<sup>26</sup> In particular the generalisations by the Scriptor at *Vita Elagabali* 6, 1–2 and 11, 1. It is symptomatic that out of the brief episode of Zoticus reported by Cassius Dio, the author

toriography, modern scholars have been all too ready to accept a bizarre career as possible, or even characteristic, of Elagabalus' reign.<sup>27</sup> That Elagabalus was «ein typischer Orientale» was apparently sufficient explanation for HERMANN BENGTON.<sup>28</sup> This prejudice has not left even exponents of that supposedly dispassionate science, prosopography, unaffected.<sup>29</sup>

It was against this background that HANS-GEORG PFLAUM, in the first attempt at a detailed analysis, explained ...atus' career in his *Carrières procuratoriennes équestres* of 1960, understanding all his attested offices, from *a studiis* onwards, to belong to the reign of Elagabalus.<sup>30</sup> Regarding ...atus to have been of Syrian origin and thus presumably favoured by the household of Iulia Maesa,<sup>31</sup> he placed the office of *a studiis* in the period from July 218. He considered, surely rightly, that ...atus' legateship was a result of the specific historical circumstances of 218

of the HA constructs a major influential and corrupting figure in Elagabalus' reign (Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80[79], 16, 1–6; cf. *Vita Elagabali* 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 *comes* (Protogenes, surely inspired by Caligula's notorious freedman: Dio [Xiph.] 59, 26, 1–2 & 60, 4, 5; though cf. T.D. BARNES, *Ultimus Antoninorum*, in: J. STRAUB [ed.], *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium* 1970, Bonn 1972, 58–59) and *praef. vigilum* (Cordius), a dancer as praetorian prefect, a barber as *praef. annonae* (Claudius) and a mule-driver, courier and locksmith as *procuratores XX hereditatum*; cf. WHITTAKER, *Herodian* II, 63 n.3 and BARNES, op. cit. 56–57, who accept, at least partly, the accuracy of this account.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. the commentary of A. R. BIRLEY, *Septimius Severus: the African Emperor*, London 1971, 276, since revised in the second edition (London 1988), 193. Note especially the treatment of the career of P. Valerius Comazon by M. BESNIER, *L'Empire romain de l'avènement des Sévères au Concile de Nicée*, Paris 1937, 79, 85 n.207, and MILLER (as n.19) 53–54, who compounded the farrago in the *Historia Augusta* with fictions of their own; an interpretation which unfortunately persists in, e.g., WHITTAKER, *Herodian* II, 64 n.1, BARNES (as n.26) 70, and M. GRANT, *The Severans: the Changed Roman Empire*, London 1996, 26. Cf. PASSERINI (as n.8) 322–323, No 71, HOWE (as n.8) Appendix II.B, 97–100, PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 752–756, No 290 and, most lately and fully, KETTENHOFEN (as n.17) 29–32, for a reasoned account.

<sup>28</sup> H. BENGTON, *Republik und Kaiserzeit bis 284 n. Chr.*, Munich 1967, 374; cf. GRANT (as n.27) 24–25.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., BARNES (as n.26) 67 explicitly adduces ...atus' career as illustration of the claim in the *Vita Elagabali* that the emperor enrolled individuals in the senate «sine discriminatione aetatis, census, generis» (6.2).

<sup>30</sup> PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 756–762, No 293, followed by H. PAVIS D'ESCURAC, *Le préfecture de l'annone: service administratif impérial d'Auguste à Constantin*, Rome 1976, 360. However, P. VON ROHDEN & H. DESSAU had offered no estimate of the timescale of ...atus' career in *PIR*<sup>1</sup> III, incertus 51, though BARBIERI (as n.8) 235, No 1202, considered his cursus to belong «certo sotto Elagabalo».

<sup>31</sup> PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 762 & III, 996, No 293, pointing out in support that the nomina of ...atus' client Hermogenes are strongly indicative of an Emesene or Palmyrene origin (cf. D. SCHLUMBERGER, *Les gentilices romains Palmyréniens*, *BEO* 1942/43, 52–82 and H. SEYRIG, *Uranius Antonin. Une question d'authenticité*, *RN* VI<sup>e</sup> série 1, 1958, 56 n.1).

and thus should be located in Syria, specifically with either the legion III Scythica or the III Gallica, whose loyalty was dubious in the light of the revolt of their commanders in the winter of 218/219.<sup>32</sup> Hence ...atus' loyal service was recognised by his title *amicus fidissimus*. The consulship, he thought, also belonged to 218 (thus necessarily *suffect* and *in absentia*), being a measure designed to reinforce ...atus' authority with the troops. Having presumably arrived in Rome in Elagabalus' train by early autumn 219,<sup>33</sup> ...atus was then favoured with the subsequent promotions as *praefectus annonae* and *praetorio*.

The crucial weakness of PFLAUM's interpretation was his claim that, «malgré son commandement d'une légion dans une province à gouverneur sénatorial et malgré son consulat, ...atus continue à être chevalier».<sup>34</sup> 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 «honorary» so that it did not confer or imply senatorial membership, seems unacceptable. It would certainly be unprecedented.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, PFLAUM stressed that, ignoring the interlude as legate and consul, ...atus' career from palatine office to *praefectus annonae* and then *praetorio*, did progress in a regular manner, including the lesser pontificate.<sup>36</sup> In fact, PFLAUM's own works demonstrate that the *a studiis* was not amongst the top rank of palatine officials and would not normally expect to advance to the prefecture of the grain

<sup>32</sup> Cassius Dio 80,7,1. The III Gallica was even temporarily disbanded as a punishment; on which see E. DABROWA, The commanders of Syrian legions, 1st–3rd c. AD, in: D. L. KENNEDY (ed.), *The Roman Army in the East*, Ann Arbor 1996, 278.

<sup>33</sup> HALFMANN (as n.15) 231, favours July/August for Elagabalus' arrival. CIL VI 31162 = 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 FREY (as n.2) 73–93, 101–106.

<sup>34</sup> PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 761.

<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, following PFLAUM'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.

<sup>36</sup> The promotion from a palatine officium to the prefecture of the *amona* and an accompanying enrolment as a *pontifex minor* is quite well paralleled in the later second and early third centuries: M. Petronius Honoratus, *proc. a rationibus, pontif. minor, praef. annon.*, before AD 147, (CIL XIV 4458; PIR<sup>1</sup> P 207; PFLAUM, *Carrières* I, 283–286, No 117; DEVIJVER, *PME* 2, P 24); L. Volusius Maecianus, *a libellis et a censibus, pontif. minor, praef. annon.*, c.152/161 (CIL XIV 5347; PIR<sup>1</sup> V 657; PFLAUM, *Carrières* I, 333–336, No 141; DEVIJVER, *PME* 2, V 133); Anonymus, *ab epistulis, a libellis, a rationibus, praef. annon., pontif. minor*, probably between 169 and 198 (*AnnEpigr* 1960, 163 & 164; PFLAUM, *Carrières* III, 994, No 271; DEVIJVER, *PME* 2, incertus 255); cf. PAVIS D'ESCURAC (as n.30) 70–71; but identified with Dioga, *praef. vigilum* c.213/217, by M. CHRISTOL, *Un fidèle de Caracalla: Q. Marcus Dioga*, *CCG* 2, 1991, 165–188.

supply, let alone the praetorian prefecture.<sup>37</sup> But, of course, is not the unexpected to be expected of Elagabalus?

There might, nevertheless, be another way of explaining ...atus' promotion into the senate as illusory. For, the letters ...os following the lacuna in line 3 of CIL VI 31776 b, from which the consulship has been surmised, could be understood as referring to *ornamenta consularia* (i.e. restoring, [...ornament. c]os.),<sup>38</sup> which were an established honour for the praetorian prefects<sup>39</sup> and, furthermore, were extended to those in lesser prefectures in the later Severan period.<sup>40</sup> Since such *ornamenta* alone did not confer actual membership of the senate,<sup>41</sup> 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 *leg(atu)s leg(ionis)*, as engraved, might be understood as standing in the place of the correct equestrian title for legionary command, *praefectus legionis*; the consequence of technical inexactitude on Hermogenes' part.<sup>42</sup> Analogous examples of an equestrian official being erroneously credited with the title of the

<sup>37</sup> The tables of H.-G. PFLAUM, *Essai sur les procureurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*, Paris 1950, 255, 292; show that an *a studiis* might except to advance to a *cognitionibus, ab epistulis* or a *libellis* and (*op. cit.* 257, cf. 294–295) that the palatine office which most regularly gave access to the *praefectura annonae* was a *rationibus*, less often a *libellis* (see previous note), but that, apart from ...atus, not a single *a studiis* is known to have been so favoured.

<sup>38</sup> cf. CIL XII 5842 = ILS 1321: *ornam[ent]is consular[is]*, in honour of Sex. Afranius Burrus and CIL V 3340 = ILS 1336: *ornamentis consularibus*, for P. Graecinius Laco, both of the Julio-Claudian period, for the order, if not the level of abbreviation. Note, however, the word-order of CIL IX 5358 = ILS 1325: *consularibus ornamentis ornato*, for M. Gavius Maximus under Pius, and CIL VI 31828 = ILS 1326: *consularibus ornamentis honorato*, for M. Bassaeus Rufus c. AD 180, both of which are closer in date to the Esquiline texts.

<sup>39</sup> STEIN (as n.8) 246–247; B. RÉMY, *Ornati et ornamenta quaestoria, praetoria et consularia* sous le Haut Empire romain, *REA* 78/79, 1976/77, 166–170; R. SYME, *The Guard Prefects of Trajan and Hadrian*, *JRS* 70, 1980, 76–77 (= *Roman Papers* III, No 90, 1294–1296).

<sup>40</sup> For an ex-*praefectus vigilum* who probably received senatorial *ornamenta*, see *AnnEpigr* 1969/70, 193, as analysed by M. CHRISTOL, *La carrière de Q. Cerellius Apollinaris, préfet des vigiles de Caracalla*, in: J. TRÉHEUX (ed.), *Mélanges d'histoire ancienne offerts à William Seston*, Paris 1974, 126; PFLAUM, *Carrières*, Supplément, 59–62, No 237 A; but cf. CHASTAGNOL (as n.35) 120, who considers Apollinaris to have benefitted from an adlection *inter praetorios*. On the general inflation of honours and titles amongst the high equestrian officials, especially between 207 and 223, see F. GROSSO, *Ricerche su Plauziano e gli avvenimenti del suo tempo*, *RAL* 23, 1968, 24 n.97, PAVIS D'ESCURAC (as n.30) 60–61 and M. CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI – F. ZEVY, *Revisions et nouveautés pour trois inscriptions d'Ostie*, *MEFRA* 88, 1976, 626 n.2.

<sup>41</sup> R. J. A. TALBERT, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, Princeton 1984, 366; CHASTAGNOL (as n.35) 221–222.

<sup>42</sup> 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. BALTZ, *Apamea 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.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, a similar lapicidal or drafting error, which replaced *proc(urator)* for *praef(ectus) alimentorum* has proved the most convincing explanation for another famous, apparently mixed, senatorial and equestrian *cursus*; namely, that of T. Aius Sanctus under Commodus.<sup>44</sup> However, despite the attractiveness of the interpretation of this stage of ...atus career as *praefectus legionis, ornamentis 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, epithet of the legion and even a severe abbreviation of *ornamentis*. 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 praetorian prefect at Alexandria sometime in the reign of Elagabalus' successor, Severus Alexander.<sup>45</sup> 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 *patroni c(larissimi) v(iri)* of Canusium in Apulia and who was thus alive and well in AD 223.<sup>46</sup> ARTHUR STEIN, therefore, swiftly and rightly rejected the identification with Honoratus because ...atus

<sup>43</sup> Note the discussion of Aedinius Iulianus *leg. Aug. prov. Lugd.* in 220 (CIL XIII 3162, side I, 21) by H.-G. PFLAUM, *Le marbre de Thorigny*, Paris 1948, 35, and now the case of Aurelius Basileus (plausibly the *praefectus Aegypti* 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 *praeses provinciae* (AnnEpigr 1989, 730) – the latter title being a shorthand for the more correct *praeses pro legato* (cf. AnnEpigr 1989, 911). Cf. also the list of second/third-century equestrian governors with their attested titles in PFLAUM (as n. 37) 114–115.

<sup>44</sup> AnnEpigr 1961, 280; cf. PFLAUM, *Carrières III*, 1001–1006, No 178 bis; W.ECK, RE Suppl. 14, 1974, cols. 40–41, s. v. Aius 2; M. CORBIER, *L'aerarium Saturni et l'aerarium militare: administration et prosopographie sénatoriale*, Rome 1974, 290–296, No 58.

<sup>45</sup> CIL III 12052, cf. 14 127: *Honoratum praef. praetor(io) em(inentissimum) v(irum), Pacilius Tychianus c(enturio) leg. II Tr(aianae) F(ortis) G(ermanicae) Sever(ianae)*; DE RICCI (as n. 1) 382.

<sup>46</sup> P.Oxy. 62 recto, line 2 and CIL IX 338 (= ILS 6121) = M. CHELOTTI – R. GAETA – V. MORIZIO – M. SILVESTRINI (edd.), *Le epigrafi romane di Canosa I*, Bari 1985, 35, col. I, line 6. On Honoratus' career see now DEVIJVER, PME 5, 2090–2091, D 22 bis.

never held the prefecture of Egypt and was, in all likelihood, executed along with Elagabalus in March 222.<sup>47</sup>

## II. [Extric]atus

However, another possibility was opened up by the discovery in 1959 on the site of ancient Portus of an inscription naming a certain Messius Extricus as *v(ir) p(erfectissimus) praef(ectus) ann(onae)* and dated precisely to *xv kal(endas) octobr(es) Faustino et Rufino co(n)s(ulibus)*, that is 17 September AD 210.<sup>48</sup> For, in his notice of the publication in *L'Année épigraphique* for 1977, PFLAUM suggested that this *praefectus annonae* should be identified with T. Messius Extricus *consul ordinarius (posterior)* in AD 217, whose career was otherwise unknown but whose extraction was probably Tripolitanian.<sup>49</sup> It had already been noted that this consulship probably belonged to an ex-equestrian official who had been previously granted the *ornamenta consularia*, seeing that there appeared to be some contemporary ambiguity as to whether his ordinary consulship should be counted as an iteration or not.<sup>50</sup> For in some contemporary documents he is credited as *cos. II*, in others not.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, it should be observed that, had Extricus' consulship in 217 been a genuine second one, his colleague, C. Bruttius Praesens, cer-

<sup>47</sup> A. STEIN, RE 5.1, 1903, s. v. Domitius 62, col. 1428, supported by HOWE, *Pretorian Prefect* 74.

<sup>48</sup> G. IACOPI, *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 5–6 August 1959, 3 = A. D'ORS, *Epigrafia jurídica griega y romana*, VI (1957–1959), SDHI 26, 1960, 480; O. TESTAGUZZA, *Portus*, Rome 1970, 75–76.

<sup>49</sup> AnnEpigr 1977, 171; cf. W.ECK, RE Suppl. 15, 1978, cols. 289–290, s. v. Messius 6a, and L. PETERSEN in PIR<sup>2</sup> V.2, Berlin 1983, M 518. Extricus' praenomen is provided by the record of additions to the college of Arval Brethren in the dating of Macrinus' co-optation (CIL VI 1984 = ILS 5025, lines 14–17): *C. Bruttio Praesente, T. Messio Extricato II cos.* Latin cognomina ending in *-atus* are a predominantly African phenomenon and Gigthis in Tripolitania exhibits a family of notable Messii in the second century; CIL VIII 22720 (= IRT 31), 22729 (= ILAfr. 22), 22741, cf. also IRT 29 from Sabratha; on all of whom see the comments of H.-G. PFLAUM, AnnEpigr 1977, p. 45, R. SYME, *Donatus and the Like*, *Historia* 27, 1978, 588–603, esp. 596 (= *Roman Papers III*, No 79, 1105–1119, 1112) and again PFLAUM, *Carrières*, Supplément, 73–74, No 293.

<sup>50</sup> H. DESSAU in PIR<sup>1</sup> II, Berlin 1897, M 372, and BARBIERI (as n. 8) No 372, hesitated between presuming prior *ornamenta* or suffect consulship. W. KROLL, RE 15.1, 1913, col. 1244, s. v. Messius 7, and A. DEGRASSI, *I fasti consolari dell'impero romano dal 30 avanti Cristo al 613 dopo Cristo*, Rome 1952, 206, on the other hand, both preferred a suffect consulship in an unknown year. M. PEACHIN, *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology*, AD 235–284, Amsterdam 1990, 52, certainly reckons Extricus' dubious iteration to rest upon *ornamenta*.

<sup>51</sup> Lists of the attestations of both variants of the consular formula for AD 217 can be found in W.ECK, *Beobachtungen zu kaiserlichen Beauftragten der Alimentarinstitution*, ZPE 18, 1975, 94 n. 24 and PIR<sup>2</sup> M 518, p. 260. The parallel with the uncertainty over the status of the iterations of Q. Maecius Laetus *cos. «II»* in 215, M. Opellius Macrinus and M. Oclatinus Adventus *cos. «II»* in 218 and P. Valerius Comazon *cos. «II»* in 220, the last

tainly a patrician but still consul for the first time only, ought to have ceded precedence to him.<sup>52</sup> It seemed thus a simple step for MIREILLE CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, with the evident encouragement of PFLAUM,<sup>53</sup> to identify Extricator, equestrian *praefectus annonae* of 210, the subsequent holder of consular *ornamenta* and then ordinary consulship in 217, with ...atus the praetorian prefect of Elagabalus.<sup>54</sup> According to this hypothesis T. Messius Extricator 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 minores*. 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 Raetian expedition of 213, then this would indeed put Extricator in the company of C. Iulius Avitus Alexianus, *comes imp. Antonini in Germania*, husband of Iulia Maesa and grandfather of the future emperor Elagabalus.<sup>55</sup> Messius Extricator must next, she proposes, have been adlected *inter consulares*<sup>56</sup> before assuming the ordinary consulship for 217,<sup>57</sup> 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 Antiochianus, with whom he was to die in March 222. Indeed, this apparently attractive identification has received general consent.<sup>58</sup>

three of whom Cassius Dio specifically states (79,13,1; 80,4,2) had received prior *ornamenta*, is compelling.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricator, 273 n. 15, who claimed «On doit pas s'étonner que Brutius Praesens, bien que consul pour la première fois, soit cité en premier car de toutes façons étant patricien il était supérieur en dignité à son collègue, cos. «II».

<sup>53</sup> CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricator, 267, 272 n. 11 and 273 n. 13.

<sup>54</sup> CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricator, 272–274. That Extricator 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. PFLAUM, *Titulature et rang social sous le Haut-Empire*, in: C. NICOLET [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, 25–26 avril 1969, Paris 1970, 177–178).

<sup>55</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> I 192; HALFMANN (as n. 15) 251, Appendix No 70.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. HALFMANN (as n. 15) 251, Appendix No 72, who thus restores [*adlecto inter c*]os. in line 3 of CIL VI 31776 b, surely mistakenly.

<sup>57</sup> Even if Messius Extricator's 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, Extricator, 273 n. 15) preclude its referring to a second consulship, because this is not always indicated in this class of epigraphy.

<sup>58</sup> Reported without dissent in *AnnEpigr* 1979, 95. PFLAUM, *Carrières*, Supplément, 72–75, completely rewrote his entry for No 293 (T. Messius Extricator, previously ...atus; cf. *Carrières* II, 756–62 & III, 996) in the light of this identification, which is also registered by PETERSEN in PIR<sup>2</sup> M 518, p. 260. PFLAUM (op. cit.) 73 went as far as to say «C'est le mér-

However, problems subsist. Indeed CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI conceded «notre démonstration comporte, et nous en sommes consciente, des points faibles», specifically, that Extricator is the only praetorian prefect known to have held a consulship prior to the prefecture.<sup>59</sup> 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 Extric]ator's career requires us to ignore the word-order of the twin dedications from the Esquiline.<sup>60</sup> This is problematic because, if the drafter 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.<sup>61</sup> This might have produced, for example: [...ato, cos., pontifici minori, comiti amico fidissimo, praef. praet. imp. Caes. M. Aurelli Antonini pii felicit Aug. pont. max. sacerdotis amplissimi, praef. 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 prefectures 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*, *praef. ann.*, *praef. praet.*). Nevertheless, PFLAUM was prepared to ignore these difficulties for the sake of an identification of

ite de Mme M. Gervasoni-Cébeillac et M. F. Zevi d'avoir reconnu que l'on devait restituer à l'énigmatique -atus son nom complet et d'avoir résolu les problèmes que soulevait cette identification». Extricator is duly entered as a *comes* of Caracalla in HALFMANN (as n. 15) 251, Appendix No 72, and the consequent reconstruction of the career has been accepted by P. M. M. LEUNISSEN, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander (180–235 n. Chr.)*, Amsterdam 1989, 66–67. G. ALFÖLDY, *Die Stellung der Ritter in der Führungsgeschichte des Imperium Romanum*, Chiron 11, 1981, 187 (= *Die römische Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart 1986, 180), uses M. CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI's Extricator as the basis for arguing an increase in legionary legate's pay under the Severans to HS 200,000, though, even then, Extricator has to remain a special case (ALFÖLDY, op. cit. 187 n. 95).

<sup>59</sup> CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricator, 274 with n. 23.

<sup>60</sup> CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricator, 274, cf. 272 n. 10: «Nous n'insisterons pas sur l'évident étrangeté de ce cursus, car l'ordre dans lequel sont citées les fonctions remplies par [...ato] est sans conteste invraisemblable. Le mélange des charges et prétrise de rang équestre ... et sénatoriales ... oblige de toutes façons à envisager une remise en ordre si on veut comprendre cette carrière.»

<sup>61</sup> For parallels see G. WALSER, *Römische Inschriftkunst: römische Inschriften für den akademischen Unterricht und als Einführung in die lateinische Epigraphik*<sup>2</sup>, Stuttgart 1983, 54–59, Nos 16–18, and K. PAASCH ALMAR, *Inscriptiones Latinae*, Odense 1990, 247–297.

...atus with Extricatus.<sup>62</sup> 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 Extricatus, *praef. ann.* in 210, *cos.* in 217.

A second objection to the creation of [Extric]atus 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 consulares* (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.<sup>63</sup> 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 Extricatus' candidacy must yet again be excluded by this consideration.<sup>64</sup> A lesser objection is the difficulty of discovering plausible circumstances under which Caracalla would have resorted to appointing his chief literary aide to the command of a legion, whether as a senator or not. None of the scenarios offered by CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI for the period 211–217<sup>65</sup> 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 Extricatus] 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 [- - -]atus; il n'existe pas un autre personnage, sinon T. Messius Extricatus». For that there is no better candidate known to us is *not* an argument in favour of identification with T. Messius Extricatus. 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

<sup>62</sup> PFLAUM, *Carrières*, Supplément, 74–75: «La place insolite de la préfecture de l'annone et du pontificat mineur, continuent à embarrasser, mais tout compte fait, on préféra n'avoir affaire qu'à un seul personnage T. Messius Extricatus».

<sup>63</sup> This is amply demonstrated by the list of *comites Augusti* in HALFMANN (as n. 15) 245–253. For the formality of the process of admission see AnnEpigr 1949, 38, a dedication to Q. Aemilius Pudens who was (lines 5–6) [*ad]lecto in comitatu imp. | [Com]modi Aug.*

<sup>64</sup> Though PFLAUM, cited by CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricatus, 273 n. 17, considered that [Extric]atus' title of *comes, amicus fidissimus* might plausibly relate to Caracalla, given Messius Extricatus' rapid ascension from *praef. annon.* to *cos.* «II» in only seven years.

<sup>65</sup> CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI, Extricatus, 273 n. 16, suggesting Caracalla's Raetian expedition of 213, Gothic campaign of 214 or Parthian campaign of 215. See HALFMANN (as n. 15) 223–230, for details of the travels of Caracalla.

the evidence of only three surviving letters, if the cognomen were Latin, then an African origin might plausibly be ventured, which would hardly make him untypical of the age.<sup>66</sup> Since ...atus need no longer belong to the *gens Messia* however, a Greek cognomen (e.g., [Callistr]atus vel sim.) and an eastern origin, according with that of his client Hermogenes, is once again a distinct possibility.<sup>67</sup>

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, praef. annonae*, enrolled as a *pontifex minor* as well as appointed *praefectus praetorio* under Elagabalus. Conversely there is no need to assume, as did PFLAUM originally, that his service as a *studiis* or his appointments as *legatus legionis* and *consul* (necessarily *suffect* now that Extricatus is excluded) belong 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 *studiis* towards the end of the reign of Caracalla and thus a familiar of the Severan imperial household, including Iulia Maesa and her daughter Soemias,<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> In any event ...atus' service as a *studiis* 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.<sup>70</sup> Now it is significant that in his account of the rebellions of the legates [- - -]s Verus, of the legion III Gallica (in Syria Phoenice), and Gellius Maximus, of the IIII Scythica (in Coele Syria), against Elagabalus in the winter of 217/218, Cassius Dio digresses on the extraordinary nature of their appointments and adlection into the senate.<sup>71</sup> Verus, he remarks, was promoted di-

<sup>66</sup> On the African predominance amongst those with cognomina in -atus see above n. 49 and for a list of Africans at high levels in the Severan period see BIRLEY 1971 (as n. 27) App. III, 327–358.

<sup>67</sup> As H.-G. PFLAUM originally proposed (see above n. 31). I am grateful to Prof. A. R. BIRLEY for reminding me of this possibility.

<sup>68</sup> Cassius Dio 79,30,3, explicitly states that Maesa lived with her sister the empress Iulia Domna (Caracalla's mother), who was at Antioch when Caracalla was murdered (79,23,1), whence Macrinus ordered them to be expelled and to return to their *patria*, Emesa (79,23,5–6; 79,30,3); cf. KIENAST (as n. 6) 181, who inexplicably locates Maesa in Rome on Caracalla's death.

<sup>69</sup> PFLAUM (as n. 37) 293–294, demonstrates that access to the post of a *studiis* was generally from the second rank of procuratorships (which are listed *ibid.* 254, 299 n. 2). As noted before, holders of the office a *studiis* were not generally amongst the highest flyers.

<sup>70</sup> Cassius Dio 79,5,4; KIENAST (as n. 6) 169.

<sup>71</sup> Cassius Dio 80,7,1.



rectly from centurion (*primus pilus bis*, no doubt),<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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 Macrinus. Moreover, such a pattern of appointment accords well with what Dio has to say about Macrinus' infringement of social protocol is his nomination of his fellow ex-prefect, M. Oclatinius Adventus, to the post of prefect of the city (traditionally the prerogative of senior ex-consuls), while Adventus was still technically an *eques*, not to mention Macrinus' own promotion directly from the equestrian order to the throne.<sup>74</sup> 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, Macrinus would have been desperately short of conventionally qualified candidates to appoint to legateships.<sup>75</sup> Does not ...atus' irregular promotion from *a studiis* to *legatus legionis* fit this context admirably? As for the question of which particular legion he commanded, of those based in the Syrian theatre requiring a senatorial commander the III Gallica (over 300 km away at Raphanea) and IIII Scythica (at Zeugma, 80 km away) are already accounted for (with ...s Verus and Gellius Maximus, mentioned above); plausibly, then, XVI Flavia Firma based at Samosata, only 50 km or so from the site of Caracalla's murder.<sup>76</sup> The extraordinary move from *a studiis* to military commander may thus be explained by Macrinus' 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 Macrinus did not violate protocol entirely, we may conjecture that, having benefited from an adlection *inter praetorios* in or-

<sup>72</sup> See B. DOBSON, *Die Primipilares*, Köln – Bonn 1978, 60–74, for the career patterns and promotion prospects of this grade.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. PIR<sup>1</sup> V 292, PIR<sup>2</sup> G 130, B.E. THOMASSON, *Laterculi Praesidum I*, Göteborg 1984, 33; 105, and DĄBROWA (as n. 32) 283, who credit the promotions to Elagabalus because Cassius Dio (79,35,1) reports Marius Secundus as Macrinus' appointee as *leg. Aug. pro praetore prov. Syriae Phoenices*, which normally comprised the command of the III Gallica. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the two responsibilities had been separated for the Parthian campaigns, which had been on-going since 215. Cf. WHITTAKER, *Herodian II*, 22 n. 1, who admits the possibility that Verus may have been appointed by Macrinus.

<sup>74</sup> Cassius Dio 79,13,1; 79,14,1–4 and 41,4. See TALBERT (as n. 41) 85.

<sup>75</sup> Cassius Dio 79,12,2; 79,12,4 and 19,1.

<sup>76</sup> For the roll-call of those legions with their permanent bases in Syria at this period see DĄBROWA (as n. 32) 277–293. The only other legion known to have been actively involved in the events of 218 is the II Parthica, then encamped at Apamea (Cassius Dio 79,34,2 and 5), but this was commanded by an equestrian (on whose probable identity see below); on which see BALTY (as n. 42) 101–102. Tombstone evidence also reveals the presence of detachments of *XIII* and *XIII Gemina*, the *III Flavia* as well as the *cohors XIII urbana* gathered in Apamea; on which see BALTY, *op. cit.* 102.

der to qualify him for the legateship,<sup>77</sup> ...atus then enjoyed the honour of a (suffect) consulship *in absentia* (for a two-month period some time in late 217 or the first half of 218).<sup>78</sup> Macrinus may have felt that the consulship 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 palatine office.<sup>79</sup>

How then to explain the survival and further advancement of an obvious collaborator of Macrinus' 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.<sup>80</sup> Comazon had also received an extraordinarily swift promotion – directly to *praefectus castrorum*,<sup>81</sup> having held no other prefecture or procuratorship prior to this, according to Dio.<sup>82</sup> In this case the appointment was certainly due to Macrinus since Comazon succeeded Aelius Triccius, promoted by that emperor to the governorship of Pannonia.<sup>83</sup> Although Comazon was not involved in the initial proclamation of Elagabalus (which happened further up the

<sup>77</sup> See Cassius Dio 79,11,2, on Macrinus' general respect for precedent and cf. 79,13,1, on his adlection of people *inter consulares* specifically in order to confer upon them the command of consular provinces.

<sup>78</sup> See Cassius Dio 43,46,5–6, for contemporary evidence on the normal duration of the consulship. Pace L. PETERSEN, *PIR<sup>2</sup> V.2*, p. 411, although Elagabalus replaced Macrinus as *ordinarius* with Adventus from 8 June 218, this does not mean that the *ordinarii* were still in office in June, which would leave no space for suffects, for Dio (80,8,2) specifically notes the irregularity by which Elagabalus inserted his name into the *fasti* retrospectively as one of the *ordinarii*, despite the fact that their period of office had already expired.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Cassius Dio 79,13,4, on the case of Marcus Agrippa, *ab epistulis* of Caracalla, demoted (*ἀποσθέντα*) by adlection to the senate *inter praetorios* as a punishment for admitting underage recruits to the army; recruitment being a regular function of the *ab epistulis* according to A. R. BIRLEY, *Locus virtutibus patefactus? Zum Beförderungssystem in der Hohen Kaiserzeit*, Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G 318, Opladen 1992, 46, where he discusses this case.

<sup>80</sup> HOWE, *Praetorian Prefect*, Appendix II.B, 97–100; 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.

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

<sup>82</sup> Cassius Dio 80,4,1, employs the technical terms *ἐπιτροπεία* (for procuratorship) and *προστασία* (for prefecture), though this latter term could also connote palatine procuratorship, as is clear from a letter of Commodus to the Athenians, *AnnEpigr* 1952, 6 = J. H. OLIVER, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, Philadelphia 1989, 422, No 209, lines 18–19: [τ]ὴν τῶν καθόλου λόγων προστασίαν.

<sup>83</sup> Cassius Dio 79,13,2 and 80,4,3, of which the MS gives the form Deccius Triccius, through epigraphy was revealed the name's corruption (cf. PIR<sup>2</sup> A 271, where, however, Triccius' command of the II Parthica is erroneously located in Italy rather than in Syria).

Orontes valley at Raphanaea, the camp of the legion III Gallica<sup>84</sup> the beheading by Comazon's troops of Macrinus' praetorian prefect, Ulpianus, who had ignominiously retreated from Raphanaea, heralded the downturn in that emperor's fortunes.<sup>85</sup> 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 Orontes 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.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, he received *ornamenta consularia*, and was later even honoured with both an ordinary consulship (for AD 220) and the prefecture of the city, as Dio relates.<sup>87</sup> Thus, like ...atus, Comazon experienced two stages of extraordinary promotion – from (probably) centurion *primipilaris* to *praefectus leg. II Parthicae* and again thence directly to *praefectus praetorio* – corresponding to the accessions 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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup>

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 Maximus 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 An-

<sup>84</sup> 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 fermented by a gymnast named Eutyphianus and then led by Soemias' 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.

<sup>85</sup> Herodian 5,4,3–4 (somewhat confused); cf. Cassius Dio 79,31,4 and 34,4.

<sup>86</sup> He is named as prefect with a certain Julius Flavianus by a dedication from Histria in Moesia (AnnEpigr 1961, 86 = Inscriptiile din Scythia Minor I 99), which plausibly belongs to the first half of 219, in the context of Elagabalus' tour of the Balkan provinces of Thrace, Moesia, and the Pannonias (Cassius Dio 80,3,2), prior to his arrival in Rome.

<sup>87</sup> Cassius Dio 80,4,1–2.

<sup>88</sup> Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80[79],15,3.

<sup>89</sup> 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. LEUNISSEN (as n. 58) 310–311, who prefers to place his second term as *praefectus urbi* already under Elagabalus. Although the consular historian would have resented 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 consulship) under Severus Alexander; on which see WHITTAKER, Herodian II, 81 n. 3 and SYME (as n. 10) 143–145.

tiach to Rome via Nicomedia, where it spent the winter of 218/219, a time of some tribulation for the new regime.<sup>90</sup> 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),<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> Also, in a similar vein, the wholesale cancellation of arrears owed to the imperial fisc dramatically advertised the change in regime.<sup>93</sup> 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 performed and entered in the *fasti*;<sup>94</sup> 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 Iulia Maesa. His regained equestrian status also permitted the enrolment 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 Soemias, than Maesa herself. In fact, Cassius Dio reports that, of those who had been highly rewarded for their collabora-

<sup>90</sup> Cassius Dio 80,7,3.

<sup>91</sup> Macrinus tried to curry favour by taking action against those senators who had falsely accused their fellows in order to gain preferment from Caracalla (Dio 79,18,1–2; 79,21,2–22,1) but in their eyes his presumptiveness in seizing the throne at all ensured that he would never be fully accepted (79,41,2).

<sup>92</sup> Herodian 6,1,3. Cassius Dio 80,1,2. Since the letter 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' favourites.

<sup>93</sup> *Descriptio consulum*, s. a. 218 (ed. R. W. BURGESS, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana*, Oxford 1993, 232 = T. MOMMSEN (ed.), *Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, vol. I, MGHAA, vol. 9, Berlin 1892, 226): *Antonino et Advento. His cons. instrumenta debitorum fisco in foro Romano arserunt 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).

<sup>94</sup> TALBERT (as n. 41) 27–29.

tion in Elagabalus' elevation, only one survived the purge following the emperor's downfall:<sup>95</sup> the reference is clearly to Comazon.

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

R. W. B. SALWAY 1997	M. CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI 1979	H.-G. PFLAUM 1960
<i>a studiis</i> to Caracalla until 217 ( <i>adlectus inter praet.</i> ) 217 leg. leg. XVI Fl. Fir. 217–218/219 consul ( <i>suffectus</i> ) 217/218 relegatio in equestres 218 comes of Elagabalus 218/219 praef. annonae 220–221 pontifex minor 221–222 praef. praetorio 221–222	<i>a studiis</i> to Severus until c. 210 praef. annonae 210–? pontifex minor 210–222 ( <i>adlectus inter praet.</i> ) 210/217 leg. leg. ( <i>incertae</i> ) 210/217 comes of Caracalla 210/217 ( <i>adlectus inter cons.</i> ) before 217 cos. «II» ord. ( <i>post.</i> ) 217 praef. praetorio 221–222	<i>a studiis</i> to Elagabalus 218 ( <i>adlectus inter praet.</i> ) 218 leg. leg. IIII Scythica or IIII Gallica 218/219 consul «honorarius» 218 comes of Elagabalus 218/219 praef. annonae 220–221 pontifex minor 221–222 praef. praetorio 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 31 776 a):

[[[-----]]. . . . . ATO · ]]  
[proc. . . . A S]TVDIS · LEG · LEG ·  
[xvi f. f. c OS. C]JOMITI · AMICO ·  
[fidis SIMO P]RAEF · ANN ·  
[[[pontifi CI MINO]RI · PRAEF · PRAET · ]] 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?<sup>96</sup> It

<sup>95</sup> Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 80[79],20,2–21,3. Other than the anonymous prefects, Dio names Elagabalus' mother, Soemias, his lover, Hierocles, the *proc. summarum rationum*, Eubulus and the urban prefect, Fulvius, as victims.

<sup>96</sup> R. SYME, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939, 7. At the same time we should bear in mind the need for caution, for as W. AMELING has commented recently, reviewing B. RÉMY, *Les carrières sénatoriales dans les provinces romaines d'Anatolie*, Istanbul – Paris 1989 in *Gnomon* 67, 1995, 698: «Dem Außenstehenden erscheint die Prosopographie oft als ein besonders exakter Zweig unserer Wissenschaften. [Wer das Buch von Rémy von Anfang bis

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 misjudgement 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-prefect Adventus. 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 Triccius, appointed to the governorship of Pannonia).<sup>97</sup> And, as noted above (see section III) Macrinus' decision to appoint the *a studiis* to a legionary command is made explicable by the lack of conventionally qualified candidates at his disposal. In addition, the redating 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.<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup> The sharp contrast between the extraordinary favour shown to ...atus and Comazon and the fate of their colleagues, Verus and Gellius Maximus, further underlines the fundamental significance of the support of the commanders in Syria to the success 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-

Ende liest,] wird deutlich sehen, daß auch die Prosopographie von Vermutungen, Wahrscheinlichkeiten und kumulativ-hypothetischen Argumenten lebt.» Note also A. J. GRAHAM, *The Limitations of Prosopography in the Roman Imperial Period* (with special reference to the Severan period), *ANRW* II.1, 1974, 136–156.

<sup>97</sup> Cassius Dio 79,13,3.

<sup>98</sup> Cassius Dio 79,35,1; 80,3,4. As well as Macrinus' prefects, Iulianus Nestor and Aurelius Basilianus, Elagabalus (or rather Iulia Maesa) had executed Fabius Agrippinus, Marius Secundus and Pica Caerianus, governors of Syria Coele, Syria Phoenice and Arabia respectively.

<sup>99</sup> 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 Diadumenianus' safety by Macrinus in 218, he was, under Severus Alexander, instrumental in Ulpian's downfall in 223/224, appointed prefect of Egypt in 224 and thence 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, *P. Oxy.* XXXI, 1966, 102, on No 2565 and SYME (as n. 10) 153.

perial fortunes in the period 217–218 is vividly encapsulated in the double twist in ...atus' own career. Furthermore, shorn of its extraordinary aspect, ...atus' career can no longer serve as supporting evidence of insanity and unpredictability in public affairs under Elagabalus. The reinterpretation of ...atus' career also serves as a corrective to control the insufficiently critical acceptance in some modern scholarship of the claims of a historical tradition which is uniformly hostile. Elagabalus' personal religious and sexual conduct was undoubtedly of a sufficiently bizarre nature that he became an embarrassing liability, even as a mere figurehead; prompting his own grandmother to conspire for his replacement. However, it is an unwarranted assumption that this generally affected the conduct of public business, including the appointments of key personnel. Such matters were in reality, no doubt, left to the shrewd judgment of Iulia Maesa. Despite Dio's professed outrage, Herodian's exaggerations and the fantastic imaginings of the author of the *Historia Augusta*, Elagabalus goes no further against precedent in his public appointments than did Macrinus.<sup>100</sup> The only genuinely attested outrageous appointment is palatine, rather than public, and does not infringe senatorial protocol in any way.<sup>101</sup>

#### *Epilogue: T. Messius Extricus*

Now that the personality of ...atus has been retrieved from amalgamation with that of Extricus, 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.<sup>102</sup> Contradictory pieces of information, had they belonged to an earlier age.

In fact, the contemporary ambiguity over the precise calculation of Extricus' iteration is attributable to the importation of prior *ornamenta consularia* into the equation;<sup>103</sup> for such was, as Dio relates,<sup>104</sup> the practice established for and, I suggest, arising from the particular circumstances of the consular pairing of 203, C. Fulvius Plautianus «II», P. Septimius Geta II: Severus' *praefectus praetorio* and brother respectively.<sup>105</sup> In consequence of the preeminent position into which

<sup>100</sup> The promotion of Claudius Pollio from centurion to consular legate (see above n. 24) is no more irregular than those of Gellius Maximus, ...s Verus (see above) and ...atus, and the case of Valerius Comazon, praetorian prefect, urban prefect and *cos. «II»* is prefigured by that of Oclatinus Adventus; all of which are attributable to Macrinus.

<sup>101</sup> I.e. Aurelius Zoticus, the athlete made a *cubiculo* (Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 79 [80], 16, 1–6).

<sup>102</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> M 518.

<sup>103</sup> As seen in this instance long ago by PASSERINI (as n. 8) 222–223.

<sup>104</sup> 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.

<sup>105</sup> 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,<sup>106</sup> 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 hegemony may have been short-lived but the precedent of his «iterated» consulship is a helpful legacy. For, were there any lingering doubt, it certifies T. Messius Extricus *cos. «II»* in 217 as an earlier recipient of the consular *ornamenta* and, therefore, someone whose senatorial membership was of no great antiquity; thus positive indication that he is one and the same as the *v(ir) p(erfectissimus) praefectus annonae* of 210. Indeed, the iteration on the basis of *ornamenta* puts Extricus among select company: Q. Maecius Laetus (praetorian prefect with the jurist Papinian after Plautianus' fall in 205)<sup>107</sup> *cos. «II»* in 215,<sup>108</sup> Macrinus and Adventus in 218<sup>109</sup> and P. Valerius Comazon in 220, after whom the practice fell into disuse.<sup>110</sup> Given these parallels and Extricus' 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 Extricus 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 Extricus' probable Tripolitanian origin has already been noted in discussing ...atus above (see section II). What of office after the *annona*? His fellow *cos. «II»*s, Adventus and Co-

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

<sup>106</sup> 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 reditu* of Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Iulia Domna and, lines 8–9: [C. Fulvii Plautian.] *pr. pr. c. v. et necessarii* [[Augg.]], and how his estates were managed, like imperial ones, by an equestrian procurator (e.g. Ulpian [-]) *proc. ad bona Plautiani* of CIL III 1464 = ILS 1370 and the future emperor Macrinus). Cf. the account of Cassius Dio [Xiph.] 76 [75], 14, 1–77 [76], 6, 3.

<sup>107</sup> CIL VI 228 = ILS 2187, lines 21–22: *Maecio Laeto et Aemilio Papiniano p[ro] p[ro] v[er]u[m]* *em.*, which is dated precisely to 28 May 205.

<sup>108</sup> DEGRASSI (as n. 50) 60 certainly reckoned Maecius Laetus' iteration based upon prior *ornamenta*.

<sup>109</sup> Despite Dio's claim (79,13,1–2) that Macrinus refused to have their consulships 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 CECERE, *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 = *Inscriptioe din Scythia Minor* V 247).

<sup>110</sup> Although the iterated consulship of the emperor Carus in 283 has been cited 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 comments of J. R. REA, *P. Oxy. XXXIV*, 1968, 97, on *Macriano II et Quieto [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 consulship, PFLAUM initially considered an urban prefecture likely also for Extricatus,<sup>111</sup> as he had also argued earlier for Maecius Laetus.<sup>112</sup> However, none of the four precedents adduced for Laetus by PFLAUM, which exhibit a coincidence of iteration and prefecture, are valid because in every case these particular double honours crowned conventional senatorial careers.<sup>113</sup> In fact, shorn of his urban prefecture, Laetus resembles nothing more than a more successful version of his Antonine predecessors, L. Volusius Maecianus and T. Aius Sanctus.<sup>114</sup> They both, like Laetus, ascended by way of the prefecture of Egypt<sup>115</sup> but, lacking the extra prestige of the praetorian prefecture, secured only suffect consulships. Thus deprived of a precedent, it would be unsound prosopographic method to import the later examples in support of an urban prefecture for Extricatus, especially since the distaste expressed by Dio at Adventus' appointment in 217 to that office suggests that this promotion was an innovation.<sup>116</sup> 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 Extricatus, is their tenure at some time or other of the praetorian prefecture. Moreover, barring the exceptional case of Plautianus, all had laid aside the office before taking up the *fasces*, which by analogy would imply a tenure for Extricatus commencing sometime after 17 September 210 and finishing before 1 January 217. It would not be impossible that Extricatus moved from the *annona* to the prefecture of Egypt as an intermediate stage, since it would fit a well-established pattern.<sup>117</sup> However, it is far from necessary and the *fasti* are already quite crowded.<sup>118</sup> So a praetorian prefecture in the period 210/217 would make Extricatus first a junior colleague of Laetus, then a senior

<sup>111</sup> H.-G. PFLAUM in *AnnEpigr* 1977, 171, reporting the publication of the inscription from Portus.

<sup>112</sup> PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 583, No 219; a conjecture accepted by P. A. BRUNT, *The Administrators of Roman Egypt*, *JRS* 64, 1974, 146 (= *Roman Imperial Themes*, Oxford 1990, No 10, 253).

<sup>113</sup> cf. PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 583, No 219, cf. 667 n. 5.

<sup>114</sup> PFLAUM, *Carrières* I, 333–336, No 141 = DEVIJVER, *PME* 2, V 133 and PFLAUM, *Carrières* III, 1001–1006, No 178 bis.

<sup>115</sup> Maecianus in AD 161, Sanctus in 178–180 and Laetus in 200–203 (G. BASTIANINI, *Lista dei prefetti d'Egitto dal 30<sup>a</sup> al 299<sup>a</sup>*, *ZPE* 17, 1975, 295, 299, 304; idem, *Aggiunte e correzioni*, *ZPE* 38, 1980, 83, 85).

<sup>116</sup> Cassius Dio 79, 14, 1.

<sup>117</sup> On which see BRUNT (as n. 112) 130–131 (= 226–227).

<sup>118</sup> It would, in theory, be possible to squeeze a short tenure between that of Ti. Cl. Subatianus Aquila (lasted attested 23 July 210) and L. Baebius Aurelius Iuncinus (first attested some time in 29 January 212) or between Iuncinus (last attested November 213) and his successor, Aur. Septimius Heraclitus (first attested in March 215); cf. G. BASTIANINI 1975 (as n. 115) 304–307 and 1980 (as n. 115) 85–86.

colleague of Adventus.<sup>119</sup> There was certainly a vacancy in the prefecture consequent upon the downfall of Patruinus, the ephemeral successor of Papinian, along with the emperor Geta, in 212.<sup>120</sup> On his own retirement Extricatus would, then, have been succeeded by Macrinus – so in close company with a jurist and an advocate.<sup>121</sup> This item excites interest as to possible offices prior to the *annona*. There is indeed a jurist of the Severan period on record: a certain Messius, who is mentioned only once by Iulius 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 *consilium* of an unnamed emperor over the status 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.<sup>122</sup> This Messius is otherwise as enigmatic a personality as Extricatus. In fact WOLFGANG KUNKEL has already suggested that the jurist should be identified with Extricatus *cos.* «II».<sup>123</sup> However, most scholars have preferred an identification with a certain P. Messius Saturninus from Pheradi Maius in Africa, who served as *procurator a studiis, advocatus fisci sacri auditorii* and *a declamationibus Latinis*,<sup>124</sup> despite the fact, firstly, that his offices suggest eloquence rather than legal expertise and, secondly, that his career might belong somewhat later.<sup>125</sup> In short, there is no evidence that makes Saturni-

<sup>119</sup> That Adventus had served longer than his colleague in 217, Macrinus, is a reasonable supposition from his considerable seniority in age, reported by Cassius Dio 79, 14, 2.

<sup>120</sup> Cassius Dio [Petrus Patricius] 78[77], 4, 1<sup>a</sup>. I follow HOWE, *Pretorian Prefect*, 70–71, in considering Patruinus 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 PFLAUM, *Carrières*, *Supplément*, 57, 220 A. That the praetorians should demand Papinian's head as well as Patruinus' in 212 (Dio [Petr. Patr.] *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 consular Aurelianus and his ex-troops in 217 (Dio 79, 12, 2), of the legion II Parthica and Aelius Triccius in 218 (Dio 80, 4, 3) and the evident fear which still shadowed Dio in Italy in 229, some time after his Pannonian troops had complained about him (Dio [Xiph.] 80, 4, 2–5, 1).

<sup>121</sup> It was Macrinus' skills as an advocate that first brought him to the attention of his patron, Plautianus, who made him procurator of his estates (Cassius Dio 79, 11, 2); cf. D. LIEBS, *Nicht-literarische römische Juristen der Kaiserzeit*, in: D. LIEBS – K. LUIG (edd.), *Profil des Juristen in der europäischen Tradition: Symposium aus Anlaß des 70. Geburtstages von Franz Wieacker*, Ebelsbach 1980, 167–168, No 18, and GRANT (as n. 27) 22, who wrongly think him a jurist (see the case of Messius Saturninus below).

<sup>122</sup> *Digest*. 49, 14, 50 = O. LENEL, *Palingenesia Iuris Civilis* I, Leipzig 1889, 965, Paulus frag. 75: *Papinianus et Messius novam sententiam induxerunt*.

<sup>123</sup> W. KUNKEL, *Herkunft und soziale Stellung der römischen Juristen*<sup>2</sup>, Graz-Wien-Köln 1967, 229–230.

<sup>124</sup> *AnnEpigr* 1932, 34 = ILTun 250. CROOK (as n. 16) 174, No 229; PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 613–20, No 231 = DEVIJVER, *PME* 2, M 47; BIRLEY 1971 (as n. 27) App. III, 350; LIEBS (as n. 121) 164–166, No 17; L. PETERSEN in *PIR*<sup>2</sup> V. 2, 1983, M 514 & 527.

<sup>125</sup> Pace PFLAUM, *Carrières* II, 761, *a studiis* was not a post requiring juristic training (see

nus a stronger candidate than Extricator to be the jurist Messius and certain considerations that make him a positively weaker one. Even if T. Messius Extricator 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.<sup>126</sup>

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.<sup>127</sup> 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.<sup>128</sup> It was incidentally, a lesson from which another jurist, Ulpian, who attempted 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):<sup>129</sup>

above n. 12), thus Saturninus' 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 (PFLAUM, *Carrières II*, 935–936, No 352, cf. 617).

<sup>126</sup> A. M. HONORÉ, *Emperors and Lawyers*<sup>2</sup>, Oxford 1994, 79–89, 190, where No 1 (AD 194–202) is identified as Aemilius Papinianus, No 2 (AD 203–209) as Aelius Coeranus/Domitius Ulpianus, and No 3 (AD 209–211) is unnamed, but impossible since Extricator was during that time *praef. annonae*. It should, however, be noted that this schema is far from certain. For, despite the fact that Aelius Coeranus is thought to have been a *libellis* on the basis of I. Eph. 2026 (ὁ τὴν ἐξήγησιν τῶν ἀξιωματῶν πεπιστευμένος) 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 Coeranus 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.

<sup>127</sup> See the sensible discussion of HOWE, *Pretorian 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 Laetus and Papinian.

<sup>128</sup> Laetus and Adventus were clearly military men (HOWE, *Pretorian Prefect*, 71, No 21; PFLAUM, *Carrières II*, 662–667, No 247; cf. Cassius Dio 79, 14, 1), while Papinian 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*, Dig. 49, 14, 50), and Macrinus was an ex-advocate (PFLAUM, *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 HOWE, *op. cit.* 21–40.

<sup>129</sup> This list is essentially that of HOWE, *Pretorian Prefect*, 71–73, Nos 21–26, with the exception of the prefecture there ascribed to Cn. Marcius Rustius Rufinus, which must now be expunged after the re-interpretation of CIL XIV 4389 as belonging to Q. Marcius Dioga,

<i>date of appointment</i>	<i>soldier</i>	<i>bureaucrat</i>
205	Q. Maecius Laetus	[.] Aemilius Papinianus
211		[.] Valerius Patruinus
212		<i>T. Messius Extricator</i>
213	M. Oclatinus Adventus	
215		M. Opellius Macrinus

If one accepts this hypothesis, T. Messius Extricator, 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 annonae* (222), *praefectus praetorio* (222–c. 224).

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*c(minentissimus) v(ir) praef. vigilum*, c. AD 213/214, by CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI – ZEVI (as n. 40) 620–637 = *AnnEpigr* 1977, 154 (cf. F. ZEVI, *RE Suppl.* 15, 1978, col. 130, s. v. Marcius 56 and PFLAUM, *Carrières*, Supplément, 62, No 241).