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Praetorian Prefects of Emperor Commodus**

Summary: The article presents the history of ten praetorian prefects of Emperor Commodus. The prosopographical method used by the author of the article is extremely useful in the studies on individuals in the society of *Imperium Romanum*. In this type of research, it is particularly important to note that *praefecti praetorio* as a clerical elite were very well represented in ancient sources, which renders historical material highly representable for this group. During the twelve years' rule of Commodus, the number of *praefecti praetorio*, representing nearly forty percent of these officials during the reign of the emperors of the Antonine dynasty (96–192), clearly indicates lack of stability and continuous political struggle in the Rome of those days. The presentation of ten praetorian prefects, the highest equestrian officials, sheds light on the political system of the last emperor of the Antonine dynasty.

Keywords: Emperor Commodus, prosopography, Imperium Romanum, praefecti praetorio

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In the early Roman Empire, by virtue of a rule formulated by Augustus in 2 BCE, the position of a prefect of the praetorian guard was held by two *equites*.[1] In the period of the Principate, the prefecture of the praetorian guard was the highest rank in the equestrian *cursus honorum*.[2] One should also bear in mind that in this period, also senators were nominated *praefecti praetorio*.[3]

The main competences of these officials included command of the Praetorian Guard and military units when the emperor was present on the battlefield as well as being the emperor's bodyguard[4] as *sacri lateris custos* (Martialis, 6, 76, 1). In the 2nd century, the *praefectus praetorio* obtained judiciary rights, becoming the first instance in court trials held in Italia; in matters related to provinces, he served as the instance of appeal[5] as *vice sacra*. Yann Le Bohec accurately pointed out that the prefect of the praetorian guard simultaneously held the functions of prime minister and minister

[1] Cass. Dio, 55, 10, 10; Mommsen 1877, 831; Passerini 1939, 217; De Laet 1943, 73–95; Durry 1954, 1620; Syme 1980, 64; Brunt 1983, 59; Watson 1985, 16; Le Bohec 1994, 21; Southern 2007, 116. On the circumstances of the nomination of *praefecti praetorio* in 2 BCE, see Syme 1939, 357, note 3; Ensslin 1954, 2392; Syme 1980, 64; Campbell 1984, 116–117. Unless marked otherwise, dates given in this article, refer to the Common Era.

[2] In 70–235, the praetorian prefecture was the highest achievement in the equestrian *cursus honorum* for the fourteen prefects of Egypt. Before 70, only four prefects of Egypt assumed the praetorian prefecture as the top achievement in their career, Brunt 1975, 124; Demougin 1988, 733.

[3] Ensslin 1954, 2398; Absil 1997, 31–32. In the 1st century, there were two senators who became *praefecti praetorio*. In the reign of Vespasian, in 70–71, this was senator M. Arrecinus Clemens, Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 23–24; Passerini 1939, 288; Ensslin 1954, 2398–2423; PIR^2 A 1072; Crook 1955, 151, issue 31; Absil 1997, 149–150, no. 32. In 71–79, the praetorian prefecture was held by Vespasian's son – Titus, Borghesi, Cuq 1897, no. 25; Passerini 1939, 288; Ensslin 1954, 2423; PIR^2 F 398; Crook 1955, p. 165, no. 153; Absil 1997, 151–153, no. 32. In the 3rd century, some prefects became senators, but none of them was born a senator, Arnheim 1971, p. 78.

[4] On the competences of praetorian prefects, see Karlowa 1885, 547–549; Mommsen 1877, 833, pp. 927–929, 1061–1062; Passerini 1939, 217–218, 226–251; De Laet 1946, 509–554; Durry 1954, 1621–1623; Ensslin 1954, 2407–2419; Howe 1966, 21–40; Campbell 1984, 114–117; Absil 1997, 55–81.

[5] Cf. Dig. 1, 11, 1; Coll. 14, 3, 2; C. 9, 2, 6, 1.

for war.[6] The significance of the *praefecti praetorio* is further evidenced by the fact that their annual remuneration in the middle of the 2nd century amounted to 1 million sesterces and was the highest in the entire imperial administration.[7]

As far as the Principate period is concerned, we know of one hundred and one *praefecti praetorio* and one hundred and twenty three *praefecti Aegypti*, but only thirty eight *praefecti vigilum* and thirty two *praefecti annonae*.[8] This means that we know approx. three fourths of these top-ranking equestrian officials of the Principate period (*praefecti praetorio* 70%, *praefecti Aegypti* 78%), which suggests great significance and high representability of the studied group.[9]

Alfredo Passerini named twenty six prefects during the reign of the emperors from the Antonine dynasty.[10] According to his studies, twelve *praefecti praetorio*[11] fall under Commodus' rule. It appears, however, that Passerini has overestimated the number of prefects. The number of ten, given by Michel Absil,[12] is more likely. The number of top-ranking

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[6] Le Bohec 1994, 37.

[7] Żyromski 2001, 19. For the sake of comparison, *praefectus Aegypti* received 500,000 sesterces and *praefectus vigilum* 300,000 sesterces. The remuneration of the praetorian prefect was identical to the remuneration of top-ranking senators (*proconsul provinciae Africae/Asiae*), Żyromski 2001, 19. Cf. Alföldy 1981, 187–188.

[8] Sablayrolles 1999, 352.

[9] Sablayrolles 1999, 354.

[10] Passerini 1939, 295–311. Similarly, Absil 1997, 156–193 lists twenty six prefects during the reign of the Antonines. Different figures are cited by Hirschfeld 1877, 224–229, who offers a list of twenty five *praefecti praetorio* during the reign of the Antonines; Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 35–77, who lists twenty eight praetorian prefects of the emperors from Nerva to Commodus, and Ensslin 1954, 2423–2424, who lists twenty nine *praefecti* in the reign of emperors from the Antonine dynasty.

[11] Passerini 1939, 304–311.

[12] Absil 1997, 182–193. Hirschfeld 1877, 227–229 and Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 61–77 list eleven *praefecti* of Commodus. For obvious reasons, research carried out by scholars in the second half of the 19th century required verification. Passerini 1939, 304–311, when listing the twelve prefects, adds T. Longaeus Rufus and Sex. Baius Pudens to the list. On the other hand, Howe 1966, 65–68, 89 does not include Baius Pudens as Commodus's prefect; instead, like Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 68, he offers a list of prefects whom we do not know by name and who are only mentioned by the Augustan History. According to the list

equites under Commodus' rule, which lasted only twelve years, amounting to nearly forty percent of these officials in the reign of emperors from the Antonine dynasty (96–192) clearly indicates lack of stability and constant political struggle in the Roman Empire of that time. Frequent changes at the office of praetorian prefect were connected with numerous plots among the court and competition among *praefecti praetorio*.

It was already in the second half of the 19th century that scholars noticed the advantages of using the prosopographical method as well as onomastics in the studies of individuals of *Imperium Romanum*.[13] Reconstructing the career paths of ten prefects of the guard makes it possible to present their immense influence on Commodus' system of rule in the Roman Empire in 180–192. Furthermore, whereas the praetorian prefects of Marcus Aurelius have recently been studied,[14] the top-ranking equestrian officials from the period of Commodus' rule are still waiting for dedicated research.

1. P. TARUTTIENUS PATERNUS

Sources present different variants of the name of Paternus.[15] Tarruntius is the *gentilicium* given by the Digest (Dig., 49, 16, 7; 50, 6, 7). Cassius Dio and the Augustan History state that Tarrutenius Paternus were *nomen gentile* and *cognomen* (Cass. Dio, 71, 12, 3; 72, 5, 1; HA, *Commodus* 4, 1). Now, his *tria nomina*, that is Publius Tarrutienus Paternus, are given in the *Tabula*

prepared by Ensslin 1954, 2424, who also excluded Sextus Baius as a prefect, there were eleven praetorian prefects during the reign of Commodus. While naming the ten prefects in the period of Commodus, Absil 1997, 223, 226–231 leaves out Sex. Baius Pudens and M. Aurelius Cleander, whom he calls "personnages écartés de la liste des préfets du prétoire". In this article, I exclude Pudens and Cleander. The former was a *p(rimi)p(ilus)*, not a *p(raefectus) p(raetorio)*, while the latter had the competences only, without bearing the title of *praefectus praetorio*. On Pudens and Cleander, see Alföldy 1989, 81–126; Absil 1997, 223; Kłodziński 2010, 55–77.

[13] Nicolet 1970, 1209–1228; Pflaum 1974, 113–135; Salway 1994, 124–125; Eck 2003, 11–22.

[14] Rossignol 2007, 141–177.

[15] PIR² T 35.

Banasitana from Mauretania Tingitana,[16] discovered in 1957. In this inscription, Paternus's *gentilicium* is different from the other two versions recorded in the sources. Because of the fact that the *tria nomina* of this praetorian prefect have been preserved in the text of this inscription, I shall hereafter use the *nomen gentile* – Tarrutienus. Paternus's *gentilicium* recorded in the contents of this inscription is also confirmed by fragments of two other inscriptions from Rome.[17] Most commonly, however, he goes by the name of Paternus (Cass. Dio, 71, 33, 3; 72, 5, 2; Joh. Lyd., *De Mag.* 1, 9; Vegetius, 1, 8; D, 49, 16, 12, 1). It is likely that his daughter was Tarrutiena.[18] Michel Absil believes that Paternus was a native of Verona, but he does not state any source to support this claim.[19] His belief is probably founded on the fact that Paternus belonged to *tribus Poblilia*, which is mentioned in the *Tabula Banasitana*.[20] According to J. W. Kubitschek, citizens of Verona (*regio X*) were ascribed to *tribus Poblilia*.[21]

Taruttienus Paternus was an active jurist during the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.[22] In 171, he accompanied the emperor during the Germanic wars over the Danube river.[23] According to the account of Cassius Dio, before taking up the praetorian prefecture, he served as the secretary *ab epistulis Latinis* during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and he conducted negotiations with the Cotini, who did not get involved in the fights against the Marcomanni (Cass. Dio, 71, 12, 3).[24]

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[16] AE 1971, 534: *P(ublius) Taruttienus P(ubli) f(ilius) Pob(lilia) Paternus*.

[17] CIL VI 27118: *P(ublio) Taruttieno Pa[terno*; CIL VI 41273: *[P(ublio) Ta]ruttieno [P(ubli) f(ilio) Pob(lilia) Paterno]*.

[18] CIL VI 27118: *Taruttien[a.*

[19] Absil 1997, 28, 62, 74, 109–110, 182–183.

[20] AE 1971, 534.

[21] Kubitschek 1889, 116–117.

[22] Dirksen 1871, 412–434; Cuq 1884, 388–389; Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 62; Berger 1932, 2405; Passerini 1939, 305; Wenger 1953, 510; Ensslin 1954, 2398; Crook 1955, 185–186, no. 318; Howe 1966, 65; Watson 1985, 27; Hekster 2002, 54; Ibbetson 2005, 185; Southern 2007, 31.

[23] Passerini 1939, 304.

[24] According to Friedlaender 1888, 188, Paternus was *ab epistulis Latinis* already before 170. Townend 1961, 381 believes that Paternus was a secretary for Latin correspondence in 169. Passerini 1939, 304 and Birley 2000, 173 assume that Taruttienus was active

At that time, the office *ab epistulis Latinis* was held by *equites* in the rank of *ducenarius*.[25] In 179, following the successful wars which the Roman Army waged under the command of Taruttienus Paternus against barbaric peoples, Marcus Aurelius was declared emperor for the tenth time (Cass. Dio, 71, 33).[26] Probably in the same year, Paternus assumed the command of the praetorian guard.[27] Wilhelm Weber believes that Paternus was sent to the battlefield to lead the decisive battle against the barbarians.[28] It is possible that Marcus Aurelius made this move in connection with war activities during the *expeditio Germanica secunda*.[29]

Praetorian prefect Paternus definitely took part in Marcus Aurelius's *consilium* and was a friend of the Emperor (HA, *Marcus Aurelius* 11, 10).[30] For several years, Commodus too listened to Paternus's advice and held him in high esteem (Herodian, 1, 8, 1). However, the account of the Augustan History is different; it states that Commodus could not bear the prefects Paternus and Perennis long (HA, *Commodus* 14, 8). The *Tabula Banasitana*, dated 6 July 177, lists P. Taruttienus Paternus as a member of Marcus Aurelius's *consilium principis*.[31] Even though attendance at the meeting of the emperor's council does not necessarily mean that Paternus was a praetorian prefect, many contemporary

around 171. This was a period of intensified diplomatic activity of Rome, cf. Birley 2000, 173. The Cotini were a Celtic people and neighbours of the Marcomanni (Tacitus, *Germania* 43).

[25] Hirschfeld 1905, 320–321; Last 1936, 427; Pflaum 1950, 60, 81; Pflaum 1957, 1251.

[26] Between the spring and December of 179, coins (IMP. X) were minted with wreath and palm, i.e. with victory symbols, RIC III, *M. Aurelius* 401–408.

[27] Hirschfeld 1877, 227; Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 62; Berger 1932, 2405; Weber 1936, 364; Passerini 1939, 305; Pflaum 1950, 257; Howe 1966, 65; Absil 1997, 182; Southern 2007, 31.

[28] Weber 1936, 364.

[29] Birley 2000, p. 183. Cassio Dio mentions these actvities indirectly, Cass. Dio, 71, 33. Commodus held a triumph (*triumphus felicissimus Germanicus secundus*) after the end of the war against the Germanic tribes and the Sarmatians, Premerstein 1912, 159; CIL VI 41271. The triumph was held most likely on 22 October 180, i.e. seven months after the death of Marcus Aurelius, HA, *Commodus* 3, 6; ILS 1420.

[30] Cicogna 1902, 152, no. 5; Hirschfeld 1905, 341; Crook 1955, 185–186, no. 318.

[31] AE 1971, 534.

scholars indicate that already in 177 Taruttienus Paternus co-held the position of prefect of the guard with M. Bassaeus Rufus.[32] This fact can be supported by the order of *signatores* preserved in the *Tabula Banasitana*, where the full name of Bassaeus Rufus is followed in the next row by the name of Paternus. It should, however, be stressed that after the death of M. Macrinius Vindex[33] in 172,[34] Bassaeus Rufus became the sole prefect. The credible historian Cassius Dio does not mention a new nomination to the position of praetorian prefect after the death of Macrinius Vindex (Cass. Dio, 71, 3, 5). Thus, it is concluded that the only *praefectus praetorio* to put his signature under the contents of the document as a member of the *consilium principis*, was Bassaeus Rufus.[35]

Adolf Berger believes that for a long time, gaining the position of prefect of the guard was a very rare achievement among jurists.[36] Promoting

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[32] Campbell 1984, 347; Christol, Demougin 1988, 17; Christol 1999, 622; Birley 2000, 181.

[33] PIR² M 25; Stein 1928, 166–167.

[34] Rohden 1899, 104; Passerini 1939, 304.

[35] M(arcus) Bassaeus M. f(ilius) Stel(atina tribu) Rufus, AE 1971, 534; PIR² B 69; Hirschfeld 1877, 226–227; Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 57–60; Rohden 1899, 103–104; Passerini 1939, 303–304; Crook 1955, 154, no. 58; Absil 1997, 178–179. According to Oliver 1972, 338, among the members of Marcus Aurelius's *consilium principis* recorded on the *Tabula Banasitana*, were five senators (all of them were consuls in 177) and seven *equites*. On the other hand, Sherwin-White 1973, 90 and Christol 1999, 622 claim that the *signatores* of the document were six senators and six *equites*. In this respect, Oliver is right, because M. Gavius Squilla Galicanus was the consul in 150, AE 1979, 295; Klein 1881, 71. Manius Acilius Glabrio held the office of consul in 152, PIR² A 73; Klein 1881, 72. T. Sextius Lateranus served as the consul in 154, PIR² S 468; Klein 1881, 72. Caius Septimius Severus was a consul probably in 155, Fluss 1923, 1573. P. Iulius Scapula Tertullus was a consul in 160 and 166, PIR² I 556. At this time, T. Varius Clemens served as the *ab epistulis Augustorum Marci et Veri*, PIR² V 185. M. Bassaeus Rufus was a prefect of Marcus Aurelius. P. Taruttienus Paternus and Sex.Tigidius Perennis became praetorian prefects after 177. Q. Cervidius Scaevola was the *iurisconsutlis* and the *preafectus vigilum* in 175, PIR² C 68; Sablayrolles 1996, 489–491, no. 16; at that time, Q. Larcius Euripianus served as the *procurator a rationibus*, but later on he was appointed to the Senate and served as a consul in 183, PIR² L 89. T. Flavius Piso was the *praefectus annonae* in 179 and the prefect of Egypt in 180–181, Brunt 1975, 146.

[36] Berger 1932, 2405: "er hat es dann etwa um 179 zum Praetorianerpraefect gebracht – ein bei Juristen seltener Aufstieg".

jurists to the office *praefectus praetorio* became a rule only during the reign of the Severan dynasty.[37] Clearly, holding the high-ranking post of secretary to the emperor's office and praetorian prefect allowed one to gain knowledge in the fields of military law and administration. Paternus's renown as an outstanding jurist is confirmed by the fact that Flavius Vegetius Renatus called him the *diligentissimus iuris militaris adsertor* (Vegetius, 1, 8). Vegetius lists works of Paternus as one of the sources for his military manual. Paternus' piece entitled *De re militari* or *Militarium* has not survived until our time.[38] We only know that his works were used by authors of compilations from the time of Justinian the Great and such experts in military law as Arrius Menander and Aemilius Macer.[39] The Digest includes three excerpts from four books of Paternus' work,[40] on the basis of which we can present some aspects of Paternus' activity.[41] In one of the fragments, Aemilius Macer also quotes Paternus' statements concerning strict rules and tasks which should be performed by soldiers (e.g. construction service) along with maintenance of military discipline in the Roman army.[42] A fragment written by the praetorian prefect himself lists some forty five occupations related to technical, artisanal and professional activities, among others, doctors (*medici*), veterinarians (*veterinarii*), bowyers (*arcuarii*), roofers (*scandularii*), bladesmiths (*gladiatores*), trumpet makers (*tubarii*), masons (*lapidarii*), butchers (*lani*), blacksmiths (*fabri*), fletchers (*sagittarii*), hunters (*venatores*), woodcutters (*qui silvam infindunt*), sacrifice assistants (*victimarii*), millers (*polliones*),

[37] Mommsen 1877, 1065.

[38] Dirksen 1871, 419; Berger 1932, 2405; Ensslin 1954, 2398; Southern 2007, 31.

[39] Berger 1932, 2405.

[40] Dig., 49, 16, 7; 49, 16, 12, 1; 50, 6, 7.

[41] Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 64; Berger 1932, 2406.

[42] Dig., 49, 16, 12, 1: *Paternus quoque scripsit debere eum, qui se meminerit armato praecsse, parcissime commeatum dare, equum militarem extra provinciam duci non permittere, ad opus privatum piscatum venatum militem non mittere. Nam in disciplina Augusti ita cavetur*: *"Etsi scio fabrilibus operibus exerceri milites non esse alienum, vercor tamen, si quicquam permisero, quod in usum meum aut tuum fiat, ne modus in ea re non adhibeatur, qui mihi sit tolerandus*"; Campbell 1994, 121. Aemilius Macer was a Roman jurist, active in the first half of the 3rd century, Jörs 1893, 567–568; Cicogna 1902, 155–158.

which were classified as *immunes*.[43] Initially, *immunes* counted as *principales*.[44] The division of soldiers into so called *immunes* and *principales* was developed during the reign of Hadrian.[45] Taruttienus Paternus also wrote a fragment concerning the treatment of traitors and deserters, who, according to the military criminal law, should be treated as enemies of Rome.[46] Under the military criminal law, committing treason and desertion cost the soldier loss of Roman citizenship.[47] According to Gerard Kuleczka, this legal provision, among others, testifies to the 'extension of the attributes of crime' during the Principate period.[48] It is possible that this legal norm alludes to desertions from the Roman army which during the time of the Germanic wars were rather numerous (Cass. Dio, 71, 11, 2; 72, 2, 2). In his work entitled *De Magistratibus populi Romani*, Johannes Lydus quotes Paternus's statements from the first book on tactical matters (Joh. Lyd., *De Mag.* 1, 9). These statements describe the organisation and tactics of the Roman army during the royal reign of Romulus, defining, among others, the social division into the three original *tribi* – *Ramnes*, *Tities*, *Luceres* as

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[43] Functions and occupations deemed *immunes* – Dig., 50, 6, 7: *Quibusdam aliquam vacationem munerum graviorum condicio tribuit, ut sunt mensores, optio valetudinarii, medici, capsarii et artifices et qui fossam faciunt, veterinarii, architectus, gubernatores, naupegi, ballistrarii, specularii, fabri, sagittarii, aerarii, bucularum structores, carpentarii, scandularii, gladiatores, aquilices, tubarii, cornuarii, arcuarii, plumbarii, ferrarii, lapidarii et hi qui calcem cocunt et qui silvam infindunt, qui carbonem caedunt ac torrent. In eodem numero haberi solent lanii, venatores, victimarii et optio fabricae et qui aegris praesto sunt, librarii quoque docere possint et horreorum librarii et librarii depositorum et librarii caducorum et adiutores cornicullariorum et stratores et polliones et custodes armorum et praeco et bucinator. Hi igitur omnes inter immunes habentur*. See Watson 1985, 76; Campbell 1994, 30; Webster 1998, 119–120.

[44] Łuć 2004, 131, note 15.

[45] Passerini 1939, 74–75; Breeze 1971, p. 134, note 48; Watson 1985, p. 77; Campbell 1994, 28–29; Łuć 2004, 76; Southern 2007, 109. Among the *principales*, we distinguish between *duplicarii* (with double pay) and *sesquiplicarii* (with 1.5x pay), Breeze 1971, 134; Breeze 1993, 11. We know of one *triplicarius* (with triple pay) only, AE 1976, 495.

[46] Dig., 49, 16, 7: *Proditores transfugae plerumque capite puniuntur et exauctorati torquentur: nam pro hoste, non pro milite habentur*.

[47] Kuleczka 1974, 89. In the Principate period, *transfugium* was included in the category of treason, but during the Republic, it constituted a separate *delictum militaris*.

[48] Kuleczka 1974, 88.

well as the military unit called *Celeres*,[49] which consisted of three hundred *equites*. Military experience and personal involvement in battle had made it possible for Paternus to create works going far beyond mere theory.

The accounts of the Augustan History and Cassius Dio are the only sources to mention the details of the plots to kill Commodus and Saoterus[50] in which Taruttienus Paternus was an accomplice and the circumstances of the death of the praetorian prefect. Herodian does not provide any information concerning Taruttienus. The Augustan History describes an unsuccessful plot to kill Commodus in which, among others, Quadratus and Lucilla[51] were involved and which took place *non sine praefecti praetorii Tarrutenii Paterni consilio* (HA, *Commodus* 4, 1). Along with his colleague Tigidius Perennis, Paternus succesfully plotted to kill the emperor's favourite Saoterus (HA, *Commodus* 4, 5) in a period of fierce competition between the most influential personae of the empire for power and influence on Commodus. After the murder of the emperor's *cubicularius* Saoterus, Tigidius Perennis convinced the emperor to revoke Paternus's command of praetorians after granting him the toga with purple embroidery (HA, *Commodus* 4, 7). After several days, Commodus accused Paternus of participation in the conspiracy, stating that Paternus's daughter had been promised to the son of P. Salvius Iulianus,[52] which was allegedly meant to deprive the Emperor Commodus of his imperial power (HA, *Commodus* 4, 8). For this reason, Commodus ordered that Paternus, Iulianus and Paternus's friend, Vitruvius Secundus,[53] who was responsible for the emperor's correspondence (*ab epistulis*), be put to death (HA, *Commodus* 4, 8).[54] This

[49] Cf. Dirksen 1871, 412–413.

[50] PIR^2 S 181; perhaps Aelius Saoterus, mentioned in the inscription from Rome as a *clarissimus vir* from *ordo sacer[dotum] domus Aug(ustae) Palat(inae)*, CIL VI 2010. *Cubicularius* bearing the title of senator would constitute an exception to the rule. Stein 1920, 2308 believes that the person from this inscription is Saoterus (HA, *Commodus* 3, 6). Probably the title of *vir clarissimus* was given to this freedman after the granting of the *ornamenta consularia*.

[51] Annia Aurelia Galeria Lucilla, PIR^2 A 70; Rohden 1896a, 2315.

[52] P. Salvius Iulianus, PIR^2 S 135.

[53] PIR^2 V 775; Thielscher 1960, 464; Daguet 1988, 3–13.

[54] Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio 72, 5, 1) mentions only that Commodus murdered Salvius Iulianus and Taruttienus Paternus.

event took place in 182.[55] Clearly, the death of Paternus was a by-product of Perennis's pursuit of full power. True or not, the accusations formulated against Paternus were meant to provide 'excuses' for the actions taken by Perennis and Commodus.

Adlectio to the Senate was the highest award granted by the emperor to *equites* for outstanding achievements.[56] In the case of Paternus, however, an appointment to the Senate ultimately turned out to be nothing of an award. As far as Paternus's *adlectio* to the Senate is concerned, the Augustan History makes a general comment that the praetorian prefect was granted the toga with purple embroidery (HA, *Commodus* 4, 7). In my opinion, the appointment of Paternus to the group of *consulares*, mentioned by Cassius Dio, should be considered the final praise (Cass. Dio, 72, 5, 1). This is so because Paternus had earlier obtained the *ornamenta consularia*, which is confirmed by a fragment of the inscription from Rome.[57] It became a rule in the 2nd century that praetorian prefects were granted the *ornamenta consularia* by the emperor.[58] Perhaps Publius Taruttienus Paternus bore the senatorial title of *vir clarissimus*,[59] but in this case, the reading of this title is only a proposition how to reconstruct the text of a funeral inscription. Most likely, the title of *vir clarissimus* was given to Taruttienus Paternus

[55] Berger 1932, 2405; Ensslin 1954, 2424; Howe 1966, 65; Birley 2000, 187. On the other hand, Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 62 and Absil 1997, 182 believe that Paternus was murdered in 183.

[56] Ziółkowski 2005, 420.

[57] CIL VI 41273. Absil 1997, 47, 110, 182 mentions the fact that Paternus bore the *ornamenta consularia*, but he does not cite an inscription to confirm it.

[58] Hirschfeld 1905, 450. In the 2nd century, emperors granted the *ornamenta consularia* to four prefects, while in the 1st century – to three only, however two others were granted *ornamenta praetoria*, Mommsen 1876, 447; Ensslin 1954, 2399. On the other hand, according to Absil 1997, 47, in the 2nd century, there were as many as ten praetorian prefects who received the *ornamenta consularia*. Absil included Taruttienus Paternus in this group. As for the title of *vir clarissimus*, in addition to Paternus, it is necessary to include Cornelius Repentinus (CIL VI 654; AE 1980, 235 = Camodeca 1981) and Atilius Aebutianus (ILS 9001) as bearers of the *ornamenta consularia.* Sextus Cornelius Repentinus held the praetorian prefecture in 160–167, PIR^2 C 1428; Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 54–56; Stein 1901, 1422; Passerini 1939, 301–302; Ensslin 1954, 2424; Crook 1955, 161, no. 123; Absil 1997, 175. See the biographical note on P. Atilius Aebutianus.

[59] CIL VI 27118.

because he had been granted the *ornamenta consularia*.[60] If the reading and reconstruction of the two inscriptions is correct, Paternus was probably the only praetorian prefect from the period of the Antonine dynasty known to us who bore the *ornamenta consularia* and the title of *vir clarissimus*.

Clearly, Paternus was an expert in military law. He authored judicial works and commanded Roman troops in the victorious final stage of the Marcomannic Wars. Paternus was a merited *eques* who towards the end of Marcus Aurelius's reign, achieved the highest rank in the equestrian *cursus honorum*. At the beginning of Commodus's rule, he fell victim to political struggle.

2. SEX. TIGIDIUS PERENNIS

Perennis's *gentilicium*[61] is given only by the Augustan History (HA, *Commodus* 4, 7). In other literary sources on the period of Commodus's rule, he is simply called Perennis (Cass. Dio, 72, 9, 1; Herodian, 1, 8, 1–2). Based on the reconstruction of a fragment of the *Tabula Banasitana*, one can conclude that the full *tria nomina* of this prefect were Sex. Tigidius Perennis.[62] Most likely, Perennis suffered *damnatio memoriae*, because his name was removed from this inscription.

According to Herodian, Tigidius Perennis was a native of Italia, and before assuming the position of praetorian prefect, he had proven himself as a soldier.[63] The third part of the *Tabula Banasitana*, which contains his *tria nomina*, is dated 6 July 177 and states that Perennis was a member of the *consilium principis*.[64] Olivier Hekster claims that at that time, Tigidius Perennis served as the *praefectus annonae*.[65] In all likelihood, Ti-

[60] On the similar significance of the title of *vir clarissimus* and the *ornamenta consularia* and on mutual relations between the two, see Passerini 1939, 223; Ensslin 1954, 2399; Syme 1980, 65; Absil 1997, 52.

[61] PIR² T 203.

[62] AE 1971, 534.

[63] Herodian, 1, 8, 1.

[64] AE 1971, 534.

[65] Hekster 2002, 60.

gidius Perennis was friends with Marcus Aurelius, which is confirmed by the fact that he participated in the emperor's council.[66]

Scholars agree that Perennis became *praefectus praetorio* in 180.[67] The less credible account of the Augustan History suggests that Tigidius Perennis became praetorian prefect already during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (HA, *Commodus* 14, 8).[68] On the other hand, Cassius Dio states only that Perennis co-held the position with Paternus (Cass. Dio, 72, 10). It seems that Perennis was most likely appointed by Commodus (Herodian, 1, 8, 1).[69] The Greek version of *Acta Apollonii* states erroneously that Perennis was a proconsul of Asia.[70]

Tigidius Perennis served as the judge in the process of a Christian martyr Apollonios in Rome, who ultimately, by a resolution of the Senate, was sentenced to decapitation (Eusebius, *HE* 5, 21). Saint Jerome claims that Apollonios was a Christian senator during the reign of Commodus.[71] From the judicial point of view, the fact that in the case of the Christian senator the sentence was passed by the top-ranking *eques* is controversial on two levels.[72] The first concerns judging Christians. According to Maurice Platnauer, during the trial of the Christian senator Apollonios, the praetorian prefect intruded in the competences of the urban prefect (*praefectus urbi*).[73] The law which made the urban prefect responsible for handling *collegia illicita* was introduced with Septimius Severus's rescript.[74] Sebas-

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[66] Crook 1955, 186, no. 322.

[67] Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 65; Hirschfeld 1877, 228; Stein 1936, 952; Passerini 1939, 305; Ensslin 1954, 2424; Howe 1966, 65; Absil 1997, 184. Only Asko Timonen 2000, 55 gives the year 182.

[68] Stein 1936, 952 and Garzetti 1974, 536 accept this version.

[69] Passerini 1939, 305 and Howe 1966, 66 accept this suggestion. They consider Herodian to be the most credible source on this issue.

[70] Stein 1936, 953; Barnes 1968, 46.

[71] Hieron. *de vir. illustr.* 42: *Apollonius, Romanae urbis senator, sub Commodo principe a servo Severo proditus, quod Christianus esset* etc.

[72] This issue is broadly discussed, among others, by Mommsen 1907, 447–454, Callewaert 1905, 349–375 and Barnes 1968, 32–50.

[73] Platnauer 1918, 176, note 5.

[74] Dig., 1, 12, 1, 14: *Divus Severus rescripsit eos etiam, qui illicitum collegium coisse dicuntur, apud praefectum urbi accusandos.* Christianity was treated as *religio illicta* under

tian Ruciński claims that Septimius Severus only repeated an established norm.[75] I am inclined to accept the argumentation of Laurence Lee How, according to which this law had no binding power at the time of Apollonios's trial, because it was only the rescript which regulated the conflict of competences between the urban prefect and the praetorian prefect.[76] Had there been no conflict, issuance of the rescript by Septimius Severus would have been simply useless.

On the other hand, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, dealing with matters involving senators was outside the area of competence of the urban prefect.[77] Senators were subject only to the jurisdiction of the emperor and the Senate,[78] so, theoretically, a senator was relieved from Perennis' jurisdiction. A question, therefore, arises: Were Perennis' actions illegal? An account is given by Eusebius (HE 5, 21) according to which Perennis brought Apollonios to trial 'in front of the Senate'. Basing on the translation of the Greek words of *Acta Apollonii* by Theodor Klette, Laurence Lee Howe suggests that this fragment of *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Eusebius should be read 'before many senators'.[79] Thus, senators would take part in the praetorian prefect's *consilium* as *assessores*, thereby endorsing his activities.[80] Greenidge believes that the *praefectus praetorio* as the *vice principis* served as the head of the emperor's council.[81] In criminal matters concern-

the offence *sacrilegium*, Ruciński 2008, 143. Legal associations were only those which had been approved by the Senate or emperor, Vigneaux 1896, 211–212.

[75] Ruciński 2008, 144 supports this suggestion with the fact that Septimius Severus provided the urban prefect with the general competency in criminal matters, which must have also included the right to punish members of illegal associations.

[76] Howe 1966, 96. Howe points to the fact that already before Septimius Severus, Christians were subject to the jurisdiction of the urban prefect, but, refusing to respect the customary law concerning the person of the emperor, they could be judged by the praetorian prefect as the personal and legal representative of the emperor.

[77] Ruciński 2008, 113, 115.

[78] HA, *Hadrianus* 7, 2–4; 8, 8–9; HA, *Marcus Aurelius* 10, 6; HA, *Marcus Aurelius* 25, 5–6; Vigneaux 1896, 171, note 2. More on this topic, see Ruciński 2008, 115.

[79] Howe 1966, 96. 'Before the senate' is the suggestion made by Conybeare 1894, 35–49.

[80] Howe 1966, 96.

[81] Greenidge 1901, 410.

ing senators, the prefect of the guard could pronounce sentence on behalf of the emperor and without the right of appeal only on condition that the jurisdiction of governors had been excluded.[82] Most likely, Perennis held this extraordinary authorisation as a result of Commodus delegating his competences. In my opinion, the fact that a non-senator held such an extraordinary authorisation results from the political struggle connected with the court trials conducted by the prefect against senators after Lucilla's plot,[83] mentioned by Herodian (Herodian, 1, 8, 7–8) and omitted by the contemporary scholars.

Along with his colleague, Paternus, Perennis also took part in the successful plot to murder the emperor's favourite Saoterus (HA, *Commodus* 4, 5); similarly, he was the initiator of the plot to murder Paternus (HA, *Commodus* 4, 7; Herodian, 1, 8, 8). In 182, he became the sole praetorian prefect, having removed his colleague (Cass. Dio, 72, 9, 1; Herodian, 1, 9, 10). Taking advantage of the emperor's weakness and his lack of interest in the matters of the Empire, he seized full power (Cass. Dio, 72, 9, 3 (Joh. Zonar., 12, 4); Herodian, 1, 8, 2; HA, *Commodus* 5, 3).[84] His immense power in Rome cannot be questioned, but the assessment of his activity in the ancient historiography is less clear. Cassius Dio sees his rule as incorruptible and restrained (Cass. Dio, 72, 10, 1). An entirely different picture is presented in the account of Herodian, who states that Perennis had an insatiable desire for wealth and that he seized the property of wealthy persons (Herodian, 1, 8, 2). The Augustan History too shows the rule of Perennis in a very negative light, stating that Perennis *omnia iura subvertit* (HA, *Commodus* 5, 6). Perennis also stood behind the death of Lucilla and other members of the conspiracy (Herodian, 1, 8, 8).[85] After

[82] Greenidge 1901, 390. Greenidge 1901, 409 ascribed the reform of this office to Hadrian.

[83] See note no. 51.

[84] Howe 1966, 12 rightly called Perennis the 'prime minister' and 'vice-emperor'. Weber 1936, 381 went as far as to compare Perennis to an 'omnipotent vizier of the Sultan'.

[85] Another version is recorded by the author of the Augustan History, who believes that Lucilla was sentenced to exile on Capri and only later put to death (HA, *Commodus* 4, 4; 5, 6).

the uncovering the plot of Lucilla, the praetorian prefect conducted court trials against the former counsellors of Marcus Aurelius and wealthy senators (Herodian, 1, 8, 7–8). Through confiscation of property, he became a most influential and wealthy man. Agreeing with Parker, one should say that the account of Cassius Dio, which differs from the others, could be biased by the historian's gratitude towards Perennis for his promotion in his senatorial career.[86] In his account, Cassius Dio clearly did not state that Perennis' rule was a normal way of performing praetorian prefect's duties in that period or that it would become a common practice in the future. He only believed that in the period of unstable and weak rule, the most important counsellors of the emperor gained extraordinary power and position.[87]

One fact to consider in the assessment of Perennis' 'rule' is that in 182–186, no *congiarium* was organised for the people of Rome,[88] and alimentation funds were suspended in 184 (HA, *Pertinax* 9, 3). It is possible that such savings were meant to help improve the imperial finances, but the growing personal wealth of Perennis could cause discontent among the Roman people. The praetorian prefect also provoked hostility of the senators. One manifestation of this can be that fact that Perennis ordered senator Helvius Pertinax to return to his homeland of Liguria, where the latter stayed for three years, until the death of the praetorian prefect (HA, *Pertinax* 3, 3–5).[89] Helvius Pertinax, a great military leader and senator, could pose a threat to Perennis.[90] In 182–185, also the future emperor Septimius Severus was deprived of any public office, which could have been a consequence of the disfavour of the omnipotent prefect.[91] In the same period, Commodus was performing actions against senators. The emperor murdered two Quintilii – Condianus[92] and Maximus,[93] both of whom were

[86] Parker 1935, 31.

[87] Campbell 1984, 115–116.

[88] Parker 1935, 31.

[89] Pertinax's stay in Liguria lasted from 182 to 185, Stein 1936, 953.

[90] Marcus Aurelius deeply regretted the fact that he could not make Pertinax praetorian prefect due to the fact that the latter was a senator (HA, *Pertinax* 2, 9).

[91] Cf. Birley 1999, 73; Okoń 2009, 22, note 8.

[92] Sex. Quintilius Condianus, PIR^2 Q 19.

[93] . . . Quintilius Maximus, PIR^2 Q 22.

accused of treason (Cass. Dio, 72, 5, 3). The murder came as a result of the removal of the 'leading members' of the Senate carried out by Perennis,[94] which was described by Herodian (Herodian, 1, 8, 7–8).

The accounts of Perennis' death differ. Cassius Dio states that senatorial legionary commanders punished for disobedience sent a group of 1,500 spearmen from Britain, who arrived in Rome to inform Commodus of Perennis' plans to overthrow his rule and declare the praetorian prefect's son emperor (Cass. Dio, 72, 9).[95] Anthony R. Birley believes that this group of soldiers from Britain can be the same as the group of soldiers sent to catch bands of deserters who were prowling several western provinces of the Empire in 185–186.[96] Hekster even believes that the group of soldiers who arrived in Italia could be a *vexillatio*, i.e. a unit created within a legion, in this case in order to fight Maternus's rebellion.[97] According to Cassius Dio, the emperor's *cubicularius* Cleander made repeated attempts to convince Commodus to bring Perennis down (Cass. Dio, 72, 9, 3).

Why did Cassius Dio (in Xiphilinus's summarised version) mention spearmen (*akontistai*) and not legionaries? Xiphilinus, writing about the spear in the 11th century, could have meant the lance (*contus*), i.e. the weapon used by horsemen.[98] It is very likely that the group of 1,500 spearmen was a cavalry unit. The mobility of the unit which was given the task of conveying urgent information can also suggest that in fact cavalry, and not infantry, was meant. According to the account of Cassius Dio, during the Marcomannic Wars, around 175, as part of war contributions, 5,500 Iazyges formed cavalry units in Britain (Cass. Dio, 71, 16). It is possible that the spearmen sent to Rome ten years later belonged to these units.

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[94] Parker 1935, 31.

[95] We cannot be sure what the word used by Cassius Dio – *hyparchontes* – meant. E. Cary translates it as 'lieutenants'. Historians have accepted that in this case, the equivalent of lieutenants were legionary legates. Brunt 1973, 172, however, has engaged in a philological-historical debate concerning this topic, translating *hyparchontes* as 'rebelling soldiers', by analogy with other ancient texts.

[96] Birley 2000, 188; Cass. Dio, 72, 8, 1; Herodian, 1, 9, 7; 1, 10, 1; HA, *Commodus* 16, 2. On *Bellum Desertorum*, see Hekster 2002, 65–67.

[97] Hekster 2002, 64.

[98] According to Southern 2007, 337 *contus* is *a long, two handed lance, used by contarii*.

The Augustan History describes Perennis' practice of replacing senators with *equites* on high commander positions, which led to the outbreak of a rebellion in Britain (HA, *Commodus* 6, 2).[99] Most likely, the rebellion was started by the senators who commanded in legions stationed in Britain.[100] The account of Cassius Dio seems unlikely due to the nature of accusations made against Perennis by the soldiers who came to Rome and the fact that the rebellion in Britain continued after the death of Perennis (Cass. Dio, 72, 9, 2–3). It was already after the death of Perennis that Helvius Pertinax, sent by Commodus, finally managed to suppress the rebellion of the legions in Britain in 186 (Cass. Dio, 72, 9, 2; 73, 4, 1; HA, *Pertinax* 3, 5–10).[101]

We can conjecture that the military representation of Britain which accused Perennis of the replacement of senators on the high commander positions consisted mainly of military legates (HA, *Commodus* 6, 2: *prodita re per legatos exercitus*). But they could not have accused Perennis of treason, as they could not have known about the planned seizure of power by Perennis's son, who stayed in Illyricum. It is possible that the number of 1,500 soldiers given by Cassius Dio referred to the escort of the military legates from Britain. Still, the number of soldiers mentioned by Cassius Dio seems to be too small.[102] A legation of 1,500 spearmen would produce no pressure and threat to the military garrison in Rome (which was composed of over ten thousand soldiers), which, at that time, was surely controlled by the praetorian prefect and Commodus.

An entirely different account of Perennis' death is given by Herodian. He states that Perennis' sons were gathering military units in Illyricum

[99] At that time, there were three legions stationed in Britain: *legio II Augusta*, *legio VI Victrix, legio XX Valeria Victrix*, CIL VI 3492 = ILS 2288; Forni 1953, 88–90; Le Bohec 1994, 205–206.

[100] Legion commanders of senatorial rank were the legion legate (*legatus legionis*) and the military tribune (*tribunus militum laticlavius*) who was subordinated to him. See Webster 1998, 112–113.

[101] Platnauer 1918, 101; Weber 1936, 384. This victory was commemorated on coins minted in 185 with the legend CONC[ordia] MIL[itum], RIC III, *Commodus* 126; as well as the legend FID[es] EXERC[ituum], RIC III, *Commodus* 130.

[102] Garzetti 1974, 536.

in order to overthrow Commodus and seize power, while Perennis himself was gathering money in order to give lavish gifts to the army to encourage them to rebel (Herodian, 1, 9, 1). The Augustan History too states that Perennis' son commanded Roman troops in Sarmatia (HA, *Commodus* 6, 1). Arthur Stein believes that Perennis' son held command in lower Pannonia.[103] This is supported by an inscription dated 185.[104] The name of the *Pannoniae Inferioris* legate has been removed from this inscription, which can suggest *damnatio memoriae*. At present, however, the reconstruction of the text of the inscription suggests another name – L. Cornelius Felix Plotianus, who served as the *legatus Pannoniae Inferioris* in 184–185, which renders A. Stein's claim invalid.[105] Was the *damnatio memoriae* of Plotianus a consequence of his involvement in the plot of Perennis or his son or sons? Cristina de Ranieri has suggested a reconstruction of the events in which Plotianus intended to remove Commodus and was sentenced for this, which in turn brought about the fall of Perennis' son.[106] After this event, for obvious reasons, the relationship between the emperor and Perennis became more hostile, which in the end caused the fall of the praetorian prefect. This version, attractive as it may be, is not sufficiently supported with source material.[107] Nevertheless, it is very likely that Plotianus was involved in Perennis' conspiracy.

Herodian does not include any information concerning the army stationed in Britain. It seems more than likely that the plotting of Perennis' sons in Illycrium and the personal changes among the commanders in Britain were a part of the praetorian prefect's plan to seize power from Commodus. Perennis' plan was discovered during the *ludi Capitolini* (Herodian, 1, 9, 2). After the discovery of the conspiracy, which happened because several soldiers showed Commodus coins with the image of the praetorian

[103] Stein 1936, 954.
[104] CIL III 3385.
[105] AE 2001, 1685b; Hekster 2002, 64.
[106] Ranieri 1998, 410–412.
[107] Hekster 2002, 64.

prefect's son, Perennis was put to death together with his son (Herodian, 1, 9, 7–10).[108]

The murder of Perennis took place in 185.[109] By the order of Commodus, Perennis was decapitated at night (Herodian, 1, 9, 8). The Augustan History also speaks of the murder of Perennis and his son (HA, *Commodus* 6, 4). Only Cassius Dio mentions the murder of Perennis, his wife, his sister and his two sons (Cass. Dio, 72, 10, 1).[110] After the murder of Perennis, Commodus assumed the title *Felix* (HA, *Commodus* 8, 1),[111] which can be seen on coins minted in 185.[112]

3. NIGER

Herodian states that after the death of Perennis, Commodus decided to appoint two *praefecti praetorio*, because he was afraid of giving so much power to one person (Herodian, 1, 9, 10). According to the account of the Augustan History, Niger[113] replaced Perennis on the prefect's seat, while Cleander took over his political influences (HA, *Commodus* 6, 6). The more credible account of Herodian points to the collegiality of this position after Perennis' death. Niger described by the Augustan History seems to be identical to one of the two prefects of the praetorian guard who immediately

[108] It is possible that Perennis was murdered together with his elder son, Stein 1936, 954.

[109] PIR^2 T 203; Cuq 1884, 355; Borghesi, Cuq 1897, 67; Hirschfeld 1877, 228; Mommsen 1906, 514; Weber 1936, 382; Stein 1936, 955; Passerini 1939, 306; Hammond 1940, 159; Ensslin 1954, 2424; Howe 1966, 65; Absil 1997, 184; Birley 2000, 188; Birley 2005, 169.

[110] Stein 1936, 955 claims that Perennis's younger son served as the military tribune under his elder brother command.

[111] In his article, Mommsen 1906, 515 deliberates on the determination of the date of this fact. Basing on the contents of the description (CIL VI 746 = ILS 4202), among others, he claims that the title *Felix* was one of Commodus's imperial titles already in 183. During the reign of Commodus, the title *felix*, which means 'one bringing luck', was included in the list of the emperor's titles, Kolb 2008, 28; cf. Kluczek 2006, 64.

[112] RIC III, *Commodus* 116c = Coh. 17; 116d = Coh. 16; Rohden 1896c, 2476.

[113] PIR^2 N 94.

followed Perennis in office. Niger served as a prefect for six hours only (HA, *Commodus* 6, 6).[114] According to the Augustan History, praetorian prefects changed by the hour, while Commodus was indulging in ever growing excesses (HA, *Commodus* 6, 7). None of the praetorian prefects appointed by Commodus had remained in office for even three years. The majority of them were murdered with poison or by sword (HA, *Commodus* 14, 8). It is possible that Domitius Niger, known from an inscription from Numidia, is the same person as the future praetorian prefect.[115] The inscription gives the list of *primi ordines* and *centuriones* from the *Lambaesitanarum legionis III Augustae* cohorts of the year 161. Domitius Niger was a centurion of the IX cohort of this legion.

4. MARCIUS QUARTUS

Marcius Quartus[116] probably co-held the position of praetorian prefect with Niger after the death of Tigidius Perennis (Herodian, 1, 9, 10).[117] According to the Augustan History, Marcius Quartus served as a prefect for five days (HA, *Commodus* 6, 8). It is possible that Marcia Quarta[118] was a member of his family. Additionally, Marcia Quartilla, who died at the age of 35, could have belonged to the family of Marcius Quartus.[119]

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[114] On the topic of his *cognomen*, see Dean 1916, 40–41.

[115] CIL VIII 18065 = ILS 2452.

[116] PIR^2 M 243.

[117] Absil 1997, 187. Absil gives contradictory information in this respect. In another place, this author (Absil 1997, 92) states that Marcius Quartus co-held the office of praetorian prefect with Longaeus Rufus.

[118] CIL V 7549: *Mar/ciae / L(uci) f(iliae) Quar/tae p(arentes) f(ecerunt).*

[119] CIL IX 6097: *Marcia L(uci) f(ilia) Qua/rtilla v(ixit) a(nnos) XXXV / h(ic) s(ita) fun(us) loc(um) publ(ice).*

5. T. LONGAEUS RUFUS

His *tria nomina* – T. Longaeus Rufus[120] – are given by an inscription from Alexandria dated to 185.[121] We cannot unequivocally say whether Longaeus Rufus co-held the office with Niger or whether he served as prefect after the death of the latter. Albino Garzetti claims Longaeus Rufus replaced Niger on the position of prefect.[122] On the other hand, Absil mentions Longaeus Rufus as a colleague of Marcius Quartus after the death of Perennis.[123] According to Passerini, Longaeus Rufus assumed the praetorian prefecture between May 185 and September or November of the same year.[124] By analysing the inscription, we can say that before assuming the position of praetorian prefect, Longaeus Rufus was the prefect of Egypt (*praefectus Aegypti*). Furthermore, the title of *vir eminentissimus* from this inscription confirms the fact that he had achieved the top equestrian rank.[125]

T. Longaeus Rufus was the prefect of Egypt from 183/184 to 185.[126] This period is confirmed by findings about the terms of office of Longaeus Rufus's predecessor and successor to the position of *praefectus Aegypti* as well as the determination of the age of the papyri. Longaeus Rufus's predecessor on the position of prefect of Egypt was D. Veturius Macrinus,[127] who

[120] PIR² L 331.

[121] CIL III 14137 = ILS 8998: *T(ito) Longato (Longaeo) Rufo / praef(ecto) Aeg(ypti) praef(ecto) praet(orio) / eminentissimo viro / T(itus) Voconius A(uli) f(ilius) praef(ectus) / leg(ionis) II Tr(aianae) Fort(is).* His correct *gentilicium*, i.e. Longaeus, is given by P. Oxy. 2, 237.

[122] Garzetti 1974, 537.

[123] Absil 1997, 92.

[124] Passerini 1939, 307.

[125] Stein 1927, 1399; on the title of *vir eminentissimus*, see Hirschfeld 1905, 451–452; Ensslin 1954, 2401–2403; Domaszewski, Dobson 1967, 171.

[126] Stein 1950, 100–101; Brunt 1975, 146; Bastianini 1975, 301; Bastianini 1980, 84; Jördens 2009, 529.

[127] PIR² V 513; On 13 October 180, D. Veturius Macrinus was the prefect of Mauretania Tingitana, AE 1953, 79. Veturius Macrinus became the *praefectus praetorio* during the reign of Didius Iulianus (HA, *Didius Iulianus* 7, 5).

held office from 181 to 183.[128] Longaeus Rufus's successor was Pomponius Faustianus (or Faustinianus),[129] who served as the prefect of Egypt from 27 December 185 or 25 January 186 to September 187 (P. Amh. 2, 79).[130]

The chronological aspect as well as a certain element of the economic activity of Longaeus Rufus as the prefect of Egypt have been preserved in the contents of a papyrus dated 185 (P. Amh. 2, 107 = SP 387).[131] Antonius Justinius, a *duplicarius* sent by Valerius Frontinus,[132] the prefect of *ala Heracliana*, gives a written confirmation to Damarion, the strategos of the Hermopolis nome.[133] The contents are official matters (confirmation of grain supply for a village called Terton Epa and for the *ala Heracliana*). There is a mention of the prefect of Egypt Longaeus Rufus, who ordered the purchase of barley in the amount of one hundred *artabae* from the crops of the year 184 for the aforementioned cavalry unit.[134] T. Longaeus Rufus is also mentioned in a papyrus dated 10 January 185 and 25 January 185.[135] The contents are related to economic issues and public matters. The sender of the letter is Petaus, the secretary of a village named Horomou; he is writing to Apollonios, the strategos of the Arsinoite nome, presenting a list of wealthy persons who could provide financial support for the visit of the prefect of Egypt.

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[128] Stein 1950, 99; Brunt 1975, 146; Bastianini 1975, 300; Bastianini 1980, 84; Jördens 2009, 529.

[129] PIR^2 P 714.

[130] Stein 1950, 101; Brunt 1975, 14; Bastianini 1975, 301; Bastianini 1980, 84; Jördens 2009, 529. Faustinianus is the addressee of the Petition of Dionysia. The contents of the petition are included on the papyrus from 186, P. Oxy. 2, 237.

[131] Cf. Campbell 1994, 143.

[132] It is possible that Valerius Frontinus is the same person as L. Valerius Frontinus, the centurion of the II cohort of vigils during the reign of Septimius Severus, CIL XIV 6 = ILS 414.

[133] On the topic of *duplicarii*, Breeze 1971, 134; Le Bohec 1994, 210. *Ala Heracliana* stationed at Coptos in the twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth years of Commodus, P. Amh. 2, 107.

[134] 100 *artabae* = 100 *medimnes* = 5200 *litres*, Campbell 1994, XVIII.

[135] P. Petaus 46–47.

6. P. ATILIUS AEBUTIANUS

The *nomen gentile* of Aebutianus[136] is given by the inscription from Rome.[137] His *tria nomina* – P. Atilius Aebutianus – are given by the inscription from Dalmatia.[138] Atilius Aebutianus was probably a native of Asseria in Dalmatia.[139] His connection to this town is evidenced by the title of its protector (*patronus*).

Atilius Aebutianus, a friend of Antistius Burrus,[140] was a praetorian prefect, who died on the orders of the freedman and emperor's cubicularius Cleander (HA, *Commodus* 6, 11–12). The aforementioned inscription, which gives the full onomastics of Aebutianus, states that he was a *praefectus praetorio*, *clarissimus vir* and the patron of Asseriatium in Dalmatia.[141] Most likely, in this case, the title of *clarissimus vir*, which denoted people of the senatorial *ordo*, followed after Aebutianus's *adlectio* to the Senate, which was not the same as holding senatorial magistrates. Holding the title of *clarissimus vir* is, however, equal to receiving the *ornamenta consularia*.[142]

Scholars believe that Aebutianus was murdered in 187.[143] It appears that the date given by the historians is erroneous because of the determination of the date of the inscription from Rome – CIL VI 3682 = VI 31154.

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[136] PIR² A 1294.

[137] Written specifically in the genitive case as *Atili*, CIL VI 3682 = CIL VI 31154.

[138] ILS 9001.

[139] ILS 9001; Passerini 1939, 307; Absil 1997, 29. On Asseria, see Tomaschek 1896, 1746.

[140] L. Antistius Burrus, PIR² A 757. Antistius Burrus was the consul for the year 181 (CIL VI 213 = ILS 2099; CIL VI 725 = ILS 4206; CIL VI 1979; CIL V 7907; CIL VI 861 = CIL X 1791). Helvius Pertinax accused Antistius Burrus of intentions to seize emperor's power (HA, *Pertinax* 3, 7). Commodus's sister, Vibia Aurelia Sabina, was the wife of Antistius Burrus, Rohden 1896b, 2548.

[141] ILS 9001.

[142] Ensslin 1954, 2399; Passerini 1939, 307. During the Antonine dynasty, in addition to Atilius Aebutianus, only praetorian prefect Sex. Cornelius Repentinus held the title of *vir clarissimus*. It is worth stressing that also P. Taruttienus Paternus held the title of *vir clarissimus*, CIL VI 27118. In this case, the fact of holding this title is purely hypothetical, because the inscription has not been preserved in full. See the biographical note on P. Taruttienus Paternus.

[143] Passerini 1939, 307; Howe 1966, 66; Garzetti 1974, 537; Absil 1997, 189.

The inscription is dated 6 January 188 or 189 (*[missi honesta missione VI] II Idus Ian[uarias] / [Fusciano II et] Silan[o co(n)s(ulibus)]*). In this case, it is crucial to correctly interpret the initial fragment of the inscription: [*Pro sal(ute) Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M(arci) Aur(eli) Commod]i Aug(usti) Pii Felicis et Atili / [Aebutiani*. It seems that the dedicators of this inscription would not use the term *pro salute* in relation to the murdered Aebutianus and Commodus, because they would ran afoul of Cleander, who at that time was considered omnipotent. On the basis of the type and context of the inscription, we can say that Aebutianus was alive on 6 January 188 or 189. The determination of the specific year is problematic due to the fact that only the *cognomen* of the consul has survived in the contents of the inscription: */Silan[o co(n)s(ulibus)]*. The lection is purely hypothetical. It is possible that the consul Silanus from this inscription is M. Servilius Silanus (consul for the year 188), who co-held office with Seius Fuscianus, Duillius Silanus or Q. Servilius Silanus (*consules ordinarii* for the year 189).[144] Recently, Timonen, Birley and Hekster have established the date of the murder of Atilius Aebutianus to be 188.[145] Birley connects this event with the preparation of the *expeditio Germanica tertia*, which is dated 5 April 188.[146]

Hirschfeld and Rohden claim that the prefect Aebutianus can be the same person as T. Vennonius Aebutianus – the *eques* whose name has been preserved in the inscription from Capena.[147] Thanks to this inscription, we know that Vennonius Aebutianus was an *eques*, citizen and protector of *Augusta Taurinorum* (nowadays Turin), a judge elected from among five decurions, the curator of *Albensium Pompeianorum* and the priest of *Laurenti Lavinati*. In my opinion, the local character of this inscription, the difference in the *gentilicium* and the lack of specific information about Vennonius holding the prefecture make it impossible to accept the hypothesis put forward by Hirschfeld and Rohden that he was the same person as Atilius Aebutianus.

[144] Klein 1881, 84–85.
[145] Timonen 2000, 60; Birley 2000, 189; Hekster 2002, 71.
[146] HA, *Commodus* 12, 8–9; ILS 1574; Birley 2000, 189.
[147] CIL VI 1635; Hirschfeld 1877, 228; Rohden 1894a, 442.

7. REGILLUS

According to the Augustan History, Regillus,[148] together with Iulianus, served as praetorian prefect after the death of Cleander.[149] Soon, he too was sentenced to death by Commodus (HA, *Commodus* 7, 4). Most probably, Regillus was killed before 15 July 190, because at that time Iulianus is known to have held office alone.[150] It is possible that M. Valerius Regillus, the *quinquennalis* for the year 129 (the consulate of P. Iuventius Celsus and L. Neratius Marcellus), was a member of the family of the future prefect of the guard.[151]

8. L. IULIUS VEHILIUS GA[LLUS] IULIANUS

His name, that is L. Iulius Vehilius Gr[atus] Iulianus[152] is given by an inscription from Rome.[153] T. Iulius Iulianus are the *tria nomina* given by an inscription from ancient Brixia (nowadays Brescia).[154] His *nomen gentile* and *cognomen* – Iulius Iulianus – are also recorded in an inscription from ancient Ostia.[155] The same name elements – *Ioulios Ioulianos* – are given by an inscription from Palmyra.[156] On the other hand, CIL VI 41271 (Roma 2000) shows the amended, correct form of his name – L. Iulius Vehilius Ga[llus] Iulianus. Ancient authors called him Iulianus (HA, *Commodus* 7, 4; 11, 3; Cass. Dio, 72, 14, 1). Iulianus's imperial *gentilicium* is the most

[148] PIR² R 26.

[149] Cleander died in 189. Scholars believe that the assumption of the praetorian prefecture by Regillus took place in 190, Stein 1914, 472; Howe 1966, 67; Absil 1997, 191.

[150] CIL XIV 4378.

[151] CIL VI 10299.

[152] PIR² I 615; Hanslik 1970, 509–510.

[153] CIL VI 31856 = ILS 1327.

[154] CIL V 4343.

[155] CIL XIV 4378.

[156] ILS 8869.

popular one among equestrian officers with an imperial *nomen gentile*.[157] The *cognomen* Iulianus was very popular among Roman legionaries.[158] Supposedly, Iulianus was born around 127,[159] so we can say that he assumed the function of praetorian prefect at the age of 62. Scholars argue over the topic of Iulianus's origin.[160]

The inscription which gives his full onomastics also shows the outstandingly rich equestrian *cursus honorum* of Iulianus, which definitely testifies to an extraordinary career.[161] Iulianus's career is presented in the 'descending' manner (*cursus inversus*). L. Iulius Vehilius Gallus Iulianus completed four *militiae – praefectus cohortis tertiae Augustae Thracum* (*quingenariae*),[162] *tribunus cohortis primae Ulpiae Pannoniorum* (*milliariae*),[163] *praefectus alae Herculanae* (*quingenariae*),[164] *praefectus alae Tampianae* (*milliariae*).[165]

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[157] Żyromski 2001, 25. Nearly one fourth of the equestrian officers had an imperial *gentilicium*.

[158] Dean 1916, 33–34.

[159] Żyromski 2001, 102.

[160] Some take Palmyra (ILS 8869) to be the home town of Iulianus, while opt for Italia. Cf. Żyromski 2001, 102.

[161] CIL VI 41271: *L. Iulio Veh[il]io Ga[llo] / Iuliano, pra[ef(ecto)] pr(aetorio), praef(ecto) / ann(onae), a rationib(us), praef(ecto) c[lassis p]raet(oriae) Misenat(ium), / pra[ef(ecto)] classis praet(oriae) Raven[nat(ium), proc(uratori)] Aug(usti) et praep(osito) vexil[la]/tion(ibus) tempore belli [Germanici II, pr]oc(uratori) Aug(usti) provinc[iae] / Lusit[aniae] et Vett[oniae], proc(uratori) A]ug(usti) et praeposit(o) / vexillationis per [Orientem?], proc(uratori) Aug(usti) / et praef(ecto) classis Po[ntic]a[e, proc(uratori) Aug(usti) e]t pra[ep(osito)] / vexillationis per Achaiam et Macedoniam / et in Hispanias, adversus Castabocas et / Mauros rebelles, praeposito vexillatio/nibus tempore belli Germanici et Sarmat(ici), / praef(ecto) alae Tampianae praef(ecto) alae Her/culanae, trib(uno) cohort(is) primae Ulpiae Pan/noniorum, praef(ecto) cohort(is) tertiae August(ae) / Thracum, donis militaribus donato ab Impe/[rato]ribus Antonino et Vero ob victoriam / [belli Parthi]ci, item ab Antonino et / [Commodo Augg(ustis) ob vic]tor(iam) belli Germ[a]nic(i) / [secundi . . . . .]*.

[162] In the 2nd century, *cohors* III *Augusta Thracum* was stationed in Syria, Cheesman 1914, 162.

[163] In the 2nd century, *cohors* I *Ulpia Pannoniorum* was stationed in Pannonia Superior, Cheesman 1914, 153.

[164] In the 2nd century, *ala* I *Thracum Herculania* was stationed in Syria, Cheesman 1914, 161.

[165] *Ala* I *Pannoniorum Tampiana* was stationed in Noricum, Hanslik 1970, 510; Żyromski 2001, 102.

It should be noted that such a concentration of military experience was rare among *equites*. Around 3% of equestrian commanders who completed *militia prima* could hope to achieve *militia quarta*, because among some three hundred positions included in the *militia prima*, only around nine were available under *militia quarta*.[166]

Between 157 and 160, Iulianus was the prefect of the III cohort *Augustae Thracum* in Syria.[167] In 160–163, he served as the tribune of the I cohort *Ulpiae Pannoniorum* in Pannonia Superior.[168] During his term on this position, T. Iulius Iulianus funded the inscription for the *praesidi optimo* and M. Nonius Macrinus (*cos*. *suff*. for the year 154), *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of the province Pannonia Superior.[169] In this inscription, the *praenomen* of Iulianus reads Titus instead of Lucius, which was recorded in a later inscription (CIL VI 41271). In 167, in the Parthian war, Iulianus, as the prefect *alae Herculanae*, received the *dona militaria.*[170] Subsequently, in 167 or 168, this outstanding commander was *praefectus alae I Pannoniorum Tampianae* in Noricum.[171] Between 188 and 180, he was four times selected to command *vexilliatones*.[172] As a *procurator Augusti* (*ducenarius*),

[166] Devijver 1992a, 67; Brunt 1983, 47 believes that each of the positions of the *militiae* was held by *equites* for one year only. On the other hand, Le Bohec 1994, 41 and Hassall 2000, 335 assume that each step of the military career of an *eques* took three years to complete. Webster 1998, 113 and Southern 2007, 129 suggest that each of the positions of the *militiae* was held for three or four years.

[167] Premerstein 1912, 155; Hanslik 1970, 509; Żyromski 2001, 102.

[168] Premerstein 1912, 155; Hanslik 1970, 509; Żyromski 2001, 102.

[169] CIL V 4343.

[170] Premerstein 1912, 156; Żyromski 2001, 102. Hanslik 1970, 509 does not set a specific date when Iulianus served the *militia tertia*. The inscription from Palmyra also confirms the fact that Iulianus held this office, ILS 8869.

[171] Premerstein 1912, 156; Żyromski 2001, 102. In this case, Hanslik 1970, 510 indicates 167 as the year when Iulianus completed the *militia quarta*. This chronological verification cannot be accepted, however, because the fact that the phrase *ab victoriam belli Parthici* has been preserved in the inscription testifies to the fact that in 167, Iulianus held the *militia tertia*, although it is possible that he took up the prefecture in Noricum already in the same year.

[172] Smith 1979, 267. Pflaum 1950, 129 notes that the singular form used in the inscription – *vexillatio*, instead of *vexillationes*, *exercitus* or *legiones* – is an exception.

Iulianus held extraordinary commander rights.[173] The brilliant officer probably defended the northern *limes* against the Germanic and Sarmatian tribes.[174] L. Iulius Vehilius Gallus Iulianus also fought against the Costoboci, who invaded the Balkans in 170.[175] Around 171, he was sent to Spain to fight against Moors,[176] then in 173, he became the *procurator Augusti* and the *praefectus classis Ponticae* (*centenarius*).[177] Furthermore, Iulianus was the procurator of one of the provinces, and he commanded the fleets from Misenum and Ravenna.[178] In 177, he became the *procurator Augusti provinciae Lusitaniae et Vettoniae* (*ducenarius*).[179] Probably it was Iulianus who made it possible to put down the tumult in Lusitania (HA, *Marcus Aurelius* 22, 11).

Next, Iulianus went on to become the *proc(urator)] Aug(usti) et praep(ositus) vexil[la]tion(ibus) tempore belli* […].[180] Here, there are two ways in which the lacuna can be filled in. According to Borghesi 1897, 72 = CIL VI 31856, it should read *Britannici*. Therefore, according to Chapot and Borghesi, Iulianus commanded one *vexillatio* during the war in Britain in 183–184.[181] It is possible that during the war in Britain,[182] the military units of Iulianus gave support to Ulpius Marcellus.[183] On the other hand, according to CIL VI 41271 (Roma 2000), the lacuna should

[173] Pflaum 1950, 245.

[174] Żyromski 2001, 102.

[175] Premerstein 1912, 158; Sherk 1957, 54; Birley 2000, 190; Żyromski 2001, 102. Pausanias too mentions the Costoboci's invasion of Greece (Pausanias 10, 34, 5).

[176] The Augustan History also mentions the victory over Moors in Spain by Marcus Aurelius's legates (HA, *Marcus Aurelius* 21, 1–2).

[177] Premerstein 1912, 156; Hanslik 1970, 510; Żyromski 2001, 102.

[178] From among the thirteen prefects of the praetorian fleets of Misenum and Ravenna whose careers are known to us, only two – L. Iulius Vehilius Gallus Iulianus and Q. Baienus Blassianus – commanded provincial fleets, Saller 1980, 54, note 63; Żyromski 2001, 33. Q. Baienus Blassianus, in addition to the *classis praetoriae Ravennatis*, commanded also the *classis Britannica*, CIL XIV 5341; Żyromski 2001, 33, 79.

[179] Hanslik 1970, 510; Żyromski 2001, 102.

[180] Premerstein 1912, 159.

[181] Chapot 1896, 155; Borghesi 1897, 73.

[182] Rostovtseff, Mattingly 1923, 96.

[183] PIR^2 V 828.

be filled in with the word *Germanici II*.[184] This statement seems to be more accurate, because it agrees with the chronological order of functions served by Iulianus. He could not have fought in Britain in 183–184, at the same time serving as the prefect of the praetorian navies of Misenum and Ravenna. These offices marked subsequent stages of Iulianus' equestrian *cursus honorum*.

Iulianus commanded each of the fleets stationed in Italia for one year only. Between 183 and 184, he served as the prefect of the fleet of Misenum (*ducenarius*), while between 184 and 185 – as the prefect of the fleet of Ravenna (*ducenarius*).[185] Holding so many positions had allowed him to gain military skills and experience, but also to familiarise himself with the administrative-financial side of such undertakings.[186] Next, Iulianus held a very important position in the emperor's palace (*a rationibus*) and two great prefectures, the prefecture of annona in 189[187] and praetorians in 189–190. Iulianus probably preceded M. Aurelius Papirius Dionysius[188] as the *annona* prefect. Iulius Iulianus' term as the praetorian prefect

[184] CIL VI 41271; Żyromski 2001, 102. It is possible that the mention at the end of the inscription which has not survived until today honoured Iulianus on the occasion of Commodus's triumph (*triumphus felicissimus Germanicus secundus*) after the end of the war against the Germanic and Sarmatian tribes, CIL VI 41271; Premerstein 1912, 159. Commodus held his triumph most likely on 22 October 180, that is seven months after the death of his father, HA, *Commodus* 3, 6; ILS 1420.

[185] Eck, Lieb 1993, 86–87; Żyromski 2001, 102.

[186] Saller 1980, 55.

[187] Pavis d'Escurac 1976, 350.

[188] PIR^2 A 1567; Cuq 1884, 365; Friedlaender 1888, 179; Rohden 1896d, 2515; Crook 1955, 154, no. 53; Samonati 1957, 827–828; Pavis d'Escurac 1976, 352–353. Marcus Aurelius Papirius Dionysius came from one of the eastern provinces of the Empire and was the first imperial *consiliarius* of the equestrian rank, Pflaum 1950, 64, 185. Papirius Dionysius was an experienced jurist (Rohden 1896d, 2515) and member of Marcus Aurelius's *consilium principis* (*adsumptus in consilium* with the pay of 60 000 sesterces, CIL X 6662 = ILS 1455). Thanks to the same inscription, we know that in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Dionysius served as a *consiliarius Augusti* (*centenarius*), *praefectus vehiculorum* (*ducenarius*), *a copiis Augusti* (*ducenarius*) and *a libellis* as well as *a cognitionibus* (*ducenarius*) in the reign of Commodus. In 188, he was the prefect of Egypt (P. Oxy., 1110; Ballou 1921, 106; Brunt 1975, 146). Probably in 189, he assumed the position of *praefectus annonae* in Rome (Cass. Dio, 72, 13, 1–2). In this case, assumption of the

is also evidenced by a fragment from another inscription.[189] The inscription is dated 15 July 190 (*[ded(icata) I]d(us) Iul(ias) Commo(do) Aug(usto) VI / [[[M(arco) Pe]tronio Septimiano]] co(n)s(ulibus)*). Thanks to this inscription, we know that on 15 July 190, Iulianus held the position of *praefectus praetorio* alone. The Augustan History is the only account which mentions information about a situation which must have been utterly dishonourable to the experienced *eques*. According to this account, Commodus, in the presence of servants, threw Iulianus wearing toga into a pond. The emperor also ordered Iulianus to dance in front of his concubines while playing cymbals – naked and with a grimace on his face (HA, *Commodus* 11, 3). Admittedly, though, the situation described in the Augustan History was only a rhetorical exaggeration.

After the death of Cleander, Iulianus co-held office with Regillius. Like in the case of Regillus, Commodus sentenced Iulianus to death (Cass. Dio, 72, 14, 1; HA, *Commodus* 7, 4) and to *damnatio memoriae*, which is evidenced not only by the inscription from Ostia, where his name is erased (CIL XIV 4378), but also by the inscription with Iulianus' *cursus*, which was broken and thrown into the Tiber (CIL VI 41271). According to Cassius Dio, Iulianus was one of many extraordinary people killed by the order of Commodus. Once, however, there must have been a deep bond of friendship between Commodus and Iulianus, because when addressing him, Commodus called him publicly 'father' (Cass. Dio, 72, 14, 1). Most likely, the *post quem* date of Iulianus' murder is the 15th of July, 190.

position of *praefectus annonae* (lower in the hierarchy of the equestrian *cursus honorum* than the prefecture of Egypt) after the prefecture of Egypt could be a sign of Cleander's disapproval of Dionysius. It seems likely that this demotion could have caused Dionysius's hostility towards Cleander. In 189, Papirius Dionysius was murdered on the orders of Commodus (Cass. Dio, 72, 14, 3).

[189] CIL XIV 4378: *[[Iulio Iulian(o)]] pr(aefecto) pr(aetorio)].*

9. MOTILENUS

His *cognomen* is probably derived from the *nomen gentile* – Motilius.[190] The Augustan History is the only source to mention Motilenus,[191] who served as the prefect in the last period of Commodus's rule.[192] According to it, Commodus killed the praetorian prefect Motilenus using a poisoned fig (HA, *Commodus* 9, 2).

10. Q. AEMILIUS LAETUS

His *tria nomina* – Q. Aemilius Laetus[193] – are given by the Augustan History (HA, *Commodus* 17, 1). Aemilius Laetus are the *nomen gentile* and *cognomen* recorded by Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio, 72, 19, 4). Aemilius Laetus was a native of the African colony Thaenae.[194] Prefect Q. Aemilius Laetus was a brother of Q. Aemilius Pudens, a centurion of *legio III Augusta, II Augusta, XI Claudia*, *adlectus in comitatu Imperatoris Commodi, IIvir* and *quinquennalis* of *Thaenitanae* colony.[195]

Laetus served as the praetorian prefect in 192, i.e. during the final period of Commodus's rule (HA, *Commodus* 17, 1; Cass. Dio, 72, 19, 4; Herodian, 1, 17).[196] Thanks to Laetus' support, in 191 or 192, Septimius Severus took over the command of the army in Germania (HA, *Septimius Severus* 4, 4).[197] Wells is right to say that this support might have resulted from assistance given to each other by persons of African descent who at

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[190] PIR² M 689; CIL VI 975: *[P(ublius)] Motilius P(ubli) l(ibertus) Hermes;* CIL VIII 19504*: M(arcus) Motilius / Valens.*

[191] PIR² M 689.

[192] Stein 1933, 386.

[193] PIR² A 358.

[194] AE 1949, 38; Kotula 1972, 162; Absil 1997, 29. Precisely, *colonia Aelia Augusta Mercurialis Thaenitana*, CIL VI 1685; Treidler 1934, 1701.

[195] AE 1949, 38.

[196] Rohden 1894b, 550; Kotula 1972, 161–162.

[197] According to Platnauer 1918, 47–48, note 3, with Laetus's support, Septimius Severus became the legate of both Pannonias. Okoń 2009, 22 claims that Severus became the legate of Upper Pannonnia. Commodus's prefects also acquitted Septimius Sever

that time had lots of influence in Rome.[198] A sign of emperor's trust was the fact that Commodus greeted Laetus with a kiss after the victorious fight against gladiators (Cass. Dio, 72, 19, 4).[199] According to the Augustan History, Laetus convinced Commodus to give up the plan to burn Rome down (HA, *Commodus* 15, 7).

On 31 December 192, prefect Laetus together with Eclectus[200] and Marcia[201] took part in the successful conspiracy to kill Commodus (Cass. Dio, 72, 22; HA, *Commodus* 17, 1–2; *Pertinax* 5, 1; Herodian, 1, 16, 4–5; 1, 17).[202] Aemilius Laetus helped Helvius Pertinax become emperor (Cass. Dio, 73, 1, 1–2; Herodian, 2, 1–2; HA, *Pertinax* 4, 5–6; 5, 1–2; 10, 9). Laetus held the position of prefect also during the reign of Pertinax (HA, *Pertinax* 10, 8) and then contributed to the murder of the emperor on 28 March 193 (Cass. Dio, 73, 6, 3; 73, 9, 1; HA, *Pertinax* 10, 8–9; 11, 7).[203] Most likely, Laetus was disappointed with the scope of his power. Perhaps he assumed that he would play as important a role as Perennis and Cleander in Commodus's time. In 193, Didius Iulianus murdered Laetus, because he was afraid that the praetorian prefect supported Severus (Cass. Dio, 73, 16, 5; HA, *Didius Iulianus* 6, 2).[204]

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The political significance and influence of the discussed *praefecti praetorio* of Commodus shed new light on the manner in which the last emperor from the Antonine dynasty exercised power. It appears that in the Principate period, there were certain formal requirements which guided the

of the accusation concerning consulting fortune tellers or Chaldaeans on issues related to the emperor's power (HA, *Septimius Severus* 4, 3–4).

198 Wells 2005, 303.

199 Crook 1955, 149, no. 12.

200 PIR^2 E 3; Stein 1905, 2208.

201 Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias, PIR^2 M 261.

202 Okoń 2009, 21.

203 Platnauer 1918, 54; Okoń 2009, 21.

204 Rohden 1894b, 550.

appointment of the praetorian prefect,[205] but ultimately it was the emperor's will that drove careers and decided who held what office.[206] During the reign of Commodus, the top-ranking equestrian prefecture was not occupied by the fittest, but by those whom the emperor trusted the most and whom he controlled the most, though, admittedly, among the praetorian prefects, there were also ones like P. Taruttienus Paternus or L. Iulius Vehilius Gallus Iulianus, who were extraordinary individuals, experts in law and administration as well as military commanders from the times of Marcus Aurelius. The infringement of many rules, the omnipotence of Sex. Tigidius Perennis and M. Aurelius Cleander as well as the fact that all the prefects were murdered confirm the thesis that the rule of Commodus was one of chaos.[207] Palace conspiracies, social revolts, prefects' disobedience in addition to the weakness, irresponsibility and cowardice of Commodus eventually led to the collapse of the political life in the Rome of that period. Criminal jurisdiction and control over the praetorian cohorts in Rome – all cumulated in the hands of one official – produced a temptation to seize full power, or even become emperor. Neither Perennis nor Cleander managed to fulfil that last goal, but the growth of importance of the praetorian prefects during the reign of the Severus dynasty contributed to the seizure of emperor's power by the prefect of the praetorian guard M. Opellius Macrinus in 217.

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[205] For example, Marcus Aurelius deeply regretted the fact that he could not appoint Helvius Pertinax as praetorian prefect because of his senatorial status (HA, *Pertinax* 2, 9).

[206] Pflaum 1950, 295–296; Weaver 1967, 17; Saller 1980, 44; Syme 1980, 77; Brunt 1983, 42; Campbell 1984, 116.

[207] Literary sources lack any information concerning only the fate of T. Longaeus Rufus.

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