

The city of Rome in the fourth century AD was governed by the urban prefect (*praefectus urbi*), who was simultaneously an appointee of the emperor and a spokesman for the city's upper classes. Thanks to his intermediate position, the prefect was well-placed to express the Senate's loyalty to the imperial regime at moments of crisis. This role is captured in a distinct class of epigraphic texts, recording public dedications by urban prefects during their tenure of the office.

Inscriptions honoring senators through commemoration of their public careers have been used to explore questions of elite identity, from details of prosopography to habits of self-representation (Eck, "Senatorial Self-Representation," 1984; Niquet, *Monumenta virtutum titulique*, 2000). André Chastagnol's fundamental works (*La préfecture urbaine*, 1960; *Les fastes de la Préfecture*, 1962) established the prefect's formal powers and administrative duties. Thus scholars have studied senators and prefects as pre-eminent individuals; the inscriptions discussed here, however, cast the prefect as the servant of a corporate interest. The prefect was at the center of a symbolic process in which emperor and Senate reaffirmed their goodwill to one another.

Prefects tended to dedicate monuments to emperors at certain, predictable moments when the Senate needed to affirm its loyalty. This was imperative during times of civil war, such as that between Magnentius and Constantius II (350-53), when the prefects Fabius Titianus (*ILS* 741) and Naeradius Cerealis (*ILS* 731) dedicated statues to whichever emperor was closer to Rome and faring better in the war. Statue-dedications also welcomed new emperors to the imperial college: Constantine's son, Crispus, was honored with a statue in the Roman Forum by Ovinius Gallicanus, urban prefect when Crispus was given the rank of Caesar in 317 (*ILS* 716). Prefects often timed dedications to coincide with expected visits by emperors. Vitrasius Orfitus and his predecessor, Leontius, erected a number of statues to Constantius II in the expectation that he would visit Rome to celebrate his thirtieth anniversary in power or a triumph over Magnentius (*CIL* 6.1160-62, 31395, 31397). One prefect marked Constantine's celebration in Rome of his tenth anniversary (*ILS* 692, 694), but another was disappointed when the emperor failed to show for his thirtieth (*CIL* 6.1141-42). Caeionius Rufius displayed statues of Theodosius and his mother when the emperor visited in 389 to celebrate a triumph over the usurper Magnus Maximus (*CIL* 6.31413-14, 36959-60).

The pattern of dedications shows that senators at Rome took notice of imperial politics only rarely, primarily when they were fearful. Most of these dedications occurred in the wake of civil wars and with the expectation that the emperor would visit Rome. At such moments of potential danger, the urban prefect acted for the Senate to express approval of the regime and renew the consensus between emperor and Senate.