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6

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PPRET INSCRIPTIONS

INSCRIPTIONS PERTAINING TO THE PRAETORIAN
PREFECTS FROM 284 TO 395 AD.
PAPER EDITION

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA,
ELEONORA ANGIUS, ANDREA BERNIER,
GIORDANA FRANCESCHINI, IRENE VAGIONAKIS

IN RE PUBLICA LITTERARUM
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INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF THE PRAET.
PREFECT PROBUS FROM ROME (PINCIO) MADE
BY THE COUNCIL OF VENETIA AND HISTRIA

EDITIONS (only significant for textual interpretation): *CIL* VI 1751 (cf. pp. 3174, 3813, 4751); *ILS* 1265; Gordon 1965, pp. 135-37, nr. 333 (with photo, Pl. 159, a-b); Almar 1990, p. 300, nr. 196 (with photo); La Rocca, *Parisi Presicce* 2010, p. 515, nr. 20 (with photo); Porena 2020c, pp. 213 f., nr. 4; Wang 2020/21 (with high quality photo)

PHOTOS: Gordon 1951, Pl. CVIII, IVa; Mazzarino 1989, tab. XII; *SupplIt-Imagines, Roma (CIL, VI) 1, Musei Capitolini*, nr. 159 (1-2)

LINKS: *EDCS* 18100570; *EDR* 122122; *LSA* 272; *TM* 279424

PLRE: I, pp. 736-40

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: August 8th, 378 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Roma. Modern city: Rome (Italy). Province: Urbs. Diocese: Italiciana. Regional prefecture: Italia Illyricum Africa.

Provenance: Rome, statue base engraved on two sides, found in 1742 behind the apse of the church of the Trinità de' Monti (Pincian hill). Current location: Musei Capitolini, Sala del Galata, NCE 2552. Ancient location: private building (very probably in the *domus Pinciana*).

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: marble.

Reuse of the inscribed field: yes (the frontal epigraphic field is deeply recessed in relation to the moulding, which is possibly the result of the cancelling of an earlier inscription, so also *LSA*). Reuse of the monument: uncertain. Opisthographic: no.

Dimensions of support: Height: 82 cm. Width: 74.5 cm. Breadth: 43 cm. Dimensions of letters: *frons*: 2.2/3.2 cm. Dimensions of letters: *latus sin.*: 4/4.5 cm.

Inscribed field: Two inscribed fields: frontal field (*frons*) for the main in-

scription and left side (*latus sin.*) for engraving the date of dedication of the statue. Undamaged. The text is left-aligned ('flagged') with blanks on the right-hand side of the lines 2-3 and 5-12; the *gentilicium* of the honoree on line 8 and his role as *patronus* on line 15 are centred.

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm: prose. Palaeography: late Roman elegant squared capitals.

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for the praetorian prefect Petronius Probus

LATIN TEXT

frons

Nobilitatis culmini,
 litterarum et eloquentiae lumini,
 auctoritatis exemplo,
 provisionum ac dispositionum magistro,
 5 humanitatis auctori,
 moderationis patrono,
 devotionis antistiti,
 (vac.) Petronio (vac.)
 Probo ((hedera)) v(iro) c(larissimo) ((hedera)), proconsuli Africae,
 10 praefecto praetorio
 per Illyricum, Italiam et Africam,
 consuli ordinario,
 ob insignia erga se remediorum genera,
 Veneti adque Histri peculiare eius
 15 (vac.) patrono praestantissimo.

latus sin.

Dedicata
 VI ((hedera)) idus ((hedera)) Aug(ustas) ((hedera)),
 ((hedera)) dd(ominis) nn(ostris) ((hedera))
 Valente ((hedera)) VI ((hedera)) et
 5 Valentiniano ((hedera)) II
 Augg(ustis) ((hedera)) cons(ulibus). ((large hedera))

CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* VI 1751 and inspection of the original engraving. Text was seen and verified by Porena in 2018, Angius in 2020.

frons

11: *Illyricum*, La Rocca, Parisi Presicce 2010 (transcr. by C. Corradetti)

13: CENERA, Gordon 1965

14: *peculia Reseius*, La Rocca, Parisi Presicce 2010 (transcr. by C. Corradetti)

latus sin.

6: *Augg(ustorum)*, LSA 272

TRANSLATIONS

– English: «To the summit of the nobility, to the light of letters and eloquence, to the model of authority, to the master of provident administration, to the promoter of humanity, to the patron of moderation, to the champion of devotion, to Petronius Probus, of clarissimus rank, proconsul of Africa, praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Italia and Africa, ordinary consul, for the extraordinary forms of help towards them, the inhabitants of Venetia and Istria, his own particular clients, (dedicate) to their most generous patron.

Dedicated on the sixth day before the Ides of August, during the consulate of our masters the Augusti Valens for the sixth time and Valentinianus for the second time (= August 8th 378 AD)».

– French (élaboration de Chastagnol 1991², p. 141): «Au sommet de la noblesse, à la lumière des lettres et de l'éloquence, à l'exemple d'autorité, au maître des dispositions prévoyantes, au promoteur de l'humanité, au champion de la modération, au 'prêtre' de la dévotion, à Petronius Probus, clarissime proncosul d'Afrique, préfet du prétoire pour l'Illyricum, l'Italie et l'Afrique, consul ordinaire, pour les formes extraordinaires d'aide qu'il leur a prodiguées, les Vénètes et les Istriens, ses clients particuliers, (dédient) à leur patron très remarquable.

Dédiée le sixième jour avant les ides d'Août, sous le consulat de nos seigneurs les Augustes Valens pour la sixième fois et Valentinien pour la deuxième fois (= le 8 août 378 ap. J.-C.)».

– Italian: «Al culmine della nobiltà, al faro delle lettere e dell'eloquenza, al modello di autorità, al maestro dei provvedimenti e delle disposizioni (amministrative), al promotore del genere umano, al campione di moderazione, all'antesignano del doveroso affetto (verso i principi e verso i clienti), al chiarissimo Petronius Probus, proncosole d'Africa, prefetto del pretorio di Illyricum Italia e Africa, console ordinario, per le straordinarie forme di aiuto verso di loro, i Veneti e gli Istri, suoi clienti particolari, (dedicano) al loro disponibilissimo patrono.

Dedicata il sesto giorno prima delle idi di agosto, durante il consolato dei nostri signori Augusti Valens per la sesta volta e Valentinianus per la seconda volta (= 8 agosto 378 d.C.)».

THE INSCRIPTION AND ITS PREFECTS: CRITICAL COMMENTARY, UPDATING,
OVERVIEWS

DISCOVERY AND CONSERVATION

The statue base was found in Rome in July 1742. The object had lain behind the apse of the church of the Santissima Trinità de' Monti, in the grounds of the Convento dei Frati Minimi, founded by Francesco da Paola (1416-1507) on the Pincian hill in 1494. The find seems to have been made by the erudite Ridolfino Venuti (1705-1763; see Cod. Vat. Lat. 7935, f. 3v). Since 1734, Venuti had been curator of the collection of Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779) and was an accredited expert on Roman antiquities at the court of pope Clement XII (1730-1740), then pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758), who appointed him in 1744 as 'Deputato alle Escavazioni e Commissario alle Antichità di Roma' and 'Custode delle Gallerie Pontificie' (see Mandray 2015). In 1753 pope Benedict XIV had the inscribed base transferred to the Capitoline Museums (see Arata 2013), where it is currently displayed in the *Sala del Galata* (NCE 2552).

In the second half of the 4th Century the area where the inscription was found must have been occupied by the *domus Pinciana* owned by Petronius Probus, or more likely by his wife Anicia Faltonia Proba. Located in the ancient *Horti Luculliani*, the *domus* must have been both large and palatial. Either confiscated or abandoned after the sack of Alaric in 410 AD, it became imperial property (about the *domus* and the events after the sack, see Guidobaldi, Jolivet 1995, pp. 156 f.; Broise, Dewailly, Jolivet 2000; Jolivet, Sotinel 2012; La Rocca, Marano 2014, pp. 217 f.). The monument in honour of Petronius Probus that was decreed by the council of the province of *Venetia et Histria* was therefore built inside the magnificent Roman *domus* of the powerful patron. An important branch of the family of Petronius Probus had origins and properties in *Venetia* (l. 14, *peculiares eius*; see the inscription from Verona, PPRET 63). We know of other 4th Century praetorian prefects in Rome who had honourific monuments erected in their homes (PPRET 19, 32, 45, 65, 66, 70, 79, 80, 92; *villa* outside Rome PPRET 10; in Rome, the diocesan council of Hispaniae had to obtain the necessary authorisations to erect a monument to the praetorian prefect Sallustius in Trajan's Forum, see PPRET 54). In the 4th Century in the ancient capital the competition for having monuments in public spaces was intense. The city was crowded with statues and competition amongst the resident aristocracy to put up yet more in the public monumental spaces was fervent. As a result,

it may well have been easier for the Veneti and Histri to simply put up the monument inside the *domus* of Probus (on monuments in Roman *domus*, cf. Gehn 2012b; Scheibelreiter-Gail 2012; on public spaces in late antique Rome, cf. Weisweiler 2012a; Machado 2010 and 2019; on the epigraphy of late antique senators in Rome, cf. Niquet 2000). By placing the monument on the private property of the patron, no permission would be needed, either from the urban prefect (probably through the *curator statuarum* or the *curator operum publicorum*) or from the emperor (cf. Feissel 1984, pp. 545-58; Chastagnol 1960, pp. 157, 363-68; Bauer 1996, pp. 132-41).

STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT OF THE INSCRIPTION

The marble base has inscriptions on two sides: the main one is engraved on the front, while the date of the dedication day was engraved on the left side: August 8th 378 AD, the eve of the defeat at Adrianople (in Roman inscriptions for praetorian prefects the date is on the left side of the base PPRET 54; on the right side in the base PPRET 79). The inscriptions on the two epigraphic fields of the base from the *domus Pinciana* are contemporary, but Gordon (1965, p. 136) suggests that they were engraved by two different hands. The frontal epigraphic field is deeply recessed in relation to the moulding: an earlier inscription was erased (cf. *CIL* VI, p. 4751; *LSA* 272). No trace of the previous inscription remains and the statue that had once sat upon the base is also lost. The layout of the inscription in the frontal epigraphic field is well studied. The writing is free of abbreviations, except for the senatorial rank VC on l. 9. Words are never broken at the end of a line and there are no words divided between two lines. From the point of view of the epigraphic field and its layout, the lines of the inscription are always aligned with the left margin ('flagged'). Only lines 8 and 15 of the *gentilicium* *Petronio* and the concluding formula *patrono praestantissimo* are centred to highlight the name and role of the honoured person, a centering which also serves to mark the two moments of passage in the reading of the text.

From the point of view of content, the epigraphic text is divided into four independent sections: a) ll. 1-7, the eulogy of the senator; each single line contains and exalts a particular quality of Probus through the juxtaposition of two or more nouns; this section is very large and occupies half of the epigraphic field and the text; b) ll. 8-9, the senator's onomastics, reduced to a family name and a *cognomen* (*Petronius Probus*), followed by the abbreviated rank framed by ivy, which separates the rank from the first office of the *cursus honorum*; c) ll. 9-12, the three offices of Probus' career (clearly distin-

guished respectively in ll. 9, 10-11, 12); d) ll. 13-15, the reason for the dedication of the monument, the name of the dedicators, their relationship with Probus. The size of the letters of each line, their number and the distance between them as well as the distance between the words is dependent on the will of the editors and the stonemason of the inscription to contain the individual parts that make up the text within the end of the line (for palaeographic analysis see Gordon 1951, pp. 88-90; Gordon 1965, pp. 135-37).

EULOGY OF PROBUS

The figure honoured in his own *domus* is the most powerful senator of the second half of the 4th Century. Sex. Petronius Probus was born around 328/332 AD, and after passing through the *quaestura* and the *praetura* in Rome, he was nominated *proconsul* of Africa in 358 AD, ordinary consul in 371 AD and made praetorian prefect of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, Illyricum and Gaul four times between 364 and 387 AD (according to the scholars' hypotheses, that is the maximum time span in which he held his prefectures, see below). He died between 388 and 392 AD (see in brief, Jones 1964b, pp. 85-89; similarly *PLRE* I, pp. 736-40, and 1050 f.; Pergami 1995, pp. 417-23; Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 316-19; see more extensively Porena 2023a, pp. 129-216).

The eulogy of Petronius Probus (ll. 1-7) in our inscription, exalts the great senator from four things: the glory and nobility of his family (l. 1), his personal culture (l. 2), his qualities in the service of the *res publica* (ll. 3-4), and his virtues in social relations (ll. 5-7).

The epigraphic eulogy of the praetorian prefect Vulcacius Rufinus, inscribed on the honorary monument in his *domus* on the Quirinal hill in Rome in 347/352 AD, is similar to that of Probus (PPRET 32, see l. 1 *auctoritas*, l. 2 *eloquentia*, l. 5 *moderatio*). In 383 AD the eulogy of Anicius Auchenius Bassus (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 211-16; *PLRE* I, pp. 152-54; *CIL* VI 1679 = *LSA* 1354 = *EDR* 079520) praises similar virtues: the nobility of the lineage, the authority, the eloquence of Bassus. Note that the eulogy was written when Petronius Probus was at the height of his power; perhaps Anicia Iuliana, who married Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, son of Probus (*PLRE* I, pp. 639 f.), was the daughter of Auchenius Bassus. Still in the middle of the 5th Century, the Roman inscription of Iulius Agrius Tarrutenius Marcianus opens with the praise of his *nobilitas, iustitia, eloquentia et auctoritas* (*CIL* VI 1735 = *LSA* 1438 = *EDR* 134903, ll. 2-3).

Probus' Pincio inscription begins with praise of his *nobilitas* (l. 1), a theme

which becomes established in epigraphy from the Constantinian age onwards (see Salzman 2001; Badel 2002 and 2005, pp. 82-95, 132-55) in response to the enlargement of the senatorial class in which the ancient western aristocracy wished to distinguish itself from the senators who had recently asserted their bureaucratic abilities (see Näf 1995; Schlinkert 1996; Oppedisano 2019; for an overview of the positions of modern historiography, see Bodnaruk 2019, pp. 6-11). Probus' *nobilitas* is also extolled in the honorary inscription from Capua (PPRET 60, l. 5), and in his poetical epitaph (PPRET 64, col. II, l. 10). Probus is extolled as being the «summit of the Anician house» (*Anicianae domus culmini*) in the honorary inscription made by his son Olybrius and daughter-in-law Iuliana (PPRET 66, ll. 2-3; cf. Auson. *epist.* 16 Pastorino/Schenkl; Claud. *paneg. dictus Olybrio et Probino* *cos.* 16; Hier., *epist.* 130, 3 and 7; on the connection of Petronius Probus with the Anicii, see Settipani 2000, pp. 373-80; Cameron 2012, pp. 136-40). The *nobilitas* of Anicia Faltonia Proba, the wife of Probus, is celebrated by her son Olybrius and daughter-in-law Iuliana (*CIL VI 1755 = EDR 127595 = LSA 1462*, ll. 2-3, similarly *CIL VI 1754 = ILS 1269 = EDR 127599 = LSA 1461*, col. II, ll. 2-3; for a useful comparison of the inscriptions of the family of Petronius Probus, see Novak 1980). The *nobilitas* of an anonymous praetorian prefect is exalted on a large statue base in Leptis Magna (PPRET 97, l. 2).

Although Petronius Probus was appreciated by his contemporaries for his eloquence (l. 2) and culture, nothing has been preserved of his writings. In 371/374 AD Ausonius sent a letter with a eulogy in 105 iambic dimeters to Probus, while he was praetorian prefect and ordinary consul, in the prefectural seat of Sirmium (Auson. *epist.* 16 Pastorino/Schenkl). A panegyric of the powerful senator, Ausonius accompanies the letter with works by Iulius Titianus and Cornelius Nepos as a tribute to the literary culture of Probus and his sons. In vv. 10-15 Ausonius states that Probus «combined Ulysses' hail and Nestor's honeyed flow with the voice of Cicero» (on Probus' culture, see Cameron 2011, pp. 364-66; the composition *Anth. Lat.* I 783 cannot be attributed to our senator, see Cameron 2002b). In the Verona inscription in honour of Probus, his clients extol him as *disertissimo atque omnibus rebus eruditissimo* (PPRET 63, ll. 12-14; on the praise of culture in late Latin inscriptions, see Neri 1982).

The *auctoritas* of Probus (l. 3) stood him in good stead and may well have been behind many of his appointments as praetorian prefect. In the Latin epigraphy of Rome, the praise of *auctoritas* has important precedents (see the contemporary inscription in honour of the great L. Aur. Avianus Symmachus, *CIL VI 1698 = LSA 342 = EDR 123515*, ll. 11-12; the inscription in honour

of L. Turcius Secundus, *CIL* VI 1772 = *LSA* 1469 = *EDR* 110154, ll. 8-9; see also the inscription that rehabilitated the memory of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus senior in 431 AD PPRET 93, l. 3).

The skill of drafting *provisiones ac dispositiones* (l. 4) is rarely cited in epigraphic eulogies. In *CIL* X 520 = *EDR* 116177, the administrative efficiency of the *patronus* of Salernum Arrius Mecius Gracchus, is extolled in the context of an important building reconstruction, following a flood. However, in the inscriptions of the praetorian prefects, the art of *providere* and *disponere*, in specific administrative interventions, is relatively frequent (see PPRET 28, l. 9; 33, l. 3; 39, l. 2; 49, l. 8; 56, ll. 20-22; 97, ll. 7-8). As many as 46 imperial constitutions addressed to the praetorian prefect Petronius Probus are preserved in the late Roman Law Codes, all of which were enforced through *dispositiones* issued by the prefect himself (a list of constitutions to Probus can be found in Porena 2020c, pp. 211-13; for a law of Valentinian I that was published as an inscription by the prefect Probus, see PPRET 56). In the inscription from the *domus Pinciana*, the mastery of *provisiones ac dispositiones* (l. 4) is celebrated in the final motivation (l. 13): *ob insignia erga se remedium genera*.

Only in the inscription from the Pincian hill are Probus' three personal virtues – *humanitas*, *moderatio*, *devotio* – described in pairs of terms (ll. 5-7). The praise of these virtues reverses the negative judgement that the historian Ammianus Marcellinus expresses about Petronius Probus (Amm. XXVII 11; XXX 5, 1-11). Ammianus portrays the senator as a powerful and factious man, who only defends, promotes and rewards his clients and friends. His behaviour is immoderate since he is a hypocrite who, with the power of his office, rages against the weak and is implacable with those whom he considers be his enemies or guilty of some crime or other. His devotion is limited to defending his subordinates, even at the cost of endorsing forms of injustice, while being flattering and fawning to emperors.

In ll. 8-9 the inscription of the *domus Pinciana* the senator's onomastics are limited to the *gentilicium* and the *cognomen*. Compared to the longer polyonymy Sex. Claudius Petronius Probus, which only appears (without *praenomen*) on the Capua inscription (PPRET 60), this onomastic structure is the most commonly used (on the onomastics of Probus, see Cameron 1985, pp. 171-78; Salomies 2012, p. 5; in general Salway 1994).

PROBUS' *CURSUS HONORUM*

In ll. 9-12 of the *domus Pinciana* inscription the *cursus honorum* of the *patronus* of the Veneti and Histri is listed. It presents the positions held by Probus

before August 378 AD (cf. in summary *PLRE* I, pp. 737-39, and see below). The inscription lists the offices in the chronological order in which the codicils of his appointments were issued: the proconsulate of Africa in 358 AD (*CTh* XI 36, 13, on June 23rd; *CIL* VIII 1783), the praetorian prefecture in 368 AD (which extended to the years 368-375/376 AD, see below), the ordinary consulate in 371 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 276 f.). Eleven inscriptions mention Petronius Probus as praetorian prefect, each one suggesting or specifying how many times he had held that position (one to four) up until then. Besides the Pincian hill inscription, the inscriptions relating to the praetorian prefect Probus are PPRET 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66. Of the eleven that have come down to us, the inscription from Probus' Roman *domus* is fundamental for the reconstruction of his career, since it is the only one to furnish us with an explicit date (August 8th 378 AD) and it is the only one to indicate a specific prefectural district among his four prefectures that is securely dated.

The praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa mentioned in our inscription (ll. 10-11), which was dedicated on August 8th 378 AD, approximately two years after the termination of his office, began in March 368 AD (see *Amm.* XXVII 11, 1; the last surviving constitution addressed to the previous praetorian prefect, Vulcacius Rufinus, in office from 365 to 368 AD for three years, is *CTh* X 15, 4, on May 19th 367 AD; the first constitution to Probus is *CTh* X 24, 1, on March 10th 368 AD). This prefecture lasted a very long time, probably eight years, and ended a few months after the elevation of the young emperor Valentinian II in Pannonia, which was supported by the praetorian prefect Probus on November 22nd 375 AD (*Rufin. hist.* II 12). It is attested by no fewer than 39 constitutions in the Theodosian and Justinian Codes and is dated to between March 368 and December 374 AD by these laws (see Porena 2020c) and by a lot of literary sources (*Amm.* XXVII 11; XXVIII 1, 31-33; XXIX 6, 6-11; XXX 3, 1-3; 5, 1-11; *Hier. chron. a.* 372, p. 246 Helm; *Rufin. hist.* II 12; *Auson. epist.* 16 Pastorino/Scenkl; *Lib. or.* 24, 12; *Paul. Med. vita Ambr.* 5 and 8, 3).

As is well known, Probus held the praetorian prefecture several times. Besides this large and homogeneous set of sources from the years 368-375 AD, there are another two small groups of sources that deal with Probus' other praetorian prefectures. Among the 46 surviving constitutions sent to our prefect, two, in fact, were sent to him prior to 368 AD, dated respectively to the Spring of 364 AD (*CTh* I 29, 1, on April 27th), and the Spring of 366 AD (*CTh* XI 1, 15, on May 19th). There are then four constitutions to the prefect dated after 375 AD, in the years 380-384 AD (*CTh* VI 28, 2, on March

12th 380; *CTh* VI 35, 10, on June 27th 380; *CTh* XI 13, 1, on January 19th 383; *CTh* VI 30, 6, on October 26th 384 AD). Finally, the ecclesiastical historians Socrates and Sozomenos both provide us with brief accounts of the praetorian prefecture of Probus during the reign of Valentinian II in the years 383/387 AD, the last prefecture of the four (*Socr. hist.* V 11, 2-3 and 10-12; *Soz. hist.* VII 13, 1 and 9-11).

Scholars have always wondered whether the praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa mentioned in our inscription from the *domus Pinciana* is the first one, and whether, therefore, the two constitutions of 364 and 366 AD are in fact later in date. Another possibility is that the praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, mentioned in our inscription, is the third of the four prefectures of Probus, after a first prefecture in 364 AD and a second prefecture in 366 AD, attested by the two constitutions of the Theodosian Code (above). In this reconstruction, the data provided by the eleven inscriptions in honour of our praetorian prefect is vital. Unfortunately, the data furnished by such a large number of sources is contradictory. While it is certain that Petronius Probus was proconsul of Africa in 358 AD (*CTh* XI 36, 13, on June 23rd; *CIL* VIII 1783) and ordinary consul together with Gratian Augustus (*iterum*) in 371 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 276 f.), the chronology, sequence and administrative geography of his four praetorian prefectures is difficult to reconstruct and historians are divided.

To sum up, we can say that two chronologies and two extensions of the prefectures of Probus are possible: 1) a 'backward-looking chronology' in an Empire divided into three major praetorian prefectures (Galliae, Italia-Illyricum-Africa, Oriens); 2) a 'forward-looking chronology' in an Empire divided into four praetorian prefectures (Galliae, Italia-Illyricum-Africa, autonomous Illyricum, Oriens) – for a summary of the historiography from 1883 down to the present day, see Porena 2020a, pp. 89-91, with nn. 18, 20, 29; 2023a, pp 133-40.

The prevailing reconstruction today is the 'backward-looking chronology' based on an Empire divided into three praetorian prefectures. First proposed by Jones (1964b) and *PLRE* (1971) and defended by Cameron (1985, pp. 178-82, see p. 178: «a fortified refinement of Jones' reconstruction»), this approach has largely been accepted (the first elaboration of this hypothesis, without discussion and with some contradictions, was proposed by Mommsen in 1901; cf. Porena 2020a, p. 89). According to this interpretation, in the second half of the 4th Century there was only one major praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, particularly in the years 381-392 AD, operating side by side with the praetorian prefecture of Gaul and that of the

East. Concerning Probus' prefectures, Jones used the constitutions of 364 AD (*CTh* I 29, 1) and 366 AD (*CTh* XI 1, 15) as evidence to support the theory of him attaining two prefectures prior to his long tenure in the years 368-375/76 AD, which would, therefore, have been his third prefectorial appointment. Thus Probus would have held a first short praetorian prefecture of Illyricum in 364 AD (*CTh* I 29, 1), a second short praetorian prefecture of Gaul in 366 AD (*CTh* XI 1, 15, to which *CIVII* 38, 1 could be linked), and a long third praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in the years 368-375/376 AD. The latter prefecture is attested in the Pincian hill inscription, which was dedicated on August 8th 378 AD, however and quite curiously, the office is listed without iteration. This third prefecture would have been followed by a fourth short praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in August-October 383 AD (*CTh* XI 13, 1, moved by Jones from January 19th 383 to August 19th 383 AD; *CTh* VI 30, 6, moved by Jones from October 26th 384 to 383 AD). In his opinion, this series of offices is chronologically compatible with the order of the four prefectures listed in the Verona inscription (PPRET 63). Concerning the Verona inscription, Jones (1964b, p. 85) affirms: «On another inscription (before his fourth prefecture) he is styled “*procons. Africae, praef. praetorio Illyrici, praef. praet. Galliar. II, praef. praet. Italiae atque Africae III*” (*ILS* 1266), which can hardly mean anything else but that he governed Illyricum in his first prefecture, Gaul in his second, and Italy and Africa in his third» (Cameron 1985, p. 180, agrees and he also thinks to a simple chronological order of appointment).

As said, the 'backward-looking chronology' is based on an Empire divided into three praetorian prefectures. In the years 364/368-385/387 AD, when Probus' prefectorial career took place, the constitutions of Law Codes (and a few other sources) superimpose the prefectorial posts of no fewer than seventeen praetorian prefects for the prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa alone. Of these, eleven prefects appear to be in office in this one prefecture during the short period of 380-387 AD (see *PLRE* I, pp. 1050-51, with related entries). This crowding forced Jones to correct all the dates of the four constitutions relating to Probus praetorian prefect for the years 380-384 AD. According to this reconstruction, Probus could not have been prefect in the years in which the three prefectorial positions were already full of prefects (Jones brought forward the laws *CTh* VI 28, 2 from March 12th 380 AD to 371 or 374 AD, and *CTh* VI 35, 10 from June 27th 380 AD to 371 or 374 AD; as said, he moved *CTh* XI 13, 1 from January 19th 383 to August 19th 383 AD, and brought forward *CTh* VI 30, 6 from October 26th 384 to 383 AD). Furthermore, Jones accepted the questionable modification of a pas-

sage of Ammianus in which it was stated that Probus still held his first praetorian prefecture in 375 AD (Amm. XXX 5, 4). In 1915 W.C. Heraeus proposed to amend the text of Ammianus, *hic praefecturam praetorio tunc primitus nactus* («Probus had then, for the first time, attained the rank of praetorian prefect», so in Vat. Lat. 1873), and inserted before the adverb *tunc* a negation which does not exist in the manuscripts: *hic praefecturam praetorio <non> tunc primitus nactus* («Probus had then, not for the first time, attained the rank of praetorian prefect»). Since Jones attributes to Probus a short prefecture in 364 AD (Illyricum), a short prefecture in 366 AD (Galliae), a long third prefecture in 368-375/376 AD (Italia-Illyricum-Africa), he had to amend Ammianus' passage and reverse its meaning. This reconstruction was very successful. Moving backwards, this chronology incorporates Probus' first three praetorian prefectures, held during the reign of Valentinian I, and assumes that there was only one short praetorian prefecture of two months in 383 AD in the last thirteen years of the senator's career (376/388 AD). Finally, this reconstruction concentrates all Probus' praetorian prefect inscriptions, with or without iteration, into two groups: the first contains the inscriptions of the third praetorian prefecture alone (368-375/376 AD: PPRET 56, 57, 58, our 59, 60, 61, 63. This last inscription would be the only one to contain a reference to the first two prefectures, that of Illyricum and that of Galliae); the second one contains all the inscriptions made after the fourth praetorian prefecture (385/395 AD: PPRET 62, 64, 65, 66). The 'backward-looking chronology' of Probus' prefectorial career produces the following chronology:

- 1st praetorian prefecture over Illyricum in 364 AD, appointed by Valentinian I
- 2nd praetorian prefecture over Galliae in 366 AD, appointed by Valentinian I
- 3rd praetorian prefecture over Italia-Illyricum-Africa in 368-375/376 AD, appointed by Valentinian I
- [Gothic crisis 378/379 AD: Probus was never appointed praetorian prefect under Gratian (378-383 AD)]
- [383-388 AD usurpation of Magnus Maximus]
- 4th praetorian prefecture limited to the period of August-October 383 AD over Italia-Illyricum-Africa, appointed by Valentinian II

The 'forward-looking chronology' is based on an Empire divided into four praetorian prefectures – not three – and has been proposed recently by Porena (2020a-b; 2023a, pp. 129-216; for some similar previous hypotheses, see bibliography cited in Porena 2020a, nn. 18-20; 2023a, pp. 135 f., nn. 23-25).

According to this interpretation, there was an evolution of the number and boundaries of the praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in the period in which Petronius Probus was praetorian prefect, that is to say from the rise of Julian Augustus in 361 AD to the invasion of Italy by the usurper Maximus in 378 AD. In the years 361-376 AD, there was only one large praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, that existed alongside the praetorian prefecture of Gaul and the East. However, since 376/377 AD, the praetorian prefecture of Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa was separated from the autonomous prefecture of Illyricum (which either incorporated the whole of Illyricum from Noricum to the Aegean Sea, or extended only to the dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia – the sources do not allow us to specify). This prefecture remained separate from Italia-Africa (with or without the diocese of Pannoniae; see Porena 2020b; 2023a, pp. 67-97).

The progression of Probus' prefectorial career proposed by Porena takes into account the hypothesis that from 377/378 AD onwards, a praetorian prefecture of Illyricum was established and continued to function, run by Gratian in 376-378 AD and 381-383 AD, then by Valentinian II in 383-387 AD until the invasion of Italy by the usurper Maximus. Both for reconstructing the prefectorial career of Petronius Probus and for the prefectorial career of the other praetorian prefects during the decade 378-387 AD, it is necessary to diverge from the interpretation of Jones and the *PLRE* and divide the prefectorial offices of the West into three distinct zones: Gaul, Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa, Illyricum (the extent of which is uncertain, see Porena 2020b, with scheme at pp. 160 f.; 2023a, pp. 67-128, 266 f.).

Concerning Probus' prefectures, at the behest of Valentinian I, Probus held a first long praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa (a single giant prefecture) in the years 368-375/376 AD, which is attested by the inscription from the *domus Pinciana* dedicated on August 8th 378 AD. In this inscription the office is appropriately listed without iteration. The evidence of the Roman inscription has a direct and independent parallel in Ammianus Marcellinus.

In his 'Res Gestae', Ammianus describes in detail the personality of Petronius Probus at the moment of his appointment to the praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in 368 AD (Amm. XXVII 11). Up until this point, Ammianus had never mentioned Probus. Ammianus' appraisal, by far the most comprehensive of any of the dignitaries described in his work, represents the only contemporary analysis we have of the powerful dignitary's life and governmental experience. The appraisal was not placed by chance in the 'Res Gestae'. It was inserted into the narrative, at the precise

moment when he first reached the top of the civil administration in 368 AD, the moment which the sources describe as being the beginning of his first, long praetorian prefecture. As is known, Ammianus' historical exposition does not go beyond the year 378 AD. The historian knew that the three further praetorian prefectures of Probus, subsequent to that of 368-375/76 AD, had all been held after 378 AD, when Ammianus' history stops. Ammianus, therefore, was obliged to anticipate the profile of the powerful holder of those mandates, Probus, at the time of his entry into his first praetorian prefecture, because it was the only one of the four prefectures the historian could mention, and indeed it is the only one he does mention. Ammianus states that the sequence of the holders of the praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in the sixties of 4th Century AD was constituted by Claudius Mamertinus from 362 AD, Vulcacius Rufinus from 365 AD, Petronius Probus from 368 AD (Amm. XXI 6, 5; XXVI 5, 5; XXVII 7, 1-2; 11, 1). Ammianus' narrative describes administrative arrangements that were almost contemporary, that were both known and verifiable by his readers. If Probus really had held a first praetorian prefecture in 364 AD and/or 366 AD, as the scholars who follow the 'backward-looking chronology' believe, then a historian like Ammianus surely would have pointed it out. Nor would have started talking about Petronius Probus' bad character at the time of his third prefecture, while keeping silent about the first two. If, as we believe and as Ammianus asserts (and as Veneti and Histri suggest), the prefecture of Probus begun in 368 AD is his first one, there is no need to amend Amm. XXX 5, 4 (above). In this passage the historian wanted to point out that at the time of the arrival of Valentinian I in Pannonia in 375 AD, the praetorian prefect Probus was still stubbornly clinging to his first prefectorial mandate (*tunc primitus nactus*). In this passage, Ammianus explicitly condemns the excessive prolongation of the first praetorian prefecture of Probus; if that had been his third prefecture, Ammianus would have condemned the obsessive iteration of prefectural appointments. If, as the scholars adhering to the 'backward-looking chronology' believe, the senator had been invested in his third prefecture in 368-375 AD, in all likelihood Ammianus, who criticises the senator, would not have failed to point out such 'bureaucratic bulimia' (on the passage, see Porena 2020a, pp. 91-99; 2023a, pp. 140-57). In other words, the first praetorian prefecture of Probus could be celebrated – or execrated as Ammianus does – for its excessive duration in the years 375/378 AD, a date which is supported by the epigraphic evidence. In the following years – in the eighties – the inscriptions celebrate the iteration of the prefectures of Probus. The length, rigour and

year-by-year structure of Ammianus' work make it a very credible source, so it is highly plausible that Petronius Probus held his first and long praetorian prefecture, over Italia-Illyricum-Africa, succeeding Vulcacius Rufinus, who died in service, between 368 and 375/76 AD. This was the only one of the four prefectures obtained by Probus to fall within the time span covered by Ammianus' 'Res Gestae'.

On the basis of Ammianus' evidence and the *domus Pinciana* dedication, the 'forward-looking chronology' excludes that the constitutions of 364 and 366 AD predate 368 AD (on *CTh* I 29, 1 and XI 1, 15 see Pergami 1995, especially p. 430; Schmidt-Hofner 2008a, p. 509; Porena 2020a, pp. 101-3; 2023a, pp. 161-64).

When Probus' first long prefecture ended in early 376 AD, during the Gothic crisis (376/382 AD) and around the defeat of Adrianople (August 378 AD) – as already stated – Gratian would have divided the prefecture of Italia-Africa (perhaps with a part of Illyricum) and made an autonomous praetorian prefecture out of Illyricum. The inscription to Probus in the statue cycle made by the governor of Crete, Oecumenius Dositheus Asclepiodotus within the *Praetorium* of Gortyna, makes it necessary to place the end of Probus' third prefectorial mandate before the Spring of 383 AD. This Greek inscription carries the numeral three to indicate that Probus was at that moment former praetorian prefect for the third time (see PPRET 61, l. 5: γ' = τὸ τρίτον; the statuary cycle in the renewed *Praetorium* of Gortyna was created between the Summer of 382 and the Summer of 383 AD, see Bigi, Tantillo 2020). In the years 381-383 AD, Crete was in Gratian's *pars* of the Empire. In the years (379?) 380-382 AD, the emperor Gratian would have given Probus a second praetorian prefecture in Italia-Africa. In the Autumn of 381 AD, Gratian also gave Probus a third praetorian prefecture of Illyricum alone, which was extended into 382 AD. Probus was appointed to a second and third prefecture with separate codicils (the two mandates on two locations would have overlapped for a few months). The statuary cycle of the *Praetorium* of Gortyna portrayed the three praetorian prefects who had had Crete in their prefecture, one after the other, and who, in our opinion, were appointed by emperor Gratian: Probus (379/380-382 AD, see PPRET 61), Hypatius (382/383 AD, see PPRET 73), Praetextatus (383/384 AD, who in Gortyna is exalted probably when he was about to take office as praetorian prefect). A new reading of the inscription in honour of Probus made at Capua in 381/383 AD (see PPRET 60) celebrates the second and third praetorian prefecture of Petronius Probus as having overlapped for a few months. Both at Capua and Gortyna Probus is exalted beside Anicius

Paulinus (*PLRE* I, p. 678; *AE* 1972, 75b = Chioffi 2005, nr. 111 = *EDR* 005624 = *LSA* 1941; *ICret.* IV 320 = *LSA* 781 = Bigi, Tantillo 2020, p. 193, nr. 4): the senator is praised as *proconsul Campaniae* (378-379 AD) and prefect of Rome (380/381 AD). These pairs of monuments in Gortyna and Capua for Probus, praetorian prefect for the third time, and for Paulinus, former urban prefect, can only fall within the same chronological span if Probus held the second and third prefecture in the years 380/382 AD. Furthermore, the analysis of the iterations of the praetorian prefecture of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, in the inscription on his Roman funerary altar (PPRET 77, l. 16) and in his large statue base in Palazzo Altemps in Rome (PPRET 79, col. II, l. 11), confirms that only in the years 380 (379?) / 384 AD was it possible for a single praetorian prefect to be in charge of two separate praetorian prefectures, Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa and autonomous Illyricum, which were not reunited during the Gothic crisis into one vast prefecture (see Porena 2020a, pp. 103-17; 2023a, pp. 164-89). Probus' epitaph (PPRET 64, col. II, v. 7: *bis gemina populos praefectus sede gubernans*) also probably suggests his simultaneous assignment to two prefectures.

Two other sources – Ausonius and Symmachus – are useful in resolving the issue. Ausonius extols only one of Petronius Probus' praetorian prefectures and explicitly links it to the consulship of 371 AD (Auson. *epist.* 16 Pastorino/Scenkl). Ausonius writes an emphatic and exaggerated panegyric of Probus in which he does not associate the consulship with any iteration of the praetorian prefecture; if the prefecture of 368-375/376 in which Probus had the consulship had been his third, the poet would have pointed this out, because it was a primacy. Thus Ausonius connects Probus' consulship to his praetorian prefecture, which he implies was held only once and not repeated. In contrast, Symmachus (Symm. *epist.* I 58) extols Probus' second praetorian prefecture: this source should not be overlooked, because all letters to senators in the first book of the epistolary are sent only to praetorian prefects appointed by the emperor Gratian (376-383 AD), whereas Jones (and the 'backward-looking chronology') denies that Probus had prefectures from this emperor. According to the epistolary selection made by Symmachus, Probus was appointed to his second prefecture by Gratian, therefore after 376 AD, and according to the Capua and Gortyna inscriptions, Probus was appointed to his third prefecture by the same Gratian before the middle of 383 AD. According to this reconstruction, the constitutions addressed to Probus in the period 380-384 AD may retain the date that has come down to us in the manuscript of the Law Codes: *CTh* VI 28, 2, on March 12th 380, *CTh* VI 35, 10, on June 27th 380, and *CTh* XI 13, 1, on

January 19th 382 AD (see Porena 2020b, p. 157; 2023a, pp. 121 f.), were sent to Probus during his second and third prefectures; *CTh* VI 30, 6, on October 26th 384 AD, is the only legal evidence of his fourth and last prefecture.

In the same way that the defeat at Adrianople in 378 AD had prompted the emperor Gratian to give two new praetorian prefectures to Petronius Probus – who was already serving out a very long one – so the assassination of Gratian in August 383 AD, had prompted the young Valentinian II to give Probus another double praetorian prefecture (see Porena 2020a, pp. 118-27; 2023a, pp. 189-208).

After the usurpation of Maximus in Gaul and the assassination of Gratian, Valentinian II would have given Probus a fourth praetorian prefecture in Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa in 384-385 AD. At the same time the latter would also have been formally appointed in the same codicils to the praetorian prefecture of Gaul. As the *senior Augustus* since September 383 AD, Valentinian II would have wanted to exercise his right to appoint the prefect of Gaul in order to reaffirm that he was the legitimate heir to the *pars* of Gratian. However, since the Gauls were controlled by the usurper Maximus, Probus never took possession of this prefecture, even though Valentinian II claimed it as his own. Both Socrates and Sozomenos (*Socr. hist.* V 11, 2-3 and 10-12; *Soz. hist.* VII 13, 1 and 9-11) emphasise the presence of the former consul and praetorian prefect Probus in the administration of Italy alongside the young emperor Valentinian II. The fourth prefecture of Probus is attested only by a constitution, *CTh* VI 30, 6, dated on October 26th 384 AD. Praetextatus was still in office on September 9th 384 AD, after which he was discharged and returned to Rome where he died in December without being able to serve as consul in 385 AD. Therefore, Probus must have succeeded him between September and October 384 AD (see PPRET 77). Probus' colleague in the autonomous prefecture of Illyricum was Neoterius (*PLRE* I, p. 623; Porena 2020b, p. 155; 2023a, pp. 115 f.). The duration of this fourth prefecture held by Probus on Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa did not exceed nine months (September 384-May 385 AD). On June 1st 385 AD Principius was praetorian prefect of Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa (385/386 AD, see PPRET 81); on January 23rd 386 AD, the praetorian prefect of the autonomous Illyricum was Eusignius (386/387 AD, who may have taken office in the second half of 385 AD; see Porena 2020b, pp. 147-49, 152, 156 f.; 2023a, pp. 91-97, 108, 120 f.). In our opinion, Probus maintained a policy of opposition to the usurper Maximus from the murder of Gratian until the year 384 AD. The situation changed abruptly in the middle of 385 AD: an embassy sent by Maximus directly to the emperor Theodosius in Constantinople led to the recognition of the usurp-

er by the emperor residing in Constantinople (Zos. IV 37, 1-3). Valentinian II reluctantly bowed to this absurd alliance. The position of Probus became untenable. The praetorian prefect was dismissed from the prefecture of Italy-(Illyricum)-Africa and Gaul (nominally) before June 1st 385 AD. The latter went into voluntary exile and since he feared repercussions at the hands of Maximus, he went to Thessalonica, the extreme eastern end of Valentinian II's *pars*. The usurper invaded Italy in the Spring of 387 AD, Valentinian II fled to Thessalonica, and Theodosius defeated the usurper in Pannonia and in Venetia in August 388 AD. Probus returned to Rome as a victor: his political foresight had proved correct and monuments in his honour survived him.

This reconstruction preserves the dates of the constitutions of the Law Codes for the period 380-384 AD, while concurring with the account of Ammianus (Amm. XXVII 11 and XXX 5). It also concurs with the data on Probus' inscription from both the Pincio and Capua (PPRET 60) and distributes the four praetorian prefectures of Probus between the reigns of Valentinian I, Gratian and Valentinian II (this continuity of appointments is stated by Ammianus Marcellinus, Amm. XXVII 11, 2-3).

Concerning Probus' inscription from Verona (PPRET 63), in our opinion it does not list the prefectural districts administered by the senator in chronological order (Illyricum, Galliae II, Italia-Africa III), but by prefecture and number of terms of office. This is indicated by the separation of Illyricum from the Italia-Illyricum-Africa title of Probus' first prefecture, while it is likely that the numeral II after Galliae (l. 8) is the result of a misreading of the inscription.

The 'forward-looking chronology' of Probus' prefectorial career produces the following chronology:

- 1st praetorian prefecture in 368-375/376 AD over Italia-Illyricum-Africa, appointed by Valentinian I
- [378/379 AD Gothic crisis and creation of an autonomous praetorian prefecture of Illyricum]
- 2nd praetorian prefecture in (379?) 380-382 AD over Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa, appointed by Gratian
- 3rd praetorian prefecture in 381-382 AD over autonomous Illyricum, appointed by Gratian
- [383-388 AD usurpation of Magnus Maximus]
- 4th praetorian prefecture in 384-385 AD over Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa (and nominally Galliae), appointed by Valentinian II

Further observations on the inscription from the *domus Pinciana*.

The relationship between the *domus Pinciana* inscription and the other inscriptions pertaining to Petronius Probus' prefectures requires comment. The distribution of the praetorian prefectures devised by Jones (1964b), which generated the 'backward-looking chronology' of the prefectures of Probus, is based on the idea that the *cursus honorum* of this inscription was deliberately altered by the Veneti and the Histri. Jones states (1964b, p. 86): «It is not, however, necessary to assume that the dedicators gave his career in full; they may have preferred to ignore his first two prefectures, which were, as we shall see, brief, and to concentrate on his long third prefecture» (same interpretation in Cameron 1985, p. 179). On the other hand, in our opinion, if Probus had obtained three prefectorial appointments before August 8th 378 AD, the dedicators of the monument from the Pincian hill would certainly have included them in the *cursus honorum* under the statue of their patron placed inside his magnificent Roman *domus*. In this inscription they reserve two whole lines in order to cite just one praetorian prefecture without abbreviations; presumably they would have reserved a similar amount of space for the other prefectures. Possibly they could have avoided indicating the geographical extent of the prefecture (l. 11), and could have chiselled the iteration *ter* («thrice») after the office *praefecto praetorio* (l. 10), as indeed the *consularis Cretae* Asclepiodotus did in Gortyna (PPRET 61, l. 5: γ' = τὸ τρίτον). In the inscription from the *domus Pinciana*, towards the right margin of lines 10 and 11 there was space to put the iteration. Moreover, in 378 AD to have held three praetorian prefectures was an important record (during the 4th Century only Vulcarius Rufinus could have held three offices). The epigraphic obsession with indicating the four praetorian prefectures of our senator in the eighties reveals a tendency that the aristocrat's clients must surely have picked up on in 378 AD. Where there were iterations of a prefectorial office it was only proper to exalt them in their patron's *cursus honorum*. Thus it would be illogical and unusual to include a proconsulate of Africa in an inscription and yet omit two prestigious praetorian prefectures. In the inscription made by the *consularis* Asclepiodotus in Gortyna in honour of Probus in 382/383 AD (PPRET 61) the proconsulate of Africa is omitted, but the three prefectorial mandates, being more important in the *ordo dignitatum*, are included. In 372/375 AD, in the Probus inscription made by the *consularis* Fursidius Aristides (PPRET 58) and decreed by the κοινὸν in Gortyna, when Probus was still in office, the praetorian prefecture of Probus has no iteration: this prefecture celebrated in Crete by Aristides together with the consulate is the same as the one remembered on the statue base of the Pincian hill and neither has the itera-

tion. The inscription in honour of Probus from Capua (PPRET 60), which, as in the *domus Pinciana* inscription, gives the *cursus honorum* along four lines, exalts in the same order the proconsulship of Africa, the iteration, or rather, the overlapping of prefectorial mandates and the consulship: thus an explicit iteration. The same is true of the Verona inscription (PPRET 63), in which iteration is obsessively proclaimed. Indeed, all the inscriptions in honour of Probus made at the end of his career or after his death (PPRET 62, 63, 64, 65, 66) extol the four praetorian prefectures of Probus. In conclusion: the inscriptions always mention and extol iteration when Probus held more than one praetorian prefecture. The only exception – if one follows Jones – would be the inscription from the *domus Pinciana*. Moreover, there are no known *cursus honorum* of 4th Century AD senators in which the praetorian prefecture was omitted (see PPRET 25; 32; 45; 48; 51 twice; 54; 70; 77; 78; 79; 80; 87; 92 twice; 93 twice; 98). In 365/367 AD (probably in 367 AD), ten years before the engraving of the Pincian hill inscription, in Trajan's Forum in Rome, in the inscription in honour of the praetorian prefect Saturninius Secundus Salutius, the emperors Valentinian I and Valens extol his two praetorian prefectures of the East (361-365 and 365-367 AD, reported as *iterum*, see PPRET 51, l. 7). The case of Ceionius Volusianus *signo* Lampadius, styled as *ex praefecto praetorio, praefectus urbi* in six inscriptions, almost all dated to 365 AD (PPRET 36; 37; 38; 39; 40; 41) has been evoked by Cameron (1985, p. 179) as evidence of a selective *cursus honorum*. This example is not decisive, because the inscriptions do not illustrate the career from the point of view of the dedicators of an inscription in honour of the prefect: each inscription shows two appointments that the urban prefect himself selected and included – for political purposes – in texts that he personally wrote. It is an epigraphic self-representation, not a *cursus honorum* listed by others.

The geographical extent of Probus' prefecture in the Pincian hill inscription deserves a final comment (l. 11): *per Illyricum, Italiam et Africam*. In the 4th Century the specification of the prefecture (as an administrative district) in the inscriptions concerning the praetorian prefects is always inserted by external observers, namely family members, emperors, councils and client cities. The geographical name of the prefecture assigned to the honoree is very rarely indicated and when it is, it is for important reasons of clarity (praetorian prefects never indicate the regional extent of their prefecture in inscriptions put up by themselves). In 4th Century epigraphy – with the exception of the case of the Eastern prefect Cynegius (PPRET 75) – the indication of the geographical extent of the prefecture only occurs with the

praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa (PPRET 46; 49; our 59; 63; 65; 66; 70; 77; 78; 79; 80; 93; special PPRET 60). Specifying the geographical boundaries of the prefecture represents the exception, not the rule and is the responsibility of him who commissions the inscription; it is never the praetorian prefect. When the area is specifically defined one can often find some historical, administrative and political justification for doing so. Not only do the boundaries of a praetorian prefecture vary, but they could also change between the period of the prefect's appointment and the time of the writing of the inscription. Sometimes the prefecture included Italia, Africa and Illyricum, sometimes Illyricum was an autonomous prefecture. In the case of the inscription from the *domus Pinciana*, the Veneti and the Histri had to specify the extent of the prefecture attributed by Valentinian I to Probus in 368-375/376 AD, because in 378 AD, when they prepared their dedication for the senator and patron in Rome, that prefecture had just had Illyricum removed from it. Probus' prefecture celebrated in the dedication of the Pincian hill had not only been exceptionally long, eight years, but in the period 368-375/76 it still comprised three large sectors, Italia, Illyricum, Africa, that is to say five dioceses. Probably for the authors of the inscription dedicated in August 378 AD, Probus had been the last praetorian prefect to govern a prefecture that had incorporated Italia, Africa and Illyricum; since 376/377 AD the latter had been separated and had become again an autonomous praetorian prefecture.

In 378 AD the Veneti and the Histri exalted the united praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, because it was the only one held by Probus until then. But they also extolled its extension to three large dioceses, the Italian diocese, the African diocese, the whole of Illyricum (five dioceses in total), because that prefecture had been exceptionally long (eight years) and had been extended for the last time to an area that had then been reduced by the emperor Gratian to two smaller sectors.

The series of eleven inscriptions related to Probus praetorian prefect according to the 'forward-looking chronology' is as follows:

First praetorian prefecture

– PPRET 56: 368/369(375?) AD

– PPRET 57: (368?)376/382 AD

– PPRET 58: 372/374 AD

– PPRET 59: 378 AD, August 8th (dated)

Second and third praetorian prefecture

– PPRET 60: 381/383 AD

– PPRET 61: 382/383 AD

After fourth praetorian prefecture

– PPRET 62: 385/390 AD

– PPRET 63: 385/390 AD

Epitaph

– PPRET 64: 390/394 AD

Posthumous inscriptions

– PPRET 65: after January 1st 395 AD

– PPRET 66: after January 1st 395 AD

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