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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,  
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| II. Praetorian Prefects not mentioned in the Greek or Latin text of PPRET inscriptions | 941 |
| III. Other civil, military and ecclesiastical dignitaries                              | 942 |

INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF THE PRAET.  
PREFECT PROBUS FROM VERONA

EDITIONS: *CIL* V 3344; *ILS* 1266; Alföldy 1984a, p. 131, nr. 211; Porena 2020c, p. 214, nr. 7 (*apparatus*); 2023a, pp. 253 f. App. 25

LINKS: *EDCS* 04202390; *EDR* 093813; *EDH* 033485; *LSA* 1599; *TM* 125175

PLRE: I, pp. 736-40 - REVISED

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 385/390 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Verona. Modern city: Verona (Italy). Province: Venetia et Histria. Diocese: Italiciana. Regional prefecture: Italia Illyricum Africa.

Provenance: found during building work on the Cathedral of Verona (Duomo di Santa Maria Assunta) in the 15th Century, before 1477. Current location: lost. Ancient location: public space.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: unknown.

Reuse of the inscribed field: uncertain. Reuse of the monument: yes (building material in the Duomo di Verona). Opistographic: no.

Dimensions of support: Height: unknown. Width: unknown. Breadth: unknown. Dimensions of letters: unknown.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field (*frons*). At the time of its transcription, the inscription was apparently undamaged, but the transcribed text lacks the lower part (containing the name of the awarders). The inscription is known only from transcriptions reproduced in manuscripts by Ferrarini and Sirmond (see below).

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Latin. Rhythm: prose. Palaeography: unknown (no images available).

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for the praetorian prefect Petronius Probus

## LATIN TEXT

(vac.) Petronio (vac.)  
 (vac.) Probo v(iro) c(larissimo),  
 totius admira=  
 tionis viro, pro=  
 5 cons(uli) Africae, praef(ecto)  
 praetorio Illyrici,  
 praef(ecto) praet(orio) Gal=  
 liar[um], praef(ecto) praet(orio)  
 Italiae atque Africae  
 10 III, cons(uli) ordinario,  
 civi eximiae boni=  
 tatis, disertissimo  
 atque omnibus  
 rebus eruditissimo,  
 15 (vac.) patrono,  
 nepoti Probiani,  
 filio Probini vv(irorum) cc(larissimorum),  
 praeff(ectorum) urbis et cons(sulum).  
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## CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* V 3344 and Porena 2020c, p. 214, nr. 7.

8: *liar(um)* II, *CIL*, *ILS*, Alföldy, all databases

10: *III*, Ferrarini (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibl. HS. 765, f. 19v)

## TRANSLATIONS

– English: «To Petronius Probus, of clarissimus rank, man worthy of all admiration, proconsul of Africa, praetorian prefect of Illyricum, praetorian prefect of the Gauls, praetorian prefect of Italy and Africa three times, ordinary consul, citizen of extraordinary goodness, most eloquent and most learned in all things, patron, grandson of Probianus, son of Probinus, both of clarissimus rank, both urban prefects and consuls, ...».

– French: «À Petronius Probus, clarissime, homme digne de toute admiration, proconsul d’Afrique, préfet du prétoire d’Illyricum, préfet du prétoire des Gaules, préfet du prétoire d’Italie et d’Afrique trois fois, consul ordinaire, citoyen d’une bonté extraordinaire, très éloquent et très érudit en toutes choses, patron, neveu de Probianus, fils de Probinus, clarissimes préfets de Rome et consuls, ...».

– Italian: «Al chiarissimo Petronius Probus, uomo degno di ogni ammirazione, proconsole d’Africa, prefetto del pretorio dell’Illirico, prefetto del pretorio delle Gallie, prefetto del pretorio d’Italia e d’Africa tre volte, console ordinario, cittadino di straordinaria bontà, eloquentissimo ed eruditissimo in ogni cosa, patrono, nipote di Probianus, figlio di Probinus, chiarissimi prefetti urbani e consoli, ...».

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

The inscription was found during building work on Santa Maria Assunta, the Cathedral of Verona at an undetermined date, perhaps around the mid-15th Century, but certainly before 1477. In that year in Bologna, Michele Fabrizio Ferrarini (ca. 1450-1492) – an erudite, epigrapher, and since 1481 prior of the Carmelitan Monastery of Santa Maria del Carmine in Reggio Emilia, Italy (see Espluga 2008; Salsi 2020, pp. 41-59) – completed his «Epigrammaton ex vetustissimis lapidibus exscriptorum liber». The first redaction of this work survived in the codex Traiectinus, dating to 1477 (Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht HS. 765; concerning this codex, see Mommsen in *CIL* III, p. XXV, now Salsi 2020, pp. 61-66. The codex had several owners before coming into the possession of the Dutch philologist Pieter Burmann the Younger [1713-1788], who subsequently donated it to the Utrecht University Library). In its section on the inscriptions from Verona, the manuscript contains the first and oldest transcription of our epigraphic text (f. 19<sup>v</sup>) with Ferrarini’s annotation: «in fabrica maioris eccles(iae)», which must be the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. We do not know if Ferrarini personally saw and copied our inscription (in 1475 he was in Mantua, he may have gone to Verona, but actually there are no documented journeys of Ferrarini in Verona). Although Humanism in 15th Century Veneto excelled in epigraphic studies – Pietro Donà bishop of Padua (1390-1447), Giovanni Marcanova of Padua (1410-1467), Felice Feliciano of Verona (1433-1479), Friar Giovanni Giocondo of Verona (ca. 1433-1515) – Ferrarini’s transcription is the only early witness to the Veronese inscription in honour of Probus (his «Liber» is inspired by Feliciano’s sylloge of 1463; on the value of Ferrarini and of his sources cf. Mommsen in *CIL* V, pp. XVII, 320, 322). Unfortunately, Petronius Probus’ Verona inscription is now lost. About a century and a half after Ferrarini, the French scholar and Jesuit Jacques Sirmond (1559-1651) transcribed it in his epigraphic notes, but he did not see the Verona inscription (see below). In 1872 Mommsen published Ferrarini’s transcription from the Codex Traiectinus of Utrecht (which he considered to be the most reliable) in *CIL* V 3344.

Among the many inscriptions dedicated to Petronius Probus, the one in Verona is the most difficult to decipher (see PPRET 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66). Since we have lost the stone upon which it was written, verification of the transcription is impossible. For this reason we offer below all three versions of Ferrarini's epigraphic sylloge and a critical discussion of them. The preserved transcriptions of the epigraphic text have come down to us in the following manuscripts: 765 of the Utrecht Universiteitsbibliotheek (Nederland) dated to 1477 (see Salsi 2020, pp. 61-66); Parisinus Latinus 6128 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France of Paris (France) not dated (see Salsi 2020, pp. 67-95); Reggianus C 398 of the Biblioteca Civica «A. Panizzi» of Reggio Emilia (Italy) dated to 1486 (see Salsi 2020, pp. 96-123).

Utrecht Universiteitsbibl. HS. 765, f. 19<sup>v</sup>:

- (vac.) PETRONIO  
(vac.) PROBO VC  
TOTIVS ADMIRA  
TIONIS VIRO PRO
- (5) CONS AFRI<sup>c</sup>AE PRAEF PRAETORIO ILLYICI  
PRAE ET PRAEFEC ++
- GALLIAR II PRAEF PRAET ITALIAE ATQ AFRICAE
- (10) IIII COS ORDINARIO CIVI EXIMIAE BONI TATIS DISERTISSIMO ATQ OMNIB REBVS ERVDITISSIM
- (15) (vac.) PATRONO NEPOTI PROBIANI FILIO PROBINI VV CC PRAEF VRBIS ET COSS
- <letter C added between I and AE>  
<letter R is missing>  
<repetition of the same noun and two letters deleted>
- <four vertical strokes>

Bibl. Nat. France, Paris. Lat. 6128, f. 18<sup>r</sup>:

- PETRONIO  
(vac.) PROBO VC  
TOTIVS ADMIRA  
TIONIS VIRO PRO
- (5) CONS AFRICAE PRAEF PRAETORIO ILLYRICI

- PRAE ET PRAEFEC GAL <repetition of the same noun>  
 LIAR. II PRAEF PRAET  
 ITALIAE ATQ AFRICAE  
 (10) III CON ORDINARIO <three vertical strokes>  
 CIVI EXIMIAE BONI  
 TATIS DISERTISSIMO  
 (vac.) ATQ OMNIB.  
 REBVS ERVDITISSIM  
 (15) (vac.) PATRONO  
 NEPOTI PROBIANI  
 FILIO PROBINI VV CC  
 PRAEF VRBIS ET CONSS

Bibl. Civ. Reggio Emilia, Regg. C 398. f. 48r:

- (vac.) PETRONIO  
 PROBO VC TOTIVS  
 ADMIRATIONIS VIRO PRO  
 CONS AFRICAE PRAEF  
 (5) PRAETORIO ILLYRICI PRAE  
 ET PRAEFEC GALLIAR II PRAEF <repetition of the same noun>  
 PRAET ITALIAE ATQ AFRICAE  
 III CON ORDINARIO CIVI EX <three vertical strokes>  
 IMIAE BONITATIS DISERTISS  
 (10) ATQ OMNIB REBVS ERVDITISS  
 MO PATRONO NEPOTI PRO  
 BIANI FILIO PROBINI VV CC  
 PRAEF VRBIS ET COSS  
 ((hedera))

The Verona inscription is certainly authentic. When it entered Ferrarini's sylloge (before 1477) only the long epitaph in verse copied in 1452 by Maffeo Vegio behind the apse of St. Peter's Constantinian basilica (see PPRET 64) was known. All the other five Latin inscriptions that mention the praetorian prefectures of Probus are later than the discovery of our inscription and the death of Ferrarini (PPRET 65 and PPRET 66 from the cardinals collection belonging to the Cesi family in Rome were probably not known before 1550; PPRET 59 from the Pincian hill in Rome was found in 1742, while PPRET 62 from Trajan's Forum was found in 1933; PPRET 60 from Capua was found in 1955 and published in 1971). Also the Greek inscription in honour of Probus «former praetorian prefect for the third time» found in Gortyna was copied around 1577 (PPRET 61).

As said, in the first half of the 17th Century the inscription appears in a manuscript collection of epigraphic transcriptions by J. Sirmond (Paris Bibl. Nat. Lat. 9696, previously Suppl. Lat. 1417, p. 2, nr. 13), in which the Jesuit transcribes Ferrarini's epigraphic text, which is in Par. Lat. 6128. The French scholar does not seem to have seen the inscription, and has recomposed the text according to his personal division of the text into lines, but has taken the care to indicate with some apices the division into lines transcribed by Ferrarini in the Parisian codex.

We believe that the transcription of the Codex Traiectinus reflects the probable layout of the original epigraphic text chiselled in stone. In all the transcriptions the dedicators of the monument are missing. No doubt they were fellow citizens and clients of Probus, as indicated by the terms *civis* on l. 11 and *patronus* on l. 15, which appears well centred in the epigraphic field. It seems likely that the lower part of the inscription was illegible in the 15th Century. It is impossible that the identity of the clients was not indicated in an inscription that was engraved on either a public or private monument.

As can be seen from the manuscripts, the structure of the epigraphic text is usual. It begins with the onomastics, constituted by the *gentilicium* and the *cognomen* which is common to other inscriptions of this senator (ll. 1-2). We then have a first synthetic eulogy (ll. 3-4), followed by a long *cursus honorum* (ll. 4-10), which is succeeded by the relationship with the dedicators (ll. 11 and 15: *civis et patronus*, on the Veronese origin of the family of Petronius Probus and on the so-called 'oracle of the *Probi*' in the *Historia Augusta*, *Prob.* 24, 1-3, cf. Giardina 1975-1976; Cameron 2011, pp. 772-78; Savino 2017, pp. 24-30). Next the inscription exalts senator's exemplary conduct (ll. 11-12, to counteract the negative judgments that circulated about his behaviour, cf. *Amm.* XXVII 11; XXX 5, 1-11; *Hier. chron.* a. 372, p. 246 Helm) and that of his culture (ll. 12-14, see PPRET 59, l. 2). The senator's grandfather and father, both consuls and prefects of Rome are also exalted (ll. 16-18; Petronius Probianus, consul of 322 AD, see *CLRE*, pp. 178 f., and urban prefect in 329/331 AD, see Chastagnol 1962, pp. 82-84; *PLRE* I, pp. 733 f.; Petronius Probinus consul of 341 AD, see *CLRE*, pp. 216 f., and urban prefect in 345/346 AD, see Chastagnol 1962, pp. 124 f.; *PLRE* I, p. 735; on the family see Settiani 2000, pp. 373-80; Cameron 2012, pp. 136-40).

As in the other inscriptions honouring Probus, the awarders of the Verona inscription have listed the offices pertaining to his *cursus honorum* in the order in which his codicils of appointment were issued (ll. 5-10): the proconsulate of Africa in 358 AD (*CTh* XI 36, 13, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>; *CIL* VIII 1783), the

praetorian prefectures held four times in a maximum span of time of 364 AD to 387 AD; the ordinary consulate in 371 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 276 f.) (concerning Probus' career see in brief, Jones 1964b, pp. 85-89; similarly *PLRE* I, pp. 736-40 and pp. 1050 f.; Pergami 1995, pp. 417-23; Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 316-19; see more extensively Porena 2023a, pp. 129-216). The main problem of interpretation of this epigraphic text resides in Probus' list of praetorian prefectures. This articulation of his *cursus honorum* is unique. Of the five inscriptions that mention Probus' four praetorian prefectures (beside this one, see *PPRET* 62, 64, 65, 66) this is the only one in which the office (indicated three times) is followed by the geographical area of each prefecture, followed by a numeral that seems to indicate an iteration of the same office, or a sequence of appointments (concerning the iterations in late Roman epigraphy, see also Porena 2014a).

#### PROBLEMS OF THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

As in Ferrarini's transcriptions, the one in Regg. C 398 has a shorter layout which appears less verisimilar. The transcriptions of Traiectinus and Paris. Lat. 6128 are paginated in the same way. They have one error in common (a) and one important difference (b):

a) on lines 7-8 both make the same identical reading error, *PRAE ET PRAEFEC* <a deletion> *GALLIAR • II • PRAEF • PRAET*, which is repeated in the other two handwritten drafts of the sylloge. The scholar of Reggio Emilia, therefore, was unable to verify or correct this aberrant reading. It is possible that the copyist of the inscription – Ferrarini or his anonymous source – had problems reading the *cursus* of Probus at the point of the Gallic prefecture, or between the prefecture of Illyricum and the prefecture of Gauls. On lines 7-8 the anonymous dedicator of the monument appears to refer to two praetorian prefectures of Gauls with the numeral *II* (this numeral after the specification of the administrative area of the prefecture appears to indicate a repetition of the office, i.e. an adverb *bis*). However, this information is highly suspect. Objectively, it is extremely difficult to ascribe even a single praetorian prefecture of Gauls to Probus, since no source among the many which refer to him, puts him in this role (on *CIV* VII 38, 1, without date see Porena 2020a, pp. 101-3 and 126; 2023a, pp. 161-64; 206 f.). After having definitively rejected the thesis of 'collegiate prefectures' (see Jones 1964b), modern historiography has found no place for Probus' two praetorian prefectures of Gauls, at best only one.

b) The difference between the transcriptions of Traiectinus and Paris. Lat. 6128 is given by the numeral on l. 10: *IIII* in the former, *III* in the latter.

Having taken note of these two difficulties in the manuscript tradition, let us move on to a synthesis of the interpretations of the text by modern scholars. What criterion did the ancient author of the Verona inscription follow in listing, in six lines, the praetorian prefectures held by Petronius Probus? What do the numerals indicate? Two main interpretations seem possible.

### THREE SEQUENTIAL NUMERALS

Mommsen never examined the problems posed by the Verona inscription in his works. In his edition of the Theodosian Code and in his «Prolegomena», he merely suggests that the sequence of prefectures in the (lost) Verona dedication provides a list of Probus' appointments in chronological order (see Mommsen 1905a, p. 64 [*CTh* I 29, 1], p. 288 [*CTh* VI 28, 2], p. 295 [*CTh* VI 30, 6], p. 306 [*CTh* VI 35, 10], p. 574 [*CTh* XI 1, 15], p. 596 [*CTh* XI 13, 1]; also Mommsen 1905b, p. CLXVIII). This hypothesis was accepted and strongly emphasised by A.H.M. Jones (1964b, pp. 85-89; also in *PLRE* I, pp. 736-39). Jones states (p. 85): «On another inscription (before his fourth prefecture) he [scil. Probus] 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». Twenty years later, Al. Cameron (1985, p. 180) totally agrees: he also opts for a simple sequence of numbers in chronological order («the numerals appear in rising sequence») and he also firmly states that the series of Probus' prefectures are listed before the reference to his consulate held in 371 AD. Probus had, therefore, already been appointed praetorian prefect three times before the Verona inscription was made and before attaining the consulship (concerning this successful reconstruction of Probus' career, based on what we call a 'backward-looking chronology', see PPRET 59). According to Jones and Cameron, the numerals would indicate the succession of appointments of Probus to the praetorian prefectures before 371 AD, not the iterations or repetitions of appointments in his prefectures of Gauls and Italy-Africa. Therefore, according to their interpretation, the ll. 5-10 of the Verona inscription ought to be translated: «praetorian prefect of Illyricum (the first time), for the second time praetorian prefect of the Gauls, for the third time praetorian prefect of Italy and Africa». This interpretation of the Verona

inscription allowed them to reconstruct the ‘backward-looking chronology’ of Probus’ prefectorial career, which 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 (concerning this hypothesis, see discussion in PPRET 59)

According to this chronology, the Verona inscription should have been engraved between 371 and the first half of 383 AD.

Two obstacles weaken this hypothesis:

a) The narrative of Ammianus Marcellinus (Amm. XXVI 11 and XXX 5) and the inscription in honour of Probus from the *domus Pinciana* in Rome dedicated on August 8<sup>th</sup> 378 AD (for both see PPRET 59) show that Probus obtained the consulship of 371 AD during the long praetorian prefecture, extended over *Italia, Illyricum, Africa* (from 368 to 375/376 AD, around eight years), but this administrative district does not appear in the Verona inscription. According to the ‘backward-looking chronology’, in the second half of the 4th Century there was only one major praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, next to the praetorian prefecture of Gaul and to the praetorian prefecture of the East, but the author of the Verona inscription listed it only as *Italia atque Africa*.

In the inscriptions offered by Probus’ sons in Rome to their father in or after 395 AD – the only ones in which Probus’ praetorian prefecture of Gauls is mentioned – the prefecture of Gauls occupies the last place, not the first one as in Verona: *Italiae, Illyrici, Africae, Galliarum* (see PPRET 65, ll. 4-5; PPRET 66, ll. 6-7). If the series of prefectures held by Probus in the Verona inscription was chronological, two praetorian prefectures (*Illyricum, Galliae*) would have been omitted from the *domus Pinciana* inscription (Illyricum and Gauls, see PPRET 59), Probus’ sons would have reversed the chronological order of their father’s *cursus honorum*, and in the Verona inscription the title of the third and last of Probus’ prefectures (on Italia-Illyricum-Africa) would lack Illyricum.

b) In our Verona inscription, the numerals are placed after the geographical area of the prefecture and this would appear to indicate a repetition of the office in that specific administrative area (*semel, bis, ter*), and not a repetition of the office per se. If the author of the inscription had wanted to emphasise the chronological order of the prefectures held by Probus with a number – the first, second, third appointment – he should have placed the numerals after the office of *praefectus praetorio* and before the geographical area of the prefecture administered by the senator, i.e.: *praefecto praetorio Illyrici, praefecto praetorio II (= iterum) Galliarum, praefecto praetorio III (= tertium) Italiae atque Africae*, as noted by Seeck (1914, p. 25). This position of the numeral would have avoided the risk of misunderstanding the numeral as the iteration of the mandate in the specific prefectural seat and its regional area. However, this use of the numeral is not attested in the epigraphy of the praetorian prefects. The numeral is placed after the complete prefectorial title of the administered regional area and indicates as a rule the iteration of that regional prefecture, as it appears in the inscription of Verona: *Illyrici semel, Galliarum II = bis, Italiae Africae III = ter*. The clearest evidence of this practice is in the inscriptions in honour of Probus: the ancient authors of the inscriptions for Probus from Rome placed the numeral (*quarto, quater*) after the title *praefectus praetorio* and before the regional determination of his offices (*Italiae, Illyrici, Africae, Galliarum*, and the Gauls are in the last position, see PPRET 62, 64, 65, 66). In order to indicate that Probus had been praetorian prefect four times, regardless of the geography of his prefectures, the adverb *quater* must follow the office of *praefectus praetorio* and must precede the regional prefectures, that is to say the specification of the geographical area of each prefecture. It is clear that the authors of the four inscriptions in which the adjective or numeral adverb occurs, did not indicate the iterations of Probus' appointments in the various regional seats. They preferred to give the total number of codicils (four) and added the list of the major prefectural areas in which they were held, without qualifying the information, since such details would be very difficult to summarise in a short epigraphic text. On the contrary, the use of numerals after the regional determination of prefectures in the Verona inscription would appear to suggest a different, traditional criterion, probably dictated by an attempt to indicate the repetition of Probus' single appointment to the different regional prefectures (for the use of iterations in other inscriptions in honour of praetorian prefects of the 4th Century, see: PPRET 51, l. 7, PPRET 92, l. 6; PPRET 93, l. 2, iteration of the same regional prefecture in two different periods; PPRET 77, l. 16; PPRET 79, l. 11, numeral between the office and the regional prefecture for

a prefecture held simultaneously in two seats; PPRET 70, ll. 8-9, specification of two single appointments to praetorian prefectures in two different regional prefectures).

Finally, a further observation regarding the iterations in the inscriptions in honour of Probus: in all the inscriptions in which the numeral is used to indicate the whole four prefectorial appointments of the senator (see PPRET 62, 64, 65, 66), the numeral indicating the four offices of Probus is expressed with the adjective *quarto* or with the adverb *quater*, never with a number (i.e. *IIII*). In the Verona inscription, however, we have two numbers (ll. 8 and 10). Also in Probus' Capua inscription (see PPRET 60, l. 3), in which the author wishes to indicate the overlapping of two specific praetorian prefectures, the numeral (ordinal) is written in figures (*II et III*). In Probus' «former praetorian prefect for the third time» inscription in the statuary cycle of the *consularis Cretae* Asclepiodotus from Gortyna (PPRET 61, l. 5) we read the Greek number γ', i.e. τὸ τρίτον «three times» or «for the third time». The numeral in figures seems to indicate the iteration of specific regional prefectures covered by Probus and the numerals in the Verona inscriptions are expressed with figures.

#### ONE AGGREGATE NUMERAL

If the numerals of the Verona inscription do not indicate the chronological order of the codicils of Probus' appointments as praetorian prefect held before and around 371 AD (as in Jones and Cameron and many others), they must indicate the repetition of assignments at the head of the same regional prefecture. But, we also need to ask whether the numerals on the Verona inscription (*II* and *III* or *IIII*) were correctly read and transcribed by Ferrarini.

We have already remarked that lines 7-8 of Ferrarini's epigraphic sylloge is corrupted. In the manuscript, the numeral *II*, i.e. *bis*, after the prefecture of Gauls is very suspicious, because a praetorian prefecture held by Probus on Gauls is certain, as shown by the posthumous dedications of the senator's (see PPRET 65 and PPRET 66), but a second prefecture of Gauls is not found in any other source dealing with Probus' career. It is only attested in our Verona inscription. Moreover, in the Verona inscription, as in other inscriptions, two prefectures of Gauls would increase Probus' total number of prefectures – albeit distributed over time – from four to five, while we know that Probus did not exceed four (see PPRET 62, 64, 65, 66).

It is clear to see that the anonymous author of the Verona inscription

spared no space in listing the praetorian prefectures held by Probus (ll. 5-10): the title *praefecto praetorio* was repeated three times. Then, he wrote out in full the regional areas of the office for *Illyricum* and for *Italia atque Africa*; moreover he chiselled out in full *Africae* in relation to the proconsulate of Africa, and did the same with the adjective *ordinario* in relation to the consulate. The only exception would be the Gauls, abbreviated to *Galliar(um)*. This choice is puzzling, since the stone cutter always seems to abbreviate the offices (*procons.*, *praef.*, *cons.*), but never the administrative districts, i.e. their geographical areas. We think, therefore, that the numeral *II (bis)*, which in the manuscripts follows the indication *Galliar(um)* in l. 8, may be a misreading in a damaged area of the desinence ‘VM’ of *Galliarum*: *GALLIAR[V]M* (see Porena 2020b, p. 126; 2023a, pp. 206 f.). If this is the case, then the debated question of Probus’ iterations of his offices as praetorian prefect in the Verona inscription would be reduced, at least in part. In our opinion Probus obtained only one appointment to the prefecture of Gauls and in the Verona inscription there is no number after that prefecture on l. 8. This solution is adopted in the critical edition in this entry (above).

Let us now turn to the criterion adopted for listing the prefectures. The author of the Verona text decided to enhance the geography of Probus’ praetorian prefectures.

In diverging from Mommsen (above), Seeck (1914, p. 25) and Mazzarino (1990<sup>2</sup>, pp. 14-22, esp. pp. 16 and 18) thought that the enumeration of Probus’ prefectures in the Verona inscription was not chronological, but that it was composed on the basis of individual administrative districts, that is to say on the basis of the geography of the prefectures. Porena (2020a-b; Porena 2023a, pp. 129-216) has proposed a reconstruction of Probus’ career that differs from Jones’ reconstruction. This hypothesis (which we call the ‘forward-looking chronology’) is based on an Empire divided into four praetorian prefectures. According to this interpretation, in the years 361-376 AD, there was only one large praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, next to the praetorian prefectures of Gauls and the East. However, from 376/377 AD, the praetorian prefecture of Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa was separated from the autonomous prefecture of Illyricum. At the behest of Valentinian I, Probus held a first long praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa in the years 368-375/376 AD, which is attested by the inscription of the *domus Pinciana*, dedicated on August 8<sup>th</sup> 378 AD (PPRET 59, the office is listed singly and without iteration). After this mandate, during the Gothic crisis and around the defeat of Adrianople (late 376/378 AD), Gratian would

have split up the prefecture of Italia-Africa (perhaps with a part of Illyricum) and made an autonomous praetorian prefecture out of Illyricum. In the years (379?) 380-382 AD, 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 over an autonomous Illyricum, 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; this overlapping is explicitly indicated in the inscription in honour of Probus from Capua, see PPRET 60). In 384-385 AD, after the usurpation of Maximus in Gaul and the assassination of Gratian, Valentinian II would have given Probus a fourth praetorian prefecture in Italia-Africa with a formal appointment in the same codicils to the praetorian prefecture of Gaul. Since the latter was controlled by the usurper Maximus, Probus never took possession of this prefecture, even though Valentinian II claimed it as his own. This reconstruction distributes the praetorian prefectures of Probus between the reigns of Valentinian I, Gratian and Valentinian II. So, in our opinion, the chronology of Probus' prefectures is:

- 1st praetorian prefecture in 368-375/376 AD over Italia-Illyricum-Africa, appointed by Valentinian I
- [376/379 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 an autonomous Illyricum, appointed by Gratian (two codicils of appointment for two seats given in two different occasions to a single prefect)
- [383-388 AD usurpation of Magnus Maximus]
- 4th praetorian prefecture in 384-385 AD over Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa, and nominally over Galliae, appointed by Valentinian II (one codicil of appointment for two seats given in the same occasion to a single prefect).

According to this reconstruction, the Verona inscription would have been made after the last praetorian prefecture of Probus (his fourth one), which terminated in April/May 385 AD; the senator died after 390 AD. At that time, portraying in an epigraphic text the whole series of Probus' praetorian prefectures, while also specifying their exact geographical scope, which, in the case of Illyricum, had changed, was no easy task. In effect, Probus' most prestigious inscription in Trajan's Forum in Rome does not record the geographical scope of his prefectures, only their number (see

PPRET 62). In Probus' Verona inscription, the author has tried to combine both the iterations of the office together with a definition of the geographical areas of the prefectures. Breaking down the circumscriptions of Probus' four offices, he creates the sequence *Illyricum, Galliae, Italia-Africa*. This sequence does not occur elsewhere in Probus' epigraphy. Instead of listing the prefectural districts administered by the senator in chronological order, it lists them by prefecture (as administrative districts) followed by the number of terms of office in each single area. This is particularly evident in the separation of Illyricum from the Italia-Illyricum-Africa title of Probus' first prefecture (as said, this geography and this titulature in which Illyricum is associated with Italy and Africa are attested by the inscription of the *domus Pinciana*, see PPRET 59, l. 11). As we have already said, it is likely that the numeral *II* after *Galliae* (l. 8) is the result of a misreading of the inscription by Ferrarini or by an anonymous reader of the inscription in Verona. By breaking down the four prefectures of Probus, that is to say his four codicils, according to regional prefectures, the editor of the inscription aimed to multiply the number of praetorian prefectures attained by his aristocratic patron. The anonymous reader may well have had the impression that Probus had administered the whole of the West thanks to his numerous appointments to the praetorian prefecture (more than four times).

Probus' first long praetorian prefecture of Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa (368-375/376 AD), assumed immediately prior to the creation of the autonomous prefecture of Illyricum, is the first to be cited in Verona as *Italiae atque Africae*. His praetorian prefecture of Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa in 380-382 AD is cited second in Verona as *Italiae atque Africae*; between 381-382 AD, it overlapped with the autonomous praetorian prefecture of Illyricum, indicated at the beginning of the sequence as *Illyrici*. Finally, between September 384 and May 385 AD, Probus held the praetorian prefecture of Italia-(Illyricum)-Africa, which is cited third in Verona as *Italiae atque Africae*; combined in the same codicils of appointment with the praetorian prefecture of Gauls, it was only nominally in competition with the Gallic prefecture of the usurper Maximus, which in Verona is indicated as *Galliarum*, situated between *Illyricum* and *Italy-Africa*.

In my opinion the ancient author of the text began the list of prefectural areas with *Illyricum* because it had been Probus' most prestigious appointment: Sirmium was for a long period his seat since his long praetorian prefecture (368-375/376 AD, his first one, see Porena 2020a, p. 94-98; 2023a, pp. 146-55, and PPRET 59). In the public opinion he was the praetorian prefect residing in Illyricum (so Hier. *chron.* a. 372, p. 246 Helm: *Probus praefectus Illy-*

*rici*, with reference to the first long prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa; other sources, see Porena 2020a, pp. 94 f.; 2023a, pp. 146-49). The author of the Verona inscription then inserted *Galliae* in order to separate *Illyricum*, which from 376/377 AD was an autonomous praetorian prefecture and no longer part of the large praetorian prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa. His motivation for doing this was probably to avoid any ambiguity between *Illyricum* and *Italia-Africa* (the ambiguity might occur if they were listed one after the other). Finally, he inserted the three separate appointments of *Italia-Africa* to signify the prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa, complete with the entirety of *Illyricum* in the first appointment (368-375/376 AD). Thus, both the second appointment in 380-382 AD and the last appointment in 384-385 AD did not include the autonomous prefecture of *Illyricum*. The variability of the arrangements of the central prefecture after Adrianople led the author of the inscription to define this third prefecture as *Italia-Africa*. The city of Verona is located in the latter prefecture and perhaps the list was intended to show that the successful patron had been the praetorian prefect who is entrusted with the province of Venetia et Histria many times.

The sequence of the praetorian prefectures in the Verona inscription (*Illyricum*, *Galliae*, *Italia-Africa*) could also be explained in another way, if only hypothetically.

Anyone gaining the praetorian prefecture four times in the late 4th Century was an absolute record breaker (Iunius Bassus had been praetorian prefect two times in total for 14 years, see PPRET 10; Vulcacius Rufinus was praetorian prefect three times, just before Probus, and perhaps reached 12/13 years, see PPRET 32). The editor of the Verona inscription wanted to enhance both the geographical extension of the mandates and the iteration of the prefecture of Italia-Africa (united to the whole Illyricum at least during the first mandate). Perhaps the aim was to surpass the record recently achieved by Vulcacius Rufinus, also praetorian prefect in Illyricum (346/347-352 AD), in Gauls (353-354 AD), in Italia-Illyricum-Africa (365-368 AD). In Verona it is quite possible that there might have been a monument in honour of Vulcacius Rufinus. If there was, then it would have been certainly earlier than our inscription, perhaps made twenty years prior, around 368 AD, when Rufinus died. If such a 'phantom monument' had listed Rufinus' praetorian prefectures, the sequence would have been: Illyricum, Galliae, Italia-Illyricum-Africa, the same sequence in Probus' inscription from Verona. If two monuments for the two illustrious senators in Verona were related to each other, the numeral on l. 10 in Probus' inscription was decisive: the three prefectures of *Italia-Africa*, after the prefectures of *Illyricum*

and *Galliae*, gave the impression that Probus had held five offices, two more than Vulcacius Rufinus. This choice would explain the absence of the usual numeral *III* or *quarter* in the Verona inscription. The particular sequence in which the praetorian prefectures of Probus are listed, which in our opinion might correspond to the series of the three praetorian prefectures held by Vulcacius Rufinus, before Probus, leads us to suspect that in Verona the writing of Probus' honorary inscription in 385/390 AD may have been influenced by the presence of an earlier monument to Vulcacius Rufinus which would have stood in the same city and in the same public space. Of course, this is a hypothesis without any evidence.

#### OTHER COMBINATIONS OF THE NUMERALS

The problem of any interpretation of the Verona inscription remains the accuracy of Ferrarini's transcription. We have seen that his transcription in ll. 7-8, that is to say after the prefecture of Illyricum and before the prefecture of *Galliae*, appears to have been altered in some way. This leads us to propose, albeit tentatively, two further and quite different hypotheses on the reading of the epigraphic text (put forward with great caution by Mazzarino 1990<sup>2</sup>, p. 21).

A numeral *II* = *bis* after Illyrici?

If, as we believe, Probus held a first praetorian prefecture in Italia-Illyricum-Africa in 368-375/376 AD, with Illyricum included within this single large prefecture, and then held a praetorian prefecture of an autonomous Illyricum in 381/382 AD, the ancient author of the Verona inscription, who distinguishes Italia-Africa from Illyricum, could and perhaps should have counted two prefectures of Illyricum: a first included in the prefecture of Italia-Illyricum-Africa (before 376/377 AD), a second when the Illyricum became an autonomous prefecture (since 376/377 AD). He might well have inserted an iteration after the prefecture of Illyricum at l. 7, instead of after the prefecture of Gaul. If the numeral *II* (*bis*) had been found after the first praetorian prefecture in the list, that of Illyricum, the stone would have been inscribed: *praef(ecto) praetorio Illyrici II, praef(ecto) praet(orio) Galliar[um], praef(ecto) praet(orio) Italiae atque Africae III*. Thus: «praetorian prefect of Illyricum two times, praetorian prefect of the Gauls, praetorian prefect of Italy and Africa three times». A 15th Century reader of this sequence might easily have been tempted to alter his transcription: he may have moved the numeral *II* (*bis*) for the prefecture of Illyricum and positioned it after the

second listed praetorian prefecture (*Galliarum*), choosing to place it before the third listed praetorian prefecture (*Italiae-Africae* which is followed by the numeral *III*), in order to reconstruct the ‘correct’ sequence of numbers (as *primum, iterum, tertium* «first, second, third»).

Only the numeral *IIII* = ‘four times’ at the end?

Finally, a less likely hypothesis can be proposed if one accepts the correction of ll. 7-8 of the Verona inscription: *praef(ecto) praet(orio) Galliar[u]m*, without any numeral after *Illyrici*, nor after *Galliarum*. In Codex 765 of the Utrecht Universiteitsbibliotheek Ferrarini had transcribed the numeral *IIII* instead of *III* after the last praetorian prefecture, *Italiae atque Africae*. If the numeral *IIII* at the end was the only numeral in the entire *cursus honorum* of Probus, one might think that the author of our inscription decided to list Probus’ prefectures with a different approach, which would be similar to that of the other inscriptions mentioning his four appointments. In other words, the ancient author of the Verona inscription would have placed the numeral corresponding to the total sum of the codicils appointing Probus as praetorian prefect at the end of the list of regional prefectures, instead of adding the adverb *quater* after the titlature of the office. Thus: «praetorian prefect of Illyricum, praetorian prefect of the Gauls, praetorian prefect of Italy and Africa, (overall) four times». This arrangement is certainly less clear than the placement of the adverb *quater* after *praefectus praetorio*, but the multiplication of the titlature *praefectus praetorio* repeated before each regional district might have suggested such a solution.

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