



**Roma Tre**

DIPARTIMENTO DI  
STUDI UMANISTICI

**RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM**  
STUDIES IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

QUADERNI

6

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*In re publica litterarum liberi nos sumus*

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2025

## RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM • QUADERNI

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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

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IN RE PUBLICA LITTERARUM  
LIBERI NOS SUMUS

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INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF THE PRAET.  
PREFECT PROBUS FROM ROME BY HIS SONS ANICIUS  
PROBINUS AND ANICIUS PROBUS

EDITIONS: *CIL* VI 1752 (pp. 3174, 3813, 4751, cf. *CIL* VI 31921); *ILS* 1268.  
Photos: *SupplIt-Imagines, Roma* (*CIL*, VI) 5, *Collezioni urbane dei palazzi storici*,  
nr. 5116; Orlandi 2008, p. 133 (Ligorio's drawing); Balistreri 2020, p. 123  
(Ligorio's transcription)  
LINKS: *EDCS* 18100571; *EDR* 128599; *LSA* 1459; *TM* 281834  
PLRE: I, pp. 736-40  
PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus  
DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 395/405 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

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

Provenance: unknown; since the 16th Century the inscription is mentioned several times in the collection of Cardinal F. Cesi in his palace near St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Current location: Rome, Palazzo Albani Del Drago alle Quattro Fontane (Quirinal hill), built into a wall in the palace entrance hall (Via delle Quattro Fontane, 20). Ancient location: private space.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: marble.

Reuse of the inscribed field: yes. Reuse of the monument: no. Opisthographic: no.

Dimensions of support: Height: 133 cm. Width: 88 cm. Breadth: unknown. Dimensions of letters: 4 cm.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field (*frons*). Undamaged. The sequence and depth of the mouldings surrounding the epigraphic field suggest the erasure of an earlier inscription.

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

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for the praetorian prefect Petronius Probus

LATIN TEXT

Sexto Petronio Probo  $\bar{v}$ (iro)  $\bar{c}$ (larissimo),  
 proconsuli Africae,  
 praefecto praetorio  
 quater, Italiae, Illyrici,  
 5 Africae, Galliarum,  
 consuli ordinario,  
 patri consulum,  
 Anicius Probinus  $\bar{v}$ (ir)  $\bar{c}$ (larissimus)  
 consul ordinarius,  
 10 et Anicius Probus  $\bar{v}$ (ir)  $\bar{c}$ (larissimus)  
 quaestor candidatus, filii,  
 munus singulari religioni  
 debitum dedicarunt.

CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* VI 1752; text was seen and verified by Porena in 2016.  
 4: Illyrici, *EDR*, *LSA*

TRANSLATIONS

– English: «To Sextus Petronius Probus, of clarissimus rank, proconsul of Africa, praetorian prefect four times, of Italy, of Illyricum, of Africa, of Gauls, ordinary consul, father of consuls, Anicius Probinus, of clarissimus rank, ordinary consul, and Anicius Probus, of clarissimus rank, candidate quaestor, his sons, dedicated the dutiful offering to (his) special devotion».

– French: «Au clarissime Sextus Petronius Probus, proconsul d’Afrique, quatre fois préfet du prétoire, d’Italie, d’Illyricum, d’Afrique, des Gaules, consul ordinaire, père des consuls, Anicius Probinus, clarissime consul ordinaire, et Anicius Probus, clarissime candidat questeur, ses fils, ont dédié l’offrande qui est due à (sa) dévotion particulière».

– Italian: «Al chiarissimo Sextus Petronius Probus, proconsole d’Africa, prefetto del pretorio quattro volte, d’Italia, d’Illirico, d’Africa, delle Gallie, console ordinario, padre di consoli, il chiarissimo Anicius Probinus console ordinario e il chiarissimo Anicius Probus questore candidato, suoi figli, dedicarono l’offerta doverosa alla speciale devozione (sua)».

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

Although the inscribed base in honour of Petronius Probus was found in Rome, the exact findspot and the circumstances of its discovery remain unknown. Some 16th Century humanists (see *CIL* VI, p. 387) transcribed the inscription – and four other inscriptions made in honour of Probus and his wife Anicia Faltonia Proba (see below) – and they state that it was held in the collection of the cardinals Paolo Emilio Cesi (1481-1537) and Federico Cesi (1500-1565), located in their palace gardens near St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (the collection was reorganised after the sack of Rome in 1527; see Hülsen, Duhn 1917, pp. 1-42, in part. pp. 10 and 14, nr. 19; Dodero 2016; on the Palace in Borgo Vecchio see Santolini 2016). In the 16th Century the inscription was still on its intact base and Pirro Ligorio (ca. 1513-1583) produced a draft of the entire monument (Cod. Neap. XIII B. 7, p. 149, see Orlandi 2008, p. 133). The Cesi collection passed to Cardinal Pier Donato Cesi (1521-1586), but was dispersed in 1622, after the death (in 1621) of Cardinal Bartolomeo Cesi (1566-1621). In the middle of the 17th Century, the construction of Bernini's Colonnade delimiting the new St. Peter's square led to the demolition of part of the Cesi palace and gardens (West side). At that time the Cardinal Camillo II Massimo (1620-1676) had the inscription moved to the courtyard of his palace on the Quirinal hill at the Quattro Fontane. Later the inscribed base entered the collection of Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779, on his collection see Cacciotti 2017; Hornsby, Bevilacqua 2021). In 1707 the future cardinal bought Palazzo Mattei-Massimo-Merli, built between Via Pia (now Via XX Settembre) and Via delle Quattro Fontane by Domenico Fontana between 1587 and 1590. During the reconstruction of the palace's entrance hall, the front part of the base in honour of Petronius Probus, supporting the epigraphic field, was cut out and inserted into the wall on the right (it was here that the Jesuit Antonio Maria Lupi [1695-1737] first copied it, before 1733, as stated by him in the codex Vat. Lat. 9143, f. 43r «in palatio Cardd. Albanorum e basi (ut videtur) atrii parieti infixæ», see Buonocore 1988); Gaetano Marini (1742-1815) copied it in 1785 (p. 159). The inscription is still in Rome, built into the same wall of the entrance hall of Palazzo Albani Del Drago alle Quattro Fontane (Via delle Quattro Fontane 20, on the Quirinal hill).

The sequence and depth of the mouldings surrounding the epigraphic field suggest the erasure of an earlier inscription (as also *CIL* VI, p. 4751 and *LSA* 1459). The letters and the chiselling are very elegant and high quality,

and the writing shows a classic geometric style. The abbreviations are limited to the rank *v(ir) c(larissimus)* of the honoured individual and the monuments dedicators. Words are not broken between one line and the next. The layout is carefully studied: l. 1, bears the onomastics (with his *praenomen*, on the onomastics of Probus, see Cameron 1985, pp. 171-78; Salomies 2012, p. 5; in general Salway 1994); ll. 2-6, the *cursus honorum* (all offices were engraved in full, on the sequence see below); l. 7, the exaltation of the consulship exceptionally obtained by the two sons dedicating the monument (see below), while ll. 8-11 bear the names and office of the two dedicators; ll. 12-13 has the motivation for offering the monument.

The monument with its inscription now in Palazzo Albani was made in honour of Sex. Petronius Probus (concerning Probus' life and career, 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; on his four praetorian prefectures see below). It was dedicated to the great senator by his sons, Anicius Probinus (*PLRE I*, Probinus 1, pp. 734 f.), referred to as *consul ordinarius*, and Anicius Probus (*PLRE II*, Probus 11, pp. 913 f.), styled as *quaestor candidatus*. The most likely date of construction of the monument is 395 AD. On January 1<sup>st</sup> 395 AD, the two sons of Petronius Probus, Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius (see *PPRET* 66) and his younger brother Anicius Probinus took office as ordinary consuls (see *CLRE*, pp. 324 f.). The consulship of the two brothers was exceptional (there is only one precedent in the 4th Century, in 359 AD, Flavius Eusebius and Flavius Hypatius, see *CLRE*, pp. 252 f.; see *PPRET* 73). Moreover, that appointment to the consulship was one of the last acts of emperor Theodosius I before his death in Milan in January 395 AD and took place at a crucial historical moment. At the beginning of September 394 AD, Theodosius defeated the usurper Eugenius in the battle of the Frigidus in Venetia (see Cameron 2011, pp. 93-131, with Bonamente 2013; Crawford 2012; Harris 2016). For the following year's ordinary consulship he chose the two sons of Petronius Probus, a powerful senator who had remained loyal to the legitimate Augusti during the usurpation of Magnus Maximus in 383-388 AD, and whose family had stayed faithful in the recent usurpation of Eugenius in 392-394 AD. The two brother consuls commissioned the poet Claudianus to write a panegyric for their entry into the prestigious magistracy, full of information on the family and political context (see Taegert 1988, pp. 26-34; Dunn 2008). Our inscription from Palazzo Albani must post date January 1<sup>st</sup> 395 AD, when Probinus took office as consul together with his brother Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius. We do not know when Anicius Probus was *quaestor*

*candidatus*, but it is probable that in late 394 AD the emperor Theodosius promoted the three sons of Petronius Probus: Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius and Anicius Probinus to the ordinary consulship of 395 AD, and the younger Anicius Probus was supported by the emperor in his candidature for the *quaestura* in Rome (for the *munus* of the *quaestura*, see Roda 1977; Marcone 1981; Beltran Rizo, Jiménez Sánchez 2005; Giglio 2007). Ten years later, in 406 AD, Anicius Probus in turn became ordinary consul together with the emperor Arcadius (*cos. VI*, see *CLRE*, pp. 346 f.); the sharing of the consulship with an Augustus recalled the sharing of the consulship of his father, Petronius Probus, in 371 AD together with the emperor Gratian (*cos. II*, see *CLRE*, pp. 276 f.; for this extraordinary act, see Emion 2020). Strictly speaking, our inscribed base must be dated between the beginning of 395 AD and the end of 405 AD, but the year 395 seems the most likely occasion.

Our monument in Palazzo Albani was posthumous and supported a statue that is now lost. Petronius Probus was born around 328/332 AD and he died sometime between 388 and 392 AD (we think that the senator spent at least three years in Thessalonica and returned to Rome between October 388 and the Spring of 389 AD; in 390 AD he was alive and residing in Rome, cf. Paul. Med. *vita Ambr.* 25, see Porena 2020a, pp. 118-30; 2023a, pp. 189-209. In 395 AD Claudianus in his *paneg. dictus Olybrio et Probino coss.* celebrates the mother of the brother-consuls, Anicia Faltonia Proba who was still alive, vv. 177 and 192-194, while the praise of her husband Probus is entirely in the past tense, vv. 31-60; concerning the hypothesis on Probus' lifespan, see Porena 2020a, pp. 132 f., n. 36; 2023a, p. 142 n. 41).

The inscription made by Anicius Probinus and Anicius Probus for their deceased father is not isolated. The two brothers also dedicated a monument to their mother, Anicia Faltonia Proba (*PLRE* I, pp. 732 f.; *PChBE* II, pp. 1831-33), thanks to whom the Anician branch had been able to join with the Petronii (see Cameron 2012, pp. 136-40) (the statue-base, now lost, was dedicated in 395 AD; the crowning slab contains two elegiac distichs side by side and was chiselled in 406 AD, when Probus became consul; it is now in Leiden - Nederland, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, inv. Pb47; *CIL* VI 1754 = *ILS* 1269 = *EDR* 127599 = *LSA* 1461):

(*corona*:) (col. I:) *Consimiles fratrum trabeis gestamina honorum / tertia quae derant addidimus titulis.* (col. II:) *Dilectae Probus haec persolvo munera matri / restituens status praemia quae dederat.*

(*frons*:) *Aniciae Faltoniae / Probae, / Amnios Pincios / Aniciosque decoranti, / consulis uxori, / consulis filiae, / consulum matri, / Anicius Probinus v(ir) c(larissimus), / consul ordi-*

*narius / et Anicius Probus v(ir) c(larissimus) / quaestor candidatus, / filii devincti / maternis meritis, / dedicarunt.*

The two monuments made by Anicius Probinus and Anicius Probus seem to belong to a group of five monuments, all of which came into the collection of the cardinals Cesi (above). The elder brother of the two, Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, the other consul from 395 AD, and his wife Anicia Iuliana, dedicated, probably in 395 AD, three inscribed monuments: one similar to our inscription from Palazzo Albani was dedicated to their late father and father-in-law Petronius Probus (see *CIL* VI 1753 = *ILS* 1267 = *EDR* 122124 = *LSA* 1460 = *PPRET* 66). The married couple dedicated two more monuments for Olybrius' mother and mother-in-law of Iuliana, Anicia Faltonia Proba:

– a statue base from Rome, now in the Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, Lapidario Cristiano ex Lateranense, 12, 37, inv. 32408 (*CIL* VI 1755 = *EDR* 127595 = *LSA* 1462):

*Aniciae Faltoniae / Probae, fidei nobilitatis antiquae orna/mento Anicianae / familiae servandae ac / docendae castitatis / exemplo, consulum / proli, consulum ma/tri, Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius v(ir) c(larissimus) / consul ordinarius / et Anicia Iuliana c(larissima) f(emina) / eius devotissimi filii / dedicarunt.*

– a statue base from Rome, now lost (*CIL* VI 1756 = *EDR* 127594 = *LSA* 1463):

*Aniciae Faltoniae / inlustrissimae et / sanctissimae / castissimae feminae, / Hermogenianus Olybrius / v(ir) c(larissimus) consul ordinarius / et Anicia Iuliana c(larissima) f(emina) / d(e) d(icaverunt).*

It is not known whether this last monument for Anicia Faltonia Proba had a counterpart for her husband Petronius Probus.

In sum, therefore, the three sons of Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba had (at least) five elegant monuments built for their illustrious parents. These monuments could not have been built before the beginning of 395 AD (on the family of Petronius Probus and on the connection of Petronius Probus with the Anicii, see Settipani 2000, pp. 373-80; Cameron 2012, pp. 136-40; see the stemmi in Chastagnol 1962, pp. 291 f.; *PLRE I*, pp. 1133 and 1144; Settipani 2000, p. 375; Dunn 2008, p. 443; Cameron 2012, pp. 137 and 141). Such devotion was shown in response to the political foresight and social importance of the couple, which had greatly favoured the success of their sons in the aristocracy of the second half of the 4th Century. In ll. 12-13

of our inscription from Palazzo Albani, the sons explicitly declare that they have put up the monument to their father as a duty, in order to fulfill the debt of gratitude (*munus debitum*) for his extraordinary care of the family (*singulari religioni*) (see also the words of Flavianus iunior to his father Flavianus senior in the inscription from Trajan's Forum, see PPRET 93, ll. 32-33. Concerning the difference between *munus* and *donum*, see Isid. *de diff. verb.* 360: *munus est debitum, ut patrono; donum, honorarium est*; for a similar terminology cf. Plin. *epist.* III 5, 3; Symm. *epist.* I 44, 2; VII 29).

It would appear that in the mid-16th Century, this group of five monuments was preserved in the Cesi collection, a fact suggesting that the monuments had indeed come from the same unfortunately unknown area of Rome. Niquet (2000, pp. 27, 190, 247) argues that the monuments originated in a *domus*, such as the *domus Pinciana* (near the Trinità de' Monti) which had, in fact, belonged to Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba (see PPRET 59; for this type of monument in late antique Rome, see Gehn 2012b; Scheibelreiter-Gail 2012; concerning the possibility that the monuments came from the *domus Pinciana*, see Hülsen, Duhn 1917, p. 6). Family members and clients were free to put up statues to senators in their private *domus*, since no official permission was required, and in so doing honour the glory of their lineage (for statues in the *domus* of praetorian prefects in Rome who were great aristocrats, see PPRET 32, 78, 79, 80, 92, 93). Machado (LSA 1459; Machado 2011, pp. 511 f.; Machado 2019, pp. 158 f.) thinks not only of a *domus*, but also of the great mausoleum of the Probi behind the apse of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican (see PPRET 64).

Probus' inscription from Palazzo Albani together with the other four inscriptions offered by his sons to their parents exalt the ordinary consulship in a manner that is almost obsessive. The most illustrious office of the senatorial career, the name of whoever attained the magistracy was fixed in the collective memory forever (on the late antique consulship and the prestige of the office, see CLRE, pp. 1-35; Cecconi 2007, pp. 116-27; Mathisen 2009; Sguaitamatti 2012, pp. 137-96). In l. 7 of our inscription, Probus is extolled as *patri consulum* (as is also the case in the dedication to him by Olybrius and Iuliana, see PPRET 66, ll. 8-9). The ordinary consulate is mentioned in almost all inscriptions in honour of the praetorian prefect Probus. In the family domain it is extolled in Probus' epitaph (PPRET 64, col. a, ll. 3-4; col. b, l. 6), and in the inscriptions in honour of Anicia Faltonia Proba (see above, CIL VI 1754, ll. 4-6: *consulis uxori, consulis filiae, consulum matri*; CIL VI 1755, ll. 7-9: *consulum proli, consulum matri*). The consulships of Petronius Probus and his family (Probi and Anicii) are celebrated by contemporaries (cf. Auson.

*epist.* 16 Pastorino/Schenkl, vv. 21-26, 31-34, 69-72, 96-101; Hier. *epist.* 130, 3; Claud. *paneg. dictus Olybrio et Probino coss.* passim; Prud. *c. Symm.* I vv. 554-557). In the second half of the 4th Century the family of Petronius Probus held the record in the Roman aristocracy for attaining the ordinary consulship in every generation from the age of Constantine onwards: Petronius Probinus, Probus' grand-father, was consul in 322 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 178 f.), Petronius Probinus, Probus' father, was consul in 341 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 216 f.) – they are extolled in PPRET 63, ll. 16-18 – Petronius Probus was the ordinary consul in 371 AD together with the emperor Gratian (*CLRE*, pp. 276 f.), his sons Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius and Anicius Probinus were consuls in 395 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 324 f.), his son Anicius Probus was consul in 406 AD together with the emperor Arcadius (*CLRE*, pp. 346 f.). Moreover, when Probus was very powerful under the emperor Gratian, his father-in-law Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius was consul in 379 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 292 f.).

In ll. 2-6 of the inscription from Palazzo Albani, Probus' *cursus honorum* is listed (on his career see PPRET 59). As in the other inscriptions in honour of Probus, 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 23<sup>rd</sup>; *CIL* VIII 1783), the praetorian prefectures held four times in a maximum time span of 364 AD to 387 AD; to this we can add the ordinary consulate in 371 AD (*CLRE*, pp. 276 f.). In the second half of the 4th Century, Petronius Probus held another illustrious record: in the Roman aristocracy he was the only senator to have been praetorian prefect four times. In our inscription (ll. 4-5) the adverb *quater* is followed by the list of regional prefectures, without any connection between the individual appointments and the single prefectures (this is also the case in PPRET 66). Probus' sons recalled the four appointments and listed the districts administered. Evidently the combination of the appointment to each of the four prefectural offices and the geographical area it administered was difficult to explain in a short inscription (the difficulty also arises in other inscriptions relating to the appointments of the praetorian prefect: in PPRET 62 and PPRET 64 the regional prefectures are not specified; on the other hand, in PPRET 63, the four codicils are combined with the regional prefectures, but the combination is problematic). Concerning the different reconstructions of Probus' career and his four praetorian prefectures proposed by scholars, see PPRET 59.

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