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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

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INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF THE PRAET.
 PREFECT PROBUS FROM ROME BY HIS SON
 ANICIUS HERMOGENIANUS OLYBRIUS
 AND BY HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW ANICIA IULIANA

EDITIONS: *CIL* VI 1753 (cf. pp. 3174, 4751 f.); *ILS* 1267; Gordon 1965, pp. 152 f., nr. 353 (with photo, Pl. 166, b)

PHOTOS: *SupplIt-Imagines, Roma (CIL, VI) 1, Musei Capitolini*, nr. 219; Balistrieri 2020, p. 123 (Ligorio's transcription)

LINKS: *EDCS* 18100572; *EDR* 122124; *LSA* 1460; *TM* 279426

PLRE: I, pp. 736-40

PRÆTORIAN 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 recorded several times in the Cesi cardinal palace near St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Current location: Roma, Musei Capitolini, NCE 2499, Palazzo Nuovo, ground floor second room to the right, built into the wall upper left-hand side. 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: uncertain. Reuse of the monument: no. Opisthographic: no.

Dimensions of support: Height: 76 cm. Width: 49 cm. Breadth: unknown. Dimensions of letters: 3.2/3.9 cm.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field (*frons*). The inscription is undamaged.

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,
 Anicianae domus
 culmini, proconsuli
 Africae, praefecto
 5 praetorio quater,
 Italiae, Illyrici, Afri-
 cae, Galliarum, con-
 suli ordinario, con-
 sulum patri, Anicius
 10 Hermogenianus
 Olybrius v̄(ir) c̄(larissimus) consul
 ordinarius, et Ani-
 cia Iuliana c̄(larissima) f̄(emina), eius
 15 devotissimi filii,
 dedicarunt. ((hedera))

CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *CIL* VI 1753; text was seen and verified by Porena in 2018.

TRANSLATIONS

– English: «To Sextus Petronius Probus, the most prominent of the Anician House, proconsul of Africa, praetorian prefect four times, of Italy, of Illyricum, of Africa, of Gauls, ordinary consul, father of consuls, Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, of clarissimus rank, ordinary consul, and his (wife) Anicia Iuliana, of clarissimus rank, (their) most devoted children, dedicated (this monument)».

– French (Chastagnol 1991², p. 141): «À Sextus Petronius Probus, personnage le plus prestigieux de la famille des Anicii, proconsul d’Afrique, préfet du prétoire quatre fois d’Italie, Illyricum, Afrique et Gaules, consul ordinaire, père de consuls, Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, clarissime, consul ordinaire, et son épouse clarissime, Anicia Iuliana, ses enfants très dévoués, ont dédié (ce monument)».

– Italian: «A Sextus Petronius Probus, culmine della casata Anicia, proconsole d’Africa, prefetto del pretorio quattro volte, d’Italia, d’Illirico, d’Africa, delle Gallie, console ordinario, padre di consoli, Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, chiarissimo, console ordinario, e Anicia Iuliana, chiarissima e sua (sposa), figli devotissimi, dedicarono».

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

Although the inscribed base in honour of Petronius Probus was almost certainly found in Rome, the place and the circumstances of its discovery are unknown. Some 16th Century humanists (see *CIL* VI, p. 387) transcribed our inscription – and four other inscriptions chiselled for Probus and his wife Anicia Faltonia Proba (see below) – and they state that it was located in the collection of the Cardinals Paolo Emilio Cesi (1481-1537) and Federico Cesi (1500-1565), 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). The Cesi collection passed to Cardinal Pier Donato Cesi (1521-1586), but was dispersed after the death of Cardinal Bartolomeo Cesi (1566-1621). In the mid-17th Century, the construction of Bernini's Colonnade in the new St. Peter's square led to the demolition of part of the Cesi palace and its gardens (West side). In 1703, our inscription was still in the Palazzo Cesi in Borgo Vecchio, as stated by Francesco Bianchini (1662-1729), at that time 'Presidente delle antichità di Roma' (see his «Inscriptiones veteres et alia monumenta ex lapidibus» in the Cod. Bibl. Capit. Verona CCCLXII [= 265], fasc. 2, f. 47, then 348 f. 28). Later the inscribed base entered the collection of Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779, on his collection, see Hornsby, Bevilacqua 2021). As of 1733 pope Clement XII (1730-1740) led a campaign to prevent the archaeological finds of the Albani collection from being sold abroad in order to settle the cardinal's debts. As a result, hundreds of sculptures together with 494 inscriptions were acquired by the pope and became the property of the Capitoline Museums (see Cacciotti 2017; Barron 2021; Dodero 2021). Since 1775/1778, the inscription has, in fact, been exhibited in the Capitoline Museums (Palazzo Nuovo). Inserted into the upper left-hand wall of the second hall on the right in the ground floor, only the front part of the base, supporting the epigraphic field, without any mouldings, can be seen.

The letters and the chiselling of the inscription are elegant. The writing is of high quality and shows a classic geometric style (for a palaeographic analysis, see Gordon 1965, p. 152). The epigraphic field, detached from its base, has been stripped of its surrounding mouldings. The layout of our inscription is well balanced, but four times the words are broken between one line and the next. It seems that the epigraphic field was too narrow to accommodate all the text. In l. 1 we can read the onomastics of Probus, com-

plete with his *praenomen*, which we only find engraved in full in the two dedications made by the senator's children (see PPRET 65; on his onomastics, see Cameron 1985, pp. 171-78; Salomies 2012, p. 5; in general Salway 1994). Although in our inscriptions the abbreviations are limited to the rank *v(ir) c(larissimus)* of the dedicators, it is noticeable that Petronius Probus lacks the rank of *vir clarissimus*, and this is the only case in the extensive sequence of inscriptions in his honour (see PPRET 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65). In line 2 there would have been room to engrave the abbreviation VC, but this was not done. In ll. 2-3 and ll. 8-9 respectively, Probus' role as head of the family is exalted as is the consulship obtained by his two sons, one of them the dedicant of our monument (see below). In ll. 3-8, Probus' *cursus honorum* is detailed (see below), while ll. 9-15, gives us the names, office and the family relationship of the two dedicators.

The monument with its inscription now in the Capitoline Museums 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 pp. 1050 f.; Pergami 1995, pp. 417-23; Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 316-19; on his four praetorian prefectures, see more extensively Porena 2023a, pp. 129-216, and below). The monument was dedicated by his son Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, who is referred to as *consul ordinarius* (ll. 10-12, see *PLRE* I, pp. 639 f.; on his life, see Dunn 2008; on its literary qualities, see Stover 2015) and by his daughter-in-law Anicia Iuliana, who was Olybrius' wife (ll. 12-13, see *PLRE* I, p. 468; *PChBE* II, pp. 1169-71; on her style of life, see Wilkinson 2015).

Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius was born in 370/375 AD, and was the second son of Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba (*PLRE* I, pp. 732 f.; *PChBE* II, pp. 1831-33). He had an elder brother who died before 395 AD, whose name we do not know (*PLRE* I, p. 1029), and two younger brothers, Anicius Probinus (*PLRE* I, pp. 734 f.) and Anicius Probus (*PLRE* II, pp. 913 f.). Olybrius and Iuliana had a daughter, Demetrias, who became a consecrated virgin (*PLRE* II, pp. 351 f.; *PChBE* II, pp. 544-46; Wilkinson 2015). Anicia Faltonia Proba, her daughter-in-law Anicia Iuliana and her grand-daughter Demetrias were renowned for their culture, their fervant Christian devotion and tendency towards asceticism. They financed Christian communities and their bishops, and remained unmarried widows or consecrated virgins (see Sivan 1993a; Laurence 2002; Kurdock 2007; Dunn 2009; Jenal 2010). The male children of Petronius Probus soon disappeared from the political and social scene. Olybrius died young, probably shortly before the sack of Rome in 410 AD (see Hier. *epist.* 130, 3). Neither he nor his brothers held important positions or pursued civil careers unlike their fa-

ther: a surprising fate. However, the beginnings of their career were brilliant. In 395 AD Olybrius was ordinary consul with his brother Anicius Probinus (see *CLRE*, pp. 324 f.). The consulship of two young brothers, sons of Petronius Probus, soon after the victory of the emperor Theodosius I over the usurpator Eugenius was exceptional. It was highly celebrated in a Latin panegyric by the poet Claudius Claudianus (on the circumstances of this consulate and on the poem *Panegyricus dictus Olybrio et Probino consulibus*, see PPRET 65). The choice of the victorious emperor shows the political prestige still enjoyed by Petronius Probus, who had died a few years earlier, and attests to the family's loyalty to the legitimate Augusti. Our monument was posthumous and would have supported a statue, 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 Spring 389 AD; in 390 AD he was alive and resided in Rome, cf. Paul. Med. *vita Ambr.* 25; in 395 AD Claudianus in his *paneg. dictus Olybrio et Probino cons.* celebrates the mother of the brother-consuls, Anicia Faltonia Proba, who, at that time, 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 how long Probus actually lived, see Porena 2020a, pp. 132 f., n. 36; 2023a, p. 142 n. 41; on Probus' political fidelity to the Valentinian dynasty, see Porena 2020a, pp. 118-30; 2023a, pp. 189-216).

The monument in honour of Petronius Probus did not stand alone. Another similar inscribed statue base, now in Palazzo Albani del Drago alle Quattro Fontane (see PPRET 65), was dedicated to the great senator by his sons, Anicius Probinus (*PLRE I*, Probinus 1, pp. 734 f.), who is referred to as *consul ordinarius*, and Anicius Probus (*PLRE II*, Probus 11, pp. 913 f.), who is styled as *quaestor candidatus*. The most likely date of construction for both monuments is 395 AD. In the two inscriptions, after outlining Probus' career, the senator is extolled as *consulum patri* (our inscription, ll. 8-9) and *patri consulum* (inscription in Palazzo Albani, l. 7). Probably the monuments put up by his devoted sons were dedicated during the ceremonies relating to the consulate of 395 AD.

Olybrius and Iuliana are also attested on a small bronze plaque of unknown provenance (*CIL XV 1705*): *Olybri / v(iri) c(larissimi) et Iul/ianae / c(larissimae) f(eminae)* (concerning the father-in-law of Petronius Probus, Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, maternal grandfather of Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, see PPRET 70; for similar objects like slave collars, see PPRET 71, 72; for another similar small bronze plaque, see PPRET 74).

The inscription made by Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius and his wife

Anicia Iuliana for their deceased father and father-in-law is not unique. The couple dedicated two more monuments for Olybrius' mother and Iuliana's mother-in-law, Anicia Faltonia Proba, both of which were found in Rome (see above; on these inscriptions, see Niquet 2000, pp. 190-92 and 247): one statue base is now in the Vatican City (Musei Vaticani, Lapidario Cristiano ex Lateranense, 12, 37, inv. 32408, *CIL* VI 1755 = *EDR* 127595 = *LSA* 1462); another statue base is now lost (*CIL* VI 1756 = *EDR* 127594 = *LSA* 1463). It is uncertain whether this last individual monument for Anicia Faltonia Proba had a counterpart for her husband Petronius Probus.

Olybrius' brothers, Anicius Probinus and Anicius Probus, who made the monument in honour of Probus, on occasion of the consulate of 395 AD (now in Palazzo Albani, PPRET 65), also dedicated a monument to their mother, Anicia Faltonia Proba. Significantly, the latter was dedicated by Probinus on the occasion of his ordinary consulate in 395 AD, and was completed with a verse inscription eleven years later by Anicius Probus during his consulate in 406 AD (the statue-base is lost; the crowning slab contains two elegiac distichs side by side and was chiselled in 406 AD, when Anicius Probus became consul; this crowning slab is exposed now in Leiden - Nederland, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, inv. Pb47; *CIL* VI 1754 = *ILS* 1269 = *EDR* 127599 = *LSA* 1461).

In sum, therefore, the three sons of Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba had (at least) five elegant monuments built for their illustrious parents, all of which must have been put sometime after the beginning of 395 AD. In the mid-16th Century, the monuments would appear to have been preserved in the Cesi collection. The fact that they were together suggests that they were discovered in the same (unknown) area of Rome. Niquet (2000, pp. 27, 190, 247) argues that the monuments would have originated from a *domus*, e.g. the *domus Pinciana* owned by the couple, Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba, near Trinità de' Monti (see PPRET 59; for this type of monument in late antique Rome, see Gehn 2012b; Scheibelreiter-Gail 2012; on the possibility that the monuments belonged to 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*, because no permission was required and the glory of the lineage would be enhanced by these honours (for statues in the *domus* of praetorian prefects in Rome who were great aristocrats, see PPRET 32, 78, 79, 80, 92, 93). As a possibility, Machado (*LSA* 1459; Machado 2011, 511 f.; Machado 2019, pp. 158 f.) also suggests the great mausoleum of the Probi behind the apse of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican (see PPRET 64).

Our inscription of Olybrius and Iuliana in honour of Probus from the Capitoline Museums and the other four inscriptions offered by the sons of Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba to their parents show an obsessive exaltation of the ordinary consulship. The ordinary consulship – the eponymous ancient Roman magistracy – was the highest civil post in the later Roman senatorial career, and Petronius Probus and his sons held the record of having had a consul in every generation since the age of Constantine (Probus' grandfather, Probus' father, the senator himself, three of his sons, from 322 to 395/406 AD; on this record and the epigraphical evidence for it, see PPRET 65).

The inscription made by Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius and his wife Anicia Iuliana extols Probus as «the most prominent of the Anician House» (ll. 2-3, *Anicianae domus culmini*; on this expression and its epigraphic context, see Novak 1980). Petronius Probus was not an Anicius, but married Anicia Faltonia Proba (above), who was the daughter of Tyrrania Anicia Iuliana (*PLRE I*, p. 468, see PPRET 70). The latter was, in all probability, the daughter of Anicius Auchenius Bassus (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 211-16; *PLRE I*, pp. 152-54), who was a descendant of the consul of 334 AD Amnius Manius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Paulinus (Chastagnol 1962, pp. 90-92; *PLRE I*, p. 679), the last Anician consul in 4th Century. Since the end of Constantine's reign, no member of the Anicii had succeeded attaining either the ordinary consulship or the urban prefecture. Only 46 years after the consulship of 334 AD, Anicius Paulinus became prefect of Rome in 380 AD (Chastagnol 1962, p. 207; *PLRE I*, p. 678). In 382 AD he was followed by Anicius Auchenius Bassus (above). Both appointments were brought about through the political intercession of Petronius Probus. In 371 and 379 AD Petronius Probus and his father-in-law Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, the husbands of their Anician wives, attained the ordinary consulship (*CLRE*, pp. 276 f. and 292 f.). Literary contemporary sources extol Probus as the restorer of the glory of the Anicii (Auson. *epist.* 16 Pastorino/Schenkl vv. 31-34: *Quī vīncīt aēvi īniūrīām | stīrpīs nōvātōr Ānnīāe | pāribūsque cōmūt īnfūlīs | Ānīcīōrūm stēmātā*; vv. 82-84: *ūt hīnc āvi āc pātrīs dēcūs, | mīxtō rēsūrgēns sānguīnē, | Prōbiānōque ātque Ānīcīō*; Hier. *epist.* 130, 3: *Scilicet nunc mihi Proborum et Olybriorum clara repetenda sunt nomina, et inlustre Anicii sanguinis genus, in quo aut nullus, aut rarus est, qui non meruerit consulatum*, see Consolino 1991; cf. Prud. *c. Symm.* I, vv. 551-557; Claud. *paneg. dictus Olybrio et Probino coss.* vv. 8-21). Similarly the epigraphic texts concerning Anicia Faltonia Proba link the traditional female virtues with the glory and the nobility of the Anicii (*CIL VI 1754 = ILS 1269 = EDR 127599 = LSA 1461, frons*, ll. 3-4: *Amnios Pincios / Aniciosque decoranti*;

CIL VI 1755 = EDR 127595 = LSA 1462, ll. 2-7: *fidei nobilita/tis antiquae orna/mento Anicianae / familiae servandae ac / docendae castitatis / exemplo*). Thus, if the glory of the Anician family had been restored, according to both the senator's family and Roman society, this was entirely due to the marriage with Probus (on the Anicii between 4th and 6th Centuries, see the different interpretations of Zecchini 1981; Cracco Ruggini 1988; Cameron 2012; on the family of Petronius Probus and on the connection of Petronius Probus with the Anicii, see Settiani 2000, pp. 373-80; Salzman 2002, pp. 53-58; Cameron 2012, pp. 136-40. See the family tree in Chastagnol 1962, pp. 291 f.; *PLRE I*, pp. 1133 and 1144; Settiani 2000, p. 375; Dunn 2008, p. 443; Cameron 2012, pp. 137 and 141; on the *nobilitas* of this family, see the epigraphic panegyric for Probus in *PPRET 59*).

Probus' *cursus honorum* is listed in ll. 3-8 of Olybrius and Iuliana's inscription in the Capitoline Museums. As in the other inscriptions in honour of Probus, our 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 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.). In the second half of the 4th Century Petronius Probus achieved another illustrious record: the only Roman aristocrat to have been praetorian prefect four times. In our inscription the adverb *quater* (l. 5) 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 the inscription made by the brothers Anicius Probinus and Anicius Probus, *PPRET 65*). Probus' sons recalled the four appointments and listed the districts administered: evidently the connection between the prefectures as offices and the prefectures as administered areas was difficult to explain in a short inscription (the difficulty also arises in other inscriptions relating to the appointments of the praetorian prefect Probus: in *PPRET 62* and *PPRET 64* the regional prefectures are not specified; on the contrary, 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*.

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA