

*S*AN PIETRO IN VINCOLI, POPE JOHN II,
AND THE MYSTERY OF *URBICLUS*
*CEDRINUS**

Abstract:

In this paper, the author offers a new edition and commentary on an inscription from the church of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, recording a donation to this church by a certain presbyter Severus (*PCBE* Italie 2: s.v. Sever(u)s 20), under the patronage of Pope John II Mercurius (533–535). From 1568 onwards, the inscription, usually cited as *ILCV* 1780 (ed. E. Diehl) has attracted the attention of a number of already early modern scholars, who have offered different readings and dating of this text and have described its changing display location in the building. These aspects of the inscription's history have been entirely absent from present-day studies of this church, and a need for a proper edition has been increasingly pressing. Alongside the editorial part, the author refers to the enigmatic *urbiclus cedrinus*, specified in the inscription as the object donated by Severus. Several different possible interpretations of this term are examined, including the now prevalent identification as a 'small cedar disk' by Giusto Fontanini (1727), and a new option is suggested: that it was a cedar panel decorating the door.

Keywords:

Pope John II Mercurius, presbyter, Saint Peter, Rome, San Pietro in Vincoli, dedicatory inscription, cedar disk, *urbiclus cedrinus*, Renaissance reception of Roman epigraphy

* The photographs for this paper were kindly provided by the rev. Michał Oleksowicz who also took the dimensions of the stone (this basic element of description was apparently neglected by former editors!). Extracts from the paper (especially the Latin text, the apparatus, and parts of the commentary) will be published as database records in the *Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database* (CSLA.E08080), and the *Presbyters in the Late Antique West Database* (PLAW.ER2374). I am grateful to Bryan Ward-Perkins for his comments on the early drafts of these database entries, which are incorporated in this text, and to Barry Keane who did the proofreading. All the possible mistakes and shortcomings are entirely mine. Throughout the paper, I use Latinized versions of names of renowned early modern scholars and antiquarians *honoris causa*.

It is no secret that our honorand's fondness for the history of Rome came to fruition particularly in his groundbreaking works on the topography of the eternal city.¹ At the same time, his other passion found its outlet in his inquiries into the history of ancient Christians.² In this paper, I would like to connect both strands and discuss a sixth-century inscription closely connected with the origins of the church of San Pietro in Vincoli which enjoys the reputation of being the 'most significant foundation of the Roman *tituli* of the fifth century'.³ Albeit known to modern scholarship since the dawn of the modern period, and still preserved in the church as one of the very few extant late antique inscriptions of its once very rich collection, the object has not yet received an edition with a detailed apparatus; nor have its somewhat puzzling contents been explained at length. The problem of its reception by early modern scholars is also entirely unexplored. The paper will, perhaps, provide more questions than definitive answers, but this will, hopefully, add to the large number of unexplained problems which are still going to occupy the honorand's mind during those long happy days of his retirement.

The church of San Pietro in Vincoli is situated on the Oppian Hill, in proximity of the Baths of Trajan and the Porticus of Livia.⁴ Due to the closeness of the urban prefecture, the area was a crucial administrative node for the city. The present-day building was constructed over the foundations of earlier structures. The exploration of layers beneath the church revealed that the area used to be occupied by urban villas with gardens and water basins during the early Empire. No later than the fourth century there appeared a new building, shaped as a one-aisled hall with an apse end (*aula apsidata*), a courtyard, and arcades. It was aligned on the axis south-west/north-east because of the topographical features of the terrain. The present-day church (Church B) is a heavily modified version of a three-aisled building (Church A) which was erected on this site in the fourth or fifth century (see below, note 11) and underwent a total refurbishment in c. AD 438–440, under Pope Sixtus III (as documented by inscriptions).⁵ It was given its modern shape during the Renaissance and the Baroque.

¹ To name just a few entries from his rich dossier: Ziółkowski 1992, 1994, 2004, 2013, 2015, 2019, 2020a; Kokoszkiewicz, Ziółkowski 2013.

² Ziółkowski 2011, 2014, 2020b.

³ Brandenburg, Vescovo 2005: 189.

⁴ For an overview of the church, see Krautheimer 1967: 178–231 (further bibliography on pp. 178–179); Pietri 1976: 506–507; Colini, Matthiae 1966. A newer re-assessment of the evidence is insightfully presented in Copper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 316–318, 325–328 and Brandenburg, Vescovo 2005: 189–193 (with further bibliography on p. 332).

⁵ The opinions differ whether the refurbishment and possibly a rededication of the church took place at the beginning or towards the end of the fourth decade of the fifth century. We have no direct evidence for the exact year of the refurbishment, but the references to the council of Ephesus (431), and Licinia Eudoxia (who arrived at Rome in 439) are certainly a context for this

The origins of the present-day church are illuminated by a number of inscriptions, now largely lost, but saved for us through hand-written copies made by the medieval visitors to Rome: the *sylloge verdunensis* (Verdun) comprises three inscriptions from this church,⁶ and the *sylloge laureshamensis* (Lorsch) encompasses five.⁷ Both these collections are accessible through Giovanni Battista de Rossi's second volume of the old series of *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* (*ICUR*, s.a., II/1). A selection from these is given in the *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* (*ILCV*) by Ernst Diehl and in a more recent 'walking guide' to the inscriptions of Rome by Tyler Landsford (2009). Some of the evidence also derives from a sermon by Paul the Deacon, and the medieval *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*.⁸

Among these, two inscriptions are of principal importance for the reconstruction of the history of the church. One praises in five elegiac couplets a restoration by the presbyter Philippus under Pope Sixtus III,⁹ the other records a vow taken by the Empress of the West, Licinia Eudoxia, for the well-being of her father Theodosius II and her mother Aelia Eudocia.¹⁰ Since Licinia was married to Valentinian III in 437, both these inscriptions are presumed to refer to one and the same refurbishment in the later 430s, but listing different agents involved in this undertaking.¹¹ Other early inscriptions include short *ekphraseis*, or rather labels of

undertaking. Krautheimer is happy to accept the date of the refurbishment around 432 or later (Krautheimer 1967: 181), whereas Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 316 prefer a date between 438 and 440. The day of the (re)dedication of the church after the restoration is given by different MSS. of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* as 1 August (for an overview, see Marucchi 1902: 312 and CSLA.E04900).

⁶ Published by de Rossi in *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, 134, nos. 1–3.

⁷ Published by de Rossi in *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, 110, nos. 64–68.

⁸ Inscriptions from the church, also later ones than these cited here, are listed and discussed in Krautheimer 1967, 180–185, 226–230, and Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 325–328.

⁹ See *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, 110, no. 67; 134, no. 3 = Marucchi 1902: 312 (perhaps displayed on the inner façade/west end of the nave, see Krautheimer 1967: 181, 226). This presbyter Philippus is certainly the same person who was a representative of Pope Celestine I at the council of Ephesus 431 (e.g. *ACO* II/5: 105 [ed. Schwartz 1936]). Prior to this, he had travelled to the province of Africa in 418 as a legate of Pope Zosimus (soon replaced by Boniface I), to take part in the council of Carthage of 419. See PLAW.PR107 (and his mission in Ephesus in PLAW.ER1517); *PCBE* Italie 2: s.v. Philippus 2 (the prosopography lists the restoration of the church as one the very last commissions of Philippus, and opts for a date around 438–440); Rüpke, Glock, Richardson 2008: no. 2697 Philippus (2) – regarding Philippus and San Pietro in Vincoli, we find a short comment that Philippus was back to Rome from the East prior to July 432.

¹⁰ *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, 110, no. 66 = Marucchi 1902: 314 = *ILCV* 1779: *Theodosius pater Eudocia cum coniuge uotum | cumque suo supplex Eudoxia nomine soluit* (2 hexameteres). For a short commentary on the presumed date for this inscription, see Pietri 1976: 507, n. 4 where the author argues that it has to be later than Eudoxia's marriage, and earlier than Aelia Eudocia's disgrace in 443.

¹¹ Pietri 1976: 507. To Krautheimer, however, it was not at all clear, to which church these building inscriptions belonged. His stylistic dating for the architectural features of Church A (380–420), and the present-day Church B (later than 430s), especially window spacing, significantly conflicted the dates associated with these inscriptions. See Krautheimer 1967: 229.

lost paintings from the church (the baptism of the Ethiopian (Meroitic) eunuch by Philipp the Evangelist (= the Deacon) [Acts 8], perhaps ordered by the name-sake of the saint, the presbyter Philippus himself, the decapitation of Paul, and an image of Christ), seven verses from the metrical version of the Acts of the Apostles by Arator, reportedly performed in this church in AD 544,¹² and two lines in hexameters praising the precious relic zealously guarded in this church – the chain of Saint Peter:¹³ *inlaesas olim seruant haec tecta catenas, | uincla sacrata Petri: ferrum pretiosius auro*. Later traditions are aware of both Sixtus' and Eudoxia's involvement but tend to confuse Licinia Eudoxia with her grandmother, Eudoxia, wife of Arcadius (!),¹⁴ while a lost inscription of uncertain date adds the episode of the presumed destruction of the church during a civil war before Eudoxia's donation (*templum ... civili bello destructum ... Eudoxia ... renovavit*).¹⁵ It is, however, difficult to assess the validity of this claim. More likely, it represents later beliefs regarding the origins of the church and its cults.

The 'chain of Peter'¹⁶ is, of course, responsible for the present-day dedication of the church, but almost certainly the original dedication was different. In the

¹² For Arator's performance in the church, see Krautheimer 1967: 182; Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 317.

¹³ The conversion of the eunuch: *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, p. 110, no. 65 (elegiac couplet). The decapitation of Paul: *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, p. 110, no. 68 (elegiac couplet). The depiction of Christ: *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, p. 134, no. 2 (two hexameters). Verses 1070–1076 of the epic Acts of the Apostles by Arator: *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, p. 110, no. 64 (hexameters). The chain of Peter: *ICUR*, s.a., II/1, 134, no. 1; 157, no. 10; 286, no. 11; 290, no. 2; 352, no. 1; 410, no. 2 = Marucchi 1902: 314 = *ILCV* 1781 (two hexameters – perhaps from the rim of the apse, was still extant in the fifteenth century, see Krautheimer 1967, 180 and 226).

¹⁴ *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* 42, ed. Valentini and Zucchetti: 1140–1143: *Hic ritus pervenit usque ad tempus Archadii viri Eudoxie. Mortuo eius marito, remansit cum filio suo Theodosio parvulo; qui viriliter regabat (imperium) ac si eius vir Archadius viveret. Inspirata divino nutu et negotio rei publice iuit Ierosolimam, sepulchrum Dei et alia sanctuaria visitavit*. See also Paulus Diaconus, *Homilia de sanctis*, PL XCV, 1485–1489, cf. Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 325–326.

¹⁵ See Marucchi 1902: 317; Krautheimer 1967: 182; Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 326.

¹⁶ For the origin of this relic, see Krautheimer 1967: 180; Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 317. It is presumed that the relics must have been venerated at Rome maybe even as early as c. AD 419 when Achillis became bishop of Spoleto. A dedicatory inscription in three elegiac couplets from his episcopacy mentions a chain of Peter (*uincla Petri*) in a church dedicated to Peter in Spoleto, on a hill next to the via Flaminia. This is presumed to be a reference to a piece of this relic brought from the city of Rome, and accordingly the context of travelling to and from Rome is prominently present in the inscription: *Qui Romam Romaque venis hunc aspice montem...* See De Rossi 1871: 118; *ICUR*, s.a., II/1: 114 no. 81. De Rossi argued that the chain was brought from Jerusalem on the order of Athenais Eudocia who resided there around 440, but Cooper, Hillner, and Leyser do not find his arguments compelling. One should also consider the legend of Peter's sojourn at the Mamertine prison as a possible source for this cult, see Marucchi 1902: 316. As for the sources, Paul the Deacon is actually aware of both possible origins for this chain, since he mentions a foundation by Eudoxia from a treasure brought from Jerusalem (*delati ab Hierosolymis thesauri*), and a chain carried by Peter in Rome (*illa catena quam tulit apostolus*

Acts of the Council of Ephesus 431 there prominently features one Philippus, as the representative of the pope – he is normally identified with the restorer of our church.¹⁷ But he is named *presbyter ecclesiae apostolorum*, or the ‘presbyter of the church of the Apostles’. The synod of Rome held in 499 also mentions a *titulus aposolorum*, and so does the synod of 595 (*titulus sanctorum apostolorum*). Hence it is presumed¹⁸ that the church was first dedicated to the Apostles, perhaps just Peter and Paul, and only later the fame of Peter’s chain eradicated the memory of the other Apostles venerated there. This theory is confirmed by the contents of the iconographical programme, mentioned above, and the fact that Arator chose this church for his recitations (if we are to believe this tradition). Due to the imperial donation, the church is also commonly known as the *titulus Eudoxiae*, but we see this designation only from the seventh century onwards.¹⁹

The inscription which is the actual subject of this paper is, however, in prose and on a surviving stone. It has had a large number of editions and commentaries, starting in the early modern period, most of them, however, deficient in one or another way. Since it is not a verse inscription, it escaped the attention of the authors of medieval sylloges with Roman epigraphic collections, but was well known to the most distinguished renaissance antiquarians, such as Onuphrius Panvinus (1529–1568), Alphonsus Ciacconius (c.1530–1599), Cesar Baronius (1538–1607), Pompeius Ugonius (c.1550–1614), Lucas Holstenius (1596–1661), and was cited notably by Henry Noris in his famed *Historia Pelagiana* (1673, in comments

ab Neroniana custodia). A probably twelfth-century inscription from the church (see Marucchi 1902: 317; Krautheimer 1967: 182; Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 326) confuses both items: *apposuit Petri pretiosa vincula ferri \ illustris mulier quae detulit ab Hierusalem \ et quibus est Petrus Neronis tempore victus*, while *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* (ch. 42, ed. Valentini and Zucchetti: 1140–1143) distinguish between the chains of Peter and Paul deposited in this church: *ubi posuit catenas beati Petri praelibatas et catenas beati Pauli Neronianas*.

¹⁷ ACO I 1,3: 13 [ed. Schwartz 1927]: Φίλιππος πρεσβύτερος ἐκκλησίας ἀποστόλων; ACO I 1,7: 88 [ed. Schwartz 1929]: Ἀρκαδίου καὶ Προϊέκτου τῶν θεοσεβεστάτων ἐπισκόπων καὶ πρεσβευτῶν καὶ τοῦ θεοσεβεστάτου πρεσβυτέρου Φιλίππου τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ θρόνου Ῥωμαίων καὶ ληγάτου. Philippus’s pride in the ‘orthodox’ decisions taken by the council features prominently in the verse inscription commemorating the refurbishment: *praesbiteri tamen hic labor est et cura Philippi | postquam Effesi Xps uicit utrique polo* (ICUR, s.a., II/1, 110, no. 67; 134, no. 3 = Marucchi 1902: 312).

¹⁸ Brandenburg, Vescovo 2005: 190–191. Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 317 rightly notice that *titulus Apostolorum* is a designation potentially easy mistaken for the *basilica Apostolorum*, now San Sebastiano on the via Appia.

¹⁹ For references, see Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 317; Krautheimer 1967: 182–183. This designation (*titulus Eudoxiae*) is first attested no earlier than in a letter by Gregory the Great (MGH Epp. II: 275 [= Greg. Ep. XI 15]: *Andromachus presbyter titulo Eudoxiae*, but elsewhere this Andromachus is called the ‘presbyter of the *titulus* of the Holy Apostles’, see MGH Epp. I: 367 [= Greg. Ep. V 57a]: *Andromachus presbyter tituli sanctorum Apostolorum*. At that point, these names of the *titulus* must have been used interchangeably).

to lib. II, cap. XXIII). It was also considered by William Fleetwood (1656–1723) as a text useful ‘in usum juventutis’ in his primer of Latin epigraphy for young gentlemen. Its rich editorial history and the transmission of the text is, however, mainly connected to the subsequent revised editions of the *Lives of the Popes* (*Liber de vita Christi ac omnium pontificum* later also known as *Historia de vitis pontificum Romanorum*) by Bartholomaeus Platina,²⁰ written under the patronage of the humanist Pope Sixtus IV, and similar attempts at writing pontifical histories (especially Cesar Baronius and his fundamental *Annales ecclesiastici*). Although Platina himself makes no mention of this text, and his description of the life of John II does not suggest he saw it (Platina 1479: 28), the inscription appears as an ‘annotatio’ by Panvinus in his annotated edition of Platina’s book in 1568 (but not in the earlier edition of 1562, lacking any commentary to the original text).²¹ To the best of my knowledge, this appears to be the first rendering of the inscription in a printed volume. In 1602, the inscription was independently introduced by the father of ‘universalist’ epigraphy Joannes Gruterius (1602) who included it in his *Corpus absolutissimum inscriptionum antiquarum totius orbis Romani*, from a (significantly worse) copy by cardinal Metellanus (1541–1619) processed and delivered by Leonhard Gutenstenius,²² which in turn influenced some interpretations in Ernst Diehl’s corpus *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*, the basic point of reference for twentieth-century and present-day historians. A milestone in the history of this object was certainly also the edition by Justus Fontaninus (1728) which offered a very good rendering of the text, its lettering, and ligatures in a carefully prepared drawing.

The stone, however, is still accessible in the church, and some editors also consulted it before issuing their own edition. So can do any contemporary scholar – it is occupying a hallowed and yet austere position in the middle of a wall, in the shadow of an ornate pipe organ. That it is not an *in situ* location, is quite clear from early modern descriptions. In the *editio princeps*, Panvinus himself describes it as follows: ‘huius Ioannis mentio extat in antiqua tabula, sita in pauimento basilicae S. Petri ad uincula, his uerbis’. Twenty years later, in 1588, Pompeius Ugonius similarly reported that the stone was exhibited as a pavement slab in the middle of the floor, and it was at some point brought closer to the relics of the chains of Peter (where it was presumably also embedded in the pavement).²³ Then, in

²⁰ For the life and works of Platina, see Bauer 2006.

²¹ That Panvinus had known this text earlier is, however, suggested by his description of the life of John II in his earlier work, *Epitome pontificum Romanorum*, dating from 1557 where he appears to be quoting from the inscription on pages 22–23.

²² For the work of this surveyor of dubious reputation for Gruterius and his corpus, see Sandys 1927: 28; Cooley 2012: 383; Calvano 2020: 260, 265.

²³ Ugonius 1588: 55: ‘nel mezzo di questo pauimento si leggeua vn’antica inscrizione, di Papa Giovanni II. La quale è stata poco fa trasferita presso all’altare de santi Vincoli, & non stimo superfluo porre in questo luogo’. This description was copied in 1839 by Antonio Nibby, for



Fig. 1: The inscription of Severus as seen today: fixed on the wall below the pipe organ.

1601, Ciacconius states again that the inscription was: ‘in antiqua marmorea tabula, posita in pauimêto basilicę s. Petri ad Vincula’.²⁴ Joannes Gruterius (1602)²⁵ also described it as used as a pavement slab in this church: ‘Romę in pauimento templi S. Petri ad vincula’. This same description is repeated after Ciacconius by

whom Ugonius was the main source for this inscription, see Nibby 1839: 665–666: ‘nel mezzo al pavimento eravi un’antica iscrizione di Papa Giovanni II (...) la scritta riportata venne poi posta presso l’altare e’sacri vincoli’. Nibby was apparently not aware of the later placement of the inscription on a wall. Baronius 1596: 167 gives only a general description: ‘Extat in ecclesia S. Petri ad Vincula, descriptit etiam Panuin(ius).’

²⁴ Ciacconius 1601: 148.

²⁵ Gruterius 1602: 1059, no. 3.

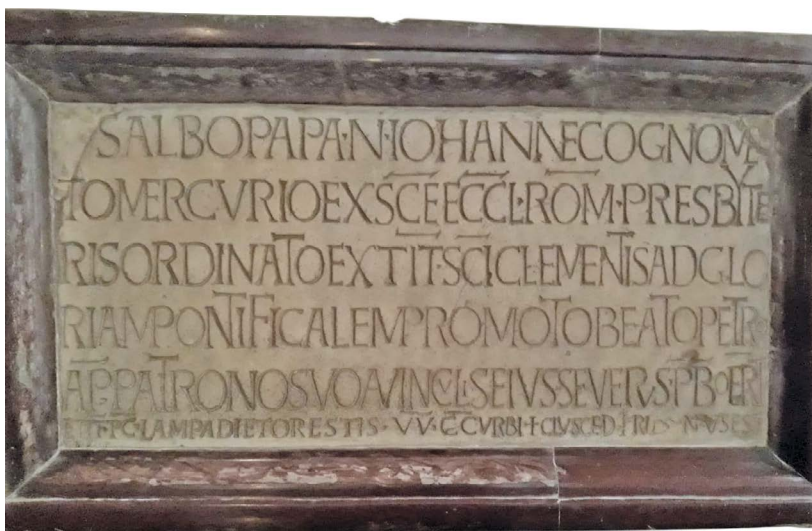


Fig. 2: The inscription of Severus - full view.

Augustinus Oldoinus in his 1677 re-edition of the former's *Vitae, et res gestae pontificum romanorum* (perhaps thoughtlessly), but then the stone resurfaces in a new location. Its mounting on a wall, below the pipe organs is reported about a century later (1727), by Justus Fontaninus:²⁶ 'Est parieti sinistro affixus lapis sub organis contra mausoleum Julii II. Pont. Max.' – a quick comparison with the photograph (**Fig. 1**) shows how this eighteenth century description is strikingly accurate even today, as if the time froze for this stone.²⁷ It is, therefore, very plausible that the authorities of the church decided to take it from under people's feet some time during the seventeenth century, probably as a result of a growing interest in this piece after its inclusion in more and more print volumes on the history of the papacy. Nonetheless, we cannot be sure if the earlier placement in the floor was the original one: the stone bears minimal if any signs of wear from footsteps.

The stone (**Fig. 2**) is a fine white marble plaque, the text is in large lettering, pleasing to the eye from a calligraphical perspective, and brimming with sophisticated ligatures. The upper left- and right-hand corners are broken and lost (now restored together with missing parts of the letters, see **Fig. 3–4**), though this does

²⁶ Fontaninus 1727: 51.

²⁷ A testimony from Orazio Marucchi suggests that the stone was not moved between the eighteenth century and the present day, see Marucchi 1902: 313: 'encore fixée à la paroi de la nef gauche de l'église'.

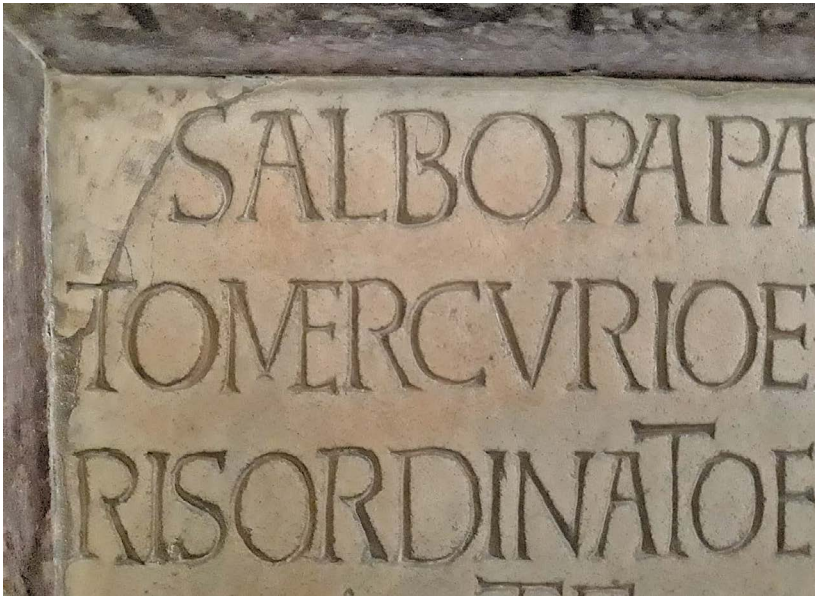


Fig. 3: Upper left-hand corner of the inscription of Severus.

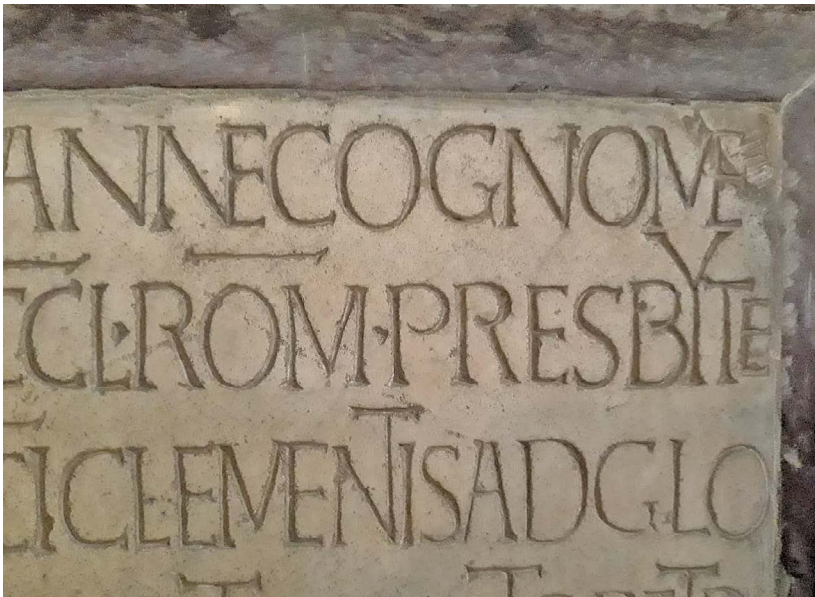


Fig. 4: Upper right-hand corner of the inscription of Severus.

not affect the entire shape of the stone – apart from this small flaw, the stone is almost intact. The dimensions are: H. 0.275 m; W. 0.58 m. Letter height is almost invariably 3.5 cm in lines 1–5, but line 6 contains a much denser and smaller script, of about 1.8 cm. Quite surprisingly, previous editions were silent about the dimensions.

The lemma, presented below, offers an overview of only the more important editions, starting with those of and does not include less significant revised editions of De Noris, Ciacconius, etc. The commentary of Pagius to Baronius is, however, included.

Panvinus 1568: 75 (Baronius 1596, 167; Ciacconius 1601: 148; De Noris 1673: 334, comm. in lib. II cap. XXIII; Oldoinus 1677, coll. 361–362; Pagius 1705, 546); Ugonius 1588: 55 (Nibby 1839: 665–666, with huge errors); Gruterius 1602, 1059 no. 3: after Metellanus/Gutenstenius; Holstenius 1662: 234–235 (Paperbrochius 1685: 78; Fleetwood 1691: 483, no. 2; Relandus 1715, 708–709); Fontaninus 1727, 51 (dr.): ‘ex ipso marmore albo fidelissime exceptam hic damus’ (Zaccaria 1752: 387); Blanchinus 1728 (dr.), 254: ‘ex prototypo’ (but referring to the tradition of Baronius/Ciacconius); Duchesne 1886, 285, n. 1; Marucchi 1902: 313 (dr.); Marucchi 1910, 298, no. 337 (dr.) (*ILCV* 1780 [ed. Diehl] with an addendum in II, ad no. 1780; Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 326; EDCS-42600216); Lansford 2009, 102, no. 3.4C; *IPont* I.2a, Ioannes PP. II no. 1 (ph.); CSLA.E08080. Cf. Panvinus 1557: 22–23; Fontaninus 1727, 27; AASS 35 [1867], 1 August: 15–16; Du Cange 382, s.v. urbiclus; *CLRE*, 600, s.a. 533; Krautheimer 1967: 182 (with no detailed history of editions); *PCBE* Italie 2: s.v. Sever(u)s 20; Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 316 n. 15.

[+] salbo papa· n(ostro)· Iohanne cognome-
to Mercurio ex s(an)c(ta)e eccl(esiae)· Rom(anae)· presbyte-
ris ordinato ex tit(ulo)· s(an)c(t)i Clementis ad glo-

4. riam pontificalem promot. beato Petro

ap(ostolo)· patrono suo a vinculis eius Severus· p(res)b(yster) o(ff)ert.

et it(erum)· p(ost) c(onsulatum)· Lampadi et Orestis· vv(irorum)· cc(larissimorum).

urbi+clus ced i ri+us est.

1. [+] Fontaninus, + Panvinus, Baronius, Paperbrochius, Fleetwood, Blanchinus, Duchesne, Diehl, + om. Noris, Holstenius, Relandus, Pagius, Marucchi 1910, Landsford || salbo = salvo || papa II Joanne (!) Nibby || Joanne Baronius, Fleetwood, Nibby, Iohanne Pagius, Ioanne Panvinus, Ugonius, Ciacconius, Diehl, EDCS, Iohanne Noris, Paperbrochius, Blanchinus, Duchesne, Marucchi 1902, Iohanne Zaccaria || 1–2. cognome[n]to Fontaninus, Blanchinus, Duchesne, cognomen|to Panvinus, Ugonius, Baronius, Ciacconius, Noris, Holstenius, Paperbrochius, Fleetwood, Relandus, Pagius, Zaccaria, Nibby, Marucchi 1910, Landsford, cognome|to Diehl, cognome(n)|to EDCS, cognome|to Marucchi 1902 || 2. sanctae Panvinus || 2–3. presbyteris Relandus (typo, as Holstenius gives the correct spelling) || 3–4. et gloriā Nibby (typo) || 5. ejus Baronius, Fleetwood, Pagius, Zaccaria, Nibby || ejus servus Presbyter

(!) Nibby || Severus Ugonius, Ciacconius, Gruterius, Noris, Holstenius, Paperbrochius, Relandus, Fontaninus, Blanchinus, Pagius, Duchesne, Marucchi 1902, Landsford, Severs Marucchi 1910, Seuer(u)s Diehl, EDCS || 4. om. pontificalem (!) Nibby || 5–6. eivs se verus presb. offert Panvinus (!), presbyter offert Ugonius, Nibby, presb. offert Baronius, Ciacconius, p(res)b(yster)o fr|et Gruterius, Severus pbo. fr. et. it. (!) Fleetwood, of()rt Noris, Holstenius, Paperbrochius, Relandus, Pagius, Landsford, o()ert Fontaninus, Blanchinus, Marucchi 1902, ofri Zaccaria, ofert Duchesne, opfert Marucchi, oert|et=offer|et pro offert? Diehl, o(ff)ert(?) | {et} EDCS, of(fe)er *IPont.* || 6. Etit. Ugonius, tit. Nibby || p(ost) c(onsulatum) om. Gruterius || Lampadii Baronius, Ciacconius, Lampadis Zaccaria || vrbiclvus cedrinvs Panvinus, Vrbiclus Cedrinus Ugonius, urbiculus cedrinus Baronius, Ciacconius, Noris, Paperbrochius, Pagius, Nibby, Urbitcius Cedrinus (!) Fleetwood, Vrbiccius Gruterius, vrbi+clus cedriin+us Fontaninus, Blanchinus, Marucchi 1902, urbiclus (= urbiculus) cedrinus Zaccaria || vrbi+clus cedrinus Marucchi 1910, Landsford, Vrbi + clus Cedri(leaf)nus Duchesne, vrbiclus = Vrbiccius? Diehl, Urbiclus Cedrinus EDCS, om. Holstenius, Relandus

Relandus 1715: 709 claims that ‘Fleetwood [1691] pag. 483 (...) notat Paperbrochium legere PBO. OFRT. & IT. P. C. i.e. 532.’ But Paperbrochius (1685: 78) does not give this reading, it is only Fleetwood’s misreading of Paperbrochius’ text or comments which led him to this supposition. Fleetwood himself printed this passage as *Severus PBO. FR. et. it.*

[*] In the lifetime of our Pope John, called Mercurius, ordained from the presbyters of the holy Roman Church, promoted to pontifical glory from the *titulus*-church of Saint Clemens. To the blessed Peter the Apostle, his patron from his chains (*a vinculis eius*), Severus, presbyter, offers (this). In the third year after the consulship of Lampadius and Orestes, *virī clarissimi*. (The offering?) is of a small cedar disk.

The inscription has a number of interesting features, not to say that it has a particularly intriguing ending – but before we get to this, let us take a look at the main body of the text. Although this is clearly a dedicatory inscription by certain presbyter Severus,²⁸ four out of six lines are occupied by an elaborate mixture of dating, acclamation, and patronage formula. ‘Papa noster Johannes’ mentioned there is pope John II Mercurius (his pontificate is now dated 533–535, though the opinions of early modern Church historians differed, especially regarding his accession, see below). The introductory phrase *salvo papa nostro* (‘when our pope so-and-so was in good health’, meant to denote ‘in the lifetime of our pope so-and-so’) is a direct continuation of emperors’ acclamations which we find in

²⁸ For Severus, see PLAW.PR1066, *PCBE* Italie 2: s.v. Sever(u)s 20 – the prosopography assumes (after the editions that the name of the presbyter was abbreviated – but the photographs clearly show that it is written *scriptio plena*, with ligatures. A time-frame suggested for this Severus is 532–535 (accordingly, the accession of Pope John II is given here as 532, not 533). Rüpke, Glock, Richardson 2008 is silent about this priest, and our inscription is not cited on the list of sources, as the book’s chronological scope is limited to AD 499.

inscription throughout the early Empire.²⁹ The pope is, however, neither the hon-orand/recipient of the dedication (it is the Apostle Peter himself), nor the person directly involved in the donation. His mention is made merely for prestigious reasons, or perhaps, he in a way acknowledged or gave permission to Severus' activity. This extensive formula was certainly a means of self-assertion of his status on the part of Severus and was meant to impress the viewers about his apparently special attachment to the pope.

The part enclosing the name of the presbyter Severus (ll. 4–5) is one of the first mentions of the dedication of the church through a reference to the relic of Saint Peter's chains. This designation is known in several forms: *Petrus (vel ecclesia Petri) a vinculis*,³⁰ *ad vincula*, and *de vinculis*. The first is mentioned in our inscription, and in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in the account of the death of a presbyter of this church in 501/502, during an unrest caused by the Laurentian Schism (after Krautheimer considered as the earliest securely dated use).³¹ There may be, however, an earlier case of the use of this name. Certainly, the same designation also occurs in an epitaph from the Cemetery of Cyriacus ad Sanctum Laurentium on the via Tiburtina, now in the collection *Lapidario Cristiano ex Lateranense* in the Vatican Museums, but its date is not given (presumably fifth century).³² It is worth noting that the dedicatory inscription by Severus contains an unusual addition to this designation – the possessive pronoun *eius*, or 'his'.³³ If *eius* goes with the name of presbyter Severus, it would mean that he styled himself as 'his' presbyter (i.e. the presbyter of (the church) of Saint Peter). However, if *eius* goes with *a vinculis*, as the word order suggests, it could mean that either the connection of Peter and

²⁹ The formula *salvo papa nostro* is a derivative from earlier and contemporary imperial acclamations *salvo d(omino) n(ostro)*, well attested in inscriptions from the Severan period, but present throughout Late Antiquity. For example, AE 1966, 606 from Aïn Schkour in Mauretania Tingitana: *Salvo [et I]n[victo] | domino nostro [[Seve[ro]]] | [[Alexandro]] P[ro]f[er] Fel[ici] Aug[usto] | balneum ver[us] vetustate | conlapsu[m] a fundamen[tis] restituit examplia[m]ta priore cella L[ucius] Aurel[ius] | Nemesianus v[ir] e[gregius] proc[ur]ator | Aug[usti] nostri curante | Tib[er]io Claudio Zenone trib[unus] | coh[ortis] IIII mi[li]tariae Tungrorum; AE 1987, 962 from Qasr el-Azraq in Arabia: *Salvo d(omino) n(ostro) Con[stantino] maximo P[ro]f[er] Fel[ici] victore | ac triumphator[em] semper Aug[usto] et Constantino | et Constantio [nob]b[ilissimis] Caess[aribus] --- | --- tempore ---; ILS 814 from Singidunum in Moesia Superior, AD 474–475: *Salvo d(omino) n(ostro) | Iulio Nepote [p(er)]p[ro]p[ri]o Aug[usto] | Audax v[ir] c[onsularis] (larissimus) | p[ro]f[er]fectus | urbi fecit.***

³⁰ In AASS 35 [1867], 1 August: 16 the phrase *a vinculis* is understood as 'absolutio a vinculis', or the (feast/commemoration of the) 'liberation from the chains.'

³¹ LP 53 (Symmachus), ed. Duchesne 1888: 261, cf. Krautheimer 1967: 181; Brandenburg, Vescovo 2005: 190.

³² ICUR, s.n., VII 19321 = Marucchi 1902: 313: *✠ locus Sebastiani p[ro]f[er]b[er]yter[i] a vin[culis] | in quo requiescit filia s[up]ra[scripta] nomine --- | quae vixit an[no]s XIII dep[ositus] III kal[endas] nove[m]b[ris].* See also Zaccaria 1752: 387. The inscription is omitted by Krautheimer.

³³ See PCBE Italie 2: s.v. Sever(u)s 20 where full designation of the saint/church is given as *Petrus a vinculis eius*.



Fig. 5: Lower left-hand corner of the inscription of Severus.

‘his’ chains is stressed, or, as is suggested by Lansford, this still links *a vinculis eius* with Severus, the presbyter, describing him as ‘Severus, presbyter at his [Peter’s] chains’. This reading, however, puts severe strain on the word order and ‘a’ is not normally used to mean ‘at’.

Yet another aspect of this inscription, which surprisingly troubled even the early modern masters of Latin, was the proper dating formula, and the date it denoted. This is important, since based on the assumption that the plaque was made in the same year that pope John II took up office, it was used to date the beginning of his pontificate to different dates (AD 531, 532, and 533 respectively). The dating formula is wholly included in line 6 (**Fig. 5**) and executed in much smaller letters than the rest of the text. The passage reads *et it. p. c. Lampadi et Orestis vv. cc.* To make it clear – this phrasing undoubtedly stands for AD 533. The consulship of Lampadius and Orestes is well documented in a number of *fasti*, calendars, and documentary sources:³⁴ one can safely ascribe it to AD 530, this is beyond doubt. Now, the abbreviated formula *et it(erum) p(ost) c(onsulatum)* denotes the *third* year after one’s consulship (whereas *post consulatum* denotes the first year, and *iterum post consulatum* the second). We also see the application of this

³⁴ *CLRE*: 594–595 (s.a. 530).

formula to date AD 533 in several other inscriptions and calendars in the West (whereas in the East this same year was proclaimed as the third consulship of the emperor Justinian), and in their *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*³⁵ Alan Cameron, Roger Bagnall, Seth Schwartz, and Klaas Worp without hesitation included the inscription of Severus as a certain testimony to the dating formulae of the year 533. This date was, however, correctly identified by very few researchers. To the best of my knowledge the first who also rightly dated this inscription was Louis Duchesne in his edition of our text in the *Liber pontificalis* in 1886. Duchesne did not name the date next to the text, but he wrote that we witness here ‘un monument épigraphique relatif au pape Jean II, ... et à son élévation au pontificat’ which he firmly placed in 533. The dating to 533 was reasserted by Orazio Marucchi in 1910 without explanation,³⁶ almost certainly as a result of his reading of Duchesne’s *Liber pontificalis* (but see below for his earlier work proposing a different dating). This same year (533) is also specified by Krautheimer.³⁷ Sadly, in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century few scholars followed Duchesne – most modern articles, amateur websites, and databases, which discuss or present this inscription (wrongly) place it in AD 532. In the long history of editions and commentaries published on this text, other dates have also been suggested, all of them based on wrong assumptions. The reasons were manifold, but all of them resulted from a lack of understanding with respect of the dating formula.

The year 532, so often met in studies referring to this inscription was suggested already by Panvinus, Ugonius, Holstenius, Paperbrochius, Fleetwood, Relandus, and Pagius³⁸ since they all read the dating formula as just *it(erum) p(ost) c(onsulatum)*, unable to connect and properly understand *et* which opens the phrase. Hence, they opted for the second year after the consulship of Lampadius and Orestes. The same reasoning was also presented by Fontaninus³⁹ whose arguments were in turn found convincing by Du Cange in his *Glossarium*.⁴⁰ In 1839, Nibby simply copied the date from his source, Ugonius. Although Marucchi suggested 533 in 1910, his earlier mention of this inscription [1902]⁴¹ suggests a date in 532, probably because of the same incomplete reading of the dating formula. For quite a different reason, 532 was proposed in the influential edition by Ernst Diehl, in the *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*. Although Diehl certainly knew

³⁵ *CLRE*: 600–601 (s.a. 533).

³⁶ Marucchi 1910: 298, no. 337.

³⁷ Krautheimer 1967: 182.

³⁸ Panvinus 1557: 22–23; Ugonius 1588: 55; Holstenius 1662: 234–235, 238; Fleetwood 1691: 483; Relandus 1715: 709; Pagius 1705: 546.

³⁹ Fontaninus 1727: 51.

⁴⁰ Du Cange, s.v. *urbiclus*.

⁴¹ Marucchi 1902: 313.

well Marucchi's [1910] (and presumably Duchesne's) correct reading and dating, he surprisingly preferred to follow an old idea of Johannes Gruterius, and argued that *et* from the beginning of line 6 was allegedly the ending of the verb which we see at the end of line 5. This he read as *oert|et = offeret = offert*. What was then left for Diehl from the dating formula (*it(erum) p(ost) c(onsulatum)*) corresponded to 532. It is, however, very implausible that *et* from the beginning of line 6 belongs to the verb from line 5. The verb is abbreviated and reads almost certainly *o(ff)ert*, which is a correct and complete form, and there is no need to look for any endings in line 6. Gruterius, however, wrongly connected *o* from *offert* with the preceding word *p(res)b(byterus)*, turning it into a difficult to contextualize ablative form *pbo = presbytero*, and was hence forced to look for a different verb at the breaking of lines 5 and 6 (same error was made by Fleetwood, but not by Paperbrochius, as it is claimed in Fleetwood's edition, and repeated by Relandus). But this is by no means needed in Diehl's reading where *o* is retained as an integral part of the verb. Furthermore, *et* is squeezed between two words with superimposed lines, whereas it itself has no marking, a clear sign that it is a separate word. Cooper, Hillner, and Leyser, who drew upon Diehl's edition, also adopted 532 as a date for this text.⁴² In the Epigraphic Database Claus-Slaby, Manfred Claus places this *et* in curly brackets: {*et*}, which means he deemed it superfluous in the text, a mere stonemason's error. This also implies a shorter dating formula and a date in 532 but is equally unjustified. Tyler Lansford's edition (2009) does not specify an absolute date. The author only speaks of the 'third year (inclusive) after the consulship', as a counter part of just *it(erum) p(ost) c(onsulatum)*. Inclusive counting makes the computation AD 532. All in all, arguing for a date in AD 532 is quite inconsistent, since these same scholars usually agree that John II was consecrated as pope in AD 533.⁴³

Behind another attempt to date this inscription – the supposed date of 531 – stands the great authority of Cesar Baronius. In the seventh volume of *Annales ecclesiastici* (published in 1596) he advocated 531 as the allegedly correct date. He was surprisingly inept at solving the abbreviation *et it.* and was convinced that only *p(ost) c(onsulatum) Lampadi et Orestis vv(irorum) cc(larissimorum)* denoted the year, that is the first year after the consulship of Lampadius and Orestes. This supposition was refuted already in the seventeenth century: by De Noris in 1648 (see below), and Paperbrochius in 1658.⁴⁴ Later Baronius' erroneous dating was addressed

⁴² Cooper, Hillner, Leyser 2006: 326.

⁴³ *PCBE Italie 2*: s.v. Sever(u)s 20 argues, however, that John II took up his office in 532.

⁴⁴ Paperbrochius 1685: 78 (using the text by Holstenius) stresses that the inscription was crucial for the chronology of John II but Baronius was unable to date it correctly: 'Baronius, nihil certi inveniens quod dicere possit de initio, adeoque & de duratione hujus Pontificatus (...) satis habet ostendisse, non ante annum DXXXV obiisse Joannem, & saltem ante finem anni DXXXI sedere coepisse; quod ultimum jam refutavimus. Ipsa autem inscriptio (...) Baronium fefellit.'

by Antonius Pagius in his monumental commentary to the *Annales*, and by Justus Fontaninus. But it was not just Baronius who made this error. In the posthumously published *Vitae et res gestae Pontificum romanorum* by Ciacconius, the brilliant antiquarian and his editor ('scholiast to Ciacconius') were perplexed by the inscription's abbreviations and eventually suggested 531 as the year of its engraving.⁴⁵ Especially, the scholiast wondered at the 'occult' abbreviations concealing the date, writing on the margin: 'Lege sic notas occultas et it. P.C. Lampadij, & Orestis vv.cc. & iterũ post Cõsulatũ Lampadij, & Orestis virorum clarissimorum'. This comment was later mercilessly derided by Noris in his reference to Ciacconius' edition: 'Certe rideo legens scholiastem Ciaconii, qui in margine argutulus notat veteres usos ea nota IT. Nempe ITERUM, hoc est, inquit, anno 531. Inepte, cum hic annus sit post consulatum, sequens vero iterum post consulatum Lampadii [sc. 532 – PN]'.⁴⁶

One of the most recent attempts to collect all the inscriptions from the city of Rome, connected with the history of papacy, the *Inscriptiones Pontificiae*, puts forward yet another date, 535. This is, however, without any explanation or reference to earlier discussion of dating, so this is presumably a typo by the editor.

The most intriguing, and still unsolved part of the inscription is, however, the short phrase which comes after the dating formula, in the lower-right hand corner (**Fig. 6**). It reads *urbi+cl̄us ced̄ i ri+nus est*. The text consists of apparently three words decorated with three signs: a cross, an ivy leaf, and most probably a palm (in between the other two) – all of them are ornamentations one finds on daily basis in inscriptions authored by Christians. In particular, the meaning and spelling of the first word has been disputed, but the overall context of this phrase is problematic. Some editors either did not understand it or found it wholly insignificant for the remaining text, so no commentary is found in their treatises (probably for this reason the passage was even entirely dropped by Holtensius and Relandus in their editions). Furthermore, since most of them were writing in Latin, they felt no immediate need to translate the phrase, which is always a stimulus for a detailed commentary of difficult passages. Others, however, expressed different opinions. Paperbrochius understood it as a *mensa*: a table or an altar offered to the church of Saint Peter by Severus, but he was by no means certain about his judgement.⁴⁷ Fontaninus boldly suggested that it was rather a depiction of Saint Peter executed on a round medallion, or *clypeus vel thorax*. This is because *urbiclus*,

⁴⁵ Ciacconius 1601: 148: 'Lāpadij, & Orestis vv.cc. anno Christi 531. Huius Pōtificis Ioānis mēto exstat in antiqua marmorea tabula, posita in pauimēto basilicę s.Petri ad Vincula'.

⁴⁶ De Noris 1673: 334–335, cf. Oldoinus 1677: coll. 361–362 and Blanchinus 1728: 254 both citing the criticism by Noris.

⁴⁷ Paperbrochius 1685: 75: 'vbi Urbiculum explico Orbiculum; & coniecto, significanti mensam cedrianm, ibidem oblatam à Severo, presbytero S. Petri ad vincula. Congruentiorē coniecturam, si alius suggerat, libenter, amplectar.'

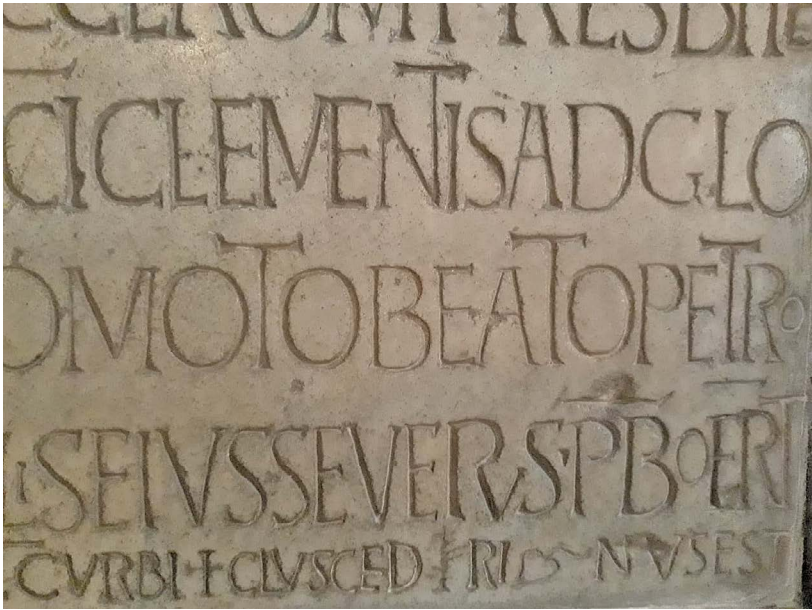


Fig. 6: Lower right-hand corner of the inscription of Severus.

if taken as a variant spelling of *orbiculus*, translates as a ‘small cedar disk’, and the church has strong associations with the Apostle.⁴⁸ We see this same boldness in the Christian prosopography of Italy which qualifies the offering of Severus as ‘une offrande votive, sans doute (!) un aménagement avec un disque ou un globe de cèdre, come le suggère la dernière notation de la dédicace (*orbiculus cedrinus est*).’⁴⁹ Duchesne, however, preferred to describe it as an unspecified votive object (but again – the object offered by Severus), and Lansford adheres to a cautious interpretation (‘some type of votive offering made of cedar wood’). Diehl, again inspired by Gruterius’ reading, considered the possibility that the clause conceals corrupted names (!), perhaps Urbicius and Cedrinus (Kedrenos) – this is inferred from his spelling and capitalization of the first letters of these words. He gives no explanation for their role in the inscription – but these could be the names of artisans who made the offering or carved the commemorative inscription, etc.

It is in fact difficult to judge on the character of this *urbiculus*, and the validity of these interpretations. This word is a *hapax* and the only major Latin dictionary which features the headword *urbiculus* is Du Cange’s *Glossarium*. The entry is, as one can

⁴⁸ Zaccaria 1752: 387 endorses the interpretation by Fontaninus against that by Paperbrochius.

⁴⁹ *PCBE Italie* 2: s.v. Sever(u)s 20.

expect, based entirely on our inscription's contents, and its interpretation by Fontaninus. Thus, it is of little help for solving the meaning of this mysterious term. A closer discussion of the phrase may, however, give us some new insight into its contents.

First, it seems justified to consider the phrase as consisting of three words rather than four. Theoretically, it would be possible to read there a sentence using a possessive dative clause: *urbi †clus† cedrinus est*, or 'The city has a cedar (...)'. In this sequence, however, *clus* would be difficult to translate,⁵⁰ and the phrase would make little sense if any in the context of the whole inscription. If one, therefore, sticks to the reading *urbiclus*, as it is spelt on the stone, it is reasonable to note that the word can be plausibly expanded as *urbic(u)lus*,⁵¹ and considered as a diminutive form. Now, most of the authors cited above derived it from *orbis* > *orbiculus* (sc. a small disk, a slice) > *urbiculus* > *urbiclus* with a notable misspelling of 'u' instead of 'o'. Probably, this is a correct reasoning, but one should also mention that there exists the word *urbicula* (feminine!) which is actually a diminutive of *urbs*, not *orbis*, and it is used as such ('small town', 'citadel'), also in later and early modern Latin.⁵² Sadly, this etymologically more sound understanding is similarly difficult to reconcile with the rest of the text.

If the meaning of the noun remains doubtful, the adjective is, however, easier to explain, and the way it is used by ancient authors would be, perhaps, useful for understanding the whole sentence. The adjective *cedrinus* normally means 'of cedar (wood)' and is usually used with reference to timber (*ligna, trabes*), building materials (*tigna*), and fragrant oils (*olea*). In a configuration very similar to ours, it is mentioned by Pliny the Elder, in his description of a cedar statue of Apollo, brought to Rome from Seleucia, and venerated in a temple near the Theatre of Marcellus: *cedrinus est Romae in delubro Apollo Sosianus Seleucia advectus* (Plin. *NH* XIII 53). An offering of a free-standing statue of Saint Peter is still very unlikely, given the early Christian views on such statuary. Looking for a more Christian context, one comes across a passage in the commentary on *Psalms* 118 by Ambrose, where the author explains that cedar tablets, or plaques (*tabulae cedrinae*) are often mounted on doors of churches, as decorative elements.⁵³ Such cedar panels placed

⁵⁰ *DMLBS*, s.v. *clus* notes that it can stand for an abbreviation of *clavus*, or 'nail', 'tent-peg'. See also *DMLBS*, s.v. *clavus* 1.f.: '†clus, *teltreo* GIC C 492; 9.. †claus, *lignum tentorii vel † telde*, .. *teltre*, .. *taebere WW*'. Although 'tent' is often a synonym for 'tabernacle' it is not the latter but a mere 'tent-peg' which is denoted by this word. I am grateful to Karolina Tomczyszyn for drawing my attention to this headword.

⁵¹ This expansion is justified, for example, by the use of *vincla* instead of *vinc(u)la* in another inscription from this same church. See *ILCV* I 1781.

⁵² For *urbicula*, see Ersch, Gruber, 1851: 373; Laurianu, Massimu 1876: 1534.

⁵³ Ambrose: *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII* tau 37–38: *Dicunt ergo: si murus est, aedificemus super eum receptacula; et si ianua est, sculparamus super eam tabulas cedrinas. Murus est anima sancti. habet et ecclesia muros suos, quae iam perfectior dicit: ego ciuitas munita (...). Et quia ianua Christus est, qui ait: per me*

on churches' doors were also known to Apponius, a mid-seventh-century commentator of the Song of Songs, who, as Augustine, evokes them in an exegetical context.⁵⁴ Furthermore, elsewhere in his writings, Ambrose makes a clear association of cedar wood with objects of utmost luxury: he places it alongside pure gold, precious gemstones, and silver-plated feathers of doves.⁵⁵ This would at least explain why the cedar object donated by Severus was certainly worthy of the funds and effort needed to execute such a high quality marble plaque.

To sum up, the mentioned passages from Augustine and Apponius may suggest that the possible offering made by the presbyter Severus, in addition to the already proposed *mensa* or a cedar disk (otherwise quite plausible), may also have been a cedar panel, or a series of cedar panels, carved to decorate the door of the church, perhaps in the form of small cedar disks (but not a cedar disk specifically meant to bear an image of Saint Peter and placed elsewhere in the church, as suggested by Fontaninus). Admittedly, the inscription uses a singular noun in the place of plural which would be much more suitable for this interpretation, and this, of course, poses a difficulty. Nonetheless, the option is in my opinion still worth considering, perhaps even more with the advice of the honorand himself, whom I wholeheartedly encourage to address this issue. Till then, the meaning of *urbiclus cedrinus*, and the problem of complete understanding of our inscription remains unresolved.

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AE – *L'année épigraphique*.

si quis introierit saluabitur, et ecclesia ianua nuncupatur, quia per ipsam patet populis aditus ad salutem. Sed ne haereticorum corrumpatur tineis aut uermibus, dicunt filiae Hierusalem, uel angeli uel animae iustorum: aedificemus super eam tabulas cedrinas, hoc est fidei sublimis bonum odorem; est enim suavis huius materiae odor, quam non uermis, non tinea corrumpat.

⁵⁴ Apponius, In *Canticum canticorum expositio* XII 635: *Quod ostium, propter quod cum Christo unum sunt, tabulis cedrinis compinctis, aliis etiam gentibus, quibus nunc commixta est, pro Christi nomine moriendi praebebit suo exemplo ingressum in regno Dei.*

⁵⁵ Ambrose, *Ep.* VII 52.3: *Venit tamquam illa navis, aurum se cum intellegibile vehens et ligna cedrina et lapides pretiosos et illas columbae pennas deargentatas, quibus inter medias sortes somno pacis et tranquillitatis sopore dormiuit.*

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Paweł Nowakowski

pawel.nowakowski@uw.edu.pl

Faculty of History
University of Warsaw
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
00-927 Warsaw, Poland