

PUBLIUS PAPINIUS ST[--] AT ELEUSIS

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An inscription on a statue base at Eleusis, discovered by J. Kirchner, was published by him as *IG II² 3919* with the following text (Plate 1):

init. s. I p. ἡ βουλὴ ἡ ἐξ Ἀρήου Πά[γου]
Πόπλιον Παπίνιον Στ[ειριέα]
ἀρετῆς ἔνεκα καὶ εὐνοίας].

Kirchner's restoration of line 2, however, which deprives the man of a cognomen, must be rejected. In the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* only two Publii Papinii are attested, and it happens that they both could have been alive at the time this inscription was written: on epigraphical and phonological grounds approximately between the middle of the first century B.C. and a date not much later than the middle of the following century.¹ These two men are the poet P. Papinius Statius and his father (*PIR* P 77–8). We must therefore consider the possibility of restoring either of their names.

Statius the younger can be eliminated; he was born around 40 A.D. and probably never left Italy.² But in his *Epicedion in Patrem (Silvae* 5.3) he mentions that his father, who was also a poet, won victories at the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games (lines 141–45). The *Epicedion* also informs us that his father died at the age of sixty-five (line 253). Since he probably died not much later than the year 81, the date of his birth will have been around A.D. 16,³ and he would therefore have been in Greece for the games approximately around the

¹ Because of the letter-forms and the spelling Ἀρήου: see Meisterhans-Schwyzler, *Grammatik der attischen Inschriften* (Berlin 1900) 47–48.

² Cf. the account of his life in *RE* 18 (3), 984–85; Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* 2 (Munich 1935) 531–32.

³ Cf. the accounts cited above, note 2. He was still living at the time his son started composing the *Thebaid*, around A.D. 80 (for the date see *RE* 18 (3), 984–85; Schanz-Hosius, *op. cit.*, 536).

middle of the century, certainly not later than the third quarter. His name is not directly attested, but in view of the rarity of the name of the son and the fact that of the two probably only the father was in Greece at this period, we can be reasonably sure that the father is the man in our inscription, and accordingly that both father and son had the same cognomen. The correct text of the inscription should now read:

ca. med. s. I p. ἡ βουλὴ ἡ ἐξ Ἀρήου Πα[γού]
Πόπλιον Παπίνιον Στ[άτιον]
ἀρετῆς ἔνεκα καὶ ἐ[ὕνοιας].

If Statius the elder made only one journey to Greece, he will have been there at least two years to have achieved victories in the Pythia, Nemea, and Isthmia.⁴ But whatever the length of his stay, this was indeed a magnificent accomplishment, and made him in effect a *periodonikés*.⁵ Having previously won victories in the Sebastia at Neapolis, the most important games in the West,⁶ he had now won distinction also in the East, the homeland of his own poetic genres:

sin pronum vicisse domi, quid Achaea mereri
praemia nunc ramis Phoebi nunc gramine Lernae
nunc Athamantea protectum tempora pinu,
cum totiens lassata tamen nusquam avia frondes
abstulit aut alium tetigit victoria crinem? (*Epiciedion* 141-45).

⁴ The games are mentioned by Statius, *Silvae* 5.3.141-45 in this order, which happens to be their chronological order in the last two years of an Olympiad.

⁵ Normally a victory in the *periodos* included a victory in the Olympic games as well, but since this was impossible for poets and musicians, some did not hesitate to call themselves *periodonikai* after victories in the Pythia, Nemea, and Isthmia; cf. L. Robert, *RPh* 4 (1930) 53 ff. and L. Moretti, *Athenaeum* 32 (1954) 115-20.

I am unable to follow O. A. W. Dilke, *Statius: Achilleid* (Cambridge 1954) 3 and H. Frère, *Silvae* (Paris 1944) 198, note 6 in their opinion that the passage *Silvae* 5.3.141-45 does not necessarily indicate that the elder Statius went to Greece and took part in the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games. It is very difficult to see the point of the extended image of victory crowns in these games and of *Victoria* crowning no one else but Statius the elder, if he did not actually take part in them.

Incidentally, Frère (following Klotz) is also mistaken in attributing the omission of the Olympic games in this passage to the fact that the Sebastia in Naples were regarded as *isolympia*. The reason for the omission, as was stated above, is that there was no poetry contest at the Olympia. Statius mentions real contests here and in chronological order.

⁶ Cf. R. M. Geer, *TAPA* 66 (1935) 213 and note 24.

Although surviving monuments show relatively few Roman visitors honored by Athens at this period, the Romans who were honored were almost invariably distinguished,⁷ and one can imagine that the Areopagus would have needed little persuading, after his impressive victory in the games, to decree a statue in honor of P. Papinius Statius. And like so many other Romans,⁸ the poet undoubtedly found the Eleusinian Mysteries to be one of the principal attractions of the city. Honoring his piety and perhaps also respecting his own wishes the Areopagus had his statue set up in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore.

The statue base provides a bit more information. It is not a whole base but just a component block; the preserved left side has anathyrosis, and a cutting for a clamp is visible on the top surface at the left edge. The missing block on the left perhaps contained a dedicatory inscription by another civic corporation; the statue perhaps stood astride the two blocks.⁹

It is also noteworthy that the lettering of this inscription is virtually identical in style, disposition, and height to that of *IG II² 4165*, a statue base also at Eleusis, also of gray marble,¹⁰ and of almost identical height (Plate 2).¹¹ They were both certainly carved by the same mason, and it is possible that both belonged to the same monument, in which case *IG II² 4165* would have been the block at the right (its right side is preserved with no anathyrosis) and *IG II² 3919* somewhere in the

⁷ Cf. the list compiled by P. Graindor, *Athènes de Tibère à Trajan* (Cairo 1931) 29–45: “Mais si ces Romains sont peu nombreux, ils sont de qualité.” The list of dedications recently compiled by D. J. Geagan, *The Athenian Constitution after Sulla* (*Hesperia* Supplement 12 Princeton 1967) 140–59 shows that Graindor’s conclusion is still valid.

⁸ For a study of Romans at Eleusis (though erroneous in certain respects) see G. Giannelli, “I Romani ad Eleusi,” *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 50 (1914–15) 319–33, 369–88; cf. also G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford 1965) 78.

⁹ The left and rear sides are not preserved; the bottom appears to be original. There is a cutting on top which may have been a dowel hole, but it is unclear whether the cutting is original.

¹⁰ In *IG II²* the marble is given incorrectly as white.

¹¹ The height of *IG II² 4165* is 0.136 m. and that of *IG II² 3919* is 0.138; but without being able to inspect the bottom surfaces of these stones I do not regard these measurements as completely accurate. The length of *IG II² 4165* is 0.58 m. and the width 0.32 m. The top and right side are original; the bottom, which I was unable to inspect, probably so.

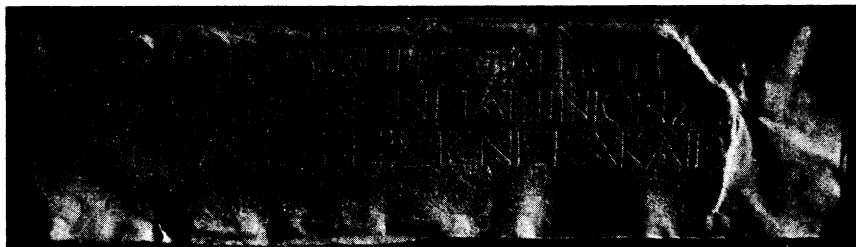


PLATE 1. IG II² 3919 (squeeze)

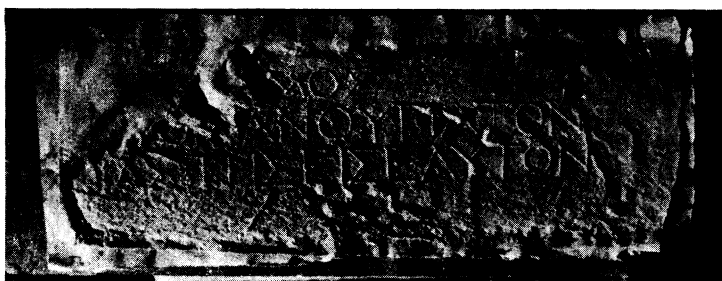


PLATE 2. IG II² 4165 (squeeze)

middle. The text of *IG II² 4165* concerns a proconsul honored by the Demos; unfortunately the proconsul's name is not preserved:

ca. med. s. I p. [ὁ δὴ]μος
 [-----]ον ἀνθύπατον
 [-----] ἔνεκα καὶ εὐν]οίας τῆς εἰς ἑαυτόν.

On the top of the base there are two dowel holes where a bronze statue was attached.¹²

Whether or not both stones belong to the same base, *IG II² 3919* is of considerable importance for our knowledge of the life of Statius the elder. Indeed, it informs us with reasonable certainty that he was "Statius the elder." It represents our only testimony independent of his son's account in the *Silvae* and supplements it with a new dimension, that his father's travels in Greece not only included Athens (as one might easily guess), but that there he took part in the Eleusinian Mysteries and was given high honor by the Areopagus.¹³

¹² If the two blocks belong to the same base, it is possible that the statue of Statius was centered above *IG II² 3919* as the statue of the proconsul seems to have been centered above *IG II² 4165*; but with the information presently available one still cannot exclude the possibility, suggested above, that the statue of Statius stood astride two blocks even if it should definitely turn out that the statue of the proconsul was centered above a single block of the same base.

¹³ I would like to thank the Greek Archaeological Society and the Greek Archaeological Service for allowing me to inspect *IG II² 3919* and *4165*.