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Representing consulship

On the concept and meanings of the consular diptychs

Abstract

Although the consular diptych does not appear as a distinct category of art until the end of the Roman consulate's thousand-year history (*c.* 400–541), it constitutes a primary example of the continuance of Roman honorific tradition, developing concurrently with the division and transformation of the Roman empire and the resurgence of the consulate as the most prestigious office on the *cursus honorum*. By analysing and interpreting the patterns of motif selection, compositional structure and representational mode in the consular diptychs, it is possible to trace the various contextual factors, cultural and historical, that contributed towards their conception, and to gain valuable insights into the precepts of the late antique 'ideology of consulship' that was transmitted through this new visual medium. The present article discusses the different layers of meaning within the consular imagery, conveyed through an increasing elaboration and regularization of form and content, from the basic theme of official apparatus and ceremonial to the more symbolic themes through which the ideal aspects and functions of the Late Antique consulate are expressed, notably the triumphal and regenerative powers figuratively invested in the consul, and the intimate link between these and the ideas of imperial victory and 'Eternal Rome'.

The consular diptychs constitute a well-known and frequently cited category of Late Roman and Early Byzantine art, notable for the number in which they have been preserved, for their formal and iconographical homogeneity, and for the fact that nearly all of them can be securely attributed to specific consuls/commissioners, and thus to specific years. However, despite the indisputable value and interest of the consular diptychs as *exempla* of Late Antique art, their imagery has not been subject to more systematic analysis and interpretation until recently.[1] The classic corpus publications by Richard Delbrueck (*Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, 1929) and Wolfgang Fritz Volbach (*Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 1916, 1952, and 1976),[2] do not primarily deal with iconographical matters. Delbrueck's approach to the consular diptychs is philological and archaeological, aiming for a complete documentation of the material category as such, but rarely moving beyond the concrete and specific. Iconological aspects are largely left aside in his analyses and the imagery of a consular diptych as a whole is never really discussed in depth, even less the consular image as a phenomenon. Even so, the value of the *Consulardiptychen* cannot be overrated: it is, and will surely remain, the foundation on which all subsequent studies on this group of artworks must rest. The aim and method of Volbach's study, the two latter editions of which are to no small degree dependent on Delbrueck's work, and which encompass a greater number of Late Antique and Early Medieval ivories, are more purely archaeological, focussing on stylistic development, attribution and dating. Thus, a comprehensive and updated study which reassesses the functions and meanings of the consular diptychs as a category of commemorative art within their specific period and context has long been due. The consular diptychs do indeed provide a rich source in their own right, not only to the nature and functions of the ordinary consulate in last 140 years or so of its existence, but to the history of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire as a whole.

The present article[3] aims at offering, in brief form, a structural and contextual analysis of the imagery of the consular diptychs belonging to the fully figural type, which is predom-

[1] Olovsdotter 2005.

[2] Delbrueck 1929; Volbach 1976 (the third and last edition, which will be the one referred to throughout this article).

[3] This article evolved from a lecture held at a British Museum Byzantine Seminar on Late Roman and Early Byzantine ivories in August 2006. I would like to express my gratitude to Chris Entwistle, curator of the Late Roman and Byzantine Collections at the British Museum, for inviting me to participate, and for the opportunity to view all the consular and related ivory diptychs in British collections gathered together in a unique handling session. I would also like to thank Prof. Bente Kiilerich of the University of Bergen for her helpful comments on the manuscript.

inant within the preserved corpus.[4] The purpose is to show that by analysing and interpreting the patterns of motif selection, compositional structure and representational mode that determine the consular image, it is possible not only to trace the artistic, historical and socio-cultural factors that contributed towards its conception in the Late Roman period, but also to gain valuable insights into the precepts and functions of the peculiarly Late Antique 'ideology of consulship' that was expressed and promulgated through this new visual medium.

The consular image in its specialized form was developed towards the very end of Roman history: the preserved consular ivory diptychs date from about 400 to 541 CE, that is from nearly 900 years after the consulate was instituted to only some 140 years before it was closed to private citizens (in 542). By then the consulate, the most elevated of Roman *dignitates*, had long been devoid of executive power and become entirely centred around public ceremonial and display: processions, the giving of games and the distribution of largesse. Although it seems that the attractiveness and prestige of the office fluctuated over time, it is certain that by the second half of the 4th century it had once again become regarded as the pinnacle of the *cursus honorum* by the Roman and Constantinopolitan élites. This is not least demonstrated by the ever increasing sums spent on consular munificence—spectacles and gifts—in the 5th and 6th centuries;[5] so much so, in fact, that they became subject to legal restrictions.[6] The potential of the consulate for indirect power was clearly not to be underestimated, since it still carried considerable public exposure with it. In Rome in particular, where the non-resident imperial power, and later the Germanic and Ostrogothic rulers, were dependent on the senatorial aristocracy for imposing and upholding their authority, the annually appointed consuls were actively encouraged to perform their official obligations with magnificent display, since by this they would set a glorious example of prosperity and generosity to their fellow citizens.[7] Thus, in the western half of the empire at least, the personal qualities and public display of prosperity and generosity were considered beneficial to communal life and to society at large, and (presumably) generally conductive to contentment and stability, social and political. Ivory diptychs and other luxury artworks, commissioned in large numbers by ordinary or private consuls (*consules ordinarii*)[8] for the purpose of gift distribution in connection with their accession on the New Year, were an important ingredient and expression of this consular generosity.[9]

Precedents and parallels to much of what we see in the consular diptychs may be found in the honorific imagery of triumphal and funerary monuments from the Republican era onwards, and certain standard elements and compositional schemes in the consular material also occur on Late Antique medallions and coins, in a variety of works in the minor arts, in church mosaics, etc. Without going deeper into the problem of typological genealogies, one may safely state that the consular diptychs represent a continuance of tradition, artistically as well as contextually, since the commemoration of public status provides a core theme in Roman art of all periods. As a phenomenon, however, the consular diptych is quite new: through it a canonical imagery of consulship is developed for the first time, even if a more strictly normative standard for its conception was not, to judge from the preserved corpus, to emerge until the first decades of the 6th century and in Constantinople.[10] Incidentally, all the remain-

[4] The extant corpus of authentic and documented consular ivories, the fully figural, semi-figural/medallion and ornamental categories included, amounts to 43, of which 26 are fully figural. For a discussion of the distinctions in visual language and (possibly) classes of recipients between the three diptych categories, see most recently Eastmond 2010.

[5] Bagnall, Cameron, Schwarz & Worp 1987, 9; also Delmaire 1989, 572–574; and Cutler 2007, 148.

[6] Upper limits were set to consular expenditure (metals, weights and sums) in the law code of Justinian of the year 537/538, reiterating a paragraph in a Theodosian law of the year 384; *Nov*. 105. See also Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz & Worp 1987, 10–11; and Delmaire 1989, 572; and Cutler 2007, 148.

[7] The Ostrogothic king Theodoric's form letters to his appointed consuls of the year, cited by Cassiodorus, contained interesting passages to this effect; Cassiod. *Var*. 2.2, 3.39, 4.51, 6.1, 9.22–24. Similar passages are found in the legislation of the emperor Theodosius I; *Cod. Theod*. 15.76, 16.10.3. According to the *Fasti consulares*, ordinary consuls were regularly appointed in both west and east throughout the period from which the consular diptychs have been preserved; e.g. Degrassi 1952, 86–100. For a recent and very useful study on the Late Roman consuls (listed in the *Fasti consulares*) as juxtaposed to the consular diptychs, see Ravegnani 2006.

[8] In the Late Roman period (from the 4th century) there were in effect three kinds of consulate: the original and ordinary consulate, instated with the Roman Republic, with two annually appointed consuls in Rome, from the year 307 one each in Rome and Constantinople; the imperial consulate, open to emperors only and of Flavian date; and the suffect consulate, which was seemingly instated in Rome, but never in Constantinople, sometime in the 4th century; e.g. Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz & Worp 1987, 2f, 21. Additionally, there was the ex-consulate, a pseudo-consular status which could be bestowed on persons irrespective of whether they had previously held the ordinary consulate (or other); see for instance Courtois 1949.

[9] Cf. e.g. Delbrueck 1929, 6–16; Cutler 1984, 105–108; Shelton 1982, 125; and Engemann 2008, 71–77 esp.; also Painter 1991, 73, 76–78.

[10] For an interesting discussion of the canonic imagery of the eastern diptychs in particular, and of the relationship between an adherence to 'models' and the individual artists' imagination, see Cutler 2007, 138–142.

ing eastern diptychs date from the 6th century, whereas the western diptychs cover the entire period from which consular ivories have been preserved (*c.* 400–541).[11]

The motif repertory of the consular diptychs

THE CONSUL AND THE CONSULAR INSIGNIA

The consular image is made up of a relatively limited range of motifs, some of which are more or less obligatory, others optional.[12] In the earlier stages of development, as would be expected, there was no iconographical canon to adhere to, as demonstrated by a diptych issued by Probus,[13] western consul in 406, who chose to have his appointer, the emperor Honorius, represented in his stead. In the western half of the empire there is also a practice of having the honorand of the diptych represented in the double capacity of consul and *patricius*; the Halberstadt diptych (417?) and the diptych of Basilius (541) testify to the uninterrupted continuance of this peculiarly western convention.[14] But as a general rule, the consular image centres upon and 'evolves' from the consul's figure, which is rendered as an impersonal and—particularly in the eastern diptychs—ageless carrier of official attributes. The rendering of the consul's face is for the most part generic and undifferentiated from the faces of any other figures included in the image (official attendants, city goddesses, imperial personages, etc.), and even from the faces of other consuls in *their* diptychs (*Figs. 1*, *3–4*, *7–10*). This physiognomic stereotypification is particularly advanced in the eastern works, which were

Figure 1. The Lampadiorum diptych, *west* c. *400 (left panel). Brescia, Museo Romano, inv. 4; photo by concession of the Civici Musei d'Arte e di Storia di Brescia.*

[11] Of the extant consular ivories 17 are attributed to western consuls and/or workshops, covering the period from *c.* 400 to 541, whereas the 26 preserved eastern specimens were issued between 506 and 540. Further, whereas each western diptych belongs to a different commissioner, the eastern works in several cases form series of two to six identical or near-identical specimens per consul, with a total of ten commissioners. The date *c.* 400, as opposed to the more widely mentioned 406 (the year of Probus' diptych) is motivated by my convinction that the Lampadiorum panel is to be recognized as a consular diptych; see infra, footnote 16.

[12] Olovsdotter 2005, 62–178.

[13] Aosta, Tesoro della Cattedrale; Delbrueck 1929, N 1, Taf. 1; Volbach 1976, Nr. 1, Taf. 1; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 14. See notably also Kiilerich & Torp 1989, 368–371.

[14] The Halberstadt diptych, west 417 (?) (*Fig. 2*); the diptych of Felix, west 428 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MMA, inv. 3262; Delbrueck 1929, N 3, Taf. 3; Volbach 1976, Nr. 2, Taf. 2; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 3, Pl. 3); and the diptych of Basilius, western production 541 (*Fig. 6*).

Figure 2. The Halberstadt diptych*, west 417 (?). Halberstadt, Domschatz, inv. 45; photo by concession of the Domschatzverwaltung Halberstadt.*

to some degree serially produced.[15] Only rarely does a face strike the viewer as individualized, such as in the diptychs of Boethius (487) (*Fig. 5*) and Basilius (541) (*Fig. 6*), both of western production. As for the rendering of the consul's body, its shape becomes increasingly abstracted and reduced into a plane onto which the characteristic patterns and draping of the toga costume are applied, as it were, usually in very fine detail (e.g. *Figs. 2*, *5*, *6*, *9*). Likewise, the poses and gestures performed by the consul are reduced to very few variants and combinations: the standing or enthroned position, the right hand raised or lowered, holding the *mappa circensis* (the piece of cloth with which the consul signalled for his circus games to commence) or, occasionally, a codicil of appointment. The left hand is invariably locked at waist level, clasping the scep-

[15] Supra, n. 11. This partly contra Anthony Cutler, who in his most recent article on ivory diptychs expresses the view that the 'ritrattistica' is the only aspect exempt from the general stereotypification of the eastern diptychs, citing the heavy chin and oversized orbits characterizing some of Anastasius' faces in support of this; Cutler 2007, 138–140.

Figure 3. The diptych of Astyrius, *west 449 (left panel). Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum, inv. Kg 54.207; photo © Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt.*

tre. As a rule, gestures and poses do not refer to any specific or immediately identifiable ceremony or act, and they often appear to be interchangeable without the content or 'meaning' of the image being altered in any perceptible way; thus, for instance, in the diptych of Boethius, where the consul is alternately standing with the *mappa* lowered along the side of his body and seated with the *mappa* raised. Only in the early western Lampadiorum panel (*Fig. 1*), which in everything essential conforms to 'standard' consular iconography,[16] may we recognize a specific scene taking place within a specific context: the honorand (perhaps Lampadius) presiding over his public games from the tribunal at the Circus Maximus in Rome. For the rest, poses and gestures appear to be fused into a comprehensive and synoptic formula illustrative of the totality of consular ceremonies or roles: the procession (*processus consularis*), the presiding at games (*pompa circensis*), and the distribution of largesse (e.g. *Figs. 5, 8*)[17]—or simply presiding, i.e. seated in state on the *sella curulis*, presiding constituting *the* act that traditionally expressed the essence of magisterial dignity and authority, in Roman life as in Roman art. In eastern diptychs the consul is always seated.

The consular insignia (*ornamenta consularia*) comprise the purple-and-gold and star- or 'palm'-embroidered toga costume, commonly called the triumphal toga (*toga triumphalis, vestis triumphalis, vestis palmata*), the ivory sceptre (*scipio eburneus*), the curule chair (*sella curulis*), and the lictorian *fasces*. The toga and the sceptre were at an early stage inherited from the Roman triumphator, who in his turn had inherited them from the Etruscan king and ultimately from the god Iuppiter, in the form of his Capitoline cult statue; these insignia may thus in themselves be said to represent an original and unbroken link between consulship and Roman victory and empire-making.[18] The *ornamenta* quite naturally constitute a primary theme within consular imagery, progressively surpassing their carrier in importance by becoming more monumental, elaborate and detailed, especially so in the east, as exemplified by the painstakingly carved sceptres and curule chairs of Areobindus, Anastasius and Magnus (*Figs. 7, 9–10*). The toga costume in particular would have presented an eye-catching centrepiece, its intricate pattern coloured with purple/red and gold.[19]

[16] On the attribution of the Lampadiorum panel to a consul, or more precisely to the commemoration of an ordinary or suffect consulship (likely simultaneously with some other major event in the public lives of the Lampadii and the Rufii who were the co-honorands of the complete diptych) in the years around 400, see Chastagnol 1966, 58f; Formis 1967, 187–191 esp.; Volbach 1976, 50; Cameron 1981; Cameron 1986, 57–62; Cameron 1998, 400; Engemann 1999, 162; and Olovsdotter 2005, 18–20.

[17] The diptychs of Magnus *cos*. 518, the lower registers of which have been removed at some point, would almost certainly have shown scenes similar to those of Clementinus' diptych, as demonstrated by three bone copies of Magnus' ivory diptychs, one sample of which is kept in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (MMA) in Paris; Delbrueck 1929, N 23, Taf. 23; Volbach 1976, Nr. 24 bis (3), Taf. 11; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 13 b.

[18] From the earliest times Iuppiter conceded and received all victories achieved by the Romans, and the victor was considered to be invested with the god's power, conceived as the quality of *felicitas* and roughly translated as an innate ability to succeed and induce success and prosperity, the possession of superior good fortune. In the Republic it was customary for generals who had triumphed to be awarded a consulship for the upcoming year, whereby they ideally transmitted their *felicitas* onto the Roman state and people. For the history and symbolisms of the triumphal and consular insignia, see notably Versnel 1970, 57f, 74, 77, 89–93, 126–131, 361–371, 302f; Schäfer 1989, 184f, 187f esp.; and Dewar 2008, passim. Also Salomonson 1956, 53–64, 91; and Künzl 1988, 85–129. For analyses of the representation of the insignia in the consular diptychs specifically, see Delbrueck, passim; and Olovsdotter 2005, 71–90.

[19] On the colouring of the consular diptychs and Late Roman and Early Byzantine ivories, see Connor 1998; and Connor 2008. A more critical approach to the colouring of Late Antique ivory is taken by Anthony Cutler; Cutler 1994, 144–149. On the love of colour and its generous application in all kinds of art in the Late Antique period, see also James 1996, 125–140 esp.

Figure 4. The Bourges diptych, *west, first half of the 5th century. Bourges, Musée du Berry, inv. 1860.3.2; photo © F. Lauginie, Musées de la Ville de Bourges.*

The consular insignia are regularly employed as means for rendering tribute to the appointing emperor or king, whose gifts they are.[20] The ruler's image may decorate the toga in the form of one or several insets (*segmenta*) (e.g. *Fig. 2*); the sceptre is with few exceptions crowned by at least one imperial *imago* (*Figs. 1–4*, *7–9*); and the ruler's toga-clad bust may ornament the seat-rail of the *sella curulis*, be held aloft by Victory figurines (*victoriolae*) mounted on the side-extensions of the seat (*Figs. 7*, *9–10*), or, again, be inscribed on the banner attached to the *fasces* held by a city goddess (*Fig. 8*).[21] Particularly interesting examples are provided by some sceptres of Flavius Anastasius (east, 517),[22] which are crowned by a row of three heads signifying the dynasty of the appointing emperor Anastasius I, whose head must (following the laws of hierarchy) be recognized as that in the centre, flanked by

[20] On the inclusion of the emperor's image on the insignia of the ordinary consul in late antiquity, see Auson. *Grat. act*. 51–54 (for the toga specifically); Delbrueck 1929, 33, 38; Kruse 1934, 110–112; Salomonson 1956, 32, 88–100; Meslin 1970, 55; Restle 1988, 940, 956; Schäfer 1989, 184–188; and Dewar 2008, 217–219 esp. Also *DarSag* IV:2, 1172–1175 s.v. Segmentum (V. Chapot).

[21] Such a ruler's bust is also found on the banner of the *fasces* held by a city goddess in the diptych of Orestes, consul of the west in 530; London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 139–1866; Delbrueck 1929, N 32, Taf. 32; Volbach 1976, Nr. 31, Taf. 16; and Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 7, Pl. 7.

[22] London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 368-1871 (Delbrueck 1929, N 20, Taf. 20; Volbach 1976, Nr. 18, Taf. 8; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 11 B, Pl. 11:2); Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare (Delbrueck 1929, N 19, Taf. 19; Volbach 1976, Nr. 20, (Taf. erroneous); Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 11 C, Pl. 11:3); additionally, a lost panel formerly in the Antiquarium, Berlin (Delbrueck 1929, N 20, Taf. 20; Volbach 1976, Nr. 17, Taf. 8; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 11 B, Pl. 11:2)

members and previous consuls of the Anastasian family—a family to which the present consul in fact also belongs.[23]

In eastern works in particular, the sceptre and curule chair are frequently ornamented with motifs referring to imperial victory, i.e. the supreme quality of victoriousness invested in the emperor. The *victoriola*, appearing in duplicate form on some consuls' chairs, had developed into an imperial insignium in late antiquity, accompanying the emperor in his aspect of triumphator and world ruler in numerous artworks, medals and coins of the period, of which the aforementioned diptych of Probus (west, 406), representing the emperor Honorius as victor, is a notable example.[24] On some sceptres of Areobindus (*Fig. 7*) we find a laurel-encircled eagle crowned by a standing statuette of the emperor in military costume, holding a spear[25] and an orb (*orbis terrarum*), the insignia of world dominion; Anastasius' sceptres feature similar constellations (*Fig. 9*). These 'piled' sceptres are distinctly reminiscent of the Roman military standard, the *signa*, whose emblems regularly included the *imago clipeata* of the emperor/s, laurel wreaths, and the eagle.[26]

That the *mappa circensis*, the games-giver's cloth, was regarded as something of an independent insignium in late antiquity is demonstrated by its appearance also in consular diptychs which do not otherwise include scenes or pictorial references to the games or arena. It is displayed in several different ways, not all of which are immediately associated with known acts or gestures performed by the *editor et praeses ludorum*: it may be held whilst standing up or being seated on the *sella curulis*, it may be raised, lowered alongside the body, resting in the lap, or held against the chest.[27] This diversity indicates that, rather than depicting the physical act of opening the circus-races, the *mappa* works as a symbol of the *pompa circensis* and hence as an official ensign of the consul as 'performer of munificence', i.e. as a distributor of *munera*. The giving of and presiding at games were without doubt considered to be the most important and emblematic act performed by the incoming consul in the Late Roman period, when public life was centred as never before on the ceremonies and spectacles conducted in the arena.

SECONDARY FIGURES

As a rule, the consul is accompanied by two or more figures, roughly falling into three categories: officials, city goddesses, and imperial personages. Broadly speaking, their function is to set consulship in context. By introducing real (human) or symbolic (divine) figures, the artist and/or commissioner of a diptych may emphasize or expound on certain aspects of consulship—general, specific and, as the case may be, individual.

A first category of secondary figure is represented by the junior official or functionary, who appears with higher frequency in diptychs issued by western consuls. Hierarchically distinguished from the consul through size reduction, a receded position and a less ornate costume, these figures commonly display attributes and perform gestures denoting their official status and/or function(s) in the 'scene' represented. Thus, for instance, the attendants in the Lampadiorum panel (*Fig. 1*) and the Halberstadt diptych (*Fig. 2*), who, as signalled by their costumes, are of senatorial and patrician rank[28] but obviously lower on the official scale than the honorand (consul, first patrician). Whereas the physiognomies of the attendants in the Lampadiorum panel are more or less identical to the consul's, and thus suggestive of family or *gens*, their counterparts in the Halberstadt diptych are in all four cases (two per panel) physiognomically differentiated from the honorand and from each other. These differentiations, which are unique within the extant corpus of consular diptychs, seem to suggest an actual portrayal of individuals; four men of special relevance to the honorand in his official capacity or for his career, political allies whose services have earned them the honour of being co-commemorated with him in his official diptych/s. Another, more singular example is provided by the lictor and *thekophóros* ('case-carrier')[29] accompanying Astyrius (*Fig. 3*), western consul in 449, who, due to a military engagement, took office at Arelate (Arles).[30] The main function of these distinctly smaller insignia-carriers must have been to announce to the diptych's recipient that Astyrius' consular accession was carried out with all due procedure even though it took place away from Rome, more precisely

[23] Martindale 1980–1992a, 82f. Also Delbrueck 1929, 123 with footnote 1, 125; Volbach 1976, 35; and Olovsdotter 2005, 75.
[24] Aosta, Tesoro della Cattedrale; Delbrueck 1929, N 1, Taf. 1; Volbach 1976, Nr. 1, Taf. 1; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 14). Another example that may be cited is the so-called Barberini ivory in the Louvre, Paris (inv. OA9063; e.g. Delbrueck 1929, N 48, Taf. 48; Volbach 1976, Nr. 48, Taf. 26; and Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 20).
[25] Identified as a sceptre (viz. a half-length staff) in my publication of 2005 (Olovsdotter 2005, 38 with footnote 191, 40f), but since then reconsidered to be the tall spear or *hasta* of the military commander, which in all three cases (four diptych panels of Areobindus) has been severed below the emperor's raised arm.
[26] Representations of military *signa* are found on various triumphal and sepulchral monuments, among others the Porta Argentarii in the Forum Boarium, Rome (204 CE).
[27] Cf. e.g. the ivories of the Lampadii (*Fig. 1*), Halberstadt (*Fig. 2*), Boethius (*Fig. 5*), Basilius (*Fig. 6*), and Clementinus (*Fig. 8*).
[28] Whereas the toga was the universal attribute of official status within the civilian context, the chlamys costume originated in the military sphere, becoming a signifier or ensign of patrician status in the Late Roman period specifically; Cassiod. *Var*. 8.9.3; also e.g. *RE* III.2.4 (1899), 2345 s.v. Χλαμύς (K. Büchner); and Delbrueck 1929, 55.
[29] This official function is attested by Johannes Lydus; Lydus *Mag*. 2.14, 3.21. See also Kruse 1934, 103f; and Olovsdotter 2005, 93f.
[30] E.g. Martindale 1980–1992a, 175.

under the superintendence of the praetorian prefect of Gaul (*praefectus praetorio per Gallias*) who was stationed at Arelate, and whose official insignia included the *theca*, a monumental writing-tool box crowned by imperial busts.[31]

Roma and Constantinopolis present a more notable category of secondary figure, appearing with somewhat greater frequency in diptychs produced in the 6th century. Traditionally belonging in the imperial sphere, their general and most immediate function within the consular context would naturally be to signify the two primary capitals of the empire, Rome and Constantinople, where the consuls of the year were appointed. More specific meanings and functions would have been revealed through attributes and other typological peculiarities, but these mostly vary between diptychs. The earliest appearance of the city goddesses within the preserved corpus is in the Halberstadt diptych (*Fig. 2*), a work commonly and plausibly attributed to the west and the second decade of the 5th century.[32] Here they do not accompany the consul, but are found beside the imperial figures in the upper registers of the panels. These goddesses, whose heads are surrounded by nimbi as a sign of their divinity, are easily distinguishable from each other: the helmeted Roma (left) conforms to the ancient, warlike Minervan or Amazonian type epitomized by the *Roma Aeterna* instated under Hadrian and renovated by Maxentius in 307,[33] displaying the orb, spear (*hasta*) and sword of world rule; and Constantinopolis (right) is represented as a civilian city *tyche* of a generic and vaguely eastern type, wearing a radiate crown and a *dalmatica* or *palla* draped like a toga, and holding a branch of what would most probably be identified as either laurel (symbol of victory) or olive (symbol of peace) in her left hand, which passively rests in her lap.[34] Whereas Roma holds the insignia of 'her' (western) emperor, Constantinopolis puts her right arm around the shoulders of the (eastern) emperor to whom *she* belongs. Appearing within their traditional imperial context, the significance of the Halberstadt goddesses is quite clear: they are the divine protectresses of the unity of the Roman emperors, of the Roman empire, and of the military and civilian spheres (empire and state).

In the diptychs issued by the 6th-century consuls Clementinus, Magnus (*Figs. 8*, *10*) and Orestes,[35] the city goddesses accompany the consuls in the main register of the panels. Here they are conceived as a pair of helmeted courtly ladies who have shed their typological differences, but whose attributes—some of which are not immediately decipherable—vary, with the consequence that their functions appear rather vague and ambiguous. These goddesses have been compared with the junior officials represented in other consuls' diptychs,[36] for instance those of Astyrius and Areobindus: they stand beside and slightly behind the consul, and one of them holds the *fasces*. However, they are in no instance smaller than the consul they accompany; on the contrary, their stature exceeds his, something which is inconsistent with a lower status. It seems altogether more apt to compare them with Roma as she appears in the diptych of Basilius (*Fig. 6*), a work produced in Rome in 541 (or thereabouts),[37] where there is no hierarchical distinction between the goddess and consul standing side by side in the foreground of the left panel, and where her friendly arm around Basilius' shoulders plainly announces that she is a benevolent protectress of and sharer in 'her' consul's status. With this comparison in mind, I would like to support Alan Cameron's interpretation[38] that the *fasces*-carrying city goddess 'Roma' in the diptychs of Clementinus and Orestes has not been demoted into a humble lictor, but must rather be recognized as the *conferrer* of the *fasces*, i.e. as a representative of the consul's appointer, the emperor. Consequently, her right-hand gesture (raised in the consul's direction, palm open) would signify endorsement or empowerment rather than subservient acclamation, and

[31] Kruse 1934, 105; Berger 1981, 32–34, 184–190; and Olovsdotter 2005, 93f. The vital importance in the Late Empire of the imperial *imago*, the presence of which was prerequisite for any and every official act to be legally valid, is most notably illustrated by the famous late 4th-century illuminated manuscript *Notitia Dignitatum* (preserved through several copies from the 15th and 16th centuries, one of which is kept in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris and another in the Staatsbibliothek in Munich), painstakingly depicting the insignia of the numerous civilian and military offices in the eastern and western empires. An illustrated treatment of this manuscript is presented by Berger. On the consular accession of Astyrius at Arelate, see also Sidonius Apollinaris, who mentions a consular panegyric recited by Nicetus on the occasion; Sid. Apoll. *Epist*. 8.6.5–6; also Martindale 1980–1992a, 175.

[32] Delbrueck 1929, 87, 91f; Toynbee 1953, 272f; Volbach 1976, 42; Kiilerich 1993, 237f; Bühl 1995, 151, 158–164; Bühl 2001, 195–201; Cameron 1998; Engemann 1999, 167f esp.

[33] The Hadrianic/Maxentian *Roma Aeterna* type was widely repeated throughout the Late Antique period. For typological analyses, see Mellor 1981, 1016–1017; and Vermeule 1959, 35–43.

[34] For a full discussion of Constantinopolis' attributes in the Halberstadt diptych, see Olovsdotter 2005, 98–100 and 109, with references.

[35] The diptych of Orestes, western consul in 530, closely resembles that of Clementinus (east, 513); London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 139-1866; Delbrueck 1929, N 32, Taf. 32; Volbach 1976, Nr. 31, Taf. 16; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 7, Pl. 7.

[36] Notably Bühl 1995, 105f.

[37] The Roman patrician Anicius Faustus Albinus Basilius, eastern consul in 541, was the last private citizen to be appointed to the ordinary consulate; Martindale 1980–1992a, 174; Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz & Worp 1987, 161f. On the attribution of the diptych to the consul of 541, see Cameron & Schauer 1982, 128–131; and also e.g. Olovsdotter 2005, 36–38.

[38] Cameron 1998, 396f.

Figure 5. The diptych of Boethius, *west 487. Brescia, Museo Romano; photo by concession of the Civici Musei d'Arte e di Storia di Brescia.*

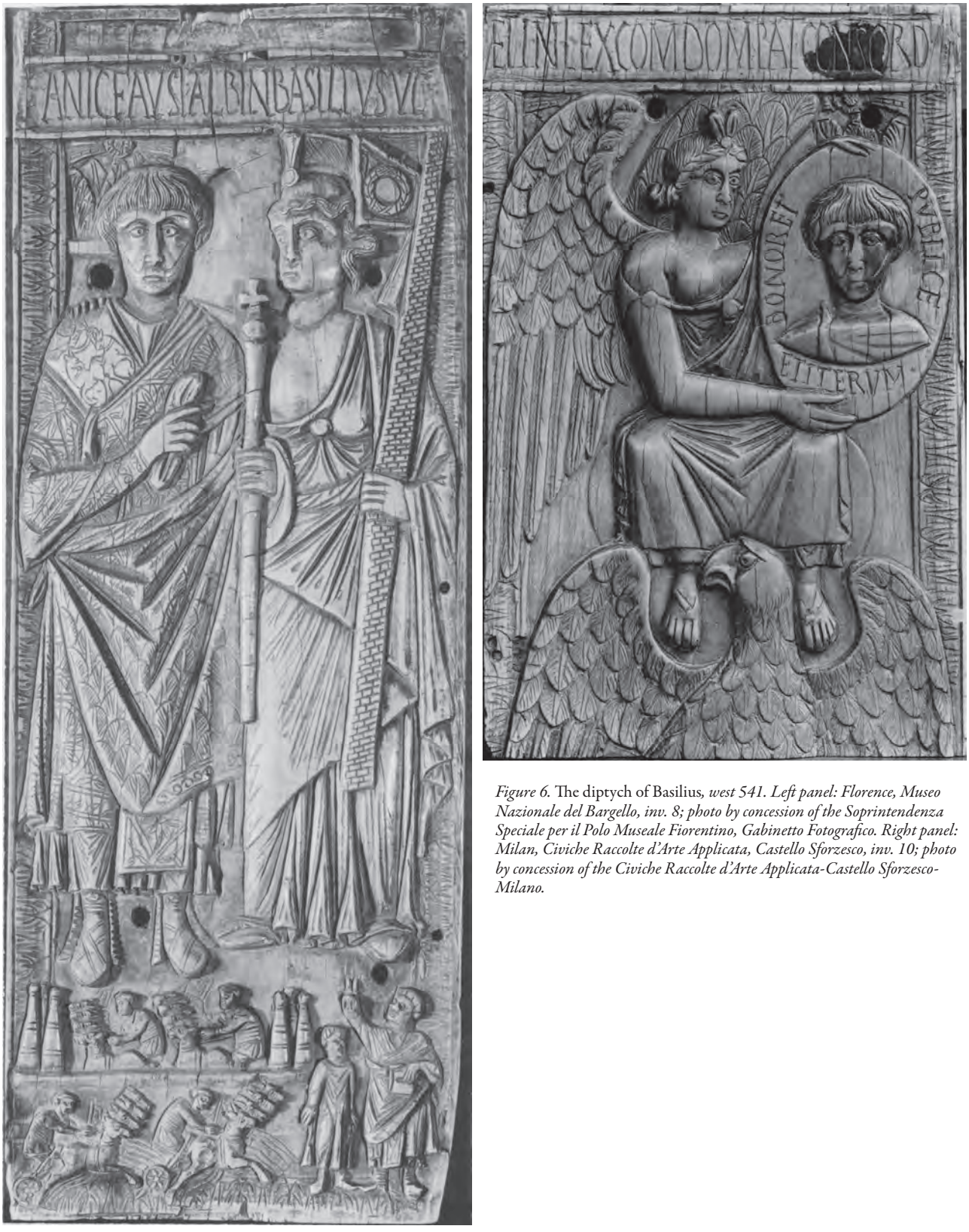

Figure 6. The diptych of Basilius, *west 541. Left panel: Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 8; photo by concession of the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino, Gabinetto Fotografico. Right panel: Milan, Civiche Raccolte d'Arte Applicata, Castello Sforzesco, inv. 10; photo by concession of the Civiche Raccolte d'Arte Applicata-Castello Sforzesco-Milano.*

so be understood as a gesture of power.[39] The plausibility of this interpretation, viz. that Roma is conceived as the conferrer of consulship in 6th-century consular imagery, is further strengthened by its acknowledgement of the fact that the ancient city goddess of the Romans retained her status as an imperial divinity or *genius* in this late period—a status which was also 'inherited' by Constantinopolis.[40] So, if the *fasces*-bearing goddess in the ivories of Clementinus and Orestes is the conferrer of consulship, what would then be the function of her left-side sister, holding a knob-tipped sceptre and a small globe (variously inscribed with an *alpha*) that are seemingly reductive versions of the imperial insignia? And what, again, would be the function of the warlike twin goddesses in the diptych panels of Magnus *(Fig. 10)*, who share the emperor's attributes of world dominion between them: spear, shield and (a small) orb? These questions have caused some debate through the years,[41] and are complicated by the

Figure 7. A diptych of Areobindus*, east 506 (right panel). Bésançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, inv. A.185; photo Besancon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie – cliché Jean-Louis Dousson.*

[39] Although similar to the acclamatory gesture performed by one of the attendant figures in the Halberstadt diptych for instance (*Fig. 2*), it is in fact identical to the open-handed gesture performed by the emperor on Late Roman coins and medallions, and by (for instance) the empress Ariadne (?) in an ivory panel in Vienna; Delbrueck 1929, N 52, Taf. 52; Volbach 1976, Nr. 52, Taf. 27. The gesture denotes rulership and supreme power, in its turn deriving from the gesture of divine power witnessed in various representations of gods; see for instance Brilliant 1963, 209; and L'Orange 1973, 327–344; also Olovsdotter 2005, 105f with footnotes 510–519.

[40] On the lingering divinity of Roma and Constantinopolis in late antiquity, see notably MacCormack 1975; Shelton 1979; Kleer 1984, 70–74; and Salzman 1990, passim. For a more in-depth discussion of divine vs. secular in the representation of Roma and Constantinopolis in the consular diptychs, see Olovsdotter 2005, 105–107, 191f.

[41] Delbrueck 1929, 117–119, 135f; Toynbee 1953, 263–277; Bühl 1995, 197–217; Cameron 1984; Cameron 1998, 393–397; Shelton 1989, 123 esp.; Engemann 1999, 163f; and Olovsdotter 2005, 100–107, 109f. The problem of how to identify the small and in some instances inscribed globe held by the left-side goddess has not been satisfactorily resolved. As I have argued previously (Olovsdotter 2005, 105), the theory proposed by Bühl (Bühl 1995, 212–217; Bühl 2001, 200 n. 29) that it be recognized as a spherical weight stands and falls with the presupposition that all the diptychs in which it appears—those of Clementinus, Magnus, and Orestes—were originally issued by Clementinus, whose former status as *comes sacrarum largitionum* ('count of the sacred largesse') would supposedly have warranted the incorporation of that instrument into the diptychs with which he later commemorated his consular appointment. However, apart from the fact that the spherical weight was neither the instrument used above all others to measure coins in the 6th century, nor an insignium of the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, the attribution of all consular diptychs showing a small globe in the hand of a city goddess to a single consul is problematic. I prefer to see the motif as a meaningful pendant for the spear held by the same goddess in these diptychs, viz. as an orb, or more precisely the symbol of an orb, since it would not have been legitimate for a goddess to 'bestow' the insignia of imperial rulership on an ordinary consul.

Figure 8. The diptych of Clementinus, *east 513. Liverpool, World Museum, inv. M 10036; photo courtesy National Museums Liverpool.*

circumstance that no parallels may be found between any of these 'consular' variants of Roma and Constantinopolis in other media and contexts. In the end, all one can do is propose a general interpretation for them, which is that they symbolize the unity and continuity of the Roman empire and state as a territorial and constitutional whole—a role which they in many respects share with the consul in this late period.

Imperial or regal figures are included in one third of the preserved diptychs of the fully figural type, where they appear in separate upper registers. They may be represented as part of a scene or, more commonly, as *imagines clipeatae* against an abstract background. The separateness and elevated position of the rulers' images within the pictorial field naturally reflect their superior status in relation to the consul, whereas their reduced scale signals a secondary importance to the main theme, viz. the celebration of consulship. As far as may be judged from the preserved corpus, the inclusion of the ruler's image on a more regular basis did not occur until the 6th century and in Constantinople. Generally speaking, it serves two purposes: the first and most obvious is to render homage to the consul's appointer, the emperor or king; the second, which is only applicable in some cases, is to proclaim or draw attention to the circumstance that the issuing consul is related by family to the imperial house.

Beginning with the Halberstadt diptych (*Fig. 2*), which is commonly attributed to Flavius Constantius, consul of the west in 414 and 417[42] and co-emperor of Honorius in the west in 421 (as Constantius III), the imperial figures found in its upper registers are by far the most complex and debated example of such in a consular diptych. Identified by Roma and Constantinopolis flanking them, the emperors of West and East, Honorius and Theodosius II, are seated on a high-backed, settee-like throne raised on a dais. Their respective status as *Augustus* is indicated through size, the senior Honorius being larger and the junior Theodosius smaller; a differentiation which is mirrored in, and hence emphasized by, 'their' respective city goddess. Roma's display of the imperial insignia indicates that, here, the western emperor enjoys a primary status vis-à-vis his eastern colleague. The emperors are otherwise both attired in chlamys costumes, and both hold up their right hand in the formal gesture of speech (palm turned outwards, two digits raised) as a sign of their authority.[43] The group is flanked by two men-at-arms recognizable as praetorian guards, whose function, as evidenced by the monumental shields screening their bodies, is to physically protect the emperors along with the four-columned building in front of which they preside; the building, or façade, would symbolize the imperial palace, the absolute centre of imperial authority in late antiquity.[44] Thus far the scene is a classic representation of imperial unity and concord:[45] the emperors' unity and authority as rulers over the two halves of the Roman empire are protected by the gods and the army alike. However, in the centre between and behind the emperors, in a receded yet conspicuous position, is a female figure. Everything below her chest is screened by the emperors' seat, but she is of the same larger (adult) size as the Honorius-Roma couple, and wears the costume and jewelled collar of a courtly lady whilst lacking more defining attributes: she is neither an *Augusta*[46] nor a deity.[47] The inclusion of a courtly lady in a consular diptych, and in such a key position within the composition (top-centre), can only be explained if she represents

[42] Notably Delbrueck 1929, 87, 91f; Toynbee 1953, 272; MacCormack 1975, 148; Volbach 1976, 42; Bühl 1995, 151 and footnote 442; Bühl 2001; Engemann 1999; Olovsdotter 2005, 108, 115f, 118f, 147f; and Olovsdotter 2008.

[43] For a discussion of this and related gestures in Late Roman and Early Byzantine official imagery, see e.g. Shelton 1982; and Olovsdotter 2005, 68–71.

[44] The four-columned *fastigium*, incorporating the so-called *serliana* motif characterized by a wider and taller central arch between two narrower intercolumniations, is a peculiarly Late Antique concept within the Roman context, which not only served as a ceremonial front in palatial and sacral architecture from the Tetrarchic period onwards, but was also introduced in innumerable images in various artistic media. Notable artworks featuring the *fastigium* motif are the great silver missorium of Theodosius I in the Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid (Delbrueck 1929, N 62, Taf. 62; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 23; see also Kiilerich 2000, 273–280), and the so-called *palatium* mosaic in the nave of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. For a full discussion of examples and sources, see Olovsdotter 2005, 166f.

[45] Comparanda are mainly found on coins and medallions from Constantine to Justinian (*c.* 330–550); e.g. Toynbee 1953, passim; Shelton 1979, 36; Bühl 1995, 10–78; also Kleer 1984, 70–74; and Olovsdotter 2005, 97.

[46] One of whose characteristic attributes or insignia in the 5th–6th centuries was the diadem with *pendilia*; compare for instance the representations of the empresses Ariadne in the diptych of Clementinus (*Fig. 8*) and Theodora in the apse mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna. See also e.g. Delbrueck 1929, 91f.

[47] A goddess or personification would surely have been represented with a nimbus like those of Roma and Constantinopolis in order to render clear the divine distinction. Even though the alternative interpretation of the figure as Concordia proposed by Bente Kiilerich and Hjalmar Torp (Kiilerich & Torp 1989, 343 n. 122) must be deemed less plausible precisely because of the lack of a nimbus, it is nonetheless highly pertinent. The female figure in the Halberstadt diptych does conform to the generic Concordia type as witnessed in numerous examples of imperial and sepulchral imagery in the sense that she is shown as a frontal figure, little more than a bust as she stands between and behind the 'concordant' pair commemorated so as to visually bind them together. A similar function could certainly be ascribed to the Halberstadt lady. As a point of interest, Claudianus, in his panegyric to Honorius on his third consulship in 396, uses the expression *unanimi fratres*, 'unanimous brothers', when envisaging the worldwide victory that the emperor would achieve together with his senior brother and co-consul Arcadius; Claud. *III. Cons. Hon*. 201–211. For a discussion of the *fraternitas* or *fratrum* between these two emperors, which is also mentioned by Claudianus in his panegyric on the occasion of Honorius' fourth consulship in 398 (Claud. *IV. Cons. Hon*. 602–610, 655–656), see Dewar 2008, 226–228.

a specific personage with a specific and officially recognized significance for the commissioning consul in the year where the diptych was issued, as well as for the emperors with whom she is grouped. Such significance may be ascribed to the princess Galla Placidia, Honorius' step-sister, who, after having been returned from the Visigoths to the imperial palace in Ravenna, was wed to Constantius, her long-time suitor, on the same day he entered his second consulship, viz. on January 1st 417.[48] On this same day, Constantius, who was Honorius' most successful general, was also able to commemorate a victory over the Visigoths achieved the previous year;[49] a victory which re-established and secured the imperial authority of Honorius, hence the rule of the Theodosian dynasty as a whole, and which is more directly referred to through the barbarian captives figured in the lower registers of the diptych (see further below).[50] If this interpretation of the imperial scenes in the Halberstadt diptych is correct, then they are vital to the understanding of the diptych's imagery as a whole. Through them, the commissioner and honorand announces and explains his extraordinary success and privilege: his role in the restoration of imperial authority and in the reunion of the imperial family after a period of crisis,[51] and his rewards in the form of a consular appointment and a membership through marriage into the imperial house.

The composition featured in the diptychs issued by Flavius Anastasius (*Fig. 9*), eastern consul in 517 and great-nephew to the emperor Anastasius I,[52] of three *imagines clipeatae* mounted on a triangular pediment presents a different conception of the imperial theme, at once more abstract and straightforward. The lost diptych(s) of Anthemius, eastern consul in 515 and son of Anthemius, previous emperor of the west (467–472), showed an identical scheme.[53] As is well known, the *imago clipeata* constitutes an ancient and essentially non-historizing form of honorific representation, which portrays (or symbolizes) the honorand in an elevated and immortalized state. In Anastasius' diptychs, the emperor's *imago* is suspended in sole majesty on the pediment's apex, accompanied alternately by *erotes* (as in the diptych illustrated in *Fig. 9*) and *Victoriae*, figures of regeneration and victory.[54] Below the emperor's *imago*, supported on plinths, are those of the empress Ariadne (right) and an ex-consul (left). It is through the ex-consul's presence that the dynastic content of the constellation is revealed, since only a joint connection with the present consul and the imperial house may explain it: the ex-consul establishes a link between the present consul and the imperial sphere. The most plausible identification of the ex-consul's *imago* would be Fl. Anastasius' father, Pompeius, eastern consul in 501 and nephew to the emperor Anastasius I.[55] In a couple of other Anastasian diptychs, kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona respectively,[56] the imperial bust also wears the triumphal toga (the gem-incrusted imperial variant), thereby underscoring the theme of consular dynasty even further. What we see in Anastasius' diptychs, then, is a kind of family tree, a visualization of three generations of consuls and imperial family members with Ariadne as 'ancestral mother' in a scheme that simultaneously celebrates the consular and the imperial dynasty of Anastasius I. The present consul is not visually separated from the imperial sphere, but his shell-encircled head forms a perfectly rhomboid continuity with the clipeate heads above.

In the 6th-century ivories issued by Clementinus *(Fig. 8)* and Orestes,[57] both of whom were unrelated to their appointers, the concept of empire is represented in a more abstract way, and the consular sphere is also completely separated from the imperial one. The *imagines clipeatae* of the imperial and regal couples (Anastasius I-Ariadne in Clementinus' diptych, Athalaric-Amalasuntha in that of Orestes[58]) flanking a central cross would signify their joint and harmonious rule in the sign of Christ; an idea which is expressed even more clear-

[48] Sources for the history, career and marriage of Flavius Constantius are Olympiodorus 34; and Malalas 350. See notably Lütkenhaus 1998, 63, 72–74, 133f; and further Delbrueck 1929, 92; Engemann 1999, 165–167; Olovsdotter 2005, 118f; and Olovsdotter 2008.

[49] Martindale 1980–1992a, 321–325; Demandt 1989, 149; and Lütkenhaus 1998, 85–93, 133.

[50] Incidentally, the victory of 416 was the last ever to be celebrated with an imperial triumph in Rome; see e.g. McCormick 1986, 56–58.

[51] It should perhaps be pointed out that this imperial family reunion never occurred in real life (Honorius and Theodosius actually never met). Here, the viewer is presented with a symbolic representation of a 'state' re-established, not an event.

[52] E.g. Martindale 1980–1992a, 82f.

[53] Anthemius *cos*. 515 was the commissioner of a lost diptych of which a panel (the upper half) has been preserved through an 18th-century engraving by Héron de Villefosse; Delbrueck 1929, N 17, Taf. 17; Volbach 1976, Nr. 16, (Taf. erroneous); also Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 15.

[54] Victories are found in three other preserved diptychs of Anastasius, and in the lost diptych of Anthemius; Delbrueck 1929, N 17–20, Taf. 17–20; Volbach 1976, Nr. 16–20, Taf. 8–9; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 11 B–C, Pl. 11:2 a–b, 11:3 a and 15.

[55] Delbrueck 1929, 123 with footnote 1, 125. This identification was subsequently adhered to by among others Kruse and Volbach; Kruse 1934, 108; Volbach 1976, 35. For the known data of the consular kin of Fl. Anastasius and the emperor Anastasius I (Pompeius, Hypatius, Paulus and Probus), see Martindale 1980–1992a, 577f, 898f; and Cameron 1978, 260–262.

[56] Delbrueck 1929, N 19–20, Taf. 19–20; Volbach 1976, Nr. 18 and 20, Taf. 8–9; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 11 B–C, Pl. 11:2a and 11:3a.

[57] In the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Delbrueck 1929, N 32, Taf. 32; Volbach 1976, Nr. 31, Taf. 16; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 7, Pl. 7.

[58] The appointer of Orestes (west, 530) was the 14-year old Ostrogoth Athalaric, ruler over the western empire under the guardianship of his mother, queen Amalasuntha; e.g. Demandt 1989, 205, 305.

Figure 9. A diptych of Anastasius, *east 517. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MMA, inv. 55; photo Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.*

ly in a medallion diptych of Iustinus,[59] eastern consul in 540, where the clipeate bust of Christ appears between Justinian and Theodora. Such Christian content has seemingly little to do with the secularized nature of the consulate in this period. Rather than illustrating the official connection between the consul and his appointer, it describes the nature of imperial rule, in its peculiarly Late Antique formulation, as a reflection of a divinely instated order—an order in which the appointed consul has his specially designated place.

THE LOWER-REGISTER SCENES

The scenes found in the lower registers of a number of consular ivories generally fall into two categories, both of which refer to the consul's *munera* or official generosity: games and gift distribution. Their rendering is invariably characterized by scale reduction—sometimes dramatically so—vis-à-vis the consul/main scene and, in the games-scenes in particular, a much freer compositional structure.

The games-scenes present the most concrete, or least symbolic, aspect of consular imagery, representing 'real' action taking place in 'real' settings. However, the preserved material suggests somewhat different approaches to, or interests in, games-scenes in the western and eastern halves of the empire. Circus-races with *quadrigae* only appear in western ivories—those of the Lampadii and Basilius (*Figs. 1*, *6*)—whereas scenes from the amphitheatre are favoured in the 6th-century east (*Figs. 7*, *9*),[60] variously representing hunts of wild beasts (*venationes*) and theatrical, musical and acrobatic contests, as well as rows of spectators. The manner or mode in which the games-scenes are depicted also differ between west and east, something which may perhaps only partly be ascribed to the formal conditions imposed by the type of action or game category chosen. In western ivories the action is symmetrically ordered, directed and synchronized, especially in the circus-scenes, where the four competing teams move at equal intervals around the *spina* with its characteristic pair of tri-conic *metae*. The evenly flowing cyclic movement characterizing the circus-race contrasts with the diverse and disorderly action witnessed in the eastern amphitheatrical scenes. Here, the broad scale and richly variegated figures are plainly aimed at calling forth the viewer's excitement and admiration, the numerous contestants, animal species and prize objects manifestly illustrating the extraordinary wealth and public generosity of the consuls who issued the diptychs. Interestingly, victory is only rarely illustrated in the games-scenes of the consular diptychs: it is the action itself that is of interest, whether it be a speedy circling around the *spina* or the violent struggle between men and beasts. The final victory of the *venatores* may be suggested through the interspersion of prize objects (plate, palm-fronds etc.) between themselves and their animal opponents, as in a couple of diptychs of Areobindus, but the overall effect of this approach is rather a further emphasis on the theme of consular magnificence.

The theme of consular gift distribution (*sparsio*, *largitio, sportula*, *missilia*, *dona calendarium*)[61] is represented by means of a fixed scenic type in the 6th-century diptychs of Clementinus (*Fig. 8*), Orestes[62] and (originally) Magnus (*Fig. 10*),[63] where we find a pair of plump and smiling children, striding vigorously amidst thick layers of coin and precious objects, and shouldering bulging sacks from which more coins flow. These figures display distinct typological affinities with the putto or *eros* in Roman art tradition, who is likewise a plump little child happily engaged in some toil symbolic of the good life (harvesting, wine-making, garland-carrying etc.), i.e. of abundance, regeneration and *felicitas temporum*.[64] Thus, rather than being depicted as a real act or event, the largesse of these consuls is clothed in an idealizing imagery which describes it as the bringing of a more universal prosperity and happiness for the year inaugurated by their accession—an idea as ancient as the consulate itself.[65] A more matter-of-fact way of treating the subject is witnessed in the diptych of Boethius (*Fig. 5*), consul of the west in 487, where a representative selection of gift objects, including varieties

[59] Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, inv. 13.322; Delbrueck 1929, N 34, Taf. 34; Volbach 1976, Nr. 33, Taf. 17; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 17.

[60] Only one of the preserved consular diptychs from the west, the anonymous Bourges diptych (*Fig. 4*) commonly dated to the first half of the 5th century, shows *venatio* scenes. On the representation of games on the consular and diptychs and in other commemorative artworks commissioned by officials in late antiquity, see most recently Engemann 2008, 53–65 esp.

[61] For a compilation and discussion of the various terms for official gift-distribution and their application, see Olovsdotter 2005, 128 footnote 724.

[62] Delbrueck 1929, N 32, Taf. 32; Volbach 1976, Nr. 31, Taf. 16; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 7, Pl. 7.

[63] As suggested by the bone replicas of a diptych panel attributed to Magnus *cos*. 518; Delbrueck 1929, N 23–25, Taf. 23–25; Volbach 1976, Nr. 24 bis (1–3), Taf. 11; Cameron 1984, 401f; Olovsdotter 2005, 55f, Pl. 13.

[64] The concept of *felicitas temporum*, 'happiness of the ages', provided a major theme in Late Antique imperial propaganda and its visual expressions, where it served to celebrate the victoriousness of the emperor, more particularly the prosperity and regeneration that were considered to result from imperial victory. The four-seasons motif, in its various configurations, provided one such means of visualizing regenerative happiness, and was reiterated in innumerable works of Roman art, from triumphal arches (see e.g. the arch of Septimius Severus in the Forum Romanum) to the funerary monuments of private citizens.

[65] On the association of munificence, i.e. the bringing of gifts, with the inauguration of new and prosperous cycles, see Stern 1953, 164; Meslin 1970, 59–61; Versnel 1970, 384–397; Salzman 1990, 34; also Olovsdotter 2005, 200f.

distributed as prizes in the arena (plate, palm-fronds) and coin-sacks are neatly arranged before the consul's feet in an enumerative fashion.[66] An extra factual touch is provided by the signs stating the sums contained in the four sacks (two per panel): 2,000 pounds in gold each, which, if indeed intended to be counted altogether, amount to a sum significantly exceeding that expected to be spent on public munificence by a western consul in the 5th century.[67]

MOTIFS AND SCENES REFERRING TO VICTORY

Motifs and scenes of this category are, in one way or another, regularly included in the consular diptychs.

In eastern works, the figure of Victoria is without exception connected to the emperor: the duplicated *victoriolae* mounted on the curule chairs and architectural frames in the diptychs of Areobindus, Anastasius, Magnus (*Figs. 7*, *9–10*) and Anthemius[68] hold aloft or support the imperial *imago clipeata*. Rather than representing the goddess Victoria herself, these figurines symbolize the emperor's innate victoriousness, the quality of *Victoria Augusta* or *Imperatoria*, and their elevation of his effigy is a very traditional way within Roman honorific art of conveying the idea of transcendence and immortality. In the period where the consular diptychs were conceived, the orb-surmounted *victoriola* had, as already mentioned, become an actual insignium of the emperor,[69] and it is likely not a coincidence that it appears only in diptychs issued by consuls related by family to an emperor, present or previous.[70] Through this victory emblem, the consulships of Areobindus, Anastasius, Magnus and Anthemius may be understood as emanating from, and being expressions of, the supreme victoriousness of the emperor, their kinsman and appointer.

In the right panel of Basilius' diptych (*Fig. 6*), kept in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, we find the orb-enthroned Victoria and the Jovian eagle as main characters in a 'scene' that can only be described as apotheotic. The three motifs—Victoria, orb, eagle—are standard elements of consular insignia in the 6th-century eastern diptychs, and, more importantly, all three are the insignia of the Late Roman emperor in his capacity of world conqueror and ruler. But there is no reference to the emperor, consul-appointing or otherwise, found in the imagery of this panel, or in the entire diptych.[71] Instead we see the seated, hence 'peaceful', Victoria elevated on the wings of the eagle and embracing the *imago clipeata* of Basilius himself, encircled by the patriotic motto *BONO REI PVBLIC(A)E ET ITERVM* ('for the good of the state anew'); a scheme which evidently refers to the honorand's eminent civic virtues as well as their crowning with some extraordinary success. So, contrary to the dictate that the emperor be the universal and exclusive victor of the Romans, we find here a private consul and patrician claiming victory all to himself; something he would likely not have been able to do in an official diptych issued in Constantinople, where the emperor Justinian's critical attitude towards the public favour-seeking of private consuls would have imposed restraint. As it is, the only diptych to have been preserved from an unknown number issued by Basilius, the eastern consul of 541, was produced in Rome, where he would have returned after the conclusion of his tenure.[72] What, then, would have been the remarkable deed that inspired Basilius to commission a diptych featuring this kind self-glorifying imagery? The sources indicate that he had acted as a messenger during Justinian's famed reconquest of Italy in 540, a part for which he was rewarded with consulship—

[66] The requisite sum for a western consul to qualify for office in the early 6th century is generally held to have exceeded that required by his eastern colleague; Guilland 1954, 548; Bagnall, Cameron, Schwarz & Worp 1987, 9; and Delmaire 1989, 572–574.

[67] Whereas regulations were never imposed on western consuls for their official spending, the sum prescribed for eastern consuls was (the equivalent in silver of) 2,000 pounds in gold in the 5th century and 4,000 at the beginning of the 6th; Delmaire 1989:1, 572. As already mentioned, the official generosity of western consuls is thought to have exceeded that of their eastern colleagues considerably; e.g. Guilland 1954, 548; Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz & Worp 1987, 9; and Delmaire 1989:1, 572–574. Cf. also supra, footnote 6. By way of comparison, a *sparsio* sack inscribed with the sum contained in it (in this case 1,000) is also witnessed in the representation of Gallus *Caesar* as imperial consul in the Codex calendar of 354; e.g. Stern 1953, Pl. XV.

[68] Anthemius cos. 515. A lost diptych panel portraying him has been preserved through an 18th-century engraving; Delbrueck 1929, N 17, Taf. 17; Volbach 1976, Nr. 16, (Taf. erroneous); also Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 15.

[69] For instance, the imperial *victoriola* is featured in the consular diptych of Probus (west, 406), where the emperor Honorius is represented as a Christian triumphator, holding the *labarum* in one hand and the *victoriola* in the other; Delbrueck 1929, N 1, Taf. 1; Volbach 1976, Nr. 1, Taf. 1; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 14. Another prominent example is the 6th-century Barberini ivory assemblage in the Louvre, where the emperor featured in the central panel, variously identified as Anastasius I and Justinian, displays the orb-surmounted *victoriola* and the *hasta* of world-rulership; see for instance Delbrueck 1929, N 48, Taf. 48; Volbach 1976, Nr. 48, Taf. 26; and Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 20.

[70] Martindale 1980–1992a, 82f, 96, 99, 143, 701, 796. The *victoriola* appearing in the Probus' diptych in 406 is not part of any consular insignium, but represents the imperial insignium proper, held by the emperor Honorius in person. Probus was not related by family to Honorius, but the imagery chosen for the diptych—which may well have been destined for the emperor or a member of his household—was clearly intended as a celebration of, and a token of gratitude towards, his appointer.

[71] One could of course interpret the eagle as a reference to the appointing emperor, as one could the entire eagle-orb-Victoria constellation, were it not for the fact that it is crowned by the *imago* of the consul himself; Basilius thus quite blatantly takes the emperor's place in this imperial scheme.

[72] Cameron & Schauer 1982, 128–131. Cf. supra, footnote 36.

the last one to be bestowed on a private citizen.[73] In Basilius' own eyes, judging by the grandiosity of this diptych panel, his feats had been of such importance that they deserved to be celebrated in terms of a victor's apotheosis.

Laurel wreaths and garlands appear in many consular ivories (*Figs. 1–3*, *5–6*, *8–10*). They present versatile emblems with which the triumphal connotations of consulship and its festive celebration may be accentuated, the wreath specifically referring to the triumphator's *corona laurea triumphalis* which would previously—but, it seems, no longer in late antiquity—have been an insignium of the ordinary consul.[74] The laurel garland had a given place in the consular celebrations, as it did in the triumph and the many festivals throughout the Roman year. As suggested by their placement within the images, the wreath and the garland serve to expound on three, often correlated, things: the glory of the consul himself, the glory of his *gens* and ancestry (represented either in person, as in the Lampadiorum panel, or through a monogram shield as in the diptychs of Clementinus and Orestes), and the glory of the imperial dynasty (as in the diptychs of Halberstadt and Anastasius). For instance, if hung from an arch, it may be associated with the consular procession moving along the Via Triumphalis after the model of the triumphal procession and thus, in the extension, with triumphal arches; or it may be associated with the festive decoration of any locale relevant to the consular celebrations, such as the tribunal at the circus or amphitheatre, from whence the consul presided over the victories achieved in his honour.

An altogether different kind of reference to victory is provided by the lower-register scenes in the Halberstadt diptych (*Fig. 2*), which show barbarian captives—men, women and children—huddled together on the ground. The scenic type, a *submissio* (viz. a ritualized submission of conquered enemies), does not appear in any other preserved consular diptych, nor does it form a part of the private citizens' honorific imagery in the Late Antique period, but it has been borrowed from the imperial iconography of triumph.[75] Evidently alluding to a military success, the scenes are 'legitimized' by the emperors' presence in the upper registers of the panels, where they, accompanied by Roma and Constantinopolis, are enthroned in front of a palatial façade hung with laurel garlands. Although the emperors would be the sole recipients of the barbarians' surrender, since every military victory ultimately and exclusively belonged to them, it is nevertheless towards the commissioner and honorand himself that a male barbarian extends his weapon with a relinquishing gesture in the right panel of the diptych.[76] There is no reason to doubt that this imagery was introduced for a particular reason, nor that the submission-scenes refer to a specific event or achievement in the commissioner's career with a direct bearing on his consular appointment; an achievement by which he would have gained the official right to adopt a theme from the imperial iconography of triumph for his commemorative diptychs. As already mentioned,[77] Flavius Constantius, to whom the Halberstadt diptych is commonly attributed, had played a decisive part in the victory against the Visigoths in 416; a part which won him, amongst other things, a second western consulship in 417.

OTHER SYMBOLIC MOTIFS

Other symbolic motifs occasionally found in the consular diptychs are the shell (*concha*) and the eagle (*Figs. 3–4*, *6*, *9*), both traditionally appearing in honorific and religious art, polytheistic as well as Christian, where they generally function as signifiers of divinity, immortality and apotheosis. The shell is comparable to the nimbus or halo, attribute of divinity, whereas the eagle, symbol of Iuppiter, is the conveyor of souls into eternity (especially those of emperors) as well as an imperial insignium and an emblem of imperial warfare. As mentioned, the eagle also formed part of the triumphal and consular insignia from the earliest times; the ancient or 'Republican' eagle-crowned sceptre (*scipio cum aquila*) is displayed by Boethius (*Fig. 5*), western consul in 487, and, extraordinarily, Magnus (*Fig. 10*), consul of the east in 518. On the sceptres featured in the diptychs of Areobindus and Anastasius (*Figs. 7*, *9*) the eagle is combined with motifs symbolizing the emperor as world ruler. When the eagle appears

[73] On the prosopography of Anicius Faustus Albinus Basilius, eastern consul in 541 and the last private citizen to be appointed to the office, whose full names and titles are inscribed on the extant diptych, see notably Cameron & Schauer 1982. The attribution proposed by Cameron and Schauer of the diptych to the eastern consul of 541 has been accepted by, among others, Gudrun Bühl (Bühl 1995, 221), Josef Engemann (Engemann 1998, 115), and the present writer (Olovsdotter 2005, 37f, 108, 110–114). See also Martindale 1980–1992b, 217. For the previously prevalent attribution of the diptych to the western consul of 480, Flavius Caecina Decius Maximus Basilius *iunior*, which was solely based on stylistic evaluations of the carving whilst disregarding the evidence of the inscription, see Graeven 1892, 216; Delbrueck 1929, 100 with footnote 2; and Volbach 1976, 31.

[74] In the Late Antique period, the *corona laurea triumphalis* had been monopolized by the emperor in his capacity of perpetual triumphator; see e.g. Schäfer 1989, 182f.

[75] Notable examples of which are the column base of Arcadius in Constantinople (401–421) and the aforementioned Barberini ivory in the Louvre; e.g. Delbrueck 1929, N 48; Volbach 1976, Nr. 48; Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 20. For a full discussion of the *submissio* scenes in the Halberstadt diptych, see Olovsdotter 2005, 146–148.

[76] It should perhaps be repeated here that the *chlamys* costume worn as a sign of patrician status in late antiquity was actually military by definition; see supra, footnote 28.

[77] See supra, footnotes 47, 48.

as an independent motif, it may allude to a military commission or context, as the ancient practice of appointing generals to the consulate continued in late antiquity.[78] It could explain the eagle's presence, in duplicate form, in the anonymous consular diptych kept in the collections of Musée du Berry at Bourges (*Fig. 4*),[79] whose commissioner, as indicated by his plain toga costume, probably took office away from Rome.[80] More generally speaking, by surrounding the consul's figure with immortality symbols such as the eagle and the shell, the elevation of his dignity is emphasized and glorified. After all, the year of a consul's tenure will for eternity bear his name in the annals of Rome.

ARCHITECTURAL MOTIFS

Finally, architectural motifs are present in most of the preserved consular ivories, where they contribute to 'build' and structuralize the pictorial field, and to enclose the consul's figure in stately isolation. Widely assumed to represent or even depict the tribunal at the circus or amphitheatre, these architectural motifs do not conform to a single type, but range from very simple and quasi-tectonic shapes to elaborate fantasy structures. They are quite clearly derived from different models (architectural and iconographic),[81] which have been variously abstracted, conflated, and combined with symbolic motifs alluding to victory and immortality: laurel wreaths and garlands, Victories, *erotes*, eagles, shells, *imagines clipeatae*. Possible models, all of which derive from sacral contexts, are the temple, the *fastigium* or ceremonial front (a palatial motif), the portal, the triumphal arch, and, of course, the tribunal at the circus or amphitheatre. An additional source of inspiration to the more aedicular varieties may have been the portable platform (*lectica consularis*, *sedia gestatoria*)[82] on which the Late Roman consul, seated on his *sella curulis*, was carried in procession on the day of his accession; a structure which may have taken the form of a palanquin, perhaps similar to the funerary float featured in the so-called Consecratio panel in the British Museum created in Rome in the years around 400.[83] The architectural frames in the consular diptychs may thus allude to several models and contexts simultaneously, and possible 'readings' are many. For instance, when a consul appears surrounded by a structure whose general shape and ornamentation conform to those of a triumphal arch, the viewer is reminded of the *processus consularis* moving along the Triumphal Way after the model of the *processus triumphalis*;[84] or when he appears in front of a temple-like façade or a palatial *fastigium*, he becomes associated with the extraordinary power which temporarily makes him the emperor's equal.[85] Irrespective of type, the architectural structure emphasizes the ceremonial content of the image, lending it a solemn and exclusive quality, and imbuing it with a symbolic pregnancy which is ultimately derived from the triumphal connotations tied to the consular accession.

Compositional structure

The conception of the consular image largely adheres to a Late Imperial art tradition with roots in the Tetrarchic period,[86] the epitome of which is witnessed in the great public monuments of the Theodosian era: the obelisk and column bases of Theodosius I (*c.* 386–394) and Arcadius (401–421) in Constantinople. The formal principles shaping the imperial imagery of the Tetrarchic period are, interestingly, most faithfully followed, and further developed, in the consular diptychs produced in Constantinople two centuries later, forming an archaistic canon specially suited, it seems, for the honorific imagery of the consuls appointed by Anastasius I.[87] The diptychs of the Anastasian consuls show symmetrical and stratified compositions radiating from the hieratically enthroned and larger-than-life consul in the centre, a scheme identically repeated in the two panels. The overriding principles are bal-

[78] E.g. Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz & Worp 1987, 4–6.
[79] Delbrueck 1929, N 37, Taf. 37; Volbach 1976, Nr. 36, Taf. 20; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 5, Pl. 5. The diptych is commonly and plausibly dated to the first half of the 5th century.
[80] Compare the plain toga of Astyrius (*Fig. 3*), a general who entered his consulship at Arelate in Gaul; see supra, n. 30. The *vestis triumphalis*, which originally belonged to Capitoline Iuppiter, could exclusively be donned within the *pomerium* of Rome (and later Constantinople); e.g. Versnel 1970, 57–74, 83; and Restle 1988, 944; also Delbrueck 1929, 98.
[81] For a discussion of architectural models and their application within consular imagery, see Olovsdotter 2005, 157–178. For a more general discussion of the architectural structures in the consular diptychs and other so-called tribunal images of the Late Roman period, see Gabelmann 1984, 198–205 esp.
[82] Procop. *Vand*. 2.10.15–16; Lydus *Mag*. I132; Claud. *IV. Cons. Hon*. 584–585; Amm. Marc. 25.10–11. Interesting discussions of these sources are offered by Stern and also Delbrueck; Stern 1953, 158–161; Delbrueck 1929, 64, 67.
[83] Inv. 1857, 10–13, 1. Delbrueck 1929, N 59; Volbach 1976, Nr. 56; also Weigand 1937; Cracco Ruggini 1977; Cameron 1986, 45–52; Arce 2000, 248; and Olovsdotter 2005, 170–172 and Pl. 21 a.
[84] On the correspondences between triumphal and consular ritual procedure, see notably Versnel 1970, 95–98, 129–131, 302f; and McCormick 1986, 84–91 esp.
[85] On the consul's status as the emperor's equal and colleague during the short term of his tenure, see Heucke 1994, 79f; and also Guilland 1954, 545f.
[86] Notably represented by the triumphal arches of Galerius in Thessaloniki (293–303) and Constantine in Rome (315).
[87] On the similarities and reiterations vs. diversity in the consular diptychs, particularly the eastern ones, and on the significances of compositional patterns, see Cutler 2007, 133f, 137.

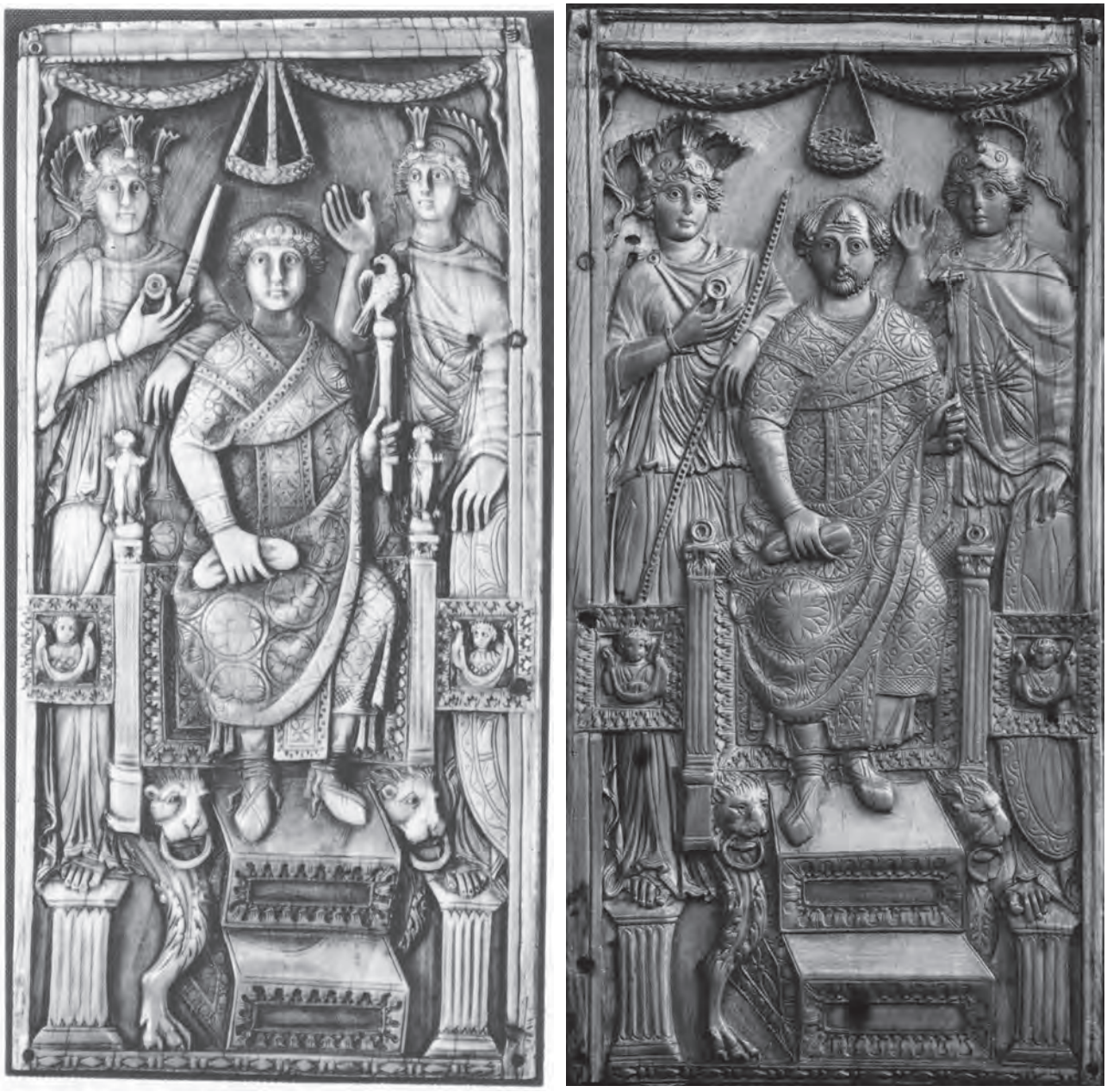

Figure 10. Two diptych panels of Magnus, *east 518. Left panel: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MMA, inv. 3267; photo Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Right panel (partly recarved): Milan, Civiche Raccolte d'Arte Applicata, Castello Sforzesco, inv. 8; photo by concession of the Civiche Raccolte d'Arte Applicata-Castello Sforzesco-Milano.*

ance and order, which are realized by means of hierarchical differentiations and relationships: size and placement (centre, left-right, above-below etc.) are major tools for the 'correct' structuring of the consular image, whereas the poses, gestures and attributes of the various figures convey the finer aspects of hierarchical distinction. There are a couple of examples of complex, hierarchically determined compositions among the 5th-century western diptychs, notably the Lampadiorum and Halberstadt diptychs (*Figs. 1–2*), but they cannot be compared with the rigorous system characterizing their later eastern counterparts. The diptychs of Areobindus, Clementinus and Anastasius (*Figs. 7–9*) present such clearly stratified images. Here, the frontally enthroned consul occupies nearly the entire central register; attendant figures are granted a more receded position, imperial figures (when included) appear as bust effigies in an abstract upper register organized according to internal hierarchical relationships; and the games-scenes featured in the lower registers are dramatically contrasted with the scenes above, scale-wise and compositionally.

Clearly, a scale of values is at the core of this system, a sort of world order. The centre or 'node' of this order is the consul himself, the highly emblematic but temporary holder of supreme power and the symbolic representative of perennial victory and prosperity. Above him, in a superior or transcendental realm and accompanied by deities or religious symbols denoting their divine association, are the emperor and his family or dynasty from which the consul derives his power. Flanking the consul are either junior officials whose presence renders distinct the superiority and exclusivity of the consular dignity within the state, or city goddesses who illustrate the consulate's supreme elevation and 'divinely ordained' or 'eternal' quality. Below are the gifts of the consul to the Roman and Constantinopolitan peoples: heaps of coin and valuable objects, or large numbers of men and wild beasts crowding the arena, hierarchically distinguished from each other through size and through the degree of their success and fighting skill, their vigorous and chaotic action forcefully contrasting with the ceremonially hieratic state of the consular scenes above them. Uniquely, in the Halberstadt diptych (*Fig. 2*), the commissioning consul and patrician stands elevated above groups of barbarian captives, the 'gifts' of a victorious general rather than of a civilian office-holder.

Defining consulship through imagery: conclusions

The conception of the consular image is essentially synoptic, where the various motifs combined and arranged within the pictorial field form layers of meaning around the central theme of consulship. According to this synoptic formulation, consulship is a gloriously elevated yet passive and dependent state, the consul is an impersonal symbol of that state, and his official functions are attributes rather than acts; illustrations or symbolizations of the superior qualities that made him eligible for the office. Physical and temporal aspects are fundamentally irrelevant to the representation of consulship, and so is the individuality of the consul. Conversely, of primary importance are the consular status, apparatus and ceremonial, and, increasingly, the symbolic values attached to and traditionally inherent in the consulate. The basic iconography of consulship, viz. the representation of a consul 'performing' the functions of his office (*processus consularis*, *pompa circensis*, and *largitio/sparsio*, all of which involved being seated on the *sella curulis* and displaying the insignia of office), is enveloped in several layers of meaning. No preserved diptych is solely concerned with consular status and ceremonial; indeed, not even the reductive imagery of Felix's diptych (west, 428)[88] can be described as an entirely straight-forward representation of consulship.[89] Instead, a range of secondary figures, symbolic motifs and architectural elements are introduced with the purpose of emphasizing and expounding on the emblematic aspects of consulship. This secondary motif repertory, and the ways in which its components are rendered (forms, types, modes) and distributed, make up the 'superstructure' of consular imagery. Their implicit and often multidimensional meanings describe the *essence* or *nature* of consulship in abstract terms, viz. as an ideological formulation, reflecting the historical and cultural setting in which the consular image was conceived. The various references to what may be called an ideology of consulship generally fall under interrelated and overlapping themes such as the hierarchies of the Roman state and empire, the unity and continuity of the Roman empire, the victoriousness of the Roman emperor

[88] Felix is shown standing with his consular and patrician insignia within a portal-shaped frame; Delbrueck 1929, N 3, Taf. 3; Volbach 1976, Nr. 2, Taf. 2; Olovsdotter 2005, Nr. 3, Pl. 3.

[89] The right-hand gesture performed by the standing Felix in the left panel, with the cupped hand held against the chest (the lost right panel showed him in his patrician capacity, holding a codicil scroll in the same position; see Delbrueck 1929, Taf. 3; and Olovsdotter 2005, Pl. 3 a), does not appear anywhere else in the corpus of consular diptychs, and does not obviously refer to any specific (or known) act or ceremony within any recognizable official setting, but rather seems to be a formal expression of solemnity, receptivity and humility. See further Olovsdotter 2005, 168f; partly contra Delbrueck 1929, 93, where the curtained structure framing Felix is interpreted as the portal to his home. Although appointed consuls did traditionally proceed from their homes on the morning of their accession, it is doubtful whether a private residence would have been ascribed any importance within the greater context of consulship. A curtained portal crowned by a *tabula inscriptionis* of the kind found in Felix's diptych should rather be understood as a symbolic reference to portals and ceremonial entries in general, and hence in the extension to the greater concept of passage (physical and temporal).

(and, occasionally, of the individual consul),[90] and the transcendental and regenerative nature of consulship.[91] Most, if not all, of these themes are ultimately derived from the historical association of the consul with the triumphator. The status of the triumphator and the consul had both been assumed permanently by the *princeps* in the Early empire[92] with the purpose of promulgating the idea of the ruler's innate and god-given victoriousness (*felicitas imperatoria*, *Victoria Augusta*, *Victoria Imperatoria* etc.); a quality which in its turn was (ideally) joined to a superior ability of providing prosperity and happiness to Rome and her people. These concepts flourished as never before in Late Antiquity, constituting a core theme in the relationship between the ruler and his subjects, in public ceremonial as well as in art.

The consular diptychs and their imagery are conceptions unique to the Late Roman and Early Byzantine era, and quite evidently reflections of a collectively experienced need peculiar to that era: a need to express and reinforce a faithful adherence to 'the great Roman tradition' so eminently embodied in the consulate in a period otherwise characterized by change. Although the consular diptychs are new as an art-historical phenomenon, their imagery remains deeply traditional, as do the purposes and functions of the objects as such, which spring from an ancient practice of public gift-giving and -exchange. Indeed, tradition—or more precisely, the time-honoured Roman way of viewing and ordering society and the world—is what the consular diptychs are about. The extant works bear witness to how the Roman consulate, in the last 140 years or so of its existence, was regarded not only as the most elevated *dignitas* that a private citizen could attain within the state, but more importantly as a status increasingly charged with symbolic values, as something quintessentially emblematic of 'Rome'. It epitomized Rome as an idea, *Roma Aeterna*: a state and a people capable of forever regenerating themselves through the god-given victoriousness and prosperity of their ruler and his most privileged subjects, his appointed officials, in an ideally structured and organized world. In their various yet consistent configurations, the consular diptychs reflect the power of continuity, and a need for retaining the public traditions—practices, values, beliefs, ideologies—of Rome's glorious past in order to secure its present and future.

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[90] Some of the consuls whose diptychs have been preserved would have been military men who, following time-honoured custom, had received their consular appointment as a reward for their martial achievements. Flavius Constantius (the likely honorand of the Halberstadt diptych), Astyrius, Basilius and Areobindus are all known to have received their appointments after successful military service; Martindale 1980–1992a, 143–145, 174f, 323; Cameron & Schauer 1982, 127–131; also Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz & Worp 1987, 4–6. On Anastasius' I habit of attaching generals to his family, see Cameron 1978, 261.

[91] For a full discussion of these themes, see Olovsdotter 2005, 179–206.

[92] The emperor acquired the titles of consul and triumphator in perpetuity in the reign of Claudius; *RE* IV.17 (1900), 1127 s.v. Consul (B. Kübler). Meanwhile, the consular practice of carrying full *triumphalia* during the inaugural ceremonies on the New Year, i.e. as separated from the triumphal context proper, was seemingly introduced under the Flavian emperors; e.g. Schäfer 1989, 181.

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