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Time, place and style

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III. Time, place and style

The dating and provenience of the Milan Diptych of Five Parts are the basic questions of the studies so far, but they have not yet been clearly resolved. Considering there are no written sources that would be able to answer, it was necessary to approach the art work through a formal analytical and stylistic critical method. Nevertheless, the stylistic comparisons conducted so far are, in my opinion, insufficient and it is necessary to conduct them again thoroughly. It could be said that the proposed comparisons so far are based, rather than on the formal characteristics, on a comparison of composition and iconography. That, in and of itself, has an important testimonial value, but it does not have to be sufficient for dating the work.[52]

Volbach's starting position

As has already been mentioned, in the first edition of Volbach's catalogue from 1976 Kollwitz's opinion was cited that the Diptych belongs to the context of North Italian art of the second half of the 5th century.[53] As the basic work in the study of ivory, Volbach's or Kollwitz's dating was generally accepted and repeatedly cited with a few exceptions.[54] Volbach agrees with the more general North Italian provenience, but presents also the possibility of the Ravennan origin of the Milan Diptych precisely considering the technique with which the central panels were executed (Figs. 21 and 22). The use of this technique is found "probably" in Ravenna already at the time of Galla Placidia († 450).[55] A year later, Volbach attempts to make the careful North Italian hypothesis more precise, support the Ravennan provenience and deduce the Milan Diptych is from a local school producing high-quality ivory.[56] I believe that it will be necessary to consider again particularly Volbach's proposed comparison, which has served all of the other researchers as

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52   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84; Beckwith, The Werden Casket; Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*.
53   Kolwitz, [Rezenze:] W. F. Volbach, pp. 226–227.
54   E.g. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du Moyen Age,* pp. 26–27; Sena Chiesa (ed.), *Milano capitale,* p. 108; Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, pp. 256–258.
55   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84.
56   Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate.*

a foohold and a new, with a few exceptions,[57] has not been proposed. I consider Volbach's evaluation to be insufficient in the sense that his comparisons are not based on specific examples and so we cannot verify the correctness of his claim. We hence must look more precisely into his proposals, which are connected with the Ravennan sarcophagi and with ivory works.

Volbach proposes placing the Five-Part Diptych in the group of sarcophagi from Ravenna.[58] His pronouncement is based only on iconography; he did not perform any formal comparison. I believe that considering the state of the study of the Ravennan sarcophagi, when their chronological question and possibile derivation from a local school despite numerous studies[59] has not been reliably resolved, a comparison with them would not have much importance. How complicated the group of monuments are is clearly proved by the wide difference of opinions, based rather on subjective evaluation of the stylistic criteria. While the iconographic comparisons performed by Volbach (Figs. 15, 16, 17 and 18) do lead us to a similar artistic milieu, although we are not sure of the dating of any of them, the finding of formal similarities with the Diptych would still not be definitive.

According to Volbach, the Milan Diptych is closely connected with the group of ivory carvings, whose earliest examples were produced at the beginning of the 5th century. Volbach is aware that starting with the studies from the 19th centuries this group is based on an iconographic relationship, not based on stylistic similarity.[60] This group includes predominantly the two panels of the former five-part Diptych separated today between Berlin (Staatliche Museen, beginning of the 5th century; Fig. 6),[61] Paris (Musée du Louvre, beginning of the 5th century; Fig. 7)[62] and Nevers (Musée Blandin, beginning of the 5th century; Fig. 8),[63] the four panels with the Passion scenes from London[64] (British Museum, 440–461[65]; Fig. 23), the Andrews Diptych with scenes with Christ's miracles (Victoria and Albert Museum, 450–460[66]; Fig. 19) and the Werden Casket (Victoria and Albert Museum, begin-

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57   E.g. Beckwith, The Werden Casket; Grabar, *L'âge d'or,* s. 289.

58   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84.

59   Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes,* Band 1: Geschichte und Monumente, Wiesbaden 1969; Giuseppe Bovini (ed.), *„Corpus" della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed altomedioevale di Ravenna,* Roma 1968–1969; Marion Lawrence, *The sarcophagi of Ravenna*, Roma 1970.

60   Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate,* s. 15.

61   Idem, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 112, p. 80; Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux: Ve–XVe siècle,* Paris 2003, entry 1, pp. 33–35.

62   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 113, p. 81; The design of a complete five-part Diptych is known from a Carolignian copy nowadays kept in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. It is from around 800. (Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 221, p. 131); Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, entry 1, pp. 33–35.

63   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 114, p. 81; Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, entry 1, pp. 33–35.

64   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 116, p. 82.

65   Ivan Foletti, Infer digitum tuum huc. Le coffret en ivoire du British et Saint Jean du Latran a Rome, in: Ivan Foletti, Manuela Gianadrea (eds), *Il V secolo a Roma. Arte, liturgia e committenza*, Roma 2014 (in print).

66   Lieselotte Kötzsche, entry on the Andrews Diptych, in: Kurt Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century,* New York 1978, p. 500.

ning of the 5th century[67] or 9th century[68]; Fig. 14). The iconographic parallels found in the above-mentioned monuments have great importance for placing the Milan Diptych in a wider context, but it differs in style to the extent that even with the greatest effort it is not possible to find any relation between them. Besides the Werden Casket, they can all on the contrary serve as an illustrative example of how Roman art differed from the art of North Italy. Of we compare the mentioned ivory monuments proposed by Volbach, which are characterized by heavy, stocky figures of full volume, short proportions, rounded differentiated faces with high-set ears, with large legs and arms, with stiff drapery, which does not even try to evoke any kind of movement of the body, then at first sight we find ourselves in a completely different artistic milieu (Figs. 6 and 23).[69]

From a stylistic perspective, only the Werden Casket (Fig. 14) exceeds these Roman monuments. Until Beckwith's study from 1958, the theory that the Casket and Diptych came from the same artistic milieu was almost generally accepted;[70] the only difference in the consideration was only the attribution to the same school, workshop or artist, but in a closer investigation the style of the Werden Casket differs in many ways from the Milan Diptych. If we for instance compare the scene of the Adaoration of the Three Magi (Figs. 24 and 25), we find that on the Diptych they are depicted in a rubbery, flexible gesture. As against that, already Baldwin Smith noticed on the Werden Casket that their vitality and intense movements presuppose rather a Carolingian than a Late Antique method of resolution.[71] On the Diptych, the figures maintain their Antique solidity combined with a precision of detail that in many ways is reminiscent of consular diptychs. Beckwith notices also the techniques, with which the reliefs are carved. In Late Antique ivory reliefs, the forms always stand out from the surface of the ivory in a small gradual rise as if they had been modelled instead of carved as was the case with the Five-Part Diptych. The Carolingian ivory carvings have a much steeper rise, the forms are usually uncertain in structure, but they are shaped with dynamism and expressivity. The figures of the Werden Casket are hence rendered with greater freedom and a greater sense of rhythm; the drapery is less clearly defined, only with a weak echo of the custom so easily recognizable in the Milan Diptych. Whereas these difference served Beckwith for the claim that the Werden Casket is a Carolingian copy of the Late Antique original from the 5th century,[72] for the study of the Milan Diptych we truly must be satisfied merely with a distinc-

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67   Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 118, p. 83.

68   John Beckwith, *The Andrews Diptych*, London 1958.

69   Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, p. 34.

70   E.g. Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana nei primi otto secoli della chiesa*, Prato 1880, p. 447; Georg Stuhlfauth, *Die altchristliche Elfenbeinplastik*, Freiburg 1896, p. 71; Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, p. 16.

71   Baldwin Smith, *A Source of Mediaeval Style in France*, s. l. 1924, p. 87.

72   Beckwith, The Werden Casket.

tive iconographic similarity. That quite clearly bears some message, nevertheless for the question of the dating and the provenience it is not in any way useful for us in the current state of our knowledge of the two works.

Volbach surprisingly claims that the stylistic trend seen in these ivory monuments continues in the sarcophagal art of Ravenna,[73] where on the contrary he sees the above-mentioned heavy, stocky figures. The problem with Volbach's study already mentioned once is mainly the imprecise argumentation and non-provision of specific examples where we could verify his claim, and therefore I cannot confirm or deny them. As was already mentioned above, the group of Ravennan sarcophagi cannot be labelled as a coherent group where it would be possible to find some unified features and use them for dating other monuments, because they themselves still await a more detailed study.

Place: Ravenna?

In the mentioned problems that appear in the study of the ivory carvings, a formal analysis in the modern sense of the word is very complicated, but let's try to focus on the monuments capable of bringing us closer to the artistic taste of the 5th century with their certain dating. Those, unfortunately, remain only monumental production. The certain artistic culture of the period around the middle of the 5th century is reflected in the commissioning of the preserved mosaic decoration of three churches in Ravenna: the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia [74] or the mosaic and stucco decoration in the Orthodox Baptistery,[75] and then somewhat later in the decoration of Theodoric's Arian Church of San Apollinare Nuovo.[76] If we want in some way to support or refute Volbach's dating more precisely, we should utilize these relatively clearly dated monuments despite the limitation that arise in the formal comparison of two such different media.

Mauzoleum of Galla Placidia: The mosaic decoration of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is dated to the first half of the 5th century. It is not very likely that it would be the mausoleum of the empress, who died in Rome in 450 and was likely

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73 Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, p. 16.
74 Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2010, p. 74; Mariëtte Verhoeven, *The Early Christian Monuments of Ravenna*, Turnhout 2011, p. 39.
75 Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes,* Band 2/1, Wiesbaden 1974, p. 18; Spiro Kostof, *The Orthodox Baptistery of Ravenna*, London 1965; Ivan Foletti, Saint Ambroise et le Baptistère des Orthodoxes de Ravenne. Autour du Lavement des pieds dans la liturgie baptismale, in: Ivan Foletti, Serena Romano (eds), *Fons Vitae. Baptême, Baptistères et Rites d'initiation (IIe–Vie siècle)*, Rome 2009, pp. 121–156.
76 Emanuela Penni Iacco, *La basilica di S. Apollinare Nuovo di Ravenna attraverso i secoli*, Bologna 2004; Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, 2010, pp. 146–174; Verhoeven, *The Early,* 2011, p. 42.

buried in the mausoleum of the Theodosian dynasty at the Basilica of St Peter.[77] Although we do not have any preserved written evidence for its being an imperial commission, the generally accepted opinion is that the empress was the founder of the building, because this central structure originally formed the southern end of the narthex of the Basilica of the Holy Cross, which was part of the construction activities of the empress according to the *Liber pontificalis ravennatis*.[78]

Let's focus on the figures of the apostles located in the crossing (Fig. 26) and compare them with the figure of Christ from the scene of the Resurrection of Lazarus on the Five-Part Diptych (Fig. 27). In both cases, the figures are thin, but they have a massive central part of the body, which are formed by a heavy drapery falling deep fold and converging radially toward the left hand. Also, the under-clothes of the apostles is identical with the Milanese Christ created with straight vertical lines, but the figures are not formed merely by drapery but still beneath it the human body can be sensed, in the mosaics and the Diptych reminded by the bent knees. The folds of the drapery are created by light and shadow, as only the medium used allows. The overall impression is soft, mobile, as a continuation of the Late Antique art of the Roman sarcophagi.

Above the entrance in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, there is a scene depicting Christ as the Good Shepherd with lambs (Fig. 28). Specifically the lamb on the right hand of Christ is just like the Milanese with the legacy of the "classic" naturalistic tradition. Its elegant stance, head towards the rear almost three-quarters turned and curled tufts of hair, executed with the technique of *cloisonné* (Fig. 21) on the Milan Diptych, introduces us to the same artistic milieu.[79]

Orthodox Baptistry: For the mosaic decoration of the baptistery, there is a reliable dating confirmed in the *Liber pontificalis* by the Ravennan historian Agnellus (9th century). Agnellus refers to an unpreserved inscription probably inscribed on a marble panel and places in the *opus sectile* above the entrance mentioning Bishop Neon (458).[80] After the middle of the century, mosaics hence were created that in my opinion comes closest to the Five-Part Diptych. The features described above in comparison with the mosaics of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia are even more marked in the case of the apostles taking Christ their martyr's crowns in the cupola of the baptistry (Fig. 29). The body taking on volume particularly in the middle part of the body and massive heavy dra-

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77   Deichmann, *Ravenna*, 1974, p. 63; Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, p. 74.; Verhoeven, *The Early Christian Monuments*, p. 39.

78   Agnellus of Ravenna, pp. 120–124; Verhoeven, *The Early Christian Monuments*, p. 39.

79   Marco Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria a "cloisonné" in Italia fra V e VI secolo, ricerche stilistiche, indagini tecniche, questioni cronologiche, *Archeologia medievale* 38, 2011, pp. 459–506, esp. p. 487.

80   Agnellus of Ravenna, pp. 125–133; Deichmann, *Ravenna*, 1974, p. 18; Kostof, *The orthodox*; Foletti, Saint Ambroise.

pery with deep, bowl-shaped folds could be easly comparable to the figures of the Milan Diptych. The "Antique" lightness and naturalness, with which the drapery covers the body, is still present here. The billowing cloak of the saints in the Milanese scene, where they offer Christ their martyr's crowns, is almost identical (Fig. 30). The cloak merges along the body, but at its end billows out and adds movement to the figures. The undergarment is marked with straight vertical lines, modelled only a little.

For comparison, it would be attractive to use a medium also found in the Orthodox Baptistry and that is its stucco decoration; the medium of sculptural production simply is much closer than a mosaic. However, I would not venture to assess the individual details and their execution, because the polychromy has not been preserved for us, which would allow the fill out the modelling of the individual details. The resulting aestethic effect was quite certainly different from that of today.[81]

I am aware of the deficiencies of a formal comparison of several centimeters of small figures in ivory and monumental mosaics, but if we include the above-mentioned monuments along with the Milan Diptych in one group characterizing the aesthetic taste of the 5th century, it seems that we are in the same artistic milieu. On the contrary, this milieu fundamentally changes in other of the solidly dated monuments, which however are of the most cited in the existing literature from the comparisons with the Milan Diptych.[82] They are the mosaics in San Apollinare Nuovo from the time of King of the Ostrogoths Theodoric.[83]

San Apollinare Nuovo: We unfortunately do not have the precise date of the foundation and consecration of the building, but along with the majority of the mosaic decoration preserved today depicting scenes from the life and Passion of Christ it belongs to the construction period of King of the Ostrogoths Theodoric (493–526).[84] The church was reconsecrated in its "re-orthodoxification" at the time of Bishop Angellus (557–570), to which also the processions of the female and male saints are dated. By their magnificence, these were to convince of the renewal of the Orthodox faith in Ravenna and its superiority to the Arian heresy.[85] For instance, John Beckwith[86] or André Grabar try to put the Milan Diptych in this late period.[87]

From formal perspective, we can state at first glance that the figures are losing their Antique liveliness, are more rigid and the drapery is formed rather by lines

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81   Kostof, *The Orthodox,* p. 95.
82   e.g. Beckwith, The Werden Casket, p. 10; Ormonde Maddock Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, New York 1961, p. 202.; Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, pp. 14–18; Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, p. 256.
83   Penni Iacco, *La basilica*; Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, pp. 146–174; Verhoeven, *The Early Christian Monuments*, p. 42.
84   Ibidem.
85   Clementina Rizzardi, *Il mosaico a Ravenna: ideologia e arte*, Bologna 2011, p. 186.
86   Beckwith, The Werden Casket, p. 10.
87   Grabar, *L'âge d'or*, p. 289.

than by light and shadow. The bent knee under the cloak no longer stands out for its natural anatomy, but is only indicated by a semicircular stroke. The massive nature and bulkiness of the modelling of the figures disappears. We do not find with any of the figures a motif giving the figure movement – at its end a billowing cloack; an everpresent detail in the Orthodox Baptistry as well as in the mentioned scene depicting the transfer of the crowns on the Diptych. The folds, which fall from the hands on the Milan Diptych, form rather a sharp triangle than a deep natural fold. The gentle modelling of the folds disappears; they are sharper, more schematic and the movements more rigid (Fig. 31). Although Volbach mentions the significant iconographic parallels, not even he is inclined to date the Diptych to the time of the creation of the mosaic decoration of San Apollinare Nuovo. Surprisingly, however, he argues only that it would "not fit with the development of a number of sarcophagi."[88]

The mosaic decoration of Theodoric's church formally differs from the Five-Part Diptych to the extent that it is not possible to consider it within a single artistic milieu. From an iconographic perspective, however, it seems that these works must be somehow related. For instance, the scene with the poor widow (cat. No. 14) can be seen only in these two monuments in Early Christian art. The distinctive iconographic similarities found in the mosaics in San Apollinare Nuovo do not necessarily date the Diptych. On the contrary, they can be an important starting point for further study, when an object like the Milan Diptych could be used as a medium capable of transferring models between individual artistic centres. Understood in this way, they could be witnesses of unpreserved monuments. We could find in Theodoric's church also another example with exceptional iconography, namely the depiction of Doubting Thomas. That is also found on one of the Ravennan sarcophagi and we can find other examples of this rare iconography on the altar from the church of S. Celso in Milan or on one of the Passion Panels from the British Museum.[89] It has not been ruled out that this iconographic specificity could be one of the pieces of evidence of a connection between Milan and Ravenna, which took place at the time of the move of the imperial court from Milan to Ravenna in 402.[90]

The existence of an autonomous Milanese workshop at the time of Bishop Ambrose (374–397) and Emperor Theodosius (379–394) producing ivory works of high quality was assumed already by Baldwin Smith[91] or Alexander Coburn

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88   Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, s. 15.

89   Foletti, Infer digitum tuum huc.

90   See more on the artistic relations between Milan and Ravenna in: Ivan Foletti, Physiognomic representations as a rhetorical instrument: "portraits" in San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro and San Paolo Fuori le Mura, in: Ivan Foletti (ed.) with the collaboration of Alžběta Filipová, *The face of the dead and the early cristian world*, Rome 2013; Idem, Le tombeau d'Ambroise: cinq siècles de construction identitaire, in: Nicolas Bock, Ivan Foletti, Michele Tomasi (eds); *L'évêque, l'image et la mort. Identité et mémoire*, Rome 2014, s. 73–101.

91   Smith, *Early Christian iconography*, s. 187.

Soper.[92] The artistic direction developed in Milan was continued in Ravenna by artists who came along with the emperor.[93] The proof of that could be precisely the above-mentioned unusual iconographic similarities of some of the preserved monuments.

The same highly qualified workshop at the imperial court after its move to Ravenna in 402 was considered by Stuhlfauth in 1896.[94] Volbach also believes that it would be very strange and not very likely if a workshop for the production of ivory diptychs for the emperor and consuls was lacking in this new imperial seat.[95] diptychs had their important political function and were usually produced in the places where their commissioners were settled. For example, the Probianus Diptych belongs to the Roman school, the Diptych of Stilicho to Milan[96] or the Barberini Diptych to Constantinople.[97] Also archaeological finds document that ivory was carved near the source of this rare material or in large centres with a long craft tradition, a clientele capable of paying for these artefacts of exceptional quality and access to trade routes which could supply craftsmen and also distribute the final products.[98] As has already been stated, it is formally very difficult to characterize the Ravennan style of ivory carving in some way and attribute preserved monuments to it, but the existence of the Ravennan production of ivory is more than likely for the reason given above.

Period: technique and style

In seeking a more precise period of the creation of the Milan tablets, the year 431 could serve as a date *post quem*, when the council in Ephesus officially proclaimed the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* and casued the book of Marian iconography in the period immediately following in the last two thirds of the 5th century.[99] The scenes from the Apocryphal texts from Mary's life like the non-traditional scene of the

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92   Soper, The Italo-Gallic, pp. 145–192.
93   Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, p. 9.
94   Stuhlfauth, *Die altchristliche,* 1896.
95   Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, p. 8.
96   Ibidem.
97   Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, Les ivoires du Ve au VIIIe siècle, in: Jannie Durand (ed.), *Byzance, l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (catalogue de l'exposition au Musée du Louvre, 3 novembre 1992–1er février 1993), Paris 1992, pp. 43 and 63–66.
98   Archer St. Clair, Evidence for Late Antique Bone and Ivory Carving on the Northeast Slope of the Palatine: The Palatine Excavation, *DOP* 50, 1996, pp. 369–74; Idem, *Carving as Craft: Palatine East and the Greco-Roman Bone and Ivory Carving Tradition,* Baltimore 2003; Idem, Carving in the Center: Evidence for an Urban Workshop on the Palatine Hill in Rome, in: Gudrun Bühl, Anthony Culter, Arne Effenberger (eds), *Spätantike und byzantinische Elfenbeinbildwerke im Diskurs*, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 249–270.
99   Jean-Pierre Caillet, Remarques sur l'iconographie Christo-Mariale des grands diptyques d'ivoire du VIe siècle: incidences éventuelles quant à leur datation et origine, in: Bühl, Cutler, Effenberger (eds), *Spätantike und byzantinische*, s. 249–270, s. 17.

Annuciation at the Well (cat. No. 5) or Ordeal of the Bitter Water (?, cat. No. 10) appearing on the Milan Diptych could be an example of this. Towards the end of the century, the popularity of the Apocryphal texts slowly disappears again in the West;[100] but we cannot set the upper limit for the dating of the Milan Diptych with that. For that, I present one more much stronger argument and that is the technique, with which the central panels are executed.

The usage of the goldsmithing technique of *cloisonné* could be a singular and within the study of Early Christian ivory useful foothold not only for the dating of the Diptych, but also for other preserved monuments. Nevertheless, it has been given only a little attention in the studies so far dealing with the Milan panels.[101] It is necessary to emphasize here that only in the last forty years has the study of the technique and material used in early medieval goldwork achieved cerain results as the vast majority of the monument have been analysed with modern technologies. They are hence later than the studies which are considered to be the starting point for the Milan Diptych.[102] It is thus unavoidable that these new discoveries be included in the research of the Milan Diptych and they be used to support or refute the hypotheses proposed so far.

The central panel depicting the Lamb of God (Fig. 21) is assembled from a geometric net of interconnected compartments (*cloisons*) of gilded silver filled with red, black or greyish glass paste and 119 natural garnets. The cross from the second panel is assembled from gilded boxes next to one another not interconnected and is inlaid with precious stones and pearls (Fig. 22).[103] These two decorative goldworking techniques form the so-called "polychrome style",[104] which is generally connected with the period of the Great Migration of the Nations at the end of the 4th and in the 5th century.[105] Recently, the first mentioned technique has been subjected to intensive research as jewellery found in royal graves in Europe and the Near East could be analysed with modern technologies.[106]

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100 Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, p. 16.

101 Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, Le style coloré, in: Jean Hubert (et al.) *L'Europe des invasions: IIIe–VIIe siècle,* Paris 1967, p. 222; Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84.

102 Ibidem; Idem, *Avori di scuola ravennate*.

103 See in more detail on the analysis of the individual stones in: Margherita Superchi, *Analisi gemmologica del tesoro del Duomo di Milano,* Milano 1986, pp. 11–12.

104 Volbach, Le style coloré, p. 215.

105 Thomas Calligaro (et al.), *L'or des princes barbares: du Caucase à la Gaule, Ve siècle après J.-C.: Musée des Antiquités nationales, château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 26 septembre 2000–8 janvier 2001, Reiss-Museum Mannheim, 11 février–4 juin 2001*, Paris 2000, p. 15.

106 E.g. Birgit Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery. Emergence and Social Implications*, Stockholm 1985; Noël Adams, Back to Front: Observations on the Development and Production of Decorated Backing Foils for Garnet Cloisonné, *Historical metallurgy* 40/1, 2006, pp. 12–26; Michel Kazanski, Patrick Périn, La tombe de Childéric, le Danube et la Méditerranée. in: Laurent Verslype (ed.), *Villes et campagnes en Neustrie. Société – Économie – Territoires – Christianisation* (Actes des XXV Journées internationales d´archéologie mérovingienne, XVI), Montagnac 2007, pp. 29–38; Birgit Arrhenius, Cement Analysis from a Bow Broch from the Desana Treasure, in: Marco Aimone, *Il tesoro di Desana. Una fonte per lo studio della societa romana-ostrogota in Italia,* Oxford 2010, pp. 293–297.

The origin and distribution of the *cloisonné* style arising from the dating of the objects studied, comparative analyses of the technical features and the interpretation of their geographic distribution divides art historians and archaeologists in their opinion and provides us with very often opposing and constantly reassessed theories. Older historiography called cloisonné jewellery "Germanic" or "Hunnic" in origin, based on its geographic spread but scientific approaches were determined by nationalism or Pan-Slavism.[107] The only method of how to recognize jewellery of this type was developed in the 1970s and 1980s by Swedish archaeologist Birgit Arrhenius and is based on a comparison of the individual motifs, laboratory analyses (gemology of the stones, chemical analyses of the cements that fixed the stones in the compartments) and written sources.[108]

A great shift took place in the studies by Noël Adams on the art of *cloisonné* between the 1st and 5th centuries based on a broad reassessment of the preserved monuments[109] and confirmed what Alois Riegl proposed already a hundred years ago;[110] that this goldsmithing technique of inlaying garnets and glass into a network of metal compartments and the aesthetic connected with that ("polychrome style") is firmly set in Roman and Persian tradition, is not connected with the Germanic world or the Eurasian nomadic nation and reached its highest point of development in the centuries of Late Antiquity, both in the East and West.[111] It thus seems impossible to agree with Volbach, who puts the emergence and development of the polychrome style in North Italy simply in the conext of 488 AD, when this areas was taken by the Ostrogoths bringing a new aesthetic with them.[112] Volbach in another place, however, admits that the "polychrome" style spread "from the Orient" to Italy already towards the second half of the 5th century and labels precisely the lamb from the Milan Diptych "as the first known example probably preceding the invasion by the Goths".[113]

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107   E.g. Alois Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*, trans. Rolf Winkes, Roma 1985, p. 192 (*Die Spätrömische Kunstindustrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn,* Vienna 1901) complained about the nationalist prejudices of German researchers. His own position, however, was determined by an imperial and internationalist approach to the question "Orient oder Rom?" since he was a scholar of the multi-ethnic empire which had ambitions to be the heir of Rome. More in: Margaret Olin, The Late Roman Empire in the Late Habsburg Empire, in: Ritchie Robertson, Edward Timms (eds), *The Habsburg legacy: national identity in historical perspective*, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 107–120; Jaś Elsner, The birth of late antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901, *Art History* 25/3, 2002, pp. 358–379; Martin Dennert, Alois Riegl, in: Stefan Heid, Martin Dennert (eds), *Personenlexikon zur christlichen Archäologie: Forscher und Persönlichkeiten vom 16. Bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, Band 2, Regensburg 2012, pp. 1079–1080.

108   Birgit Arrhenius, Granatschmuck und Gemmen aus nordischen Funden des frühen Mittelalters, *Acta Universitatis Stockholmensis,* Stockholm 1971; Eadem, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery*; Eadem, Cement Analysis.

109   E.g. Adams, Back to Front, pp. 12–26.

110   Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Wien 1901.

111   Adams, Back to Front, pp. 12–26.

112   Volbach, Le style coloré, p. 225.

113   Ibidem, p. 222.

It is not the aim of this work to follow the origin of the technique of *cloisonné*, its complicated development or its spread. The above-mentioned studies and their results achieved with modern technologies must, however, be applied to the study of the Milan Diptych of Five Parts. They can provide more than the mere possibility of the formal comparison that we are left with in the case of the majority of early medieval monuments.

The latest studies using the research conducted over the past few decades in the area of *cloisonné* include the results of the research by Marco Aimone published in 2011. Aimone elaborated the newly acquired data in the area of goldsmithy in Italy in the 5th and 6th centuries and follows three aspects; the technological method of the mounting of the compartments and the stones in them, the style of the individual monuments as well as the social and symbolic significance in the context of their use.[114] Based on the different techniques and methods, he categorized the jewellery decorated with the technique of *cloisonné* into four groups. The Milanese lamb from the Five-Part Diptych was included in the group of jewellery that was found in the royal grave in Apahida (Romania, 460–470; Fig. 32) and in Childeric's grave in Tournai[115] (Belgium, Childeric died in 481, Fig. 33).[116]

Archaeological finds also from several other European graves dated to the second half of the 5th century show a noteworthy unity with a characterized identical type of luxurius goldsmithing objects executed with the technique of *cloisonné*. The objects from this group have been found on the territory of the Roman Empire, in Gaul, in the Danube Basin areas as well as in areas of Pannonia. The technically most sophisticated finds, besides the above-mentioned graves in Tournai and Apahida, include e.g. also finds from Pouan (France, Fig. 34)[117] or Blučina-Cezavy (Czech Republic, Fig. 35).[118] Although geographically hundreds fo meters apart, the objects found in them form a unified category of weapons and clothing accessories of members of the military aristocracy. The typological and stylistic correspondence of the individual finds from these famous graves form the basis of a hypothesis that the same time and place of their production can be justifiably considered.[119] The correspondence between these objects is also explained by the diplomatic relations between the Roman Empire and the barbarian elite; the aristocratic military class that derived its own authority, power and legitimacy from Rome.[120] The mentioned graves contain objects, which clearly testify to the

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114 Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, s. 479.
115 See more detail on the furnishings of the tombs in: Calligaro (et al.), *L'or des princes barbares*, pp. 79–83 (Tournai), p. 184 (Apahida) with the complete bibliography.
116 Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, p. 481.
117 Calligaro (et al.), *L'or des princes barbares*, cat. No. 27, pp. 166–169 with the complete bibliography.
118 Ibidem, cat. No. 33, pp. 197–199 with the complete bibliography.
119 E.g. Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery,* pp. 96–126; Kazanski, Périn, La tombe; Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria.
120 E.g. Kazanski, Périn, La tombe; Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria.

privileged status of the deceased and his relation to the Roman Empire. They are chiefly fibulae (brooches) of gold, which held the *paludamentum* on the right shoulder of highly places civil and military officials in the Roman Empire (Fig. 36), as is documented e.g. by the mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 37).[121] In the case of Childeric's grave the high military and administrative functions that he performed to benefit Rome are shown still more by a signet ring of gold with his name and title engraved on it and the depiction of the king in a bust (Fig. 38).[122] Golden necklaces with bell endings found in all four graves are on the other hand a symbol of power in the Germanic world (Fig. 39).[123] Magnificent weapons, also identically found in all of the observed graves – long swords with the handle covered with gold plate and short *scramasaxes* another connecting element (Fig. 40).[124] The finds from Apahida and Tournai are put also according to technology into one stylistic group, which Noël Adams called the "notched plate style" and "carpet style".[125] The shapes into which the garnets are cut, the ornamental motifs, just like the technological approach described by Noël Adams[126] and Marco Aimone[127] form the basis of the argument that allows the consideration of the same moment and place of production.

Based on a chemical analysis of the cement used in the *cloisonné* techique, Birgit Arrhenius proposed to attribute the jewellery from Apahida and Tournai to Constantinopolitan production. She believed that the goldsmiths had to know the recipe for the production of the cement which held the stones in place. This recipe was, according to Arrhenius, known only in Egypt before the 6th century, thus in an area under the influence of the Eastern Empire and from that fact she also derives a "central Constantinopolitan workshop".[128] Also the Byzantine coins found in Childeric's grave could testify for an Eastern origin. Moreover, Childeric's short *scramasax*, like the weapons of this type of the noblemen from Apahida, Pouan and Blučiny are considered to be of Byzantine-Sassanid origin.[129]

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121 E.g. Kazanski, Périn, La tombe; Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, p. 483.

122 Michel Kazanski, Patrick Périn, Les tombes de Pouan et de Childéric, in: Calligaro (et al.), *L'or des princes barbares*, pp. 79–83, esp. p. 81; ibidem, cat. No. 29–31, pp. 172–191.

123 Ibidem.

124 Jaroslav Tejral, Guerriers inhumés avec des épées (spathas) à poignée en tôle d'or, in: Calligaro (et al.), *L'or des princes barbares*, p. 79.

125 Noël Adams, *Late Antique, Migration Period and Early Byzantine Garnet Cloisonné Ornaments: Origins, Styles and Workshop Production*, London 1991, p. 47.

126 Ibidem.

127 Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, p. 483.

128 Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery*, pp. 96–126. On pp. 115–118, she mentions also the Milan Diptych and proposes an origin in Constantinople as well, although he notices that the ivory panels entirely certainly belong to the North Italian tradition.

129 Ibidem.

We know, however, that analogical objects executed with *cloisonné* appear also with the Visigoths and Vandals, whose policy was openly anti-Byzantine.[130] The presence of the gold coins found in Childeric's grave coming from the Eastern Empire so are not a convincing argument in any way; the treasures of the 5th century found in Italy also contained a large number of Byzantine coins and can with certainty prove only their great circulation in the West, the same can be claimed also in the case of the mentioned weapons. Nothing proves the Byzantine origin of the parts of Childeric's grave goods, of those graves in Apahida, Pouan or Blučina-Cezavy. On the contrary, it is rather towards the west Mediterranean and particularly Italy, where Patrick Périn and Michel Kazanski propose putting the workshop that created the decor of Childeric's sword. They place this hypothetical workshop in Ravenna, the residence of the Ostrogoth court. They start, unlike Arrhenius, from the written sources provided by Gregory of Tours, who tells of the alliance of King of the Ostrogoths Odoacer with Childeric.[131] Marco Aimone tried to support the hypothesis of these two French archaeologists in 2011.[132]

The activity of a highly qualified workshop in Ravenna under the Ostrogoths and its contacts with the Frankish Childeric was reliably proved by Patrik Périn and Michel Kazanski, but the written sources document these relations still to the period before Odoacer's invasion (476); to the perios when Ravenna served as the *sedes imperii* of the Western Roman Emperors. It arises from the analysis of Childeric's written sources, conducted by Stephane Lebecq in 2002.[133] The Frankish historian Fredegar († 660) described the sending of priceless gifts by the Emperor Majorian (457–461), whose reign is characterised by a great effort for the stability of the empire[134] to reward a loyal ally in the critical period after the creation of the Roman dominion in Gaul. It thus happened in 460, when the imperial government of the West attempted a final intervention through the Alps.[135] Similar diplomatic contacts and sending of gifts is expected also at the same time between the Western Empire and the leader of the East Germanic tribe of the Gepids Omharus buried in the royal grave in Apahida. The revolt led by the Gepids effectively finished Hunnic domination over the Germanic tribes of

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130 Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery*, p. 83.

131 Ibidem.

132 Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, pp. 483–487.

133 Stephane Lebecq, The Two Faces of King Childeric: History, Archaeology, Historiography, in: Walter Pohl, Maximilian Diesenberger (eds), *Integration und Herrschaft. Ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter*, Wien 2002, pp. 119–126.

134 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1893; Tomáš Klouda, *Zákonodárná činnost císaře Maioriana* [Legislative Activity of Emperor Majorian] (unpublished BA thesis), Ústav klasických studií FF MU, Brno 2011.

135 Lebecq, The Two Faces.

Central and Eastern Europe (454–455) and the Gepids thus became close allies of the Eastern Roman Empire for the rest of the 5th century.[136]

Is it possible for Ravenna to have been a centre of the production of goldsmithing goods of the highest quality? Mark Ščukin and Igor Bažan attempted to formulate the conditions necessary for the production of jewellery in the *cloisonné* style of the given area. Now, let's apply those conditions to the hypothetical Ravennan goldsmith's workshop: a) The area must have a deposit of garnets or it has to be possible to supply them. b) The demanding treatment of the stones for jewellery in the *cloisonné* style requires high qualifications. So, there must be a solid tradition of the working of stones in the area. Moreover, the goldsmiths must know the recipe for the production of the cement to fix the stones on the jewellery. c) There had to be a social class present in the area that could afford jewellery decorated with the *cloisonné* technique.[137]

Based on the prerequisites formulated in this way, it is clear that Ravenna meets all of the conditions for the existence of a workshop producing *cloisonné* jewellery. The supply of the material for the production of luxurious jewellery was, considering the advantageous location of Ravenna, absolutely certainly possible. As mentioned above, the recipe for the cement, which fixed the stones on the jewellery, was known from the 6th century only in Egypt. The connection of Ravenna with Egypt through the port of Classe is, however, proved by many archaeological finds.[138] And finally, jewellery of the type *cloisonné* are present on the clothing of the imperial court or on the rich liturgical objects, but we do not have any evidence that they were "commonly" used by the lower social classes.[139] Along with that, the historical data, technical and stylistic analysis lead us to a workshop of high quality, active in the middle and third quarter of the 5th century, connected with the imperial court in the West and located in Italy, likely in Ravenna. It produced the jewellery send as diplomatic gifts to Childeric and the leaders of the Germanic tribe residing in Apahida.[140] Only this imperial centre can explain the fact that jewellery executed with the absolutely same technological method has been found in areas so far apart like Belgium, Romania, France and the Czech Republic. Moreover, the title *gloriosissimus*, which Childeric and Omharus had engraved on the jewellery found could at that time have been guaranteed only by the government in Ravenna, just like the insignia found in their graves; the gold fibulae in the shape of a Latin cross.[141]

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136 See more in: Ursula Koch, Les Gépides, in: Calligaro (et al.), *L'or des princes barbares*, p. 62.

137 Mark Ščukin; Igor Bažan, L'origine du style cloisonné de l´époque des grandes migrations, in: Françoise Vallet, Michel Kazanski (eds), *La noblesse romaine et les chefs barbares, du IIIe au VIIe siècle,* Saint-Germain-en--Laye 1995, pp. 63–69, esp. p. 63.

138 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 18.

139 Ščukin, Bažan, L'origine du style cloisonné, p. 63.

140 Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, pp. 484–486.

141 Ibidem, p. 483.

Based on a study of the techniques of the assembly of the compartments, Marco Aimone attributed also the lamb from the Milan Diptych in the group of monuments executed in the *cloisonné* technique that were found in the graves of Childeric and Omharus. Its different style causes him certain hesitation. The almost illusionist conception of the twisted tuffs of the fur of the Milanese lamb using convex stones are in sharp contrast to the geometric and flat style in Belgium and in Romania. He explains it with the existence of a hypothetical second workshop in that imperial city, just as highly specialized, but not necessarily connected with the imperial court. In his opinion, the workshop used the same technique but in a different style. Any indication that the Milan Diptych was a gift or commission of the emperor is absolutely lacking for him.[142]

In this sense, the claim by Marco Aimone is on the hypothetical level, just like my assumption that the different style does not have to be attributed to "another workshop". I believe that this difference could be the question of the character of the commission when the overall aesthetic effect was a desired and intentional issue. It is only logical that jewellery corresponding to military aesthetics could be produced for the Frankish king and Germanic commander leader; i.e. geometric, flat and on the contrary for liturgical needs in the Roman Empire something that comes solidly from the Western visual tradition. The question of the models used by the craftsmen, which could have influenced the style is also worth consideration as arises from the research of Ernst Kitzinger.[143]

Place: imperial court and Emperor Majorian

The transfer of Emperor Honorius' (395–423) court from Milan to Ravenna took place in 402 at the time of the Visigoth invasion, when it was discovered that Milan was too difficult to defend. The first imperial decree was issued in Ravenna on 6 December 402.[144] From that time until the overthrow of Romulus Augustus in 476, Ravenna in the 5th century is general spoken of as the capital city of the Western Empire.[145]

That Ravenna is called *caput Italiae* instead of Rome, however, is not mentioned until in the 9th century by the chronicler from Ravenna Agnellus. The historiography of Ravenna does not start until with his chronicles and records. The method in which he presented his city has influenced our perception of the history of

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142 Aimone, Nuovi dati sull'oreficeria, pp. 486–487.
143 Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine art in the making: The main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean art 3rd––7th century*, London 1977.
144 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 46.
145 Andrew Gillet, Rome, Ravenna, and the Last Western Emperors, *Papers of the British School at Rome* LXIX, 2001, pp. 131–167, esp. p. 131.

Ravenna to this day. His contribution is undeniable; Agnellus is the person who contructed the history of the city based on the preserved monuments, is our source of the chronological information also for the unpreserved buildings. His work is comprised of the biographies of every bishop of Ravenna from the time of its conversion to Christianity until Agnellus' time. Depending on the sources available to him, he narrates for us the historical background, the artistic and architectural patronage, the poltics and the ecclesiastical disputes.[146] Andrew Gillet conducted a detailed analysis of the written sources related to the persons of the emperors in the 5th century in order to show that the idea of the primacy of Ravenna is a partially historical interpretation based on Agnellus' annalistic material and mainly served literary purposes well; as the narration of a refuge from which the not-very-capable emperors could observe the decline of their empire.[147] If we disregard this romantic role of Ravenna, a different picture emerges.

Ravenna was undoubtedly the seat of the imperial residence and the government for the early part of this century between 408 and 440, but, from 440 with the transfer of the court of Valentinian III (425–455), Rome became, for the first time since the 3rd century, again the regular seat of the government of the empire. Although the important function of Ravenna continued in preserving strategic and ceremonial functions, the symbolic value of *caput orbis* is held again by Rome. Ravenna becomes a *sedes imperii*; an imperial residence. In the chaotic times after the murder of Valentinian III and the sack of Rome by the Vandals in 455, the emperors ruling briefly are proved alternating between living in Rome or in Ravenna. It is worth noticing that the emperors coming from the senatorial aristocracy and with strong ties to the Eastern Empire governed from Rome (Petronius Maximus, Avitus, Anthemius, Olybrius, Nepos), whereas the emperors coming from the military aristocracy who were themselves generals (Majorian, Libius Severus, Glycerius, Romulus Augustus) chose Ravenna as their seat. It seems that during the period Ravenna continued to hold an administrative and military function, but was used by the emperors with interruptions. According to Deliyannis, Ravenna was an alternative, which depended on the subjective choice of the specific emperor.[148] The same was shown in the study by Charles Pietri when officials holding the highest positions, often coming from large Roman senatorial families, lived in Ravenna only during their tenure in office.[149] Pietri concludes that, while the cultivated aristocracy spent some time in Ravenna, they did not try to create an intellectual centre of it, although they

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146 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, pp. 5–6.
147 Gillet, Rome, Ravenna.
148 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 49.
149 Charles Pietri, Les aristocraties de Ravenne (Ve–VIe siecles), *Studi Romagnoli* 34, 1983pp. 643–673, esp. p. 645.

quite certainly commissioned the production of luxurious goods during their time there, such as marble sarcophagi or ivory objects.[150]

The existence of a highly specialized workshop in Ravenna, both for ivory and goldsmithing, was simply explained by the presence of the imperial court. We can rely on this claim with certainty in the first half of the 5th century, it seems that we have to be somewhat more cautious in the second half. The residence of Emperor Majorian (457–461), at whose wish jewellery executed with the same goldsmithing technique as the lamb from the Milan Diptych were produced, is proved in Ravenna with certainty by the sources.[151] Also the decoration of the Orthodox Baptistry (458) falls in the time of his reign, which I have propsed as formally the closest to the Milan Diptych. Although it is not an imperial commission, it serves as evidence for us that with the transfer of Valentinian's court to Rome there was not an interruption of the artistic activities because of the departure of artists who followed the emperor, but 440 is considered also by the specialized literature as the end of the famous period when, at the initiative of Empress Galla Placidia, Ravenna had become a prominent artistic centre. A "dark period" of the reign of not-very-capable emperors follows ended with the violent invasion of the Germanic king Odoacer in 476 and a new blossoming of art in the time of King of the Ostrogoths Theodoric from 493.[152] If such a luxurious object like the Milan Diptych of Five Parts along with the decoration of the Orthodox Baptistry in Ravenna is the only proof of this "dark period", which did not favour artistic production,[153] then, in my opinion, the path is prepared for a fundamental re-evaluation of the significance held by this North Italian city within the Western Empire including its artistic production.

Through a formal comparison of the Milan Diptych of Five Parts with relatively precisely dated monuments in Ravenna, I have tried to elucidate the aesthetic taste of the 5th century, in whose context I continue to propose the inclusion of the Milan Diptych of Five Parts. A singular foothold for the more precise dating is the use of the technique of *cloisonné*. Using the latest studies and analyses of the written sources, it would be possible to include the Milan Diptych of Five Parts in the group of products made at the time of the reign of Emperor Majorian (457–461). Volbach's dating is confirmed, but more precisely and with much stronger arguments. It allows us to consider the character of the artistic models that were behind the creation of the Milan Diptych of Five Parts.

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150 Pietri, Les aristocraties de Ravenne, pp. 654–656.
151 Gillet, Rome, Ravenna, pp. 150–151.
152 Volbach, *Avori di scuola ravennate*, p. 35.
153 Ibidem, p. 35.