From Servant of the Empire to Servant of God:

Images of the emperor from Constantine to the Macedonian Dynasty.

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Abstract

This is an insight into the changing iconography of Byzantine art from the Constantinian age (AD 306-337) to the end of the Macedonian Dynasty in AD 1081. More specifically, it analyses the evolution and adaptation of the image of the emperor from as early as Ancient Greece, to Imperial Rome and finally Constantinople.

The chronology starts with Alexander the Great, as the principle influence of the "warrior ruler" image. The aim is to analyse the nature of representation "types" in Roman Imperial art, which were, in turn, adopted by Early Christian image-makers in Constantinople. It is also an exploration into how Christian iconographical schemes utilised Hellenistic and Imperial Roman models to build its own forms of representation. This could be seen in numerous media throughout the arts of Constantinople. My chosen medium being the transformation of the emperor as a triumphant warrior, fighting for personal glory and the empire, to the *pistos en christo basileus* achieving glory through and for God.

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Chapter I
Introduction

The concept of representing a tribal leader was first documented as far back as the prehistoric wall paintings in France and Spain, which depict hunting scenes. A long tradition has been established to honour the leader of a particular group. Basic animal psychology demonstrates that the strongest animal in a pack is cared for by the females, whilst being revered or feared by the smaller or weaker males. This phenomenon is reflected in human culture. Tales were written about the brave or fearless acts of the best hunter or strongest warrior, thus creating the myths of Odysseus, Achilles or Aeneas.

This essay focuses on the way in which imperial images evolved in Byzantine art. However, a line of continuity must be traced further back in history. The most definable start is in the "neo-Sumerian" or first "Babylonian Period" with archaeological evidence dating as early as the 22nd century BC. Figure 1, **The Statue of Gudea Ruler of Lagash** (Girsu, c. 2100BC, diorite, London, British Museum, WAA 122910) or figure 2, **A boundary stone of Merodach-Baladan** (Babylonian, c. 712 BC, black marble, 46 cm high, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin), are examples from Sumeria and Babylon respectively.

The Ancient Greeks produced commemorative, marble, portrait busts of their leaders (figure 3, **A portrait bust of Pericles,** Roman copy of Greek original, c. 440 BC, marble, Vatican, Museum), while historians, such as Herodotus, wrote extensively about their achievements. To convey the idea of the good leader or brave warrior, artists used representations of mythological figures and gods. It seems as if representing a fearful god such as Apollo or the achievements of a character such as Perseus would be a sufficient reminder of man's place in nature. During the same period, Assyrian relief carvers created representations of the famous lion hunts, depicting kings slaying the creatures in vast numbers (figure 4, **A relief depicting a royal lion hunt,** Assyrian, South-West Palace, Nimrud, c. 730-727 BC, 188 cm, London, British Museum, WA 118908; 1851-9-2, 498). The hunting scenes demonstrated the king's triumphal exploits and became a popular image on later Sassanian silverware (figure 5, **A**

silver plate depicting a imperial lion hunt, Sassanian, fifth to seventh century AD, silver, 27.4cm, London, British Museum, WA 124092; 1897-12-31,187), which, in turn, influenced hunting scenes in Byzantine art.

Craftsmen started mass-producing images of their leaders during the Hellenistic period as a reminder of the military and social successes of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great. The Imperial portraiture and, ultimately, the imperial propaganda of ancient Rome drew its influences from here.

Chapter II

Form Alexander to Rome

Alexander the Great's rapid conquest of the Persian Empire from Asia Minor and Egypt to the borders of India made him one of the most significant figures of his age (Robertson,1994, P157). He was commemorated in sculpture, painting and gems by his three court artists; Lysippos, Apelles and Pyrgoteles. His achievements were also recorded on coins, in mosaics and in texts both in his lifetime and posthumously.

Alexander represented an ideal, and his portraits were, for the greater part, idealised representations, which became the prototype for imperial sculpture. For the Romans and for the later Greeks he was a man of superhuman achievements who like Heracles had become divine on the basis of his own illustrious deeds (Bieber, 1964, p.71). The image of Alexander represented strength, youth, genius and nobility (figure 6, **Alexander the Great,** Cyrene, N. Africa, c. 2nd or 1st century BC). Alexander's characteristics are best captured in the sophisticated and complex **Alexander mosaic,** figure 7, (Pompeii, second century mosaic copied form painting of late fourth century or early third century BC, House of the Faun, (VI, 12, 2), inv. 10020). Here he is represented as the quintessential hero - eyes wide and fixed on the retreating Darius. He is recognised amongst the many figures in the mosaic by the attributes commonly associated with him; the heroic pose, heavy brow and long hair or *anastole.*

The portraits commissioned by Alexander and his successors were sent all over his Empire as a reminder of the hand that governed it. It is perhaps this sense of control that the Diadochs and successions of Roman emperors wanted to adopt.

The effectiveness of the "Alexandrian style" was twofold. Firstly, numerous Diadochs and Roman emperors commissioned their own portraits in the style of an Alexander image. Figure 8, **A portrait bust of a Diadoch in the style of Alexander the Great called the "Houghton**

Diadoch" (Roman copy of Hellenistic original, second century BC, marble, 93cm high, Houghton Hall, Norfolk, private collection) or figures 9 (**Bronze head of Augustus as Alexander,** Meroe, c. 27-25BC, bronze, 47.75cm high, London, British Museum, GR 1911.9-1.1) and 10 (**A portrait bust of Caracalla,** Rome, AD 215-7, marble, London, British Museum, gr 1805.7-3.102). Secondly, it demonstrated to leaders that a myth could be created around them by being portrayed with particular attributes or by being associated with a particular pose. A prime example of this could figure 11, **The Cuirassed statue of Augustus,** (Rome, from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, c. 20 BC, marble, 204cm high, Vatican Museum, Braccio Nuovo inv. 2290), which takes the pose of figure 12, **The Arringatore** (Rome, c.80 BC, marble, 179 cm, Florence, Museo Archeologico INR 63.599). It echoes Polyclitan proportion and beauty, it also establishes a link with a recognised model of good public speaking. Augustus' famous cuirass depicts the submission of the Parthians to Rome, while also portraying the culmination of a perfect world order. Beneath the image of the Parthian king, Mother Earth reclines, Apollo and Diana ride on animals while across Augustus' chest are personifications of Sol, Luna and Dawn. These gods represent eternity, while the Sphinxes on the epaulets are the guardians of the physical world (Zanker, 1996, p.189ff). Thus the wearer of this image of victory became the representative of divine providence and the will of the gods (Zanker, 1996, p.188-192).

The Julio-Claudian dynasty comprises some of the most famous names from antiquity. They represented extravagance in lifestyle and the arts, but this did not prevent them establishing the imperial government in a period of 99 years. Augustus' achievements were well known and represented. Tiberius's (ruled AD 14-37) achievements in Germany and the Balkans were as famous and recorded, for instance, figure 13, **The triumphal procession of Tiberius** (Rome, from Boscoreale, c. AD 12, silver, Paris, private collection) depicts him in a triumphal procession crowned by an attendant, with a laurel branch in one hand and an eagle sceptre in the other. Such iconography was common at this time and often used in early Byzantine art for example figure 14, **Girdle of coins and medallions,** Constantinople, AD 583, gold, 64.7cm diameter, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1917, 17.190.147). Claudius (ruled AD

41-54) was not immediately recognised for his military genius, but was credited with the Roman expansion into Britain in the first century AD. Figure 15 is an image depicting **Claudius overcoming a personification of Britannia** (Aphrodisias, Asia Minor, from the Sebasteion, c. AD 41-54, marble) The carving in a late Classical or early Hellenistic style suggests grandeur and achievement. As a scene it is reminiscent of the Amazonomaches represented in Greek relief carving of the time, the Greek (or in this case the Roman) is depicted as the brutal yet virtuous warrior, triumphant over the "barbarian" [1]. One must consider objects like the **David Plates** (cat.no.6 Constantinople, c. AD 613-629/30, Silver, 49.9cm diameter, 20.7cm (foot ring), New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. 17.190.396) to see how similar attributes such as the knee in the back, the flowing cape of the victor or the desperate face of the vanquished enemy are adopted in Byzantine art.

A Golden era of Roman history was born with the Adoptive emperors and the Antonines, bringing with them new victories and means of representing their achievements. Trajan and Hadrian were extremely influential in this respect. Trajan pushed the boundaries of the Roman Empire to their greatest extent and won two glorious battles against the Dacians. The Senate created his famous column, which records the battles against the Dacians, figure 17, **Two details Trajan's Column,** (Rome, AD 110-13,c.100ft (30m) high). The emperor, in full military costume, is shown addressing and leading his troops. An interesting fact arises here; Trajan is commonly represented clean shaven, an attribute commonly associated with Alexander who is said to have been one of the first kings to represent himself without facial hair. It is not until Constantine, in AD 307, that one has a portrait of another clean-shaven emperor[2].

The presence of such details and iconography in Roman imperial art is constantly echoed in Early Byzantium, reinforcing the concept of the victorious emperor fighting for the sake of the

[1] Examples being the Amazonomache frieze of the Temple of Apollo in Bassae of the fourth century BC.
[2] This is purely a hypothesis as to whether Constantine was attempting to echo the grandeur of the Trajanic period by returning to the clean-shaven look- perhaps as a type of reverence?

empire. Figure 18, **The Two Columns of Arcadius,** Constantinople, c. AD 395-408) commissioned by Arcadius, one in honour of Theodosius I and the other to himself. Neither survives, but both are well documented in Italian Renaissance drawings (Weitzmann, 1977-8, catalogue number 68). They are a prime example of the adopting of Roman building programmes to represent imperial victory. Columns symbolise the emperor's grandeur and victory[3]. Soaring above the skyline of Rome or Constantinople they elevate Trajan's, Marcus Aurelius' and Arcadius' achievements to the gods[4].

The start of the Antonine dynasty was propitious, but civil war in the last decade of the century destabilised Rome and marked a steady decline in imperial authority through to the Severan dynasty. Rome was threatened both internally and on its frontiers and it was not until the rule of Diocletian that a positive change occurred. His chief aim was to strengthen the frontiers but his most significant change was the development of the tetrarchy, which divided imperial authority amongst a group of brother-emperors with the aim of defending the frontiers.

[3] For example Trajan's column- as discussed and the column of Marcus Aurelius- in Rome AD 180-192.

Chapter III

From Constantine to Heraclius

Constantine had been emperor for 18 years when he attempted to install a greater sense of security by moving the centre of the dying Roman Empire to Byzantium. He designed an elaborate building programme with colonnaded streets, public buildings, several churches, senate houses, a hippodrome and a palace. But his popularity was guaranteed by restoring a sound currency, his preference for family rule by inheritance, for integrating the meritocracy with the old nobility of the Roman Senate and making available more governorships to noble senators (Goffart, 1989, p35). Most significantly, however, he had made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. Constantine became the God's chosen emissary to rescue the Christian church from persecution.

While the Constantinian age was a period of rebirth and new beginning, it is no surprise that the arts were still bound by antique methods of representation. One need only look at figure 19, **The Arch of Constantine**, (Rome, on Via Triumphalis, c. AD 315) dedicated to him in AD 315. The reliefs depict episodes from his victorious campaigns in typical Imperial Roman fashion. On one of the most significant scenes Constantine is represented as the "new Trajan" (figure 20, **Marble relief depicting Constantine as Trajan,** Rome, c. AD 118), the archetypal Roman general of the distant imperial past (Elsner, 1998, p.61). Constantine incorporated this frieze, originally from Trajan's Forum, onto the arch and recarved Trajan's head to resemble his own. One should also consider the representation of the Imperial lion hunt on the north side of the arch (figure21, **Marble relief depicting an imperial lion hunt** Rome, From the Arch Of Constantine, c. AD 117- 138). The tondo, probably from the time of Hadrian, depicts the successful hunters standing on the corpse of the lion, which fills the lower segment of the roundel.

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[4] Arcadius' column probably represented his victory over the Goths in AD 400.

The colossal head of Constantine (figure 22, **Colossal marble head of Constantine,** Basilica Nova, Rome, c. AD 307-337) was originally constructed for the Roman Forum of Maxentius it was remodelled and rededicated to Constantine. Given classicising features and a clean-shaven face, this piece is a "dynastic link" back to Augustus[5]. It appears that while Constantine was effecting change in the New Empire, he was still acknowledging that the most effective iconographical form was that of Imperial Rome. This use would have added credibility to his image, elevating it to the status of Augustus, Trajan and Hadrian.

Two examples cat no's. 1, **Homilies of Gregory Nazianzen,** (Constantinople, c. AD 879-883, Parchment, ff. 456, 43.5cm x 30cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Manuscrits, Grec 510) & 2, **A Mounted Grey Agate Bust of an Emperor, possibly Constantine I,** (Constantinople, Agate bust: c. AD 280-337; Paris, Mount: c. 1368, Agate cameo, with silver gilt mount, small traces of enamel, Bust: 9.5cm high; total height: 31cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Babelon, 309) depict the emperor as aggressor and victor. One scene in cat.no.1 depicts Constantine's defeat of Maxentius on the Milvian Bridge in AD 312. The manuscript was commissioned in the ninth century, a long step forward in our chronology, but its iconography is relevant to this discussion. It represents the emperor charging on horseback, with his spear lowered, and guided by an illuminated cross. Contemporary images of emperors tended to represent him in a more domestic or official role. Although the "warrior image" was not obsolete it was certainly less common. Imperial Rome had demonstrated that the equestrian image of the emperor was extremely popular (for example the large bronze equestrian composition of Marcus Aurelius in Rome (Elsner, 1998, p67). It was a tangible image, commonly associated with an emperor leading the troops into battle and triumphal processions. Constantine is represented in the dress of a later Byzantine emperor, wearing a jewelled crown as opposed to a diadem or helmet. An important iconographical point is the appearance of the

[5] This parallel harks back to the achievements of Augustus and his creation of an, essentially, "new order" in Roman history.

illuminated cross[6]. The inscription on the cross reads, "You will win in this"(Grabar, 1966, p.154). Thus the representation of Constantine in this miniature must suggest two things; firstly it is a scene honouring the military achievements of a great emperor, and secondly it is a reminder that victory was granted to the Byzantine emperor with the help and guidance of God (Grabar, 1936, p.36). [7]

Catalogue number 2, the agate bust of an emperor in a gold and enamelled mount, has generally been identified as Constantine. Prima facia, this figure suggests that the image of the victorious emperor was still popular in early Christian art. He wears a cuirass and poses triumphantly, however, he holds what was originally a crown of thorns in one hand and, as Vollenweider (Byzance: 1992-3, p.84-5) suggests, a cross in the other. She adds that this may be a reference to Constantine's acceptance of Christianity. Thus the pose is more an embracing of the new religion with the military costume showing that his achievements in battle and his faith were not mutually exclusive. This adheres to the account of the vision he had in a dream of a cross that would help him beat Maxentius in AD 312[8].

The official art of the Roman Empire offered new Christian iconography a platform on which to build its images. Grabar states that Christian image-makers had no basis on which to build their new iconography and abstract ideas (Grabar, 1968, p. 45). However, the imperial art of Rome gave them this very ability. It allowed them to symbolically express concepts such as God.

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[6] The cross was not uncommon in Constantine's iconographical programme, but was not yet part of the official imagery. What one begins to see is the gradual introduction (and metamorphosis) of the iconography of antiquity to that of Early Christianity. Consider the use of the spear in cat.no's 1,3,4. The emperors carry spears as instruments of war, but with the changing iconography the spearhead is replaced with the cross. Thus an instrument of war becomes an instrument of God (Grabar, 1936, p.128- states that the enemy of the empire does not find himself attacked with an ordinary lance, but by a Christian symbol).

[7] Here he makes an extremely significant observation; the carrying of a cross in a battle shows that the emperor is the reigning king. He adds "...La representation de la croix a été souvent associée a l'idée de la victoire des empereurs..." but most significantly associated with the victory over the infidels. The "cross of Constantine" was his victory cross, it was with him in times of peace as in war. It would be with him in processions and campaigns.

[8] For an account of how Constantine chose Christianity as a result of his dream see Barnes, 1981, p.42-3, p.48ff.

Constantine started the change of official imagery, but, it remained fixed in traditional methods of representation for several centuries. Cat. No. 3, **the Silver Dish of Constance II,** (Constantinople, mid-fourth century AD, found at Kertch, Engraved silver, Leningrad, Hermitage) adds to the continuity of the "warrior emperor" theme. Constance is portrayed in a traditional processional outfit, carrying a long spear, wearing a Diadem and a halo. His attendant carries a spear and a shield with the Chi-Rho monogram inscribed on it. A winged victory figure holding a laurel wreath leads the triumphant emperor. Two concepts are juxtaposed here; victory was the result of Christian faith (demonstrated by the Chi-Rho monogram), but also due to the intrusion of the pagan and imperial symbol of victory. It can be compared to a similar medallion, figure 23 (**Medal of Constance II,** Constantinople, AD 337-361, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles), also from the period of Constance II, where the emperor (Mango, 1993, p.45) [9] on a rearing horse is about to land on the figure of his enemy.

Christian attributes such as haloes, orbs and sceptres continue to appear in later works, and actually start becoming as prominent as imperial attributes such as the diadem. This is very clear in two examples from the time of Theodosius I (reigned AD 378- 395). Figure 24, **The Silver missorium of Theodosius I, with Valentian II and Arcadius** (Constantinople/ Rome, c. AD 388, 74cm diameter, Madrid, Real Accademia de la Historia) Theodosius is placed on a throne, flanked by his two sons; one holds an orb, the other a sceptre. Each figure's importance is shown by its size (a typical Hellenistic feature) the less important armed guards on the extremities of the scene represented smaller. The significance is that the emperor is shown as the supreme being of the empire. The same is applicable to the obelisk base attributed to Theodosius I (figure 25, **Theodosius obelisk base,** Constantinople, c. 379-395) and indicative of the intensive building programme in Constantinople. The four scenes on the carved base

[9] In an extract from *Anthologia Graeca* IX, 802, "On an effigy of the Emperor Marcian", Mango describes a similar image in literature.

exemplify the emperor's official position in the empire[10]. As on the missorium, the figure of the emperor towers above his entourage. As Supreme Being and judge he is regarded as the giver of victory and rewards.

Justinian I (reigned AD 527-565) represented the culmination of Byzantine art to date, his aim was the reconstruction of a New Rome. Mango cites a passage from Procopius (Procopius, 1977 edition, Book I, ii, line 1 ff) describing one of the pieces he commissioned (Mango, 1993, p110) [11]. The extract, describes the equestrian bronze of Justinian as Achilles:

> "He wears a cuirass in heroic fashion and his head is covered with a helmet which gives the impression of swaying, and a kind of radiance flashes forth from there.... yet he carries neither sword nor spear nor any other weapon, but a cross surmounts his globe, by virtue of this alone he has won the kingship and victory in war."

Few descriptions that juxtapose the "warrior emperor" image with Christian symbols are as explicit as this. However, the statue takes the official image a large leap backwards in time. For the comparison to Achilles is a clear attempt to elevate Justinian's "warrior image" to that of, perhaps, the "greatest" warrior of antiquity.

Catalogue number 4, the **Gold medallion of Justinian**, (Constantinople, c. AD 527-538, Gold electrotype, 8.2cm diameter, 164.05g weight (of original), London, BM, CM) is a piece, designed to be presentational. This scene is imbued with imperial triumph. On the obverse an eight-pointed star (associated with Christian iconography also in figure 14) and a winged victory, holding a palm and trophy, lead Justinian in this symbolic procession. The inscription SALVS ET GLORIA ROMANORVM (The Salvation and Glory of the Romans) is an example of Justinian's propagation. This would be offered as a gift or have a ceremonial

[10] Included are depictions of Theodosius in court, receiving barbarians bearing offerings, in state and finally at the hippodrome.
[11] This edition has Procopius' text in Greek and German thus I have resorted to Mango's translation for a more accurate rendition.

function. Thus the triumphal image is made available to many as a reminder of imperial achievement.

Catalogue number 5, **The Barberini ivory**, (Constantinople, first half of the sixth century AD, Ivory, 34.2 cm total height, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Departement des Objets d'art, OA 9063) is perhaps one of the most celebrated examples of Byzantine ivory carving and imperial triumphal imagery. It further exemplifies the popularity of the equestrian image (as in figures 13, 14 and 23). Justinian occupies the central panel on a rearing horse. The emperor is in the same military dress as in cat.no.4, but now holds a downward pointing spear and wears a crown on his head. Behind Justinian is a symbolic Persian or Scythian representing the vanquished people while a winged victory soars up on the left. The horse's hoof is supported by a personification of Earth. The winged victory reappears twice; once as a trophy (or small statue), carried by a general on the left panel holding a laurel wreath in the air and on the lower register holding a trophy. Juxtaposed with the "warrior emperor" image and concept of imperial triumph is the image of Christ in the upper register. He is depicted holding a processional cross, framed in a clipeus held by two angels. This is a reminder of the omnipresence of Christianity and of its role in the imperial victory.

Justinian was often depicted as the triumphal emperor, while, he also displayed a profound belief in Christianity. When one considers the mosaics in the southwest porch of the Hagia Sophia, one realises how he chose to be remembered. Figure 26, the **Mosaic of Constantine and Justinian with Virgin and Child**, (Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, southwest porch leading into narthex, late tenth or early eleventh century) is one of the main figural mosaics in the Hagia Sophia, depicting Justinian and Constantine presenting models of the church and the city to the Virgin and Child. One should remember the effect that such an image would have upon the people viewing it. In Constantinople most people were educated and would receive an overall religious experience from visiting a church. Seeing an image of one's emperor before the Virgin and the Child, prominently placed, would have a profound effect, inspiring awe and reverence. It would also be a reminder that the emperor was chosen by God to be the intermediary between the people and heaven and protector of the empire.

It may be, as Grabar states, that the emperor is now becoming part of a skilful adaptation of Christian ideas, he is now represented as a supernatural figure (as is the case in the Hagia Sophia mosaics) which will start moving away from the more common triumphal representations (Grabar, 1936, p.127). This conforms to the text by Procopius referring to the bronze equestrian statue of Justinian, which now holds a cross on a globe instead of a spear.

After Justinian, Heraclius (reigned AD 610-641) (figure 27, **Colossal bronze statue of emperor Heraclius (?)** Constantinople, transported to Barletta in 1204, sixth to seventh century AD, bronze, 355cm high, Barletta) was the most successful, military, Byzantine emperor[12]. He was a pious man who claimed his throne in a heroic crusade assisted by the Virgin. In AD 628, he made a triumphal return from Persia, where he was greeted by the patriarch not with a Roman triumph, but with hymns of praise to God. Heraclius implemented change during his reign, with his most significant act being the abandoning of the imperial titulature of *Basileus* for the name of *Pistos en Christo Basileus* (Cameron, 1981, P.217).

Browning suggests that Heraclius saw himself as the chosen vessel of God, divinely inspired in all his actions. His campaigns were seen as a holy war, in defence of Christianity, against the infidel (Browning, 1980, p.24). It is for this reason that the Barletta bronze (figure 27) is so significant (assuming it is Heraclius). The statue is an honorific, imperial, portrait of a military emperor. As was by then common with Christian emperors, a cross is raised high in the right hand and an orb is held in the left. The cross is the sign of Victory promised by Heaven and an emblem of God's choice of representative on earth. Not too distant echoes of Justinianic iconography can be heard[13].

[12] Although Tiberius II (reigned AD572-582) and Maurice (reigned AD 582-602) were also distinguished soldiers and emperors.

Heraclius' most significant victory coincided with his most famous commission cat.no.6. The usual dating for these pieces is AD 613- 629, but it is conceivable that they were made in AD 627 after Heraclius defeated the Persian forces. The commission consists of a series of silver plates with a unique narrative relationship depicting various biblical scenes related to the life of David as expounded in the First Book of Samuel. Such plates would have, like (cat. no. 4), a presentational function, most likely celebrating the emperor's victory. The most important plate depicts the encounter of David and Goliath in three narrative bands. Their meeting is contained in the upper register, between them is a personification of the valley represented in a Hellenistic style. The second register depicts the battle between the two men. The nimbate, and fully armoured, David prepares his sling while blocking the Philistine's spear with his cloak. The figures behind David appear to advance while those behind Goliath retreat, a sign of defeat pre-empting the next scene depicting the decapitation of Goliath. The representation of this victory could be paralleled with the personal success Heraclius had over the Persian general Razatis in AD 627. Heraclius was victorious by decapitating the Persian as David did to Goliath. The parallel can be extended further by comparing the strength and size of the Persian army to that of the Byzantines and remembers the adversity the Israelites faced against the Philistines. The particular importance of this plate is emphasised in yet another comparison from Book I of Virgil's "Aeneid":

"The silver was massive on the tables, with the brave deeds of their ancestors embossed in gold, a long tradition of feats of arms traced through many heroes from the ancient origins of the race." (Virgil, Penguin ed., 1991, Book I, lines 640-2).

The purpose of presenting of such a plate in Heraclius' court could be threefold; it is initially a reminder of the emperor's victory, an indication of his reverence for the Bible and, as a gift, it would demonstrate the emperor's taste. This is much in the same vein as the silver cup from Boscoreale that also demonstrates the same idea of vanquisher and vanquished in the representation of a barbarian submitting to Augustus (figure 28, **Silver cup from a villa in**

[13] I refer to Procopius' description of the equestrian bronze statue of Justinian.

Boscoreale, Pompeii, depicting Augustus' defeat of the barbarians, Rome, c. AD 12, Roman, from Boscoreale, c. AD 12, silver, Paris, private collection).

Chapter IV

Iconoclasm

The Isaurian Emperor Leo III (reigned AD 717-740) was the first iconoclast emperor, although traces were evident in the middle of the fifth century with the emergence of the Monophysite belief (closely connected to iconoclasm). Mango suggests that iconoclasm occurred when the fortunes of the Byzantine Empire were at their lowest following the Arab siege of Constantinople (Mango, 1986, p.149). Leo III and his court attributed Byzantine misfortune to the wrath of God caused by the growth of idol worship in the Christian Church. Grabar suggests that the iconoclast movement also had a military purpose ensuring the support from of the Christians of Asia Minor (Grabar, 1966, p.142). It is commonly thought that the greatest period of destruction occurred during the reign of Leo III's son Constantine V (reigned AD 740-775), with figural church decorations being replaced with crosses, swirls of vegetation and animals (Mango, 1986,p.149). However, secular art continued with scenes of imperial victory. A passage from ***Vita S. Stephani iun., col.1112-12*** refers to the permissible images (Mango, 1986, p.152).

From the little that survives from AD 726-843, certain images carry value in the overall discussion of imperial representations. Coins and textiles are the two main surviving examples with imperial imagery. Figure 29 is an example of coins from Constantin VI (reigned AD780-797) and Theophilus (reigned AD 829-842) figures 29a (**A solidus of Constantine VI (reigned AD 780-797) and Irene,** Constantinople, c. AD 790-792, gold, 20mm, 4.44g, Paris, Bibliothéque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, ancien fonds 817) and 29b (a **Coin of Theophilus (reigned AD 829-842) with his wife and sons,** Constantinople, c. AD 838-840, gold, 20mm, 4.39g, Paris, Bibliothéque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, ancien fonds 836). These demonstrate the change that was seen; in the place of Christ, on one side of the coin, are representations of the emperor's wife or children. This is a clear move from the imperial representation previously seen in Byzantine coinage. It was not followed in the iconography of textiles of which several examples survive with one particularly interesting piece. Catalogue number 7, the **Shroud with Scenes from an Imperial Hunt**, (Constantinople, possibly AD 741-775 or 10th –11th century, Silk, 73cm x 71cm, Lyon, Musée Historique des Tissus, inv. 904.III.3) depicts the type of lion hunts that S. Stephani attacked and were commonly seen in Sassanid Persia (see figure 5). There are echoes of figure 21 and cat.no.5, with the emperor portrayed in this aristocratic sport displaying another triumphal victory over the king of beasts. Unfortunately the textile is damaged but one can see that the unidentified emperor and his horse are in the traditional hunting regalia. The constant appropriation of iconography in Byzantine art meant that, "cynegetic scenes" (Grabar, 1936, p.138), frequently represented in Iconoclastic art, also found their way into later examples during the Middle Byzantine period. They maintain the emperor's imperial status and are one of the few examples of middle Byzantine art showing the emperor in a triumphal act or pose.

The end of Iconoclasm was the definitive moment in Byzantine history. The triumph of orthodoxy over the Iconoclasts perhaps coincided with, or encouraged, a stabilising economic and political situation. Once again Byzantium began reasserting herself on the frontiers, with the stance towards Islam and the Slavs changing from defensive to aggressive. However, it was not until AD 867 and Basil I's accession as sole emperor that the change could be "seen". A new confidence encouraged a growth in "types" and "techniques" in fine and decorative arts, as well as architecture. This period of prosperity has often been called a "Macedonian Renaissance". His concept, a metaphorical "rejuvenation", was not the creation of something new, but a regaining of what had been lost (Mango, 1986, p.181). This amounted to the copying of old models that dated back to the sixth century.

If the birth of Iconoclasm was the result of God's anger at idolatry then the twilight of Iconoclasm must have been God's approval of icon worship manifested as the reconquests of lost lands and flourishing arts between the ninth and eleventh centuries.

Chapter V

The Macedonian Dynasty

Form Basil I to empress Theodora (reigned AD 1054-1056), Jenkins suggests that the Byzantine Empire was at its greatest point of expansion in both culture and military terms (Jenkins, 1987, p.183). This study aims to examine the nature of "emperor type" representations up to the end of this dynasty and the rule of Nikephoros III Botenaides (reigned AD 1078- 1081). It is the expanse of this dynasty that has provided some of the best examples of a new type of iconography demonstrating the "renewed" or "rejuvenated" image of the emperor[14]. Catalogue number 8, the **Plaque of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus Crowned by Christ**, (Constantinople, Mid 10th century, 18.6cm x 9.5 cm, Ivory, State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russian Federation 11 2 b 329) is iconographically one of the best-known imperial images in middle Byzantine art.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus is represented in ceremonial regalia, and is identifiable as emperor by the inscription, his crown and loros. Unusually, on this piece the two figures are the same size. Christ is given predominance by standing on a small plinth, but the emperor is an equal. It would be reasonable to think that there may have been an element of arrogance in Constantine; perhaps feeling his status as new emperor elevated him to equal importance? Jenkins credits him with being one of the great influences in the revival of the antique or the Hellenistic spirit that is ultimately the essence of the "Macedonian Renaissance" (Jenkins, 1987, p.257). What developed from the time of Heraclius to the Macedonian Dynasty was a changing role for the emperor. But not an unwillingly, inflicted, change. Emperors promoted themselves as pious figures before Christ and ultimately God. Perhaps as a reflex action to the Iconoclast tragedy they wanted to express their deep reverence for God by being shown humble before Him. However, one ought not to be fooled by such an idea. The concept of self-propagation was as prominent in Middle Byzantium as it was in Early Byzantine art and literature. It had simply evolved into a more complex type of iconography.

The emperor was now explicitly fulfilling, and representing the fulfilment of, his role as mediator between man and God. To the Christians awaiting the "second coming" the emperor was the New David, receiving his authority directly from God. With churches as public buildings, based on the concept of the Roman basilica, walking in, one could see an image of the emperor donating a model of the church to Christ or the Virgin (see figures 26 and 30, **Mosaic of an emperor (possibly Leo VI) kneeling before Christ,** Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, over the Imperial door, mosaic; gold and glass tesserae c. AD 920). One could not help thinking that the emperor was indeed a supernatural being; embellished in magnificent robes of purple and gold.

Catalogue number 9, the **Ivory of Christ Crowning Emperor Romanus and Wife,** (Constantinople, c. AD 958, Ivory, 24.6cm x 15.5cm, Paris, Bibliothéque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 300) is of the same type as cat.no.8 and another example of the emperors' new image. Emperor Romanus and his wife Eudokia each wear a pearled halo, crown with a mounted cross. As is common in this type of iconography the emperor and empress stand in a praying position, but unlike cat.no.8 do not bow their heads to Christ. All three figures are the same in size, but Christ has been mounted on a three-level pedestal to emphasise His importance in the scene. A similar scene is also depicted in an ivory, perhaps from Constantinople, or from the court of Otto II (figure 31, **Book-cover plaque of Christ blessing Otto II and Theophano,** Constantinople or court of Otto II, c. AD 982-983, ivory, 18.6 cm. high, Paris, musée national du Moyen Age et des Thermes de L'Hôtel de Cluny, Cl. 392). The plaque depicts the emperor and empress in full ceremonial dress as in cat.no.9, but smaller in size than the figure of Christ who stands on a plinth and is at least one third larger. These plaques were probably used for presentations, celebrating the emperor's coronation as a reminder to the recipient that the emperor receives his authority directly from Christ as His representative on earth.

[14] Lasting a total of 205 years

Catalogue number 10, the **Crown of Holy Roman Empire dedicated by Constantine IX Monomachos** (Constantinople, c.1042-50, Gold and cloisonné enamel, From left to right; 8.7cm x 4.2cm; 9.8cm x 4.5cm; 10.5cm x 4.8cm; 11.5cm x 5cm; 10.7cm x 4.8cm; 10cm x 4.5cm, Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum 99/1860) comprises seven enamelled plaques, but it is possible that there may have been other additions; notably a plaque of Christ (Evans & Wixom, 1997, p.210). This is determined by Constantine's sideward glance. The crowned emperor is clad in the full imperial regalia and carries a labarum. As with other examples of the time (such as figure 32, the **Relief tondo with an emperor,** Constantinople, late eleventh or early twelfth century, marble, 90cm diameter, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C. (37.23), the images are indicative of imperial office and absolute authority. The inscription reads "ΚΟΝΣΤΑΤΙΝΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟ ΡΟΜΕΟΝ Ο ΜΟΝΟΜΑΧΟΣ" or "Constantine Monomachos absolute ruler of the Romans". The reason for such representations may be twofold; the emperor is reminding the intended viewers of his authority by being depicted with Christ and secondly appeasing Heaven by explicitly showing his piety. This is also true in the Constantine's mosaic in the Hagia Sophia (figure 33, the **Mosaic of Christ enthroned between Constantine IX Monomachos and the empress Zoe,** Constantinople, Hagia Sophia, panel in the south gallery, mosaic; gold and glass tesserae, c. AD 1028-34), were he and his empress Zoe flank the enthroned Christ.

Cat.no.11, A **Reliquary of St Demetrios,** (Constantinople, 1059-67, Silver gilt, 11.5cm diameter; 15cm high, Moscow, State Historical and Cultural Museum "Moscow Kremlin" Russian Federation MZ. 1148) demonstrates the juxtaposition of an imperial image with that of a military saint(s). In this particular case there are two military saints; Nestor and Loupos who guard the doors to the reliquary. They are depicted wearing armour and carrying spears. On the opposite panel are the images of emperor Constantine X Doukas (reigned AD 1059-1067) and his wife Eudokia. A bust of Christ, in a representation imbued with all the typical ceremonial features, is crowning the couple. The empress, due to the emperor's failing health holds the orb demonstrating her official role in the rule of the empire. This is confirmed by the inscription of

"ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑ ΕΝ ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ ΜΓ ΒΑΣΙ ΡΩΜΕΘΝ", "Eudokia in Christ the Lord great empress of the Romans".

The crowning image on the reliquary is extremely close, schematically, to a miniature from cat.no.12, **The Homilies of John Chrysostom** (Constantinople, c. 1071-81, Tempera and gold on vellum; 324 folios, 42.5cm x 31cm, Paris, Bibliothéque nationale, (Ms. Cloisin 79) . The two objects, with perhaps only a decade separating their manufacture, demonstrate the continuity of images that, as has been established, continued throughout Middle Byzantine art. In cat. no. 12, Christ leaves his celestial sphere and enters a field half way between heaven and earth to decree his new choice of emperor. This idealised image of the emperor indicates his (and his wife's) stature, not only by the way they are dressed, but by the way they have been depicted in the manuscript, which is illuminated in an extremely lavish manner. Such generous use of gold leaf is also seen in the Basil Psalter (figure 34, **Basil II vanquisher of the Bulgarians, Miniature from the Psalter of Basil II,** Constantinople, c. AD 976-1025, tempera and gold leaf on vellum, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. Gr. Z 17, fol. IIIr) containing a miniature demonstrating that the warrior image was not yet obsolete. The use of gold symbolically illuminates the emperor's stature as well as his achievements. Basil II stands triumphantly with the vanquished, submissively bowing at his feet, in an ironic Proskynesis. He is also crowned, as in cat.no.12, by a bust of Christ lowering a crown to a passing angel who places it on the emperor's head. The Homilies of John Chrysostom suggest a way to depict imperial glory based on the image of the emperor as statesman and figure to be revered. This is not only suggested by the extensive use of gold leaf, but in the lavish dress and the image of Christ crowning him. Indeed, in cat.no.12a, Nikephoros is represented in a Christ-like posture; in an elaborately decorated gold throne, crowned and nimbate. Directly behind him are two virtues; Truth and Justice[15]. Below, on either side of the throne, are four high court officials. The emperor's status is also expressed by size importance, which is an echo of

[15] Compare this to the two personifications in the crown of Constantine IX Monomachos (cat.no.11), who is flanked (but not immediately) by personifications of Truth and Humility. Truth, unsurprisingly, proving to be the essential accessory of any proposed emperor.

previous images where Christ has been represented as the largest figure in the composition and a literal personification of authority[16].

The image of imperial authority evolved constantly throughout Byzantine art. It's purpose, however, always remained constant. The emperor had to be depicted as almighty, wise, just and virtuous to fulfil the expectations of his court, people and most importantly God. However, an image once considered to be a representation of imperial authority and of glorious victory still manages to reappear. Cat.no.13, **A Casket Depicting Emperors and Hunters** (Constantinople, 10th –11th century, Ivory, 13.4cm x 26.4cm x 13cm, Troyes, Trésor de la Cathédrale de Troyes) demonstrates that emperors could still be represented engaged in savage yet honourable sports such as hunting. This scene has lost much of the aggressiveness, which was evident in the earlier examples and has opted for more decorational motifs[17]. This is exemplified by the horsemen on two sides of the casket being represented symmetrically between, in one case, a lion, and the other a personification of the city offering a crown to the emperor on the right. In the balcony of the city scene the emperor receiving the crown is greeted by citizens with outstretched arms. It is possible that this scene may be an emperor's triumphal entry into the city after a campaign.

The casket is imbued with triumphal imagery on two levels; private, by virtue of the hunt scene, and public, by virtue of the city scene. It demonstrates that triumphal imagery did not die but evolved into other forms of representation. As the *Pistos en Christo Basileus*, the emperor does not need to be represented victorious in battle or in hunting, for it has become clear that the route to glory or triumph is through God and ultimate victory is in the realm of God.

[16] For examples see figures 30, 31 and 33. The decoration also suggests that this object was made for private use.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

An undisputable fact in Byzantine history is that it inherited from Imperial Rome an awareness that art was an effective medium for propaganda. Form the time when the seat of the empire was still in Rome numerous monumental examples still exist depicting imperial triumphs. This arose from the emperor's awareness that the best way to propagate himself was by erecting public monuments (like Trajan's column), buildings (like the Ara Pacis) and arches (such as the Arch of Constantine) which illustrated their successful exploits.

The legacy of monumental building was inherited from the times of Pericles and Alexander the Great. As a means of propaganda it was the most effective medium for an emperor to create a legend around his actions and thus control his public image.

The relocation of the empire to Constantinople meant a new land to "cultivate" economically, socially and artistically. However, for the first centuries after the move, the arts of Constantinople were still bound by the conventions of Imperial Rome. Hence one sees public building projects that were a "parody" of Roman buildings. The columns of Trajan (figure 17) and Marcus Aurelius were imitated in their style and pictorial narrative, relating to a particular emperor's victory. Thus erections such as the two columns of Arcadius (figure 18) appeared on the Constantinopolitan skyline. The obelisk base of Theodosius (figure 25) demonstrated that the emperor satisfied various public roles as well as that of protector of the empire, but also saw a change in artistic style, a move away from influential Hellenistic models, symbolising the new influence of Christian art.

While imperial influences still managed to control the iconography of early Byzantine art, Constantine began introducing Christian symbols into the artistic programmes. Cat.no.'s 1 &2 were made posthumously, but are indicative of the piety he was known for. His dream of a

[17] Such as figures 4, 5 and cat. no.7.

cross aiding his victory in the battle on the Milvian bridge was well documented and thus found its way into many battle scenes and celebratory processions to indicate God's intercession. Such a concept has multiple implications. With God as a guide in battle, victory was almost guaranteed. His backing on the battlefield added legitimacy to war. God, via the emperor, ordained that the battle needed to be fought to preserve the empire and, of course, the faith, from the infidels. Hence, one sees the transformation of the spear, from an object of war, to a staff with a cross on it.

Up to the time of emperor Heraclius, iconography of this type became more prominent and emperors were conquering other lands for the sake of the empire, but in the name of God. This was a move from the Roman imperial concept of victory, which was predominantly a great personal triumph for an emperor but also for the empire. Systematically, imperial processions and images of the emperor as a triumphal warrior became less common.

The period of iconoclasm saw a lull in productivity that did, however, offer several examples of coinage depicting an emperor in a domestic role with his family (figure 29), or on hunts (as in cat. no. 7). With the advent of the Macedonian Dynasty, the emperor no longer needed to dirty his hands with the brutalities of war, for he was now a supernatural figure who kept company with God and angels. This is seen in the numerous examples of emperors crowned by Christ or the Virgin (cat. no.'s 8, 9, 10, 12). This change, seen in the large number of works commissioned for private use, demonstrates that the emperor requested the adaptation. He commissioned the images of himself before Christ to indicate his piety and thus wins God's favour but also to show that he was a figure of authority chosen by God and receiving instructions from God.

The official art of the Roman Empire offered Christian iconography a platform on which to build its images and abstract concepts such as "God". The two iconographic forms, for a time, merged. Imperial triumph was still depicted and celebrated by the emperor, but the shift on the way it was won had evolved. It was now a victory won by the emperor in the name of God and with His assistance. Gradually, Imperial, Roman triumphal iconography was phased out. Thus in a visual context, there was no change in the role of the emperor, but a refinement in the way that imperial "power" was expressed.

List of Catalogued Objects

Cat.no.1

Homilies of Gregory Nazianzen

(Grabar, 1966, p.152-3, pl. 7)

Cat.no.2

A Mounted Grey Agate Bust of an Emperor, possibly Constantine I.

(Byzance: 1992-3, p.85)

Cat.no.3

Silver Dish of Constance II.

(Peirce & 1932, pl.27)
Tyler

Cat.no.4

Gold medallion of Justinian

(Buckton, 1994, p.70)

Cat.no.5

The Barberini ivory

(Byzance: 1992-3, p.65)

Cat.no.6

The David Plates: David and Goliath

(Kent & Painter, 1977, p.169)

Cat.no.7

Shroud with Scenes from an Imperial Hunt

(Byzance: 1992-3, p.197)

Cat.no.8

Plaque of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus crowned by Christ

(Evans & Wixom, 1997, p.203)

Cat.no.9

Ivory of Christ Crowning Emperor Romanus and Wife

(Byzance: 1992-3, p.232)

Cat.no10

Crown of Holy Roman Empire dedicated by Constantine IX Monomachos

(Evans & Wixom, 1997, p.210)

Cat.no11a &11b

Reliquary of St Demetrios

(Evans & Wixom, 1997, p.77)

Cat.no12a & 12b

Homilies of John Chrysostom

(Evans & Wixom, 1997, p. 182, 208)

Cat.no13a & 13b

A Casket Depicting Emperors and Hunters

(Evans & Wixom, 1997, p. 204-5)

Catalogue entries

Catalogue number 1 cat.no.1

Homilies of Gregory Nazianzen

Constantinople, c. AD 879-883.

Parchment, ff. 456, 43.5cm x 30cm

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Manuscrits, Grec 510.

This collection of sermons is named after the theologian St. Gregory Nazianzen. A miniature of Basil I with the empress Eudokia and their children indicates that this may have been commissioned by the emperor or given to him as a gift.

Folio 438 (verso) the "Vision of Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones" is indicative of the new developments in figurative painting based on antique models. This is clear in the rendition of the drapery, the soft modelling of the faces and the use of landscape to convey the idea of narrative. The pictorial narrative is similar to that of the tenth century Paris Psalter (Ms. gr. 139), which adopts similar Hellenistic features.

The miniature depicting Constantine's victory over Maxentius in AD 312 is taken from the section devoted to Christian emperors. It is one of the earliest pictorial examples of Constantine using his Christian faith as a guide in battle. This is manifested by the appearance of the illuminated cross which also symbolises the emperor's defence of the faith.

Manuscripts from this period also demonstrate how Christian iconographical programmes used the older models to build images and express abstract concepts.

Provenance: Library of cardinal Ridolfi c. 1550, Pietro Strozzi c. 1558, given to Catherine of Medici, entered into the Bibliothèque nationale in 1599.

Exhibited: Paris 1992-3, cat. no. 258

Literature: Grabar, 1966, p.152-3, pl. 7.

Beckwith,1969, p.180-2.

Weitzmann, 1971, p.122, 237.

Cat.no.1

Catalogue number 2 cat.no.2

A Mounted Grey Agate Bust of an Emperor, possibly Constantine I.

Constantinople, Agate bust: c. AD 280-337; Paris, Mount: c. 1368

Agate cameo, with silver gilt mount, small traces of enamel

Bust: 9.5cm high; total height: 31cm

Paris, Bibliothéque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Babelon, 309.

The later mount represents the emperor in a pose with outstretched arms. In the right hand he holds a crown of thorns (thorns now missing) while in his left he would have held a cross as a sign of his piety and acceptance of Christianity.

The image is a link back to the representations of Alexander the Great (see figures 6, 7and 8) who ~~was~~ WERE also depicted with softly modelled faces but strong features. Constantine has a slight twist in the powerful neck, a common "Alexander" feature. He is also clean-shaven and has short curly hair, suggesting youth and dynamism (even though Constantine was an old man when he became emperor).

The bust is a link back to the Hellenistic and Roman types of imperial representations, but features the entry of Christian iconographic features, such as the cross on the cuirass. Furthermore, the mount has converted an imperial, military, image into an overtly religious object that would have been on the top of a sceptre.

Constantine's acceptance of Christianity was also recorded manuscripts such as cat.no.1, where he is depicted on horseback, in military regalia being led by a cross. Figure 22 also represents Constantine with short curly hair, the powerful neck and strong rounded jaw. Such a comparison could offer a date of c. AD 315-30 to the bust.

Provenance: Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, moved to the Cabinet des Médailles in 1791.

Exhibited: Paris 1992-3, cat.no.33

Literature : Volbach,1958, p.10, 50

Cat.no2

Catalogue number 3 cat.no.3

Silver Dish of Constance II.

Constantinople, mid-fourth century AD, found at Kertch.

Engraved silver

Leningrad, Hermitage.

The emperor has commonly been identified as Constance II (reigned AD 337-361) on a triumphal procession. He is on horseback, in military regalia. He is nimbate, wears a diadem and carries a spear in his left hand. His rearing horse is also richly decorated. Leading the procession is a barefoot, winged, victory carrying a palm leaf in her left hand and raising a laurel wreath (or crown) in the right. Behind the emperor an attendant carries a spear and a shield inscribed with the Chi-Rho monogram.

If this attribution is correct, then the same emperor is depicted on the Rothschild cameo wearing a diadem inset with a Chi-Rho monogram (Beckwith, 1969, p.78). Equestrian iconography originated in Imperial Rome it remained part of the official imagery of early Christian art recurring during the reign of Justinian I (such as cat.no.4 and 5). Figure 23, from the same period demonstrates how the equestrian image can be altered from a triumphal procession (as in cat.no.3) to a metaphorical trampling on one's enemies.

In early Christian art an imperial image of this type was for private use and generally presented as a gift. Its tone, as with consular diptychs is official.

Literature: Beckwith, 1969, p. 78

Ebersolt, 1923, p.44.

Grabar, 1936, p.48

Grabar, 1968, p.45

Peirce &Tyler, 1932, p.44

Cat.no.3

Catalogue number 4 cat.no.4

Gold medallion of Justinian

Constantinople, c. AD 527-538

Gold electrotype

8.2cm diameter, 164.05g weight (of original)
London, BM, CM & Paris, Bibilothéque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles

Obverse: bust of a nimbate Justinian, wearing a helmet with plume and diadem, a cuirass, military cloak, a spear in his right hand and a shield behind left shoulder. The legend translates to "Our Justinian Perpetual Emperor".

Reverse: Justinian, now on horseback, in similar military regalia, again carrying a spear in his right hand. His horse is highly decorated with jewelled trappings. The procession follows an eight-pointed star and a winged victory carrying a palm and a trophy. Beneath Justinian the legend translates to "Pure gold of Constantinople". Above; "Salvation and Glory for the Romans".

Equestrian compositions were very common imperial images. Represented on a coin (or statue, for example the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome, or Procopius' description of Justinian's bronze), the equestrian image suggested imperial, triumphal, processions. It is also seen on cat.no.'s 3 and 5.

Similar medallions were produced in the late Roman and early Christian periods (see figures 14 & 23) for ceremonial or presentational purposes. As a presentational piece it showed the recipient that the emperor was victorious and a man of stature. The original, gold, medallion would have been the equivalent of 36 solidi (Buckton, 1994, p 70). Cat.no.'s 4 & 5 are examples of imperial propaganda in Justinian's court. Their iconography is very similar. The plumed helmet depicted is also similar to the description Procopius gives of the plumed equestrian bronze of Justinian.

The identification of the figure on the obverse as Justinian implies that the medallion was struck between AD 527-565, and was possibly struck to commemorate the imperial triumph over the Vandals in AD 534.

Provenance: Found in Cappadocia, near Caesarea, 1751 and acquired by the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris. Stolen in 1831. In 1898 casts of the medallion were found in the British Museum Department of Coins and Medallions, from which two electrotype copies were made. The copies are now in the British Museum and the Bibliotheque Nationale.

Exhibited: London 1977, cat.no.674

Paris 1992-3, cat.no.113

Paris 1982, cat.no.N.1

Literature: Buckton, 1994, p.70

Wroth, 1908,p.25.

Treadgold, 1997, p.176

Volbach, 1958, p.90

Peirce &Tyler, 1932, p.94-5

Cat.no.4

Catalogue number 5 cat.no.5

The Barberini ivory

Constantinople, first half of the sixth century AD.

Ivory

34.2 cm total height.

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Departement des Objets d'art, OA 9063

In the upper register Christ is depicted holding a processional cross in his left hand and his right hand raised in benediction. On either side of Him are the symbols for the sun and the moon. His image is framed in a clipeus supported by two angels. The central panel carved in high relief depicts the emperor in full military wear and holding a downward pointing spear in his right hand, his palludamentum gusts up behind him. He is mounted on a rearing horse decorated with jewelled trappings. A semi-nude personification of Earth carrying fruits supports the emperor's foot. To the left a winged victory on a globe (with a cross marked on it) soars up holding a palm. Behind the emperor is a symbolic Persian or Scythian. The left hand panel depicts a general in military dress carrying a trophy or small statue of a winged victory raising a laurel wreath in the air. A sack (of money?) is by his feet. In the lower register, on the left, the vanquished Persians or Scythians offer tributes to the emperor a lion also accompanies them. On the right, Indians accompanied by a tiger and an elephant make offerings of ivory.

As with cat.no.4 and figure 23, this equestrian image is part of a recognised type. In this instance the various panels indicate the emperor's (and thus the empire's) strength over the adversaries (or infidels). Three of the four panels contain representations of victories, which further emphasises the concept of victory and submission of the vanquished. The central panel is iconographically similar to cat.no.4 and cat.no.3. The upper register acts as a reminder of the omnipresence of Christianity of its constant role in the imperial victory both as guarantor and protector.

Provenance: from the seventh century AD it was in the south of Gaul; 1625, offered by Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, to Francesco Barberini in Aix-a-Provence; part of the Barberini collection in Rome; acquired by the Musée du Louvre, 1899.

Exhibited: Paris 1958, cat.no.152

New York 1977-78, cat.no.28

Paris, 1992-3, cat.no.20

Literature: Beckwith, 1969, p. 78

Cutler, 1998, p.49, 76ff

Ebersolt, 1923, p.34f.

Grabar, 1936, p.49

Kitzinger, 1977, p.96

Peirce &Tyler, 1932, p. 55

Volbach, 1958, p. 35, 87

Cat.no.5

Catalogue number 6 cat.no.6

The David Plates: David and Goliath

Constantinople, c. AD 613-629/30.

Silver

49.9cm diameter, 20.7cm (foot ring)

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. 17.190.396

The largest and most important of the nine David Plates depicts David's encounter with Goliath. The top band illustrates the meeting between the two men. They are separated by a personification of the valley. The central band is larger in size due to the importance of the scene. Both men are depicted in full military wear; David wears a halo while Goliath wears a helmet. The Philistine leans forwards and attempts to thrown the spear, David blocks it by lifting the palludamentum in his left hand, while he prepares his sling in his right. The Israelites behind David advance while the Philistines behind Goliath retreat. Their posture pre-empts the next scene were David decapitates Goliath.

The other plates in the treasure include scenes such as the anointing of David by Saul, the marriage of David to Michal and David slaying the Lion. All the scenes correspond directly to the First Book of Samuel.

The nine David plates were all part of a larger treasure called the "Second Cyprus Treasure" which is now divided between the National Museum of Cyprus, Nicosia, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Due to the decorative nature of the plates it is possible that the treasure had no religious function. Their function, as cat.no.3 (and possibly cat.no.4), was presentational and possibly used to commemorate an imperial victory. The David and Goliath plate is important because it corresponds to events from Heraclius' life. In AD 627 he confronted the Persian general Razatis in single combat and beheaded him. The conflict between the Byzantine and the Persian armies is comparable to the conflict between David and Goliath and, on another level, between the Israelites and the Philistines. It is possible that Heraclius used the David cycle as a means to represent his victory and his image as the "Good King". If this is the case then a dating of no earlier than AD 627.

Provenance: 1902, discovered in Lambousa, Northern Cyprus; part of the treasure given to the National Museum of Cyprus, Nicosia; remaining pieces sold in Paris to J. Pierpont Morgan; 1917, donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Exhibited: London 1977, cat.no.179

New York 1977-8, cat.no.431 (VII)

Literature: Dodd, 1961, p.178

Kitzinger, 1977, p.110.

Stylianou, 1969, p.33ff.

Weitzmann, 1970, p.99ff.

Cat.no.6

Catalogue number 7 cat.no.7

Shroud with Scenes from an Imperial Hunt

Constantinople, possibly AD 741-775 or 10^{th} – 11^{th} century

Silk

73cm x 71cm

Lyon, Musée Historique des Tissus, inv. 904.III.3.

Excluding the extensive damage down both right and left sides (as well as on the head of the emperor on left-hand side) of the shroud, an oval medallion with a continuous band of vegetal patterning (flowers, lotus leaves and acanthus leaves) surrounds the main scene. In the centre is a decorative and symmetrical tree. On either side is an image of an emperor (?) on horseback. The rider is in richly decorated costume, as is the horse (the patterning is similar to that of the Justinian's horses in cat.no.'s4 &5). In his right hand he holds a spear pointing downwards which kills a lion. In front of the lion is the emperor's dog. This image is reflected exactly in the right hand section of the shroud.

The representation of the emperor on horseback was common in Byzantine art, with its roots in the later, Sassanian, silverware (figure 5). The equestrian image found its way into Byzantine representations of triumphal processions. This depicted the emperor in full military regalia entering a city (such as cat.no.3 or 13). However, his triumph could also be expressed by his dominance over nature. It is possible that this artist would have seen the model for an image like cat.no.5or even earlier representations of Bellerophon slaying the Chimera (such as the ivory dated to AD 450) (Peirce &Tyler, 1932, see plate 120). It is also possible that such an image could have been the prototype for St. George slaying the dragon.

During the period of iconoclasm, imperial images were permissible and encouraged, (Mango, 1986, p.152) thus many textiles exist of hunts or chariot races. Figures 29a and 29b also show images of the emperor with his family represented on coins. The heavy use of decorative motifs, such as foliage, was also very common during this period in the place religious imagery.

Provenance: Abbey of St. Calmin, Mozac; 1904, sold to the Lyon Chamber of commerce.

Exhibited: Paris 1992-3, cat.no.132

Literature: Beckwith, 1969,p.172

Ebersolt, 1923, p. 52-4

Grabar, 1966.

Volbach, 1966.

Cat.no.7

Catalogue number 8 cat.no.8

Plaque of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus crowned by Christ

Constantinople, Mid 10^{th} century.

Ivory

18.6cm x 9.5 cm

State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russian Federation (11 2 b 329)

The plaque has suffered extensive damage on the bottom, left and right edges. Under an ornately decorated canopy Christ stands on a raised platform crowning Constantine. Christ wears a, pearled, tripartite nimbus, is depicted in a himation and is barefooted. He holds a scroll in his left hand and crowns the emperor with the right. Constantine bows his head to Christ and holds both hands out in a position of prayer.

The inscription above the emperor translates to "Constantine in Christ Absolute Ruler," to his left "Emperor of the Romans". Christ is has two letters carved either side of his head translating to "Jesus Christ".

Such scenes were extremely common in imperial iconography from the tenth century onwards. Cat.no.9 is such an example, but demonstrates how the image had progressed. Christ now crowns the empress as well. This crowning image was also common in manuscripts such as cat.no.12. In this case, however, Christ is represented as a small bust appearing above the heads of the imperial couple. The method of representing Christ and an emperor as the same in height was not a common feature until the tenth century. As this ivory was most likely produced as a commemorative gift to celebrate his accession as emperor he may have wanted to demonstrate his stature by being as large as Christ but not on the same level- hence the use of the footstool.

Provenance: Ehmiatsin, Armenia; Uvarov collection; History Museum, Moscow, 1932.

Exhibited : Moscow 1977, vol. 2, p.96

New York 1997, cat.no.140

Literature: Beckwith, 1969, p.207

Cutler, 1994, p.76

Cat.no.8

Catalogue number 9 cat.no.9

Ivory of Christ Crowning Emperor Romanus and Wife

Constantinople, c. AD 958

Ivory

24.6cm x 15.5cm

Paris, Bibliothéque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 300.

Three figures are represented on a decorated platform. In the centre Christ stands on a three-tier pedestal. He crowns the emperor Romanos with his left hand and the empress Eudokia with his right hand. Christ is depicted with a pearled tripartite nimbus, long hair and beard. He wears a himation, chlamys and sandals. The emperor wears a pearled halo, gemmed crown with mounted cross, pendoulia, pearled tunic and shoes. His loros is elaborately decorated with a square and pearled pattern, on the inside underneath his hand, part of a cross is visible. The impression of a young man is given; youthful features and clean-shaven. The empress is also richly decorated. She has a pearled halo, gemmed crown with mounted cross and pinnacles, pendoulia, a pearled tunic, chlamys and shoes. She wears a pearled fibula on her left shoulder, a repeated pattern of pearled roundels decorate her tunic and a trapezoid pattern on her chest.

The imperial couple are the same height as Christ and stand in a position of prayer with their arms held out. Christ's importance emphasised by standing on three richly decorated tiers- two circular and one rectangular. The inscription above the emperor translates to "Romanos emperor of the Romans, " above the empress "Eudokia, Empress of the Romans", and on either side of Christ he is identified as "Jesus Christ".

There are compositional similarities with figure 31, the dress is also similar, but Christ's importance is clearly emphasised by his larger proportions. The closest similarity in dress is in figure 33 and cat.no.12. The latter depicts the same sense of grandeur and nobility.

Such an ivory would most likely have served a commemorative function in celebration of the emperor's accession as sole emperor. The Romanos ivory has been the cause of much debate regarding its dating. It has been argued whether emperor Romanos II or IV is represented. Two principle arguments indicate that it may have been Romanos II. Firstly a young man is represented. Romanos II became emperor at a (comparatively) young age as opposed to Romanos IV who was older and hence would have been represented with a beard. Secondly the dress is more befitting for a tenth century emperor as opposed one of eleventh century. Thus it may have been carved when Romanos II succeeded his father Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus in AD 958.

Provenance: originally decorated the binding for the Gospels of Saint-Jean de Besancon; 1805, acquired by the Cabinet des Médailles.

Exhibited: Paris 1982, cat.no.Iv.7

Paris 1992-3, cat.no.148

Literature: Cutler, 1994, p. 25.

Cutler, 1998, p.605ff.

Peirce &Tyler, 1926, p.38-9.

Ebersolt, 1923, p.90.

Cat.no.9

Catalogue number 10 cat.no10

Crown of Holy Roman Empire dedicated by Constantine IX Monomachos

Constantinople, c.1042-50

Gold and cloisonné enamel

From left to right; 8.7cm x 4.2cm; 9.8cm x 4.5cm; 10.5cm x 4.8cm; 11.5cm x 5cm; 10.7cm x 4.8cm; 10cm x 4.5cm

Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (99/1860)

The crown currently comprises seven cloisonné enamelled plaques, however it is likely that it was comprised of more. The central plaque depicts the emperor in full imperial regalia standing on a small pedestal. He is nimbate, wearing a crown with pendoulia, shoes, richly decorated loros and tunic. He carries a labarum. He is bearded and glances to his left. Decorative foliage with six birds surrounds him; the inscription translates to "Constantinos Monomachos Autokrato of the Romans". On either side of the emperor plaques depict an empress, a dancer and a virtue. Standing on footstools are empresses Zoe (Constantine's wife) on his left and empress Theodora (sister of Zoe) to his right. Zoe is identified by the inscription "Zoe, the Pious Augusta" and Theodora "Theodora, the Pious Augusta". Both women wear similar tunics decorated red, gold and blue. They are nimbate, wear crowns topped with pinnacles, pendoulia, loroi, shoes and carry processional staffs. Decorative foliage and six birds frame them. Zoe glances to her left, Theodora to her right. On either side of them are nimbate dancers. Both kick one leg behind them and carry a scarf billowing behind. Decorative foliage and three birds also frame them. The end plaques depict Truth and Humility. Two cypress trees frame them with two birds in their branches. They are also nimbate.The rich ornamentation of the costume is similar to that of the imperial couple in cat.no.9. The imperial couple are also depicted in an earlier mosaic in the Hagia Sophia of c. 1028-34 (figure 33). Constantine is depicted with the same facial features and beard. The couple also wear similarly ornate garments.

The crown was given by the emperor as a gift to the wife of the Hungarian king. As a luxury object, depicting the imperial couple in richly decorated garments and surrounded by finely rendered enamelled foliage, it would have been indicative of their taste and stature. The presence of the Virtues, a common Hellenistic feature, would also have been indicative of the emperor's own virtues- as autokrato he would be expected to be true, just and, as the final virtue suggests, humble- especially before God. This is also demonstrated in figure 33, where the same emperor and empress humbly offer gifts to Christ.

Provenance: 1861-1870, found in Nyitra-Ivanká, Slovakia; sold to Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum

Exhibited: New York 1997 cat.no.145

Literature: Beckwith, 1969, p.214

Peirce &Tyler, 1926, p.73

Cat.no.10

Catalogue number 11 cat.no11a & 11b

Reliquary of St Demetrios

Constantinople, 1059-67

Silver gilt

11.5cm diameter; 15cm high

Moscow, State Historical and Cultural Museum "Moscow Kremlin" Russian Federation (MZ. 1148)

The unequal, eight sided, reliquary would have served a liturgical use but may have had a private use. An octagonal conical roof tops the reliquary. Columns supporting arches with acanthus leaves between them separate each side. Between each arch are small oil lamps on bases. Two of the eight sides are inscribed, four further sides are decorated with vegetal motifs. The two remaining sides depict the military saints Nestor and Loupos. They are both nimbate, in military dress and carry a spear in their right hand. They guard the door of the reliquary, which contains a silver, rectangular box in the centre said to have contained the myrrh and blood of Saint Demetrios. On the second panel an imperial couple is identified as Constantine Doukas and his empress Eudokia. They are in full ceremonial regalia being crowned by a small bust of Christ who appears from between their heads. All three figures are nimbate. The imperial couple wear similar crowns topped with crosses and pendoulia. They also wear similar tunics and loroi. Constantine carries a labarum in his right hand and holds out an orb in his left. Eudokia holds an orb in her left hand. The inscription identifies her as "Eudokia in Christ the Lord Great Empress of the Romans". This is unusual titulature for the wife of the emperor, but has been explained by the fact that Constantine passed imperial authority onto his wife as a result of his deteriorating health.

The legend says that the body of Saint Demetrios exuded myrrh, which was gathered by pilgrims and placed in such reliquaries. The mixture of blood and myrrh allegedly had remedial qualities, which may have been as a gift to the sick emperor.

The crowning scene is similar to that of cat.no.12, with its roots in the earlier representations of an imperial couple being crowned by a standing figure of Christ such as cat.no.9 and figure 31.

Exhibited: New York, 1997 cat.no.36.

Literature: Grabar, 1950, p.19ff.

Cat.no.11a

Cat.no.11b

Catalogue number 12 cat.no12a & 12b

Homilies of John Chrysostom

Constantinople, c. 1071-81

Tempera and gold on vellum; 324 folios.

42.5cm x 31cm

Paris, Bibliothéque nationale, (Ms. Cloisin 79)

The manuscript was originally made for Michael III Doukas, even though it is inscribed Nikephoros III Botenaides on folio 2v. Nikephoros was a usurper emperor and Ševčenko suggests that he not only usurped the manuscript, but also modified the imperial portraits to make them look more like himself (Ševčenko,"Illuminating the Liturgy: Illustrated Service Books in Byzantium", ed. Safran, 1998).

This manuscript is indicative of the production of luxurious manuscripts. The large use of gold leaf and elaborate clothing demonstrates that it was commissioned for or by the emperor.

One of the principle images represents an enthroned emperor who is crowned and nimbate. He is almost double the size of the next largest figure on the miniature. Such images had their roots in the earlier representations of imperial authority such as figure 24. It was also used in representations of the enthroned Christ such as figures 26, 30, 33. The emperor holds an akakia in his left hand and raises his right hand to his chest. Above him are two nimbate representations of imperial virtues; Truth and Justice. On either side two high court officials flank him.

One further miniature depicts Michael VII Doukas (relabelled Nikephoros III Botenaides) and his empress Maria of Alania. Both are nimbate and wearing crowns. Their costume is elaborately decorated and encrusted with jewels, which is a contrast to the simple blue himation of Christ. Nikephoros holds a labarum in his right hand and an akakia in his left. Maria holds a processional staff in her right hand. The nimbate Christ appears above and between their heads and places crowns on the couple.

This scene is particularly common in ivory carvings such as figure 31, cat.no.8, 9 and 11. They are demonstrative of imperial authority as ordained by God.

The manuscript was originally dated to 1071-78, however, it was rededicated to the Nikephoros in 1078-81.

Provenance: 17th century, library of Chancellor Seguier; 1731, bequeathed by Henri-Charles, Duke of Cloisin and Bishop of Metz, to Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris; 1759, transferred to Bibliothéque nationale.

Literature: Safran, 1998, p.222

Ebersolt, 1923, p.92

Spatharakis, 1976, p.57, 74-5, 77, 86, 107-19, 121, 123, 156, 244-5, 259-60.

Cat.no.12a

Cat.no.12b

Catalogue number 13 cat.no13a & 13b

A Casket Depicting Emperors and Hunters

Constantinople, 10^{th} – 11^{th} century

Ivory

13.4cm x 26.4cm x 13cm

Troyes, Trésor de la Cathédrale de Troyes.

The three principle panels and two decorative side panels are carved in shallow relief. The lid depicts a symmetrical arrangement of two emperors on horseback (possibly the same emperor reflected for decorative purposes). They are dressed in full military regalia wearing crowns topped with crosses, pendoulia and palludamentum. Their horses are also richly decorated. The emperor on the right holds a spear in his right hand, while the other holds a spear in his left. Their are arranged symmetrically. Between them is a representation of a city; from the doors a female figure walks out presenting a crown. On the balconies of the city people stand with their arms outstretched.

On the front, two horsemen attack a lion. The figure on the right, in full military wear, holds a shield in his left hand and raises a sword in his right about to strike the lion. The figure on the left wears a crested helmet, his horse moves to the left, but he has turned to the right and prepares to shoot an arrow. Two arrows have hit the lion in the centre of the composition.

On the rear, a hog in the centre of the composition is being speared by a hunter, while also being attacked by dogs; one from the left and two from the right. A tree is represented behind the hog.

The two side panels are decorative representing elaborate vegetal motifs and a bird.

Stylistically the casket is similar to cat.no.9 in the way the faces and crowns have been carved. It is also possible to compare its form to the arrangement of figures on textiles. In the latter, not only does one see similar themes such as hunts (cat.no.7), but the symmetrical arrangements of the figures is also similar. In both cases this adds a highly decorative quality to the casket, which would, suggest it was made for private use.

The scene on the lid most likely represents a triumphal procession into a city, which was a very common image in Byzantine art (see figure 14 and cat.no.'s3, 4 and 5). The other images on the casket have a similar symbolic meaning, demonstrating that the emperor was also won triumphant victories in hunts.

Provenance: after 1204, brought from Constantinople to Troyes by Jean Langlois

Exhibited: Paris 1992-3, cat.no.168

New York 1997, cat.no.141

Paris 1982, cat.no.Iv.23

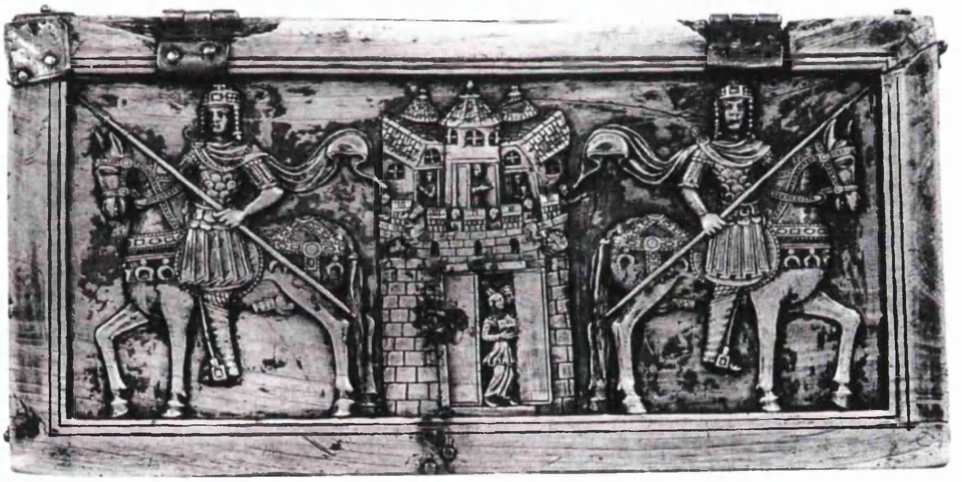
Literature: Peirce &Tyler, 1926, p.41.

Dalton, 1925, p.218

Front

Cat.no13a

Back



Lid

Cat.no.13b

Figure1

Figure2

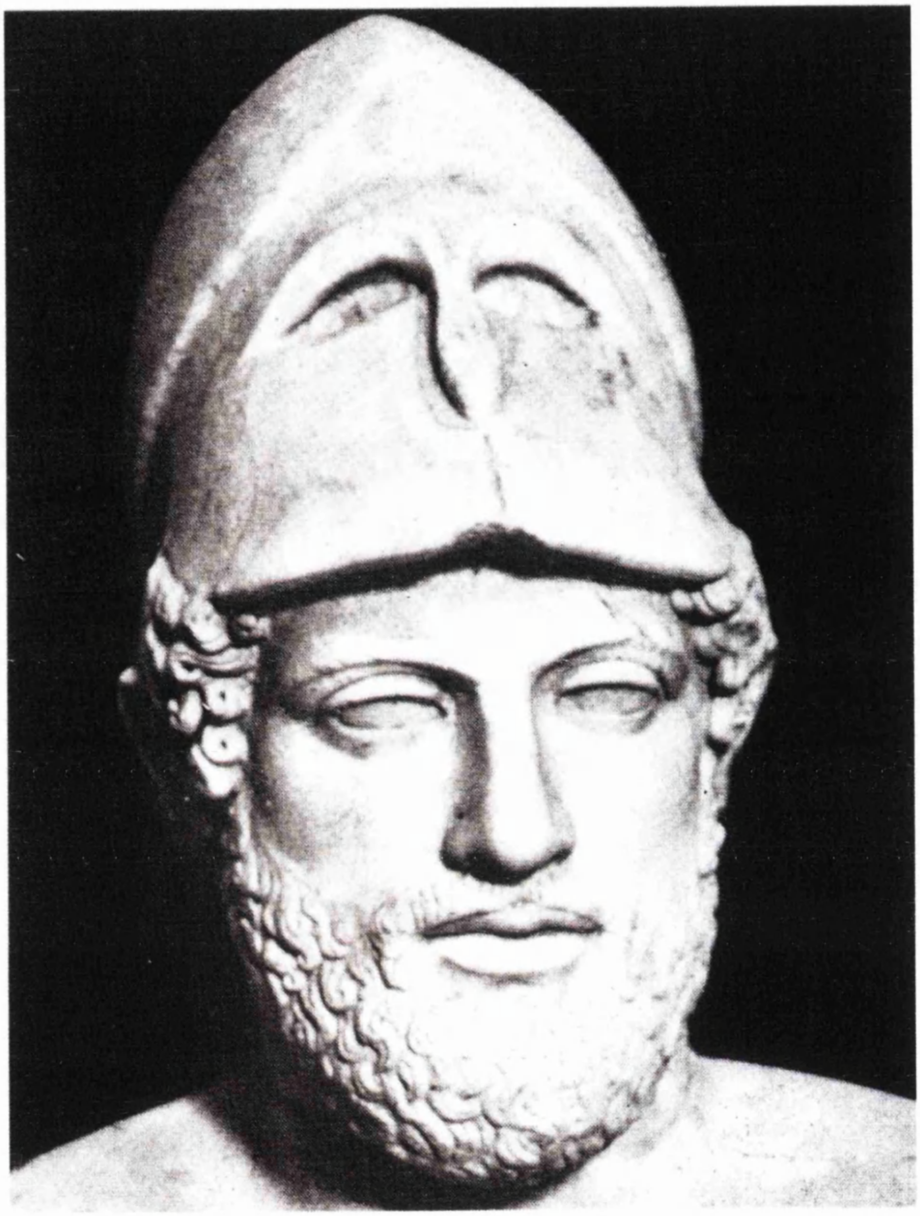


Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

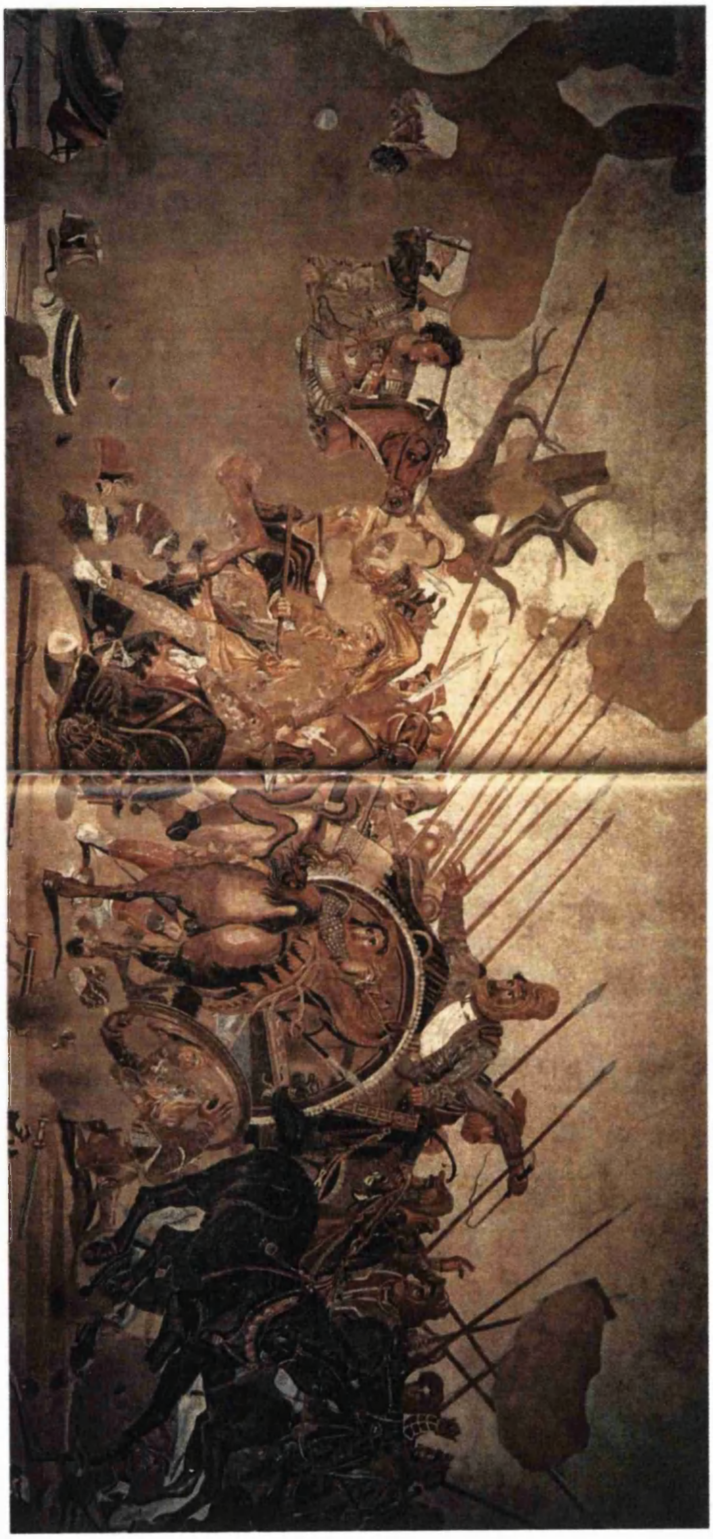


Figure 7

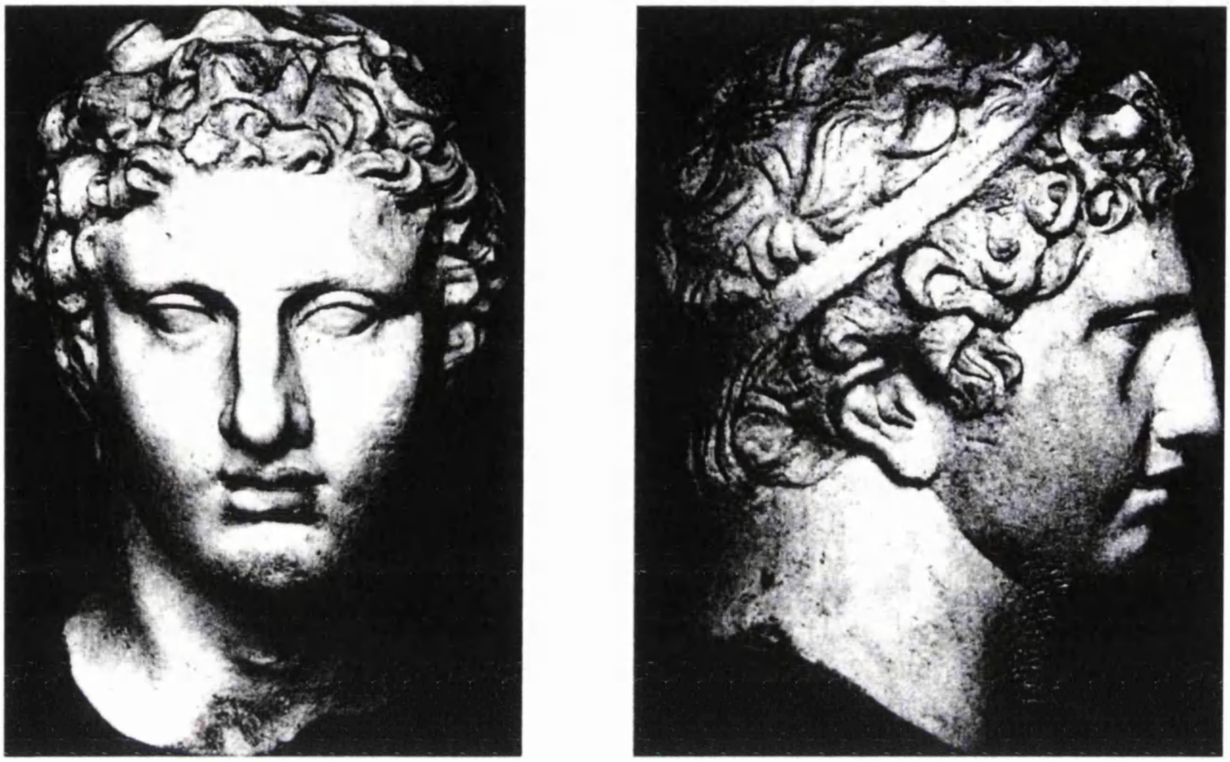


Figure 8

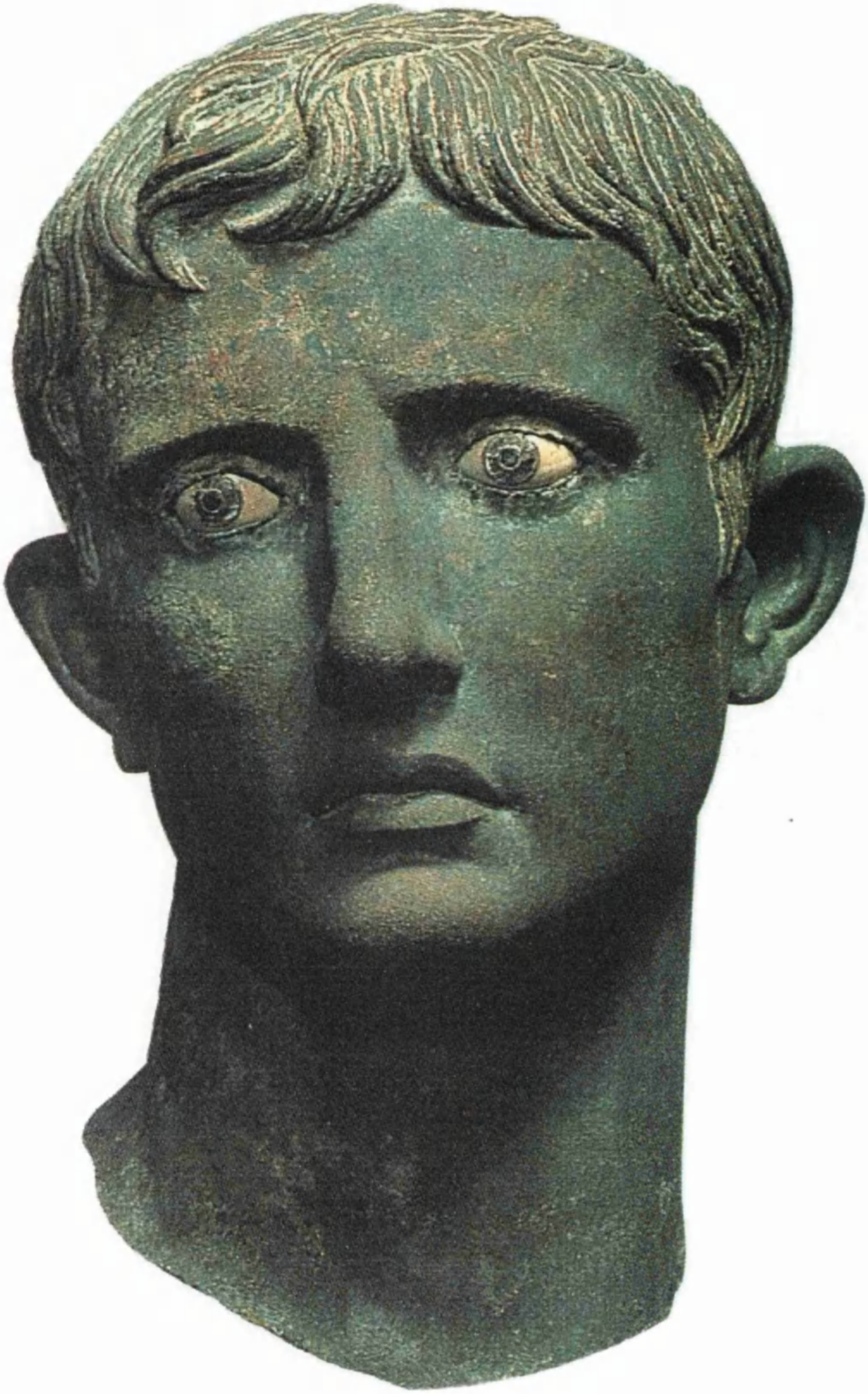


Figure 9

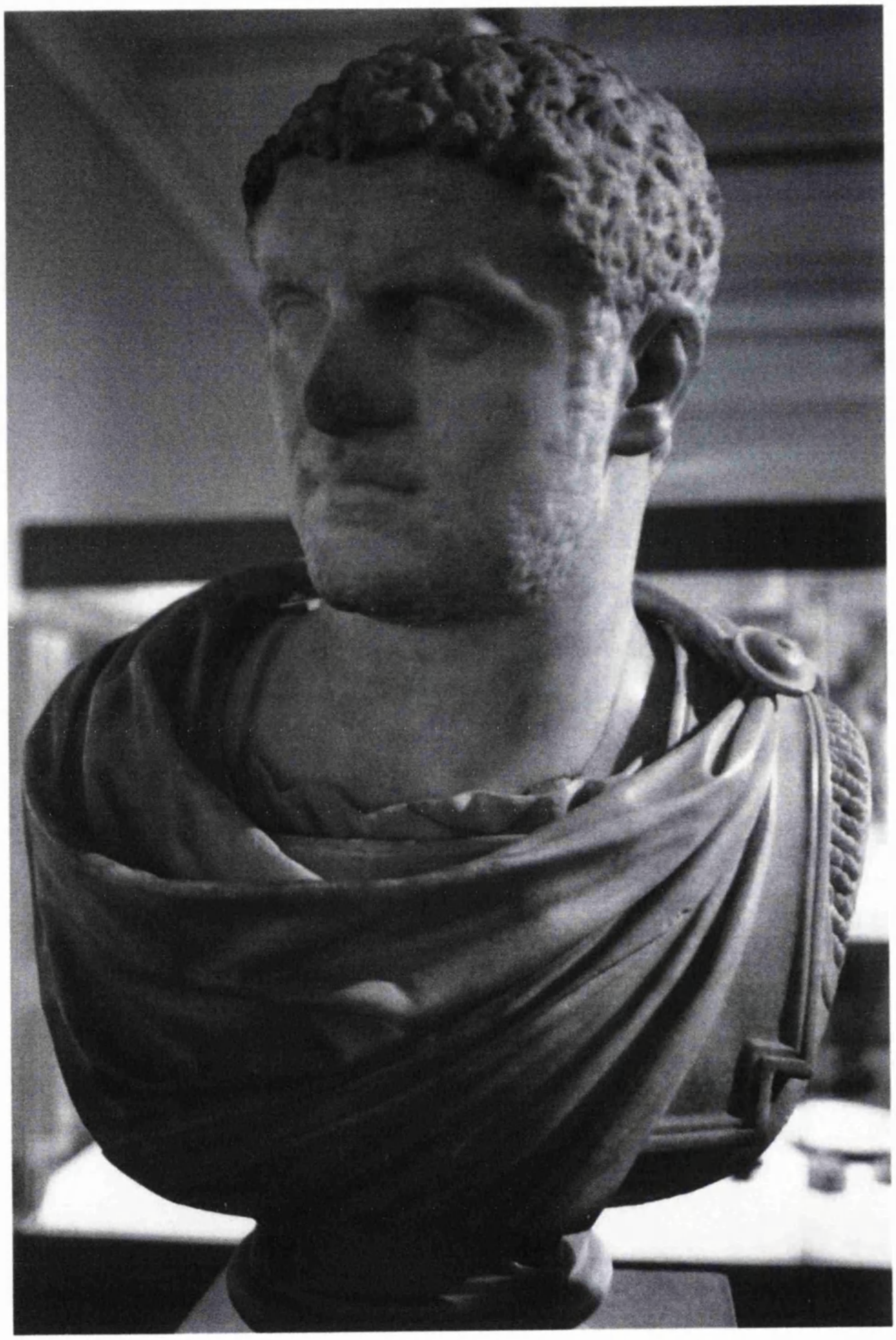


Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure12

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

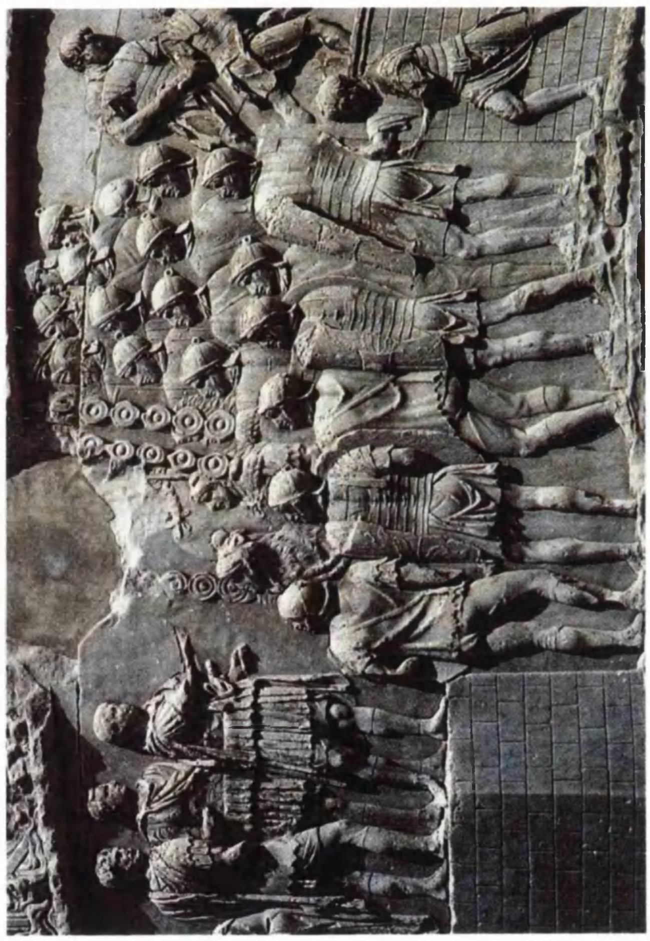


Figure 17

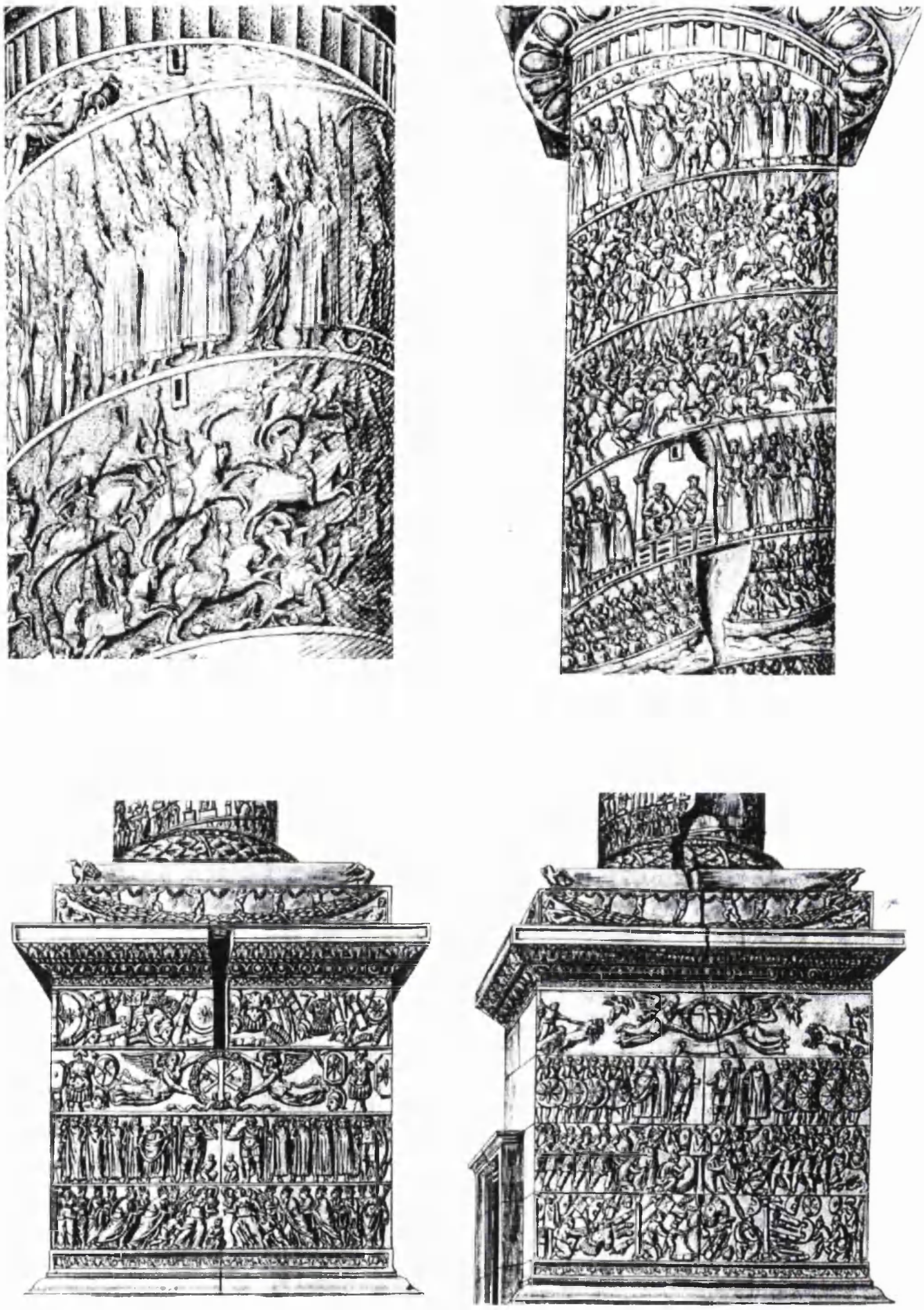


Figure 18

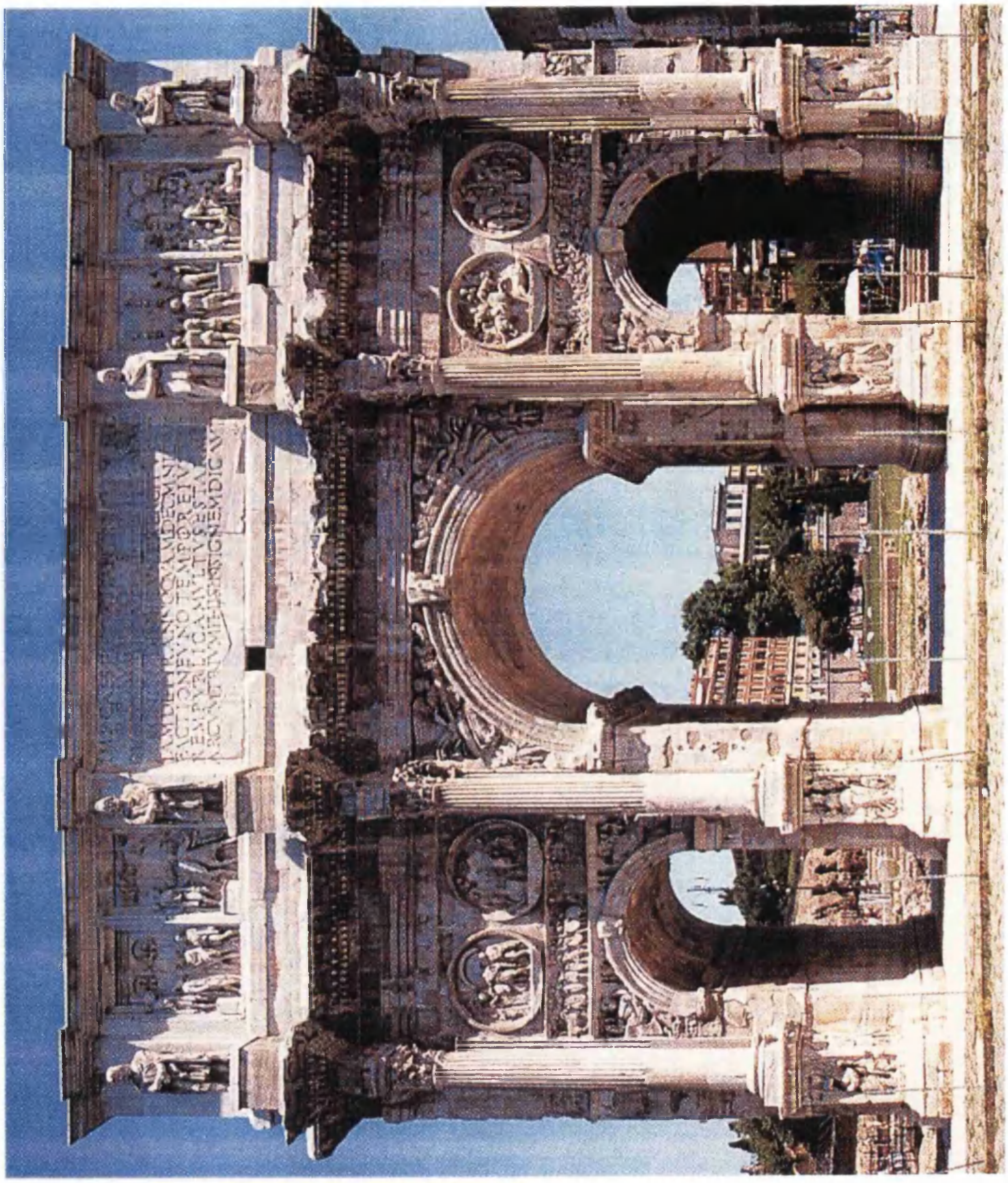


Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

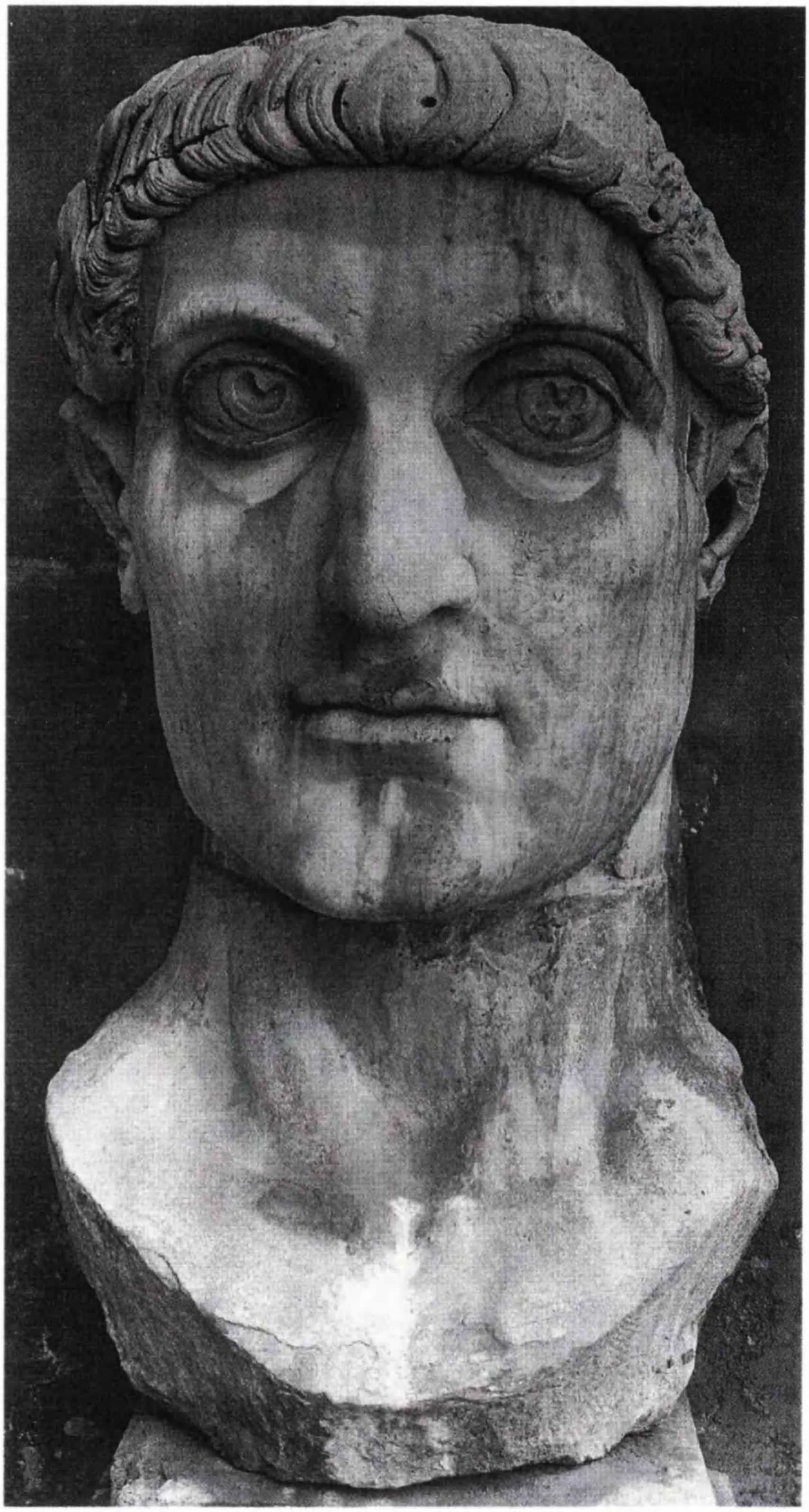


Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 24

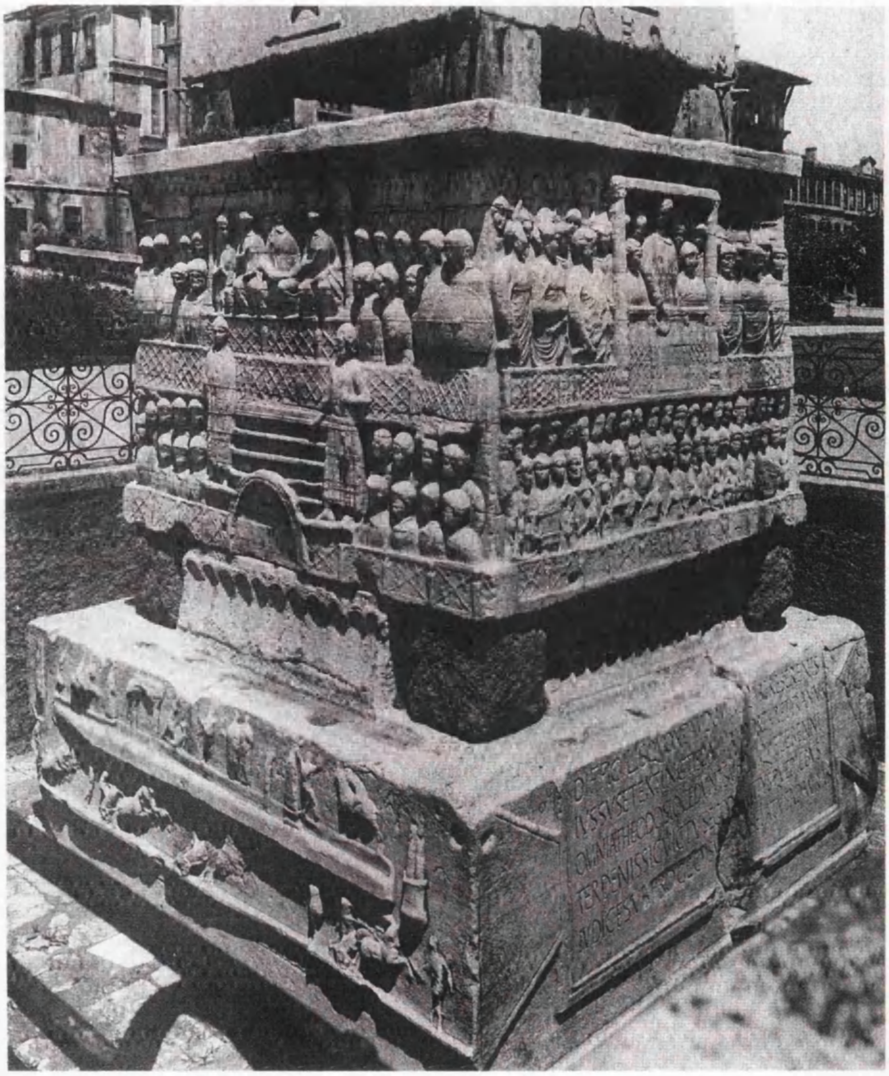


Figure 25

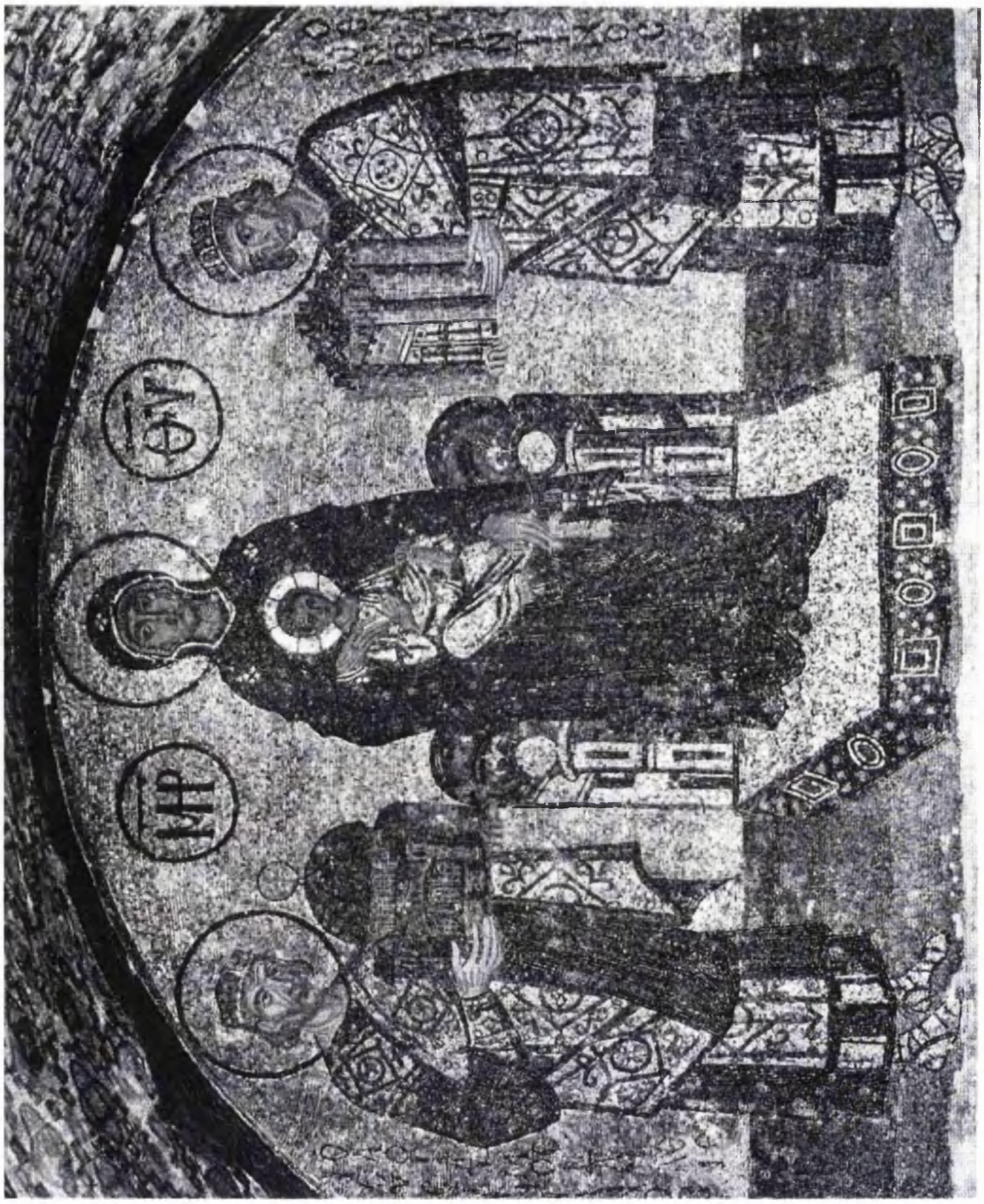


Figure 26

Figure 27

Figure 28

Figure 29 a (above); b (below)

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

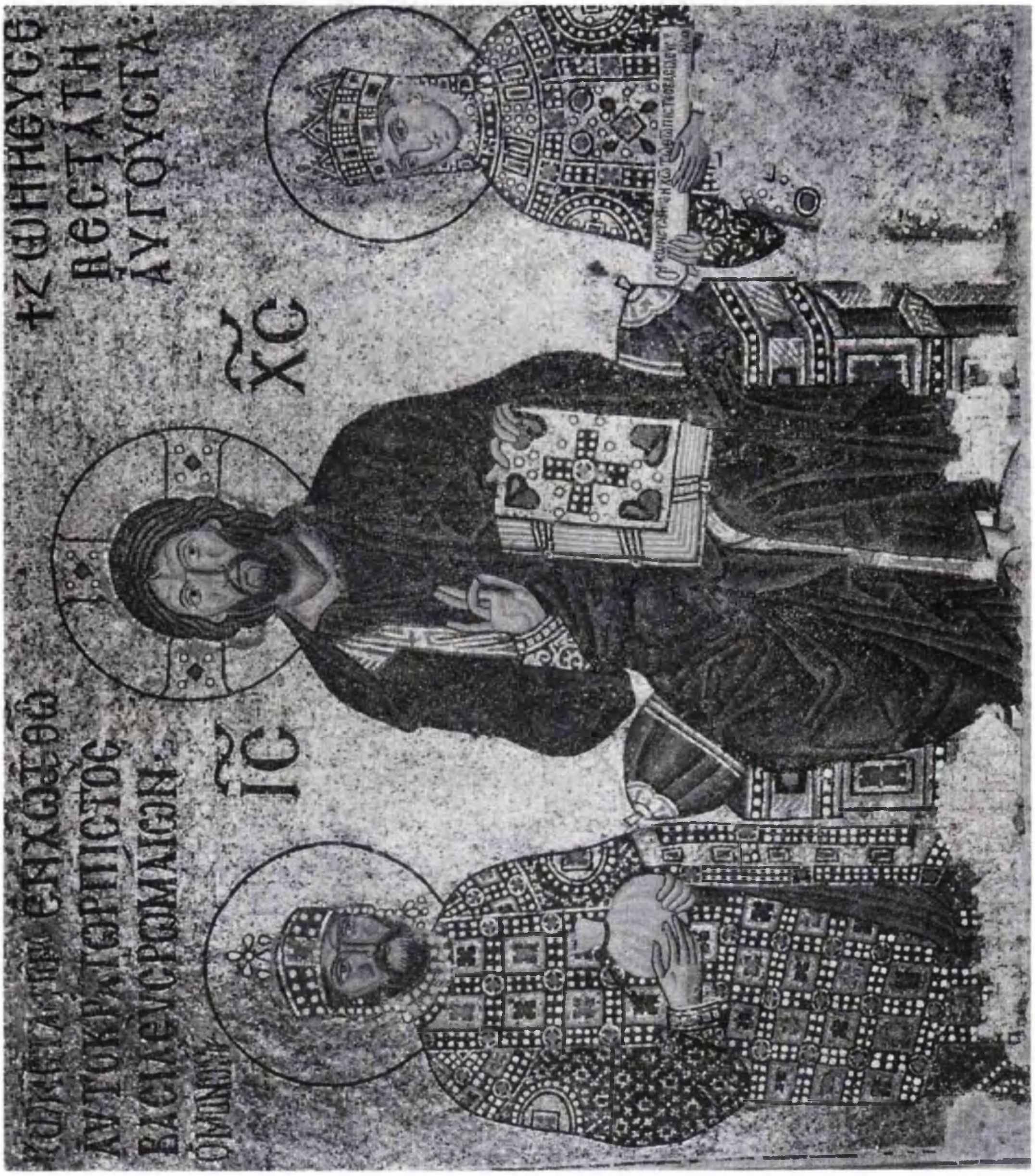


Figure 33

Figure 34

Glossary

Akakia

A purple silk purse carried by an emperor on ceremonial occasions.

Amazonomaches

A mythological war between Greek heroes and a tribe of women called Amazons.

Anastole

An attribute of Alexander the Great referring to the off centre parting of the hair. Commonly associated with royalty and youth.

Chi-Rho

Monogram symbolising the presence of Christ. From the Greek letters "X–P" the Greek version of "Christ".

Cynegetic

Alternative name for hunting scenes.

Diadoch

The official successors of Alexander the Great.

Globus cruciger

A globe with a cross mounted on-top. A symbol of imperial power.

Iconoclasm

A movement in Byzantine society that banned the use of holy images between the AD 726-843.

Iconoclast

From the Greek for "image destroyer" , a supporter of Iconoclasm

Labarum

Tall processional staff carried by the emperor - a sign of imperial power.

Loros

A jewelled scarf worn by an emperor in official processions or imperial images.

Missorium

A large silver dish with Imperial imagery, used for presentational purposes.

Monophysite

A person who maintains that there is only one nature. Closely related to iconoclastic belief.

Orant/ Orans

The early Christian posture for praying.

Pistos en Christo Basileus

"The emperor who believes in Christ".

Pendoulia

Hanging ornaments from a crown- usually worn by an emperor or empress.

Sassania

A member of the Persian dynasty ruling from c. AD 211-651

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