

The status of Serena and the Stilicho diptych

Alan Cameron

One of the best known (and best preserved) of late-antique ivories is what is generally known as the Stilicho diptych, kept in the tesoro of the cathedral at Monza. It represents a military man with a spear and shield on one panel, and, on the other, a high-ranking woman holding a flower above the head of a small boy, not more than 10 years old; he stands between them wearing a *chlamys* and holding the codicils of office in his left hand (fig. 1). Ever since the basic article by C. Jullian more than 130 years ago,¹ it has been generally accepted that the only candidates who fit this description are the western *magister utriusque militiae* Stilicho (d. 408), his wife Serena, the niece and (according to Claudian) adoptive daughter of Theodosius I, and their son Eucherius, appointed to the office of *tribunus et notarius* in (probably) 395/6.²



Fig. 1. Stilicho diptych, Monza; original hinging: the panels should be reversed (photo Wikimedia).

1 C. Jullian, "Le diptyche de Stilicon au trésor de Monza," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 2 (1882) 5-35.

2 See the entry for Eucherius in *PLRE* II.404.