ŚWIATOWIT Supplement Series C: Pontica et Caucasica, vol. III

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The Natsvlishvili Family Collection

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Introduction

The private collection of engraved gems and related objects, which is presented to a wider audience in this book, embraces a broad range of both geographical and chronological areas that can be properly described with one word – eclecticism. Although the information about the history of this assemblage is vague, closer examination of the material reveals the intention to build up a cabinet that would illustrate development of glyptic art from the very beginning to contemporary times. This is very true for other aspects of the Natsvlishvili Family collecting habits as it managed to gather Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek and Roman antiquities together with modern paintings, sculpture, porcelain and other objects of various kinds, provenance and chronology. The structure of the collection also confirms a special interest in stone materials by the creator of the cabinet – Konstantine Natsvlishvili (1918–1993), as apart from being a successful engineer, he was also a keen mineralogist. The nearly 200 objects exhibit biographical links. Some groups were probably incorporated into the cabinet from older Russian collections, whereas others have been unearthed in the neighbourhoods of Tbilisi, Mtskheta and Kutaisi. Many objects were purchased from the art market in the capital city of Georgia – Tbilisi, which already in the second half of the 19th century had become a significant art trade centre in this part of the world. In the course of the 20th century, Tbilisi became an even more attractive location for dealers of antiquities and works of art to have their businesses there. This was due to, firstly, the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the Soviet reality that came into being shortly after it in 1922, as well as the Second World War that came to an end in 1945.

Georgia still surprises us with the richness of its cultural heritage and collections of art of all kinds in its possession. The priceless heritage of Georgia results from the fact that it was always located in the intersection of great Eurasian civilisations, which is confirmed by the diverse archaeological heritage. Deposits of natural resources, especially precious metals, as well as being on the Silk Road guaranteed economic success and resulted in creation of the strong nobility class that invested heavily in collecting artworks. The rapid industrialisation during the Soviet period boosted the country's development as well. All these factors contributed to the current state of Georgian cultural heritage. It is not only an effect of national pride, but also of private interests in art among many individuals in the past and present who often emigrated and came back with newly acquired artworks enriching it. This heritage is safeguarded and preserved in museums and collections throughout Georgia. Naturally, the state takes a leading role in this task, but private collectors should also contribute, especially if the objects they hold are of high aesthetic, scientific and cultural value, and invaluably contribute to our understanding of past societies and products they manufactured.

This is very much the case of this collection which was not dispersed after the death of its former owner or sold abroad by descendants as was often the practice in Georgia in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the descendant, being proud of the past accomplishment of his grandfather and preceding generations, decided to share a part of his heritage worldwide and expose it to critical investigations for the first time. This in short order presented the typical problem of all private and public collections of engraved gems: which objects are genuinely ancient, which are modern works of this miniature art and which are contemporary fakes. The particularly exciting issue of the distinction between these categories is addressed in a short introductory essay. This was possible as the book includes both the ancient material produced locally and originating from the neighbouring regions of the Near East or brought by the Roman armies and the Renaissance, Baroque and Neo-Classical (especially Russian) gems testifying the tremendously important role of Tbilisi as an art market centre since the second half of the 19th century. Georgia is famous for its ancient goldsmithing, icons and many more, however, it is

little known for being the art trade centre it has been for centuries. Right now, the country is on the course not only to make its cultural accomplishments available for everyone, but also to make its past significance as an art trade centre more recognisable. This includes state encouragement for private collections to be revealed rather than kept in secrecy and publication of the Natsvlishvili Family collection of engraved gems is one step towards that goal. Moreover, ancient gems, many of which possibly are local products, attract attention because they illustrate provincial specifics that are difficult to notice due to the scarcity of reference material published in Georgia itself and beyond. This depicts the need to embark on profound research on the subject of engraved gems from Georgia in the future, especially on the museum collections which offer more reliable provenance information.

In addition to this, the Natsvlishvili Family collection includes examples of the post-war production of fake antiquities in the Near East and illustrate another serious problem with studies of the gems from this area. These are usually neglected both in the research and publications, but they are deliberately studied and presented here to illustrate this serious and current issue. Many fake engraved gems are circulating on the market while this book is being written and new ones are constantly produced to deceive not only collectors, but also the academia community at large. Identification of some fakes should help both groups, which is another asset of the publication. After all, it will become clear, some forgeries are works of art in their own merits, thus, from an aesthetic point of view, they ought not to be excluded.

Finally, at some points, the book also proves the great importance of provenance studies. Nowadays, this should be a priority no matter whether the collection is being formed by a private individual or an institution. If there had been sufficient information about objects' history, their dates would have been less controversial. The book itself is a clear manifesto of Polish-Georgian friendship and cooperation as well. Respect for cultural heritage is one of the many qualities both countries share and cherish.

It is somehow symbolic that the research and publication of the Natsvlishvili Family collection take place around 100 years after the birth of its creator. In this way, his enthusiasm towards art and minerals shall be properly celebrated.

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Work on such an eclectic collection required consultations with experts and comparison of various opinions. Therefore, I am grateful for help received from the following: Gabriella Tassinari (Università degli Studi di Milano), Hadrien J. Rambach (Brussels) and Martin Henig (University of Oxford) with whom I consulted the collection on the whole as well as Jeffrey Spier (J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu), Arianna D'Ottone-Rambach (Università degli Studi 'La Sapienza' di Roma), Kathryn Kelly (University of British Columbia / University of Oxford), Agnete Lassen (Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History), Attilio Mastrocinque (Università di Verona) and Barbara Kaim-Małecka (University of Warsaw) who in turn kindly advised me on individual specimens. The English was revised by Leah Morawiec (Gliwice), however, some last-minute changes were made to the text, for which I take full responsibility. Last but not least, the editorial contribution of Tomasz Płóciennik (University of Warsaw), Karolina Trusz (Foundation for Underwater Archaeology) and the Warsaw University Press team should be recognised as well. The author is deeply grateful for the smooth production process, care and attention to the text editing as well as the wonderful form that the book received.

History of the collection

The Natsvlishvili Family engraved gems collection reflects 20th century Georgian and world dramatic history. To set its chronological framework, it is worth briefly outlining that the Georgian art market started to boom in the second half of the 19th century while the country was a part of the Russian Empire. These were the times when a good number of ambitious entrepreneurs from Tbilisi enriched themselves with the revenues from Baku oil deposits. They created diverse and rich private collections of works of art, and because of their activities, Tbilisi gradually gained a prominent position as one of the major art trade centres within the Russian Empire.[1] Among the popular collectables were antiquities of various kinds. The need for them resulted in a considerable rise of uncontrolled search for jewellery, gems, coins, pottery, sculpture etc. at archaeological sites, ruins and necropolises, especially in the neighbourhoods of Tbilisi, Mtskheta and Kutaisi. Thus, Georgia at that time resembled the 18th century Italy when every corner was scoured for antiquities.[2]

In 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution broke out and it completely transformed the politics of the Russian Empire and the art market map of this part of the world. Many private collections were nationalised in 1918 by the Georgian social-democratic government and now they are the cores of major museum assemblages across the country. This situation was analogous to the one in Russia where numerous family and private collections were nationalised and redistributed among major Soviet state museums.[3] Other collections were often secretly split into smaller parts and auctioned at local art markets or smuggled abroad by emigrants. After the Soviet annexation of Georgia in 1921, the political and economic transformation was at its peak. As a result of the revolution and establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, many Russian aristocratic families fled the country through Georgia bringing remarkable collections of art with them to Tbilisi where they were sold to new owners or passed further to Turkey through the Batumi harbour and then to Western Europe. Alongside them, dealers and smugglers came to Tbilisi, which became a leading art trade centre in the Soviet Union.

Before the outburst of the Second World War, Tbilisi experienced the second major tide of artworks from Russia. In 1930 the Gostrog (the State Export-Import Office of the Soviet Union) removed many items of jewellery (including engraved gems) previously acquired or incorporated to the public museums, now considered less valuable, and put them to the market to be monetized.[4] Thanks to this the position of Tbilisi as an art market centre gained importance too. Intensive trade with Turkey was ongoing via the Batumi harbour near the Turkish border as well. This contributed to the passing of valuable artefacts through the Tbilisi art market once again, which, like in the second half of the 19th century, became an attractive platform for selling newly discovered antiquities.

This was the time when the Natsvlishvili Family started to purchase intaglios and cameos from the art market, building first a small cabinet. Most of the objects acquired were set in decorative 19th and early 20th century mounts produced within the Russian Empire. During the turbulent history

1 Regarding engraved gems specifically, ca. middle of the 19th century, St. Petersburg was the most important gem-trade centre in Russia, which is documented, for instance, by the history of the Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński collection, see: Gołyźniak 2017, 32–38, as well as many private Russian colections formed at that time, see: Arsentyeva, Gorskaya 2019.

2 This was typical for the period concerned Georgia was not the only place where antiquities were excavated in a totally uncontrolled way, often only to meet the needs of private collectors, but this phenomenon was well developed in the whole area of northern and eastern coasts of the Black Sea, see: Arsentyeva, Gorskaya 2019, 23–25.

3 Kagan 1973, 8; Arsentyeva, Gorskaya 2019, 24.

4 Arsentyeva, Gorskaya 2019, 24–25.

of the collection they were lost, but today several gems probably copy famous ancient pieces kept in the State Hermitage Museum (nos 102–106, 111, 127 and 129), as well as those which were possibly manufactured after the works produced in the Russian Imperial gem workshops active in the Ural Mountains region and surroundings of St. Petersburg (nos 128, 130, 132–133 and 139–142). It is very likely that those gems were the first ones in the Natsvlishvili Family collection, and they originate from older Russian cabinets. Nevertheless, the phenomena described above make it clear that reconstruction of Natsvlishvili Family gems' provenance is virtually impossible.

During the Second World War, the art trade in Tbilisi ceased almost completely, but shortly after 1945, the city once more became an important regional art market. Amateur excavations and illegal plundering of rich neighbouring necropolises was a serious problem in the first post-war decades and, sadly, one of the main sources for engraved gems. Besides that, Tbilisi attracted traders and dealers from other countries to come with their treasuries. Items from Turkey, Syria and Iran were imported to the city (and forgeries alongside them), while another way around, Russian and other east-Mediterranean collections were delivered there just to further pass Turkey and be auctioned in Western Europe.

After the de-Stalinisation in the late 50s, the situation changed a bit when the Soviet Union began controlling export of various goods, including works of art, more strictly. Nevertheless, still, Tbilisi remained, after Moscow and St. Petersburg, the third major city on the art market map in the country, mostly due to the earlier accumulation of various collectables, although dealers were still quite active there.

Between ca. the late 1930s and early 1960s, the essential part of the Natsvlishvili Family collection of engraved gems was formed by the eminent Georgian Soviet engineer, Konstantine Natsvlishvili (1918–1993). His professional interest included mineralogy, which is reflected in the great variety of the gemstones used for the intaglios and cameos presented in this catalogue. Many of them are made of rare materials and it seems that this was the key criterion for the collector when he decided whether to purchase an object or not. The provenance and chronology played a secondary although also important role. Most likely because of that, there is a strong representation of the Renaissance, Baroque and Neo-Classical gems within the assemblage. Konstantine's knowledge of glyptic art is difficult to be measured, but engraved gems were never the main focus of his collecting activities for sure. He was an enthusiast of antiquities, especially stone artefacts, 17th–18th century West European furniture, ethnography, porcelain, and 18th–19th century European and Russian decorative art.

It seems quite likely that a good portion of ancient gems in the Natsvlishvili Family collection originate from Georgia itself and neighbouring countries. This might be the case especially for the Hellenistic, Roman Republican, Roman, Sassanian and magical gems – nos 28–82 – categories which are often found on Georgian archaeological sites and form the museum collections.[5] Whether they were bought from reliable sources or obtained from local dealers and finders will remain a mystery forever because Konstantine's transactions were not recorded in any way. Nevertheless, it is tempting to perceive his stays during realisations of engineering projects in Tbilisi (close to Mtskheta) and Kutaisi as potential occasions for extension of his collection of antiquities. The structure of the gem-cabinet is largely diversified and also includes Near Eastern cylinder and stamp seals, Greek Bronze Age seal, Graeco-Persian gems, and Egyptian scarabs and amulets (nos 1–27). These classes of gems are very rarely found in Georgia itself and were most likely imported to the Tbilisi art market.[6] Likewise, gems produced in Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Poland and Russia throughout the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries (nos 83–153), were possibly incorporated from older (Russian?) collections through purchase or exchange while they were passing Tbilisi on the way from deep Soviet Union territories to Western Europe.

The Natsvlishvili Family collection of engraved gems was enlarged until the early 1960s and it was inevitable that some contemporary (late 19th and 20th century) forgeries found their way into it. The history of some objects reaches relatively recent times (nos 154–196), but this is a common phenomenon for the cabinets formed in the area of Georgia, Syria, Turkey and Jordan.[7]

5 Lordkipanidze 1954–1967; Javakhishvili 1972; Ramishvili 1979.

6 Lordkipanidze 1971, 103.

7 Compare for instance: Henig, Whiting 1987, nos 459–488; Middleton 2001, nos 58–59.

In those circumstances, the collection of nearly four hundred cylinders, stamp seals, intaglios, cameos and medallions was created by the Natsvlishvili Family, notably by Konstantine Natsvlishvili (1918–1993), over more than 50 years. It was created alongside other, highly interesting pieces of art (antiquities, paintings, furniture, silverwares, porcelain etc.). It seems that mainly Konstantine's interest in mineralogy was later reforged into a true passion that resulted in a collection illustrating the development of glyptic art from its very beginnings to contemporary times. The structure of the cabinet clearly shows a well-thought out intention even though a portion of the material was acquired fortuitously. Being in his late years, the collector decided to divide his cabinet in two parts and pass it to his two sons so that each received about 200 engraved gems along with other objects of art. The part presented in this volume has been preserved by the third generation of one of the branches of the family locked in a time capsule for almost last sixty years.

Ancient or not ancient – that is the question

Fraud has a long history in human civilisation. Forging seals was a popular practice throughout history affecting even the oldest items of glyptic art. Collon makes note of several Post-Akkadian cylinder seals that were later re-cut or re-invented by later ancient forgers, who aspired to imitate the Mesopotamian style of the late 3rd millennium BC.[8] On the other hand, Pliny points to the fact that at the turn of the 1st century BC/AD in Rome, gem cutters sometimes used to cheat their buyers producing glass intaglios and cameos that they sold as made of authentic gemstones. This is the first literary recorded massive example of fraudulent practices to be employed in glyptics. In his *Natural History*, Pliny subsequently advises how to tackle this problem and how to distinguish a glass forgery from a genuine stone.[9]

Since the Renaissance, gem engravers have attempted to equal and surpass their ancient counterparts.[10] Because of the high demand for classical gems among dealers and collectors, some carvers sought to pass off modern works as ancient.[11] Some forged only the signatures of famous Greek and Roman artists, which were added to genuine ancient stones in order to enhance their value at the market or created series of neo-classical gems with fabricated signatures like in case of the famous Poniatowski collection.[12] Repetitious copying and considerable decrease in the quality of workmanship, dispersion of important collections combined with increasing number of gems of doubtful authenticity ultimately contributed to the collapse of the trade in gems in the second half of the 19th century.[13] As a result, archaeologists face big problems because, in terms of glyptics, it is difficult to formulate a clear-cut definition of a forgery.[14] The best one seems to be that proposed by Spier, who writes that a forgery is an object which is intended to deceive, but he automatically states that one cannot always determine the intention of the maker.[15] For as early as in the Medieval times ancient gems were reinterpreted and given completely new meanings,[16] while the Renaissance engravers (especially those producing cameos) worked in a style very close to that of their ancient predecessors, but usually ancient gems served as sources of inspiration rather than being directly copied, although, naturally copies and fakes were produced as well.[17] As to the 18th and 19th centuries, a general observation is that in the course of time and for various reasons, for instance, due to the *grand tour* phe-

8 Collon 2005, 39 and 96.

9 Pliny, *NH*, XXXVII 76. Generally speaking, Pliny lists glass as one of the materials ancient seals were made of as glass gems in ancient Rome were particularly popular. Nevertheless, his advices on how to differ a glass gem from a hardstone one clearly suggest that sometimes clients were mislead and while they wished their seals to be made of hardstones, they received imitations in glass.

10 For a detailed study of this problem, see: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 291–304 (with further literature).

11 Plantzos 1999, 2. Not only classical gems have been falsified. This problem was and is still significant for any other kind of glyptic artefact, for instance Arabic and Persian seals, see: Porter 2017, 11–12.

12 On this problem, see: Rudoe 1993, 24–25. On Prince Stanislas Poniatowski (1754–1833) collection of engraved gems, see: Wagner 2008; Wagner 2013; Rambach 2014. However, it must be highlighted that Prince wanted illustrations of classical myth whether or not there were known glyptic examples and he had what may be the peak of neo-classical glyptic art from various artists, so that his motivations cannot be described as clear intention for production of classical forgeries. On the problem of forgeries of 'already fake' Poniatowski gems, see: Gołyźniak 2016.

13 Plantzos 1999, 3; Berges 2011, 151; Gołyźniak 2017, 57–58.

14 Plantzos 1999, 3; Tassinari 2018.

15 Spier 2007, 171.

16 Zwierlein-Diehl 1997.

17 Spier 2007, 171; Wagner 2017, 114–116.

nomenon and discoveries in Pompeii and Herculaneum, the demand for classical gems increased so much that many carvers specialised in production of modern gems that would not only take inspiration from ancient counterparts regarding the subject-matter, but also imitate their styles, techniques and even the gemstones used.[18] They were often artists and forgers in one working for greedy dealers like Thomas Jenkins (1724–1798), a notorious dealer in antiquities, mainly over-restored or forged. As reported by the English sculptor Joseph Nolekens (1737–1823), who worked for Jenkins in the 1760s, in Rome: 'Jenkins followed the trade of supplying the foreign visitors with intaglios and cameos made by his own people, that he kept in a part of the ruins of the Coliseum, fitted up for 'em to work in slyly by themselves. I saw 'em at work though, and Jenkins gave a whole handful of 'em to me to say nothing about the matter to anybody else but myself. Bless your heart! He sold 'em as fast as they made 'em'.[19] Sometimes it can be confusing because a modern artist may have not wished his work to be taken as ancient, but a greedy dealer sold the piece as an ancient work.[20]

Today it is difficult to understand the basic principles of the 18th century gem trade and collecting intertwining at that time with first truly scholarly works. A good illustration of that is Baron Philipp von Stosch (1691–1757) who published one of the most influential treatise on engraved gems signed by ancient carvers.[21] His book was well-received and gained Stosch great popularity and appreciation as a gem connoisseur. Moreover, it laid foundations for what may be considered as modern glyptic studies. However, recent critical investigations reveal that some of the gems published by Stosch in his book are not ancient.[22] It is problematic to say whether the author was aware of that or not since even his great knowledge and extraordinary taste could be deceived by the high number of already existing fakes. On the other hand, it is evidenced that modern gem engravers like Flavio Sirleti (1683–1737) or Lorenz Natter (1705–1763) worked at Stosch's atelier in Rome and Florence respectively cutting some copies of ancient masterpieces or creating new artworks inspired by ancient ones but probably not intended to be taken as genuine.[23] Those most skilful artists were able to produce the best copies that do not differ from ancient prototypes at all. Their works are still taken as genuine unless their documentation emerges proving them to be copies like in case of an intaglio bearing one of the episodes from Homer's *Iliad* once in the celebrated Medina, Bessborough and Marlborough collections and now housed in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.[24]

As time passed and enthusiasm towards gem collecting in western Europe was slowly cooling off in the second half of the 19th century, production of fake engraved gems was still considerable in other parts of the world. Count Michael Tyszkiewicz (1828–1897) in his *Memoires of an Old Collector* mentions that at the turn of the 18th and 19th century forgery of ancient intaglios indeed blossomed into a particularly flourishing business. Nevertheless, it is intriguing what he says about his own times because, towards the end of the 19th century, frauds were scarcely produced in Italy, which was the most productive location for gem engraving in the Neo-Classical era, while a great number of fakes were manufactured in the Near East by the cleverest forgers. He even tells a story about the discovery of a group of truly ancient undecorated scarabs in Cyprus which once taken by forgers were given decoration at the highest level of craftsmanship and were virtually indistinguishable from the fully genuine objects.[25]

Although, as it has been said, the trade in engraved gems fell apart almost completely in the second half of the 19th century, still in the 20th century and even today, fake antiquities, including intaglios

18 Berges 2011, 131–158; Platz-Horster 2012, 36–37; London 2014. On this subject in particular see: Zwierlein-Diehl 1993; Tassinari 2015; Tassinari 2018.

19 Smith 1895, 222.

20 Jaffé 1993. A particularly intriguing case is Lorenz Natter (1705–1763) who admits that he cut copies of ancient masterpieces but claims that he never intended his works to be taken as ancient (1754).

21 Stosch 1724. On Stosch as one of the most prominent figures of the 18th century antiquarianism, see: Furtwängler 1900, vol. III, 409–410 and 415–417; MacKay Quynn 1941; Lewis 1961, 38–90; 1967; Borroni Salvadori 1978, 565–614; Zazoff, Zazoff 1983, 3–67; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 274–275; Hansson 2014, 13–33; Rambach (forthcoming).

22 Rambach (forthcoming).

23 Natter 1754, XXXII; Hansson 2014, 15–16 and 22; Tassinari 2018. Actually, many more gem engravers were active in Stosch's atelier and produced copies of ancient gems for him, see: Hansson 2014, 22, note 58.

24 For the gem, see: Boardman *et al*. 2009, no. 339. For the discussion on its genuineness, see: Tassinari 2018.

25 Tyszkiewicz 1898, 157–158.

and cameos, continue to be produced. This is especially the case of the Near East region, which in the first half of the 20th century produced a sophisticated series of fake cylinder seals that can be now grouped together according to their peculiar styles.[26] After the Second World War the regions like Syria, Levant and surroundings yield with the most ambitious and numerous forgeries of all types of antiquities. Regarding the early Christian and Byzantine engraved gems, Spier observes that such a phenomenon was or still is considerable and its products flood the art markets in Western Europe.[27] This applies to other categories of gems, especially the good Roman ones and cylinder seals which have been abundantly recovered in the Near Eastern area quite freely without control of the state and regional officials. Such a state of affairs provokes forgers to create their products without limits and having direct access to original ancient works, they can easily and successfully mislead potential clients and scholars alike. Collon reports remarkable Achaemenid-style forgeries made of agate now on the market and Neo-Babylonian and Sassanian gems have been always popular among forgers because they are relatively quick and easy to make.[28] It is difficult to find a good solution to this problem that would satisfy collectors, authorities, scholars and others involved alike. As long as there is increasing demand for antiquities and prices for engraved gems and seals get higher and higher, their buyers will continue to be cheated by malicious mischief makers and forgers. An idealist's advice would be to avoid purchasing unprovenanced antiquities and this rule is applied by some collectors. Yet, others will always be focused on making a profit, which cannot be fully unrooted and pours fuel to the current production of fakes.

For all these reasons, it is extremely difficult to judge and classify every single collection of engraved gems originating from the Near East and neighbouring areas, especially if it presents an eclectic mixture of all kinds of glyptic objects imaginable and virtually lacks provenance information, as it is the case of the one occupying this volume. Modern forgeries of seals, intaglios and cameos often qualify as works of art in their own right, but not as antiquities, hence, they are often neglected.[29] However, it is imperative to publish research on such objects too as they help us to understand the differences between the originals and fakes. Thanks to this, it is possible to identify the latter and to tackle the problem of their production. Scholars, authorities and collectors alike would benefit from such an action as the first will be aware of existence of fakes and could identify further examples even in already published collections, the second could more successfully fight against smugglers and forgers, while collectors could avoid being deceived by untrustworthy sellers.[30] For the archaeological community such research is of crucial importance for two reasons. First, every single genuine object enriches our understanding of past societies. It provides new information about the makers and users, the craft and taste, religious and political beliefs, and many more. Moreover, the study of collections of engraved gems, even private ones, raises interest in this form of art locally and internationally as well as appreciation of the cultural heritage of the country where they are formed, like it is the case here. Second, forgeries distort our picture of antiquity sometimes to a considerable degree, for example, if a group of their products is accepted as a peculiar local style. The relationships between the truly existing peoples become blurred and unintelligible, which often leads to a great puzzle tackled by unnecessarily complex and unbelievable hypotheses, while simple means, e.g. forgery identification, is set aside. Hence, it is hoped that all the research presented here and supported by the Georgian authorities provides sufficient evidence for the superiority of even mediocre but truly ancient artefacts over sometimes more appealing modern and contemporary forgeries. Furthermore, many items in this collection are controversial and remain so even after their careful examination. Sometimes this is due to the fact that there is limited comparanda material or saying it another way if there were more unpopular, probably fake gems published, their identification would be much easier.

In the late 19th century, Middleton stated as follows: 'In no other branch of art is it so difficult to distinguish the genuine antique from the modern forgery; partly because age does nothing to alter or decompose in any way the surface of a hard gem, and secondly because, owing to the hardness

26 Collon 2005, 94.

27 Spier 2007, 171.

28 Collon 2005, 94.

29 Collon 2005, 94.

30 Porada 1968, 149.

of the material and the laborious method of working it, there is necessarily something mechanical in the cut and bite of the graving tools, and this diminishes the prominence of the artist's personal peculiarities and touch'.[31] Despite the fact that almost 130 years have passed, these words still have great meaning for every person pursuing the study engraved gems, no matter whether they be an archaeologist, art historian, connoisseur or a collector. This fact sounds very discouraging and indeed many scholars and collectors are deterred by the nature of glyptics, its complexity and huge number of various issues, among which, genuineness seems the most important. One may ask how to study them since every judgment can be easily questioned? In answer to that can be recalled the words of Goethe, who was a keen gem collector and said this: 'Those, who wish to cast doubt on everything, will especially do so when discussing gems. Might this piece be a classical copy or is it a modern reproduction? Could it be another version of a known original or is it a mere imitation? One moment the stone itself raises doubts, the next moment the inscription – which should otherwise be of particular interest – is called into question. To engage with gems is thus even trickier than to get involved with ancient coins, although the latter also require considerable circumspection (...)'.[32] Indeed, no fully objective scientific method exists for proving the antiquity of engraved gems and probably it will never be discovered or invented.

Count Tyszkiewicz claimed that a person who seeks to estimate the value of engraved gems needs to be born with a sort of special instinct because hard work is not enough. Further, he thought that nothing is more important than cultivation of one's gift for gems most importantly by maintaining continuous contact with the objects themselves.[33] This is one of the fundamental and still very significant principle in the study of engraved gems because constantly developed experience with all kinds of glyptic objects guarantee reduction of potential risk of being cheated and misled by forgeries. Count Tyszkiewicz is the best example of that because his first collection of engraved gems was a complete failure: 'In fifteen months I had expended 125,000 francs (5,000 l) in gems, two-thirds of them at least being modern – a fact we were both [with Alessandro Castellani] far from guessing. But towards the end of this time my eyes became a little sharper in detecting the good from the bad, thanks to the counsel of more learned friends, and also from the comparison of the bulk of my acquisitions with a few that were really first class, which, luckily, had been sold me with the rest. Saddened at my own folly, I sold the whole collection to Castellani for the fourth part of what it had cost me, and he, with more sense than I had shown, weeded out the palpably false gems, left the doubtful ones (a large number), added some that he had bought at a later date, and ended by selling them all to the British Museum. It was a lesson for me, and a good lesson too. From that time I understood that I must study the science of gems from the very beginning, and I threw myself into it with an ardour which was soon its own reward. And that was the history of my first collection of gems'.[34] However, the second collection of intaglios and cameos created by this extraordinary connoisseur and collector many years later was admirable and gained considerable fame and appreciation.[35]

Usually imitations of ancient gems, unless they are made by very skilful, clever and learned forgers who have access to original ancient gems and studied and copied their characteristics, are inconsistent at one point or another. In other words, it is sometimes the stone, technique, style, iconography or another detail which betrays the misleading intention and proves the object to be a forgery.[36] If one has to question all the knowledge, logic and rationality in their analysis of the item to believe its authenticity, then one is most likely dealing with a fake. In this short essay, I would like to outline the methodology that helps to understand how scholars of the present-day approach whole collections and individual objects in order to determine which intaglios and cameos are or may be truly

31 Middleton 1892, 30.

32 Zazoff, Zazoff 1983, 190. The original text sounds as follows: 'Nun aber findet die Zweifelsucht kein reicheres Feld sich zu ergehen als gerade bei geschnittenen Steinen; bald heißt es eine alte, bald eine modernę Copie, eine Wiederholung, eine Nachahmung; bald erregt der Stein Verdacht, bald eine Inschrift, die von besonderem Werth sein sollte, und so ist es gefährlicher sich auf Gemmen einzulassen, als auf antike Münzen, obgleich auch hier eine große Umsicht gefordert wird (...)'. On the gem collection of Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), see: Femmel, Heres 1977.

33 Tyszkiewicz 1898, 18–20.

34 Tyszkiewicz 1898, 33–34.

35 Tyszkiewicz 1898, 77–81 and 188; Furtwängler 1900, vol. III, 428; Snitkuvienė 2007, 199–201; Gałczyńska 2008, 217 (with further literature).

36 Middleton 1892, 30; Tyszkiewicz 1898, 20–21.

ancient and which are not. Owing to the fact that the number of published gems, and thus available to all, has sharply increased over the past century, undoubtedly, scholars are in a better position now than Middleton was in the late 19th century. The year 1900 and publication of a systematic and thorough study of ancient engraved gems by Furtwängler is still a landmark of the greatest revolution in the studies of glyptic art in history.[37] For only a meticulous and careful investigation of many gems, especially those with certain provenance, e.g. from stratigraphic archaeological excavations, enables to determine their date and cultural significance. The text below includes references to the material presented in this book since many objects are perfect illustrations of most of the problems.

Provenance

The first step in determining whether a cameo, intaglio, cylinder seal or a scarab is a genuine ancient object or not is analysis of all the information concerning its provenance and if applicable also ascertaining context. For instance, Platz-Horster proved this method to be particularly helpful for dating some cameos in Berlin that were found in 1876 in Petescia (Turania today) and several more discovered in 1920 in a burial next to Rome.[38] Her study of those finds is a wonderful example, not only because 18 objects in total unquestionably proved to be ancient works, but because they now serve as points of reference for other similar objects scattered throughout various public and private collections. Moreover, a great amount of the insight into the context of use of these gems and their durability and preciousness since some Hellenistic cameos, although created hundred years earlier than the rest of the hoard, were still in use at the point of its deposit. There are many more examples of such situations,[39] thus, all the controlled and well-documented archaeological finds of engraved gems are so important for the studies of glyptic art. In fact, finding a glyptic object during controlled excavations is the only fully objective and secure way to prove that it is truly ancient. Less secure are also finds of engraved gems in the areas already confirmed as glyptic centres like Aquileia or hoards, for instance Xanten and Carnuntum.[40]

Regrettably, none of the specimens presented in this book entirely accounts to this category of evidence. Most of the cylinder and stamp seals (nos 3–11 and 156–162) originally had soil on their surfaces and inside of the drilled points (the latter has not been removed) prior to the beginning of my investigations, which may imply that some of these were unearthed at some point at unspecified archaeological sites and then delivered to the collector directly or purchased through the art market (the latter seems more likely as there is no record of his direct interest in archaeology as a science or method for obtaining antiquities). However, forgers use highly sophisticated techniques and methods, for instance, to create the bronze or glass patina, so it is not a big deal for them to make a piece dirty and rub it so that it would look recently excavated. This is the case of several cylinder seals in this collection (nos 156–162) since other, more reliable methods like analysis of iconography and inscriptions proved them to be fakes too. The same is the case of the gold glass medallion (no. 76), which has been only partially cleaned from the soil so that the original patina was not removed during the process. Much of it is preserved in the hanger and again, one wonders if this object was unearthed somewhere or just deliberately soiled to make it look more ancient and authentic. In this case though, in some parts the soil strongly adhered (or literary rooted) to the original patina which is not easy to make by artificial

37 Furtwängler 1900. Foundations for Furtwängler's great systematisation of ancient glyptics was the outstanding collection in Berlin which he catalogued in 1896. Yet, even his work was not free of error as it turned out in the recent study of Berlin's cameos, see: Platz-Horster 2012, 36. This by no means decreases Furtwängler's merits in the study of glyptics art, but only makes one aware that even the greatest scholarly authorities can be sometimes misled by clever forgeries.

38 Platz-Horster 2012, 49–59.

39 For example, many of the gems amassed by Henig in his corpus of engraved gems from Britain have been found by archaeologists during regular excavations, see: Henig 2007. The same is the case of many gems recovered archaeologically in France, see: Guiraud 1988–2008. There is no point in bringing here more examples since it is obvious that every single recorded gem-find significantly contributes to our understanding of the nature of the craft, methods of engraving, specific dating system, cultural and material value of the piece and, of course, to the matter of distinction between ancient gems and modern creations. In addition, gems found in places like Pompeii and Herculaneum, now housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, are also of great help for the studies of gems chronology and authenticity because they are provided with *terminus ante quem* of 79 AD, see: Pannuti 1983; 1994.

40 On Aquileia as a glyptic centre in antiquity, see: Sena Chiesa 1966. On Xanten and Carnuntum as regular gem-find locations, see: Platz-Horster 1987; 1994; Dembski 2005.

means and may indicate that the object was buried for a long period of time. Perhaps then, one should not be too suspicious and dismiss every piece of evidence straight away. It is not good to take everything at face value, but if there is no other contradictory argument, such a detail like the soiling of the object should be taken as an asset in the judgment of its authenticity. Sometimes there are more worrying elements which suggest otherwise, and those cases will be further discussed below. As stated in the history of the collection, it seems quite likely that a good portion of ancient gems in the Natsvlishvili Family collection originate from Georgia itself and neighbouring countries. This might be the case especially for the Graeco-Persian, Hellenistic, Roman Republican, Roman, magical gems and Sassanian (nos 25–82) categories which are found on Georgian archaeological sites and represent the most distinctive groups in the museum collections.[41] Whether they were bought from reliable sources or obtained from local dealers and finders will remain a mystery forever because none of the art market or else transactions have been recorded. Nevertheless, it is tempting to perceive Konstantine Natsvlishvili's stays during realisations of engineering projects in Tbilisi (close to Mtskheta), Kutaisi and Odessa as potential occasions for extension of his collection of antiquities. Perhaps some mentioned gems could have originated from those areas. Unfortunately, there is also no information as to the previous owners of the clearly modern gems.

State of preservation

The state of preservation of an object and its general condition are equally important for authenticity investigations of engraved gems as provenance studies. In this term, the first thing to be observed is whether the intaglios and cameos presented to us are completely clean or betray signs of being stored for many years which usually result in dust and dirt accumulated in their nooks and crannies. If that is the case, it may be assumed that the objects did not leave the workshop a couple days or months ago and are fresh fakes. In case of the collection in question here, all the gems presented themselves as stored for many years, requiring considerable efforts to be properly cleaned. Furthermore, the incomplete, chipped and damaged pieces may be sold for considerably lower prices on the art market, which is generally undesirable by the forgers, thus, all the major imperfections may speak in favour of the authenticity of the object, unless this was made on a purpose to take it as such (mostly in case of small chips but some forgers also tend to break their seals to make them more authentic).[42] Small chips on the stones' edges are usually the effect of pulling the object out of its original setting, usually a ring, which could raise higher interest to the re-user, possessor or finder as it was often made of a precious metal, easier to sell or melt than a gem. Such chips are observable on many ancient stones in this collection (for example, nos 30–33, 42–44, 46–47, 49–50, 55–56, 59–60 and 75). Sometimes the contours of ancient gemstones are frayed or strongly worn on one side or another due to their long use and imperfect setting in the ring. The best example of that is the glass intaglio presenting emperor Caracalla on no. 51, where the gem is considerably worn on the right side behind the head due to a chip in the ring's bezel and it is generally chipped on the edges because the object was set too highly in the ring and its edges protruded, which exposed them to danger. Basing on this, similar features have, for instance, nos 30–33, 35, 46–49, 53, 55–56, 62, 68, 78 and 81. The cracks and chips may also appear on modern gems for the same reasons but usually, they do not and if the stone has perfect contours and edges and its surface is highly polished without any traces of its actual use and wearing so that its unequivocal brilliance makes a direct impression – this makes an object a suspicious one. This feature can be observed on almost all intaglios classified here as modern (nos 83–96, 102–118 and 120–122).

Furthermore, the much-worn effect is often observable on ancient intaglios of which the best illustration here are nos 30, 47, 78 and 81–82. Of course, this is not an ultimate proof for a gem to be taken as a genuine ancient piece. Middleton informs us about an intriguing method employed by gem forgers who used to give the freshly cut gems their chickens and turkeys to eat because the acid and gravel in birds' craws and stomachs altered the surface of the gemstones so that they looked worn and ancient and ultimately the carvers could mislead their clients this way.[43] Regarding forg-

41 Lordkipanidze 1954–1967; Javakhishvili 1972; Ramishvili 1979. However, it must be stressed that only a selection of gems from the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi is published, while other museum collections remain unpublished. Therefore, the control group was relatively small in number and it is evident that publication of other museum collections from Georgia is absolutely necessary.

42 Feingold 2014, 78–79.

43 Middleton 1891, 101.

ers of Egyptian scarabs, Wakeling describes their techniques as follows: 'In some cases scarabs are brought straight from the manufactory and placed upon the market. In other cases thy are buried in dung-heaps to give the odour of antiquity, then taken out, oiled and rubbed with dirt, which makes the look old and worn. Then the man will carry about with him for a considerable time, and eventually they get ready to be offered to the unwary collector'.[44] In other cases, freshly cut cameos and intaglios are given the marks of age through a very mechanical process of rubbing and scratching the surface of the stone with the use of various substances including acid or diamond powder mixture combined with iron tools. This feature is observed on no. 192 whose iconography, composition and style also pose some problems, and if all the aspects are taken into consideration, it appears the object is a fraud. One observes the same effect also on more obvious modern works like nos 86, 93 and contemporary ones – 174 and 188–189. Of course, some ancient gems have been preserved with almost intact surfaces if hidden in a tomb for centuries or have been re-polished in modern times to increase their value at the market, which was a popular practice in the 17th and 18th century and affected such celebrated cabinets of gems like the Marlborough or Devonshire.[45] Therefore, the criterion of stone's condition is by no means a definite one, but the features described above help to prove that some specimens were carved in antiquity, while other are modern or contemporary products only imitating the ancient spirit.

Stones: type, shape, form, colour and quality

Concerning the stones themselves, these are also to some degree indicative of gems' genuineness. First of all, some gemstones types were inaccessible in ancient times or engraved very rarely.[46] Mineralogical studies of engraved gems sometimes offer help in the determination of the authenticity and date of intaglios, cameos and other objects made of precious and semi-precious stones.[47] For example, non-destructive PIXE analysis aids in differentiating genuine local products from forgeries imported in modern times from other parts of the world.[48] This is limited to mostly unusual and rarely cut stones and while, for example, most of the Roman intaglios are made of carnelian, agate and other popular gemstones, the usefulness of this method is relatively low. The types of gemstones used also help to determine the chronology of gems within individual classes. For instance, lapis lazuli was widely employed for cylinder seals in the 3rd millennium Mesopotamia (no. 3), while chalcedony was in the Neo-Babylonian period (nos 6–7). Banded agate was the most preferable stone used in the Roman Republic glyptics (nos 30 and 38), in turn, red jasper was fashionable for 2nd century AD Roman Imperial gems (no. 40) and yellow jasper was at its peak in the 3rd century AD (nos 50 and 56). Some materials are extremely rare, but possible to be used in ancient glyptics like peridot (no. 66). Others are completely alien for antiquity like malachite (no. 133).[49] A step further in a stone's analysis is to determine if the type was used in a specific period of time to which the gem aspires iconographically and stylistically. Forms, shapes and sizes of engraved gems have changed over time and each cultural circle has its own repertoire. Clever forgers are aware of the preferences towards particular stones in antiquity, but the less learned ones make mistakes as in case of no. 157, which is made of serpentine that ceased to be a popular material for seals in the Post-Akkadian period and no. 159, which is an utterly atypical kind of chalcedony for the period it was intended to be taken for (Kassite).[50] The inconsistencies in materials used are usually compatible with other fraudulent aspects of gem engraving like the meaningless inscription and iconographical errors (no. 157) or a subject-matter inspired by coins (no. 166).[51]

Typologies of ancient engraved gems have been much developed by scholars for each class of

44 Wakeling 1912, 83–84.

45 Middleton 1891, 100. This issue has been well illustrated and explained in a study by Zazoff, see: Zazoff 2011.

46 For a full account on this issue, see: Thoresen 2017.

47 Gołyźniak *et al*. 2016.

48 Craddock 2009, 416.

49 Starting at the beginning of the 18th century, malachite was mined in the southern part of the Ural Mountains region in Russia and the discoveries of new sources of this material made ca. 1835 around Chelyabinsk resulted in its greater availability for various kinds of arts. For more on this issue, see: Platz-Horster 2012, no. 772.

50 For other examples of this practice concerning cylinder seals, see: Collon 2005, 94.

51 Regarding forgeries of cylinder seals, see a good account on this problem in: Collon 2005, 94–96.

seals, intaglios and scarabs and they are useful for discovering forgeries as well.[52] For example, the forms of some Egyptian scarabs in the collection in question are problematic (nos 151–153 and 163) as they do not follow classical types. In case of nos 95, 167–169 and 188–191 the forms are abnormal for Roman glyptics to which these gems probably aspired, and in cases of nos 84–85, 102, 106, 108 and 110, the exceedingly large sizes clearly indicate the decorative character of those pieces rather than the utilitarian (sealing) one as it should be in case of most ancient gems.[53] Generally speaking, observation of the average sizes of specific classes of gems is useful for detection of forgeries since their makers often made them slightly bigger than ancient ones. The features described above are not easy to spot at first glance, but it is noteworthy to mention that sometimes it is much easier to decide whether an object is modern, for instance, when it has faceting, which started to be practiced only in the thirteenth century and became widely fashionable in the modern period.[54] But even modern intaglios and cameos, although usually less appreciated than ancient ones, can be falsified by contemporary forgers. Shell was a popular material for cameo production in 19th century Italy and there is one particularly well-accomplished example in this collection (no. 145). Starting in ca. 1910, celluloid, an essentially plastic material, started to be used for cheap fake cameos. There are several criteria to distinguish those from original shell cameos. The latter usually have at least slightly concave (curved) back side because that is the natural shape of most shells. Shell is partially translucent in the tiny parts (background) while plastic is less likely to be so. But above all, shell cameos are carved, and traces of this process are easily observable on their surfaces, whereas plastic cameos are simply moulded from a matrix, thus, having no such marks.

Apart from those, colour and overall quality of the stones should also be taken into account.[55] For instance, according to the stylistic criteria, nos 89, 91 and 96 were clearly cut in the same workshop, possibly even by the same hand. Basically, the gems share subject-matters and all of them were made from the same stone source. As a result, one must dismiss all three as fakes. Similarly, very problematic is a group of three green chalcedony or chrysoprase intaglios (nos 37, 63 and 196). If chrysoprase, the material was rarely used in ancient times and here, if one took some of them as ancient, they would belong to either Roman Republican, Roman Imperial and Sassanian glyptics which does not make much sense owing to their homogenous forms and shapes. Yet, there are differences in style, all three are not carved by the same hand and consequently nos 37 and 63 due to the technical and stylistic criteria are more likely to be taken as ancient, especially no. 63, but the image is distorted by no. 196, which shares the stone type, its form and shape with the other two. Perhaps only that gem is not ancient, but there is some risk that all three intaglios were made relatively recent. The question is if the stylistic criteria are misleading here and observations of the stones alone should be taken as uncovering a fraud? The next problematic group is what the author has named the 'red jasper workshop' group. Nos 175–180 were certainly engraved by the same artist on the stones of the very same quality (veined red jasper). This quality is unusual because the casual Roman red jasper intaglios are made of clear red variant with no imperfections like these (cf. no. 40). Besides those issues, there are some iconographical inconsistencies and stylistic oddities which raise many doubts about the genuineness of the intaglios in question. There are a few more objects also cut in similar style but on slightly better stones, which are probably also products of the same workshop (nos 170–172, 185 and 194–195). Finally, several carnelians were engraved in one contemporary workshop due to their distinctive style (nos 181–182, 183 and 186), however, in this case, the stones themselves are not as suspicious as the previous cases. In contrary, carnelian was one of the most popular materials among local Georgian gem engravers in the Roman Imperial period.[56] The two indicated workshops will be more broadly commented below (cf. pp. 34–36).

In antiquity there was often a connection between gem's colour and the depiction appearing on its sur-

52 For some general typologies of ancient engraved gems, see: AGDS II, pls 49–50 – for Etruscan scarabs; Boardman 2001 – for Greek gems and finger rings; Plantzos 1999, 36 – for Hellenistic gems; Gołyźniak 2017, 90 – for Roman Republican and Roman Imperial gems; Berges 2011, 166 – for modern intaglios. See also useful commentary on this issue in: Spier 2007, 12–13.

53 Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, 281–283.

54 Middleton 1892, 37; Craddock 2009, 416.

55 On the issue of colour preferences of Greek, Phoenician and Etruscan gem engravers, see: Boardman 1991.

56 Lordkipanidze 1971, 107; Gołyźniak 2017, 63.

face.[57] For example, in antiquity, a rare gemstone aquamarine was eployed for cutting marine subjects and significant portraits.[58] Forgers are usually unaware of this fact, thus it is possible to detect a forgery if the subject does not match the type and colour of the gemstone normally used in a specific period of time for a specific representation.

Regarding cameos and the stones used for them, a general mineralogical observation is that in majority the quality of ancient agates, onyxes and sardonyxes was improved by heating and boiling in honey (Corsican in particular) as described by Pliny the Elder in order to give them more decorative colours.[59] One observes that in case of no. 67 here. Naturally, even famous engravers like Eutyches, son of Dioscurides occasionally did not use that technique for their works, but this is far more typical for modern cameos.[60] Like in the case of intaglios, cameos made of unusual stones and variations of agates and chalcedony that are not typically of two (white over dark) or three layers (dark over white and dark) should be immediately taken under suspicion.[61] This applies to a number of cameos in the collection presented here, therefore, nos 98–99, 101, 127–129, 133, 138–142 and 146–148 are all classified as modern products. In the cabinet there are several carnelian cameos too (nos 132, 135–136, 143 and 150). This material was indeed employed for cameos in antiquity but very rarely and the motifs and portraits appearing on the examples in this collection by no means should be accounted for as ancient.

Techniques

After examination of the stones, one turns his eyes to the engraving techniques and methods. These changed very little over time and ancient gem engravers used the same kinds of drills and bits as their modern and contemporary counterparts.[62] A 4th century BC Etruscan scarab in London probably presents a gem engraver at work using a bow and drill,[63] and a 2nd century AD gravestone of a gem carver found in Philadelphia in Asia Minor (Alaşehir in modern Turkey) illustrates the same tool (bow) to be used six hundred years later.[64] Both examples significantly contribute to our understanding of the organisation of a workshop, tools used and methods practised by ancient gem engravers. Thanks to the illustration and extensive description by Mariette, one has an idea how the famous gem carver Jacques Guy (1711–1793) worked in his studio in the mid-18th century and both, the tools (bow and drill) and methods are surprisingly similar to the ancient ones.[65] Another valuable testimony comes from a German gem engraver and medallist Lorenz Natter (1705–1763) who explained not only details of his profession but also gave insight into copies of some famous ancient gems cut by his hand and compared methods used for gem engraving by his contemporaries with the ancient ones.[66] Interestingly enough, Natter explains that copying of ancient gems was a natural part of gem engraver's training which was not meant to deceive anyone and he personally considered it as his ultimate goal to reach the level of mastery of ancient artists.[67] A far more recent example is the contribution of Schmidt, who presents the approach to the material and cutting gems by contemporary gem engravers active in Idar-Oberstein,[68] as well as Zwierlein-Diehl, who focused on the techniques of cameo carving.[69]

As one can see, the basic principles of the craft remain the same for centuries or even millennia and the only true innovation is the electrically driven bow used in the present day. Therefore, distinction between ancient and modern gems is highly problematic from a technical point of view. Only detailed analyses, for instance with the use of scanning electron microscope (SEM), offer some

57 Boardman 1991; Sagiv 2018, 149–160.

58 Gołyźniak 2019, 6–7.

59 Pliny, *NH*, XXXVII 74.

60 Platz-Horster 2012, 31.

61 Platz-Horster 2012, 33.

62 Ogden 1982, 171; Plantzos 1999, 3. For an extensive and up-to-date commentary on this issue, see: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 315–325.

63 Walters 1926, no. 645; Richter 1971, no. 771. However, recently, the piece has been reinterpreted as depicting a carpenter given the scale on which he is working, see: Bruschetti *et al*. 2014, no. III.47.

64 Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 316–318 and figs 337 and 959–960.

65 Mariette 1750, 207–208.

66 Natter 1754.

67 Natter 1754, V.

68 Schmidt 2008.

69 Zwierlein-Diehl 2008, 14–25.

help. For instance, Gorelick and Gwinnett found out that it is possible to differentiate 19th and early 20th fake cylinder seals and those produced contemporarily from genuine ancient ones by examination of their bores structure.[70] In antiquity, cylinder seals (and scarabs alike) were usually pierced longitudinally, and the holes were drilled from each end. As a result, it is more likely for an object to be genuine if the holes do not precisely meet in the centre and there is often an interruption where they meet. Contemporary fakes usually have almost perfectly straight bores because they are pierced from one end only, and they usually lack chipping around the hole and on the edge.[71] In turn, Maaskant-Kleibrink proved SEM to be promising for distinguishing specific styles within one class, for example, Roman Republican or Roman Imperial gems.[72] Such analyses require specific and expensive equipment, but even if these are unavailable to the examiner of the seals and gems, they are not totally powerless as long as they pay attention to details that have often been executed with the use of very specific tools in certain periods. For instance, at the beginning of the second millennium BC some cylinder seals have lines made up of drilled holes, the drill having been partly used as a milling tool, moving laterally.[73] Roman Republican gems cut in the Republican Extinguishing Pellet Style are distinctive for the details accentuated with very tiny blobs used for hair, beards, knees and feet. They are narrowly dated to the second half of the 1st century BC-first half of the 1st century AD and the particularly minute detailing was accomplished with use of the tools having peculiarly small round heads.[74] It is often the case that forgers do not pay sufficient attention to such details. They successfully imitate general rules of a specific class of gems whereas peculiarities of the art of engraving are often omitted or misunderstood because their work is usually mechanical.[75] They do not learn their craft in the way ancient engravers did, thus, make mistakes, omissions and shortcuts that become visible if the examiner has well-trained eyes and is familiar with ancient styles and techniques.[76] Such knowledge is essential, but if one deals with material that possibly originates from poorly researched areas (like Georgia), one ought to stay open-minded for the possibility of existence of local and provincial styles that are insufficiently documented. This might be the case of gems nos 53–54 since they perhaps belong to a local tradition as evidenced by similar gems to have been found around Mtskheta (cf. pp. 32).[77]

Concerning techniques of engraving, there are some more general rules that a person who aims to distinguish a genuine ancient work from a fake should pay attention to. For instance, many modern cameos have the relief undercut on the borders to increase decorative value of the piece as the image is clearly separated from the background, while Hellenistic and Roman ones seldom possess this feature, unless one deals with the Late Antique cameos (no. 65). This is observable on nos 64 and 66–70 and even though the cameos are cut in high relief, the images are not strongly undercut, but rather emerge from the background, while many modern cameos in the collection discussed here have their images undercut (nos 98, 128–129, 135, 137, 139–143 and 146). Nevertheless, better copies of ancient works imitate that feature as evidenced on no. 134.[78] Polishing of the surface might be another indicator of dubious genuineness as the clouding of the internal parts of engraving is typical for ancient gems and not so much for the modern ones.[79] In antiquity, handiwork was the only way for polishing surfaces of intaglios and cameos and it leaves specific traces, while relatively recent cut forgeries are usually polished mechanically, which gives them different, usually perfect-lustre look.[80] The fresh and sharp edges of the cuts and wheels constituting the image engraved upon the stone and high internal polishing are suspicious because contours of the engraved image usually turn dull and blunt

70 Gorelick, Gwinnett 1978.

71 Gorelick, Gwinnett 1978, 43–44; Teissier 1984, 109.

72 Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 59–62; Plantzos 1999, 3; Craddock 2009, 414. However, see the opinion of Zazoff in: Zazoff 2011, 535–540.

73 Craddock 2009, 412.

74 Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 145.

75 See a very good analysis of little elements on several cylinder seals analysed in: Porada 1968, 146–147.

76 Porada 1968, 145–146.

77 Lordkipanidze 1971, 105.

78 It must be highlighted that such observations are not definite and individual gems may vary but the general observations like that regarding cameos undercutting may help in making a decision whether the piece is ancient or not.

79 Ogden 1982, 172; Zazoff 2011, 535–540.

80 Craddock 2009, 413–414.

in the course of time and due to frequent use for sealing.[81] Therefore, if the latter is observed, one is more certain about genuineness of the gem under investigation. Similarly, cylinder seals if have extremely straight and narrow perforations might be suspicious as well. However, as Middleton pointed out, there were less (chikens and turkeys were given gems to eat, digest and poop after which their surfaces were a bit scratched and etched due to the contact with gravel and acid in their stomachs) and more sophisticated techniques applied already in the 19th century to give a surface of the stone and the engraved image a much-worn character.[82] Nowadays, acid is frequently employed to reach the same effect and it also alters the cutting so that one cannot tell the difference between ancient and modern work.[83] As Porada advises, in the case of some groups of cylinder seals, shallow engraving is more likely to point to modern work since ancient engravers used to cut their depictions deeply into the stone.[84] Concerning Egyptian scarabs, the genuine ones can be sometimes re-glazed to enhance their market value, but a watchful observer will notice irregularity of the glazing or dirt captured under it.[85] These are simple but effective ways of differentiation between genuine ancient pieces and fakes.

Regarding other technical problems, all the imperfections related to the form of the gem, especially if it is a scarab, which may be caused by misinterpretation or simple lack of sufficient knowledge of the craft, can betray a work of a forger. No. 163 well illustrates that problem since the form of the scarab is completely misunderstood and even the drilling hole is just marked on both sides instead of being fully pierced. On the other hand, it is also possible for the later alterations to the design of a seal or gem to mislead our judgment. For instance, the cylinder seal no. 3 was probably re-cut in antiquity in order to improve the already worn surface of the seal so that it could be taken for a modern if not contemporary work.[86] Finally, unfinished pieces are problematic from the technical point of view because the form, shape and type of the gemstone used may be not indicative enough to determine authenticity. The gems like no. 55 should not be straightforwardly discarded as not ancient because one can only analyse the major forms while subsequent work of the engraver would eliminate all traces of the tool marks produced so far. This is observable in other categories of glyptic products such as cylinder seals as well.[87]

Iconography

The next criterion crucial for genuineness analysis of a gem is its iconography. Each period in the history of glyptic art and cultural circle has its own limited repertoire of subject-matters typical for it and each had its own iconographical conventions. Thus, it is necessary to investigate whether the one engraved upon the object under examination belongs to the period it could be classified to. To do this, one must be familiarised with a vast number of public and private collection catalogues that offer vast insight into the issue to gain a sort of connoisseurship. The traditional method still in use is to present material in a book according to the subject-matter, which makes it easier to find analogies and detect potential forgeries. This system has been only partially applied here because the intention was also to separate ancient gems from the modern ones and contemporary fakes. Naturally, there are some doubtful specimens and the dates indicated are only proposals. It is hoped that the book will stimulate discussion on the problem of separation of ancient and post-classical glyptic objects and identification of fakes. Of course, during the research, very popular motifs are encountered as well as rare ones which may belong to a local, little known tradition or a situation may occur when a classical motif was misunderstood by an uneducated ancient engraver whose actions did not entirely follow his intentions.[88] Because the repertoire of gem devices is virtually unlimited, this criterion is not a definite one. New discoveries of gems either during archaeological excavations and through the publication of unknown cabinets and sealing archives provide ancient gems with unusual and rare subjects.[89] This is especially true for magical gems because their iconography is usually very complex

81 Middleton 1891, 100; Ogden 1982, 172.

82 Middleton 1891, 100–101.

83 Collon 2005, 94.

84 Porada 1968, 146.

85 Wakeling 1912, 75–76.

86 Collon 2005, 94–96.

87 Porada 1968, 140.

88 Teissier 1984, 109–110.

89 Plantzos 1999, 3.

and involves a great deal of elements which were often mixed together or exchanged, reinvented and reinterpreted.[90] Hence, Engemann rightly states that iconographical criteria have to be adjusted to the new finds and discoveries.[91] This is because glyptics is a very rapidly developing discipline with every new collection or single gem published updating its status.

It must be highlighted though that when one cannot find a parallel ancient gem in terms of iconography to the one he has in his hands, one should be alarmed and turn his eyes to modern glyptics, which invented an enormous number of new subjects due to re-interpretations of old myths, stories and figures that came into being. Modern cameos and intaglios were cut with innovative designs which did not exist on ancient gems. In the Baroque epoch themes related to Roman history, myths and historical figures were explored to boot.[92] But the clearest example of classical culture being inspirational for gem engraving are the neo-classical gems commissioned by Prince Stanislas Poniatowski for which a source of inspiration was Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and they relive much of the spirit of antiquity.[93] It is often the case that the scene depicted upon a gem tells us a fragment of ancient myth or story straightforwardly without any mysticism or obscurity as if it was just a book illustration. Such objects are suspicious because in the 17th and 18th century often this was the way of thinking and approach to the subject-matter which was literary based on a fragment of a literary source.[94]

Very often, the iconography of modern gems was inspired by archaeological discoveries of reliefs, statues, sarcophagi, frescos, etc. during the excavations in Tivoli, Pompeii, Herculaneum and other locations.[95] Of course, many classical gems have their images based on the famous sculptures of antiquity, but these are usually limited to the very famous masterpieces and follow them more or less consequently.[96] In the modern period, each major discovery resulted in a mass of reproductions, which were often freely interpreted. A good illustration of this problem is no. 97, which is generally based on an ancient statue of a reclining Hermaphrodite that was found in the early 17th century and was displayed in the Villa Borghese in Rome.[97] It is also good to search whether an inspiration for a gem engraver was a contemporary work of a famous modern artist.[98] This is the case of no. 110, which is based on the statue of *Perseus Triumphant* by Antonio Canova (1757–1822) or a remarkable intaglio with just a head of Perseus inspired by Canova's work engraved by a German-Italian artist Luigi Pichler (1773–1854).[99] Famous ancient intaglios and cameos were often copied too. It is noteworthy that during the Renaissance, ancient themes were merely inspirational but later they were directly copied, especially in the 18th century and even such artists like Lorenzo Natter (1705–1763), Benedetto Pistrucci (1783–1855) or Giovanni Pichler (1734–1791) admit they copied some of the famous ancient cameos and intaglios alike.[100] Pistrucci was even told to re-cut the famous Late Antique cameo presenting a Roman Emperor crowned by a personification of some city, now in the State Hermitage Museum.[101]

Sometimes copyists signed their works to avoid misunderstandings and to show that the quality of their work is comparable to the ancient masterpiece. An example of that is a faithful copy of the famous ancient intaglio presenting the bust of Antinous once in the Marlborough collection by Edward Burch (1730–1814).[102] However, many did not sign their copies and, as a result, the market is flooded with better and worse reproductions posing many problems with identification of the originals. A good example of that is the cameo presenting the head of Zeus (no. 134), which is in fact a copy of

90 But check the Campbell-Bonner database: http://www2.szepmuveszeti.hu/talismans/ [retrieved on 6 June 2018].

91 Engemann 2011, 209.

92 Platz-Horster 2012, 36.

93 Plantzos 1999, 2–3; Platz-Horster 2005; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 301–304; Wagner 2008; 2013.

94 Jaffé 1993, 109.

95 Curtius 1944–1945; Rudoe 1993, 25–26; Platz-Horster 2012, 37; Tassinari 2015.

96 Middleton 1892, 29; Platz-Horster 1970.

97 Haskel, Penny 1981, no. 48.

98 Henig, Sacrisbrick, Whiting 1994, 361.

99 Lippold 1922, pl. CXLV.1.

100 Henig, Sacrisbrick, Whiting 1994, 282; Rudoe 1996, 205; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 300–301.

101 Middleton 1891, 102.

102 Boardman *et al*. 2009, no. 753.

the famous Zulian Cameo in Venice.[103] Similarly, nos 102–106, 111 and 127 most likely reproduce fabulous ancient intaglios and cameos, some of them now kept in the State Hermitage Museum, which is an interesting observation owing to the fact that the St. Petersburg gem art market is poorly known, but copies were made everywhere. It is possible that the patronage of Catherine the Great of Russia (1762–1796), who established workshops copying famous cameos and intaglios, inspired less prominent collectors of gems who, unable to acquire originals, commissioned copies to have the image within their cabinets as was often the case in Western Europe.[104]

Portraits constitute the most difficult category and have their own rules. From the Renaissance to the Neo-Classical period, the most prominent figures of antiquity, especially Roman Emperors were highly fashionable.[105] Some of them were duplicated on a massive scale in series like the busts and heads of Lucretia, Cleopatra or those belonging to deities and mythological figures like Maenads and Bacchus and similar depictions can be found on contemporary bronze plaquettes.[106] These are relatively easy to distinguish from truly ancient portrait gems. Regarding the collection presented here, some examples of these can be found. There are either intaglios and cameos featuring heads and busts of Roman emperors, famous Greek philosophers and people whose identity is difficult to be established (nos 92–95, 99, 112–121, 128, 135–144 and 146–149), which all belong to the mentioned mass production. Apart from these, series of the *illustri uomini*, that is the most prominent figures of the Renaissance and later epochs, were also extremely popular and no. 145 featuring the bust of Michelangelo is the best example of that.[107] However, sometimes it is quite difficult to tell the difference between ancient and modern or contemporary gems since skilful gem carvers used to copy images not only from other gems but also from ancient coins, which were far more available to them.[108] A good illustration of this problem is no. 166, a red jasper intaglio presenting the Parthian king Mithridates I (ca. 171–138 BC). The gem is problematic due to several reasons. First of all, the stone type is not particularly popular in the Hellenistic period and its size seems exaggerated, although genuine big Hellenistic portrait-intaglios do exist. Also, its veined structure to some degree resembles the stones used in the so-called here 'red jasper workshop'. The style of engraving is too schematic and stiff for a Hellenistic work, especially if compared to other known intaglios with portraits of this ruler. In fact, the image is suspiciously close to the one appearing on some coins of the king minted ca. 150 BC, so probably a contemporary carver copied it from the coin. Portraits of the same ruler on gems usually have slightly different character than his images on coins, which is determined by the considerably higher hardness of gemstones compared to precious metals. It is generally supposed that sometimes gem engravers worked as coin dies makers at the same time and that could be explanation for the so close similarities between no. 166 and Mithridates coins.[109] However, when other qualities are questionable, it is difficult to accept such a possibility and again, the contemporary fake theory seems the most probable here.

Several other portrait gems in this collection are problematic, especially those belonging to the so-called here 'carnelian workshop'. Not only is their identification uncertain but also the stylistic features are suspicious. Even though glyptic objects from Georgia and territories located further east are poorly researched and one knows very little about the potential local production,[110] it seems improbable that these come from a local Georgian workshop and are in fact genuine ancient intaglios. Another case is no. 76, which poses an iconographical and technical problem as the portrait in profile in the case of gold glass medallions is rare in general and it seems to mix two different, although contemporary techniques. I did not find a similar

103 Furtwängler 1900, vol. III, pl. LIX.8; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 300.

104 On Catherine the Great and her patronage over glyptics art, see: Kagan, Neverov 2000. On the workshops producing gems for the empress, see: Kagan 1990; 1994; 2003. On the West-European habits of copying gems, see: Wagner 2017, 115.

105 Henig, Sacrisbrick, Whiting 1994, 281; Wagner 2017, 116–121.

106 Henig, Sacrisbrick, Whiting 1994, 361.

107 Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 282.

108 See an interesting example of a gem bearing portrait of Emperor Decius directly copied from an ancient coin and detected by Zwierlein-Diehl through a detailed analysis (Zwierlein-Diehl 2011, 153).

109 For more information on the issue of gems and coins relationships, see: Furtwängler 1900, vol. III, 277–278; Vollenweider 1955, 100–101; 1966, 16; Hackens 1989–1993; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1989–1993; Boardman 2001, 158 and 238; Henig 2007, 3 and 57–61; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 78–80.

110 Lordkipanidze 1971, 105; Rahman, Falk 2011, no. 06.01.02.

item to this object whatsoever. Nevertheless, in this case, the archaeological observations do not allow to confidently recognise it as a contemporary forgery.

Analysis of the subject-matter, on the whole, helps to determine whether a gem is ancient or not, but attention to detail is equally important for many forgeries are betrayed by misunderstood single elements of the compositions.[111] Forgers often employ incorrect elements for specific figures mixing their attributes, which often makes it easy to identify fakes.[112] For example, no. 170 is suspicious as the subject probably derives from the ancient coin, but not in such a variant where the kneeling figure holds a legionary standard, palm branch or whatever this object might be. Another problem of this piece is its style, which only solidifies suspicion of its false character. No. 176 is another improbable motif for ancient glyptics and no. 178 only proves that the whole group of 'red jasper workshop' gems in the collection are fakes since Fortuna does not use a sceptre (cf. pp. 34–35 below). No. 192 is probably another scene invented by a modern forger. Another matter is the fact that ancient gem engravers occasionally copied older images and compositions, and this might mislead a student of engraved gems.[113] For instance, nos 103–104 could be Roman copies of much earlier, Classical Greek motifs, which was a popular practice in the 1st century BC. However, the stylistic and compositional incorrectness and some historical circumstances suggest a post-classical date for them.

Style, composition and design

Style is still one of the most important and efficient weapons against taking post-classical and contemporary gems and fakes as ancient ones even though this criterion is highly personal and unobjective as one's taste and thus judgment may differ from another's.[114] Nevertheless, stylistic classifications of ancient gems, whether these are Etruscan scarabs, Hellenistic, Roman Republican, Roman Imperial, Christian intaglios and cameos, or any other class of gems are well developed and described.[115] Therefore, it is relatively easy to observe every deviation from standards, which should always be viewed as suspicious as conventions often are not respected by forgers.[116] Porada even speculates that compositional and stylistic errors may sometimes help to distinguish between contemporary Near Eastern and European forgers. Over a long history of fakes in glyptic art, forgers established some sorts of canons, thus, it is possible to tell whether the faked item is a product of the early 20th century or a relatively recent creation.[117] Naturally, it is a difficult case when an object presents a pure stylistic invention and it is difficult to tell if it exhibits an unknown regional or local style.[118] However, if whole groups of such gems appear within one collection or at the market at a single point in time, it is good cause for suspicion.[119] A good illustration of this problem is our 'red jasper workshop' group featuring strange compositions and most importantly style that does not conform to any established typology (nos 170–172, 175–180, 185 and 194–195). Moreover, sometimes forgers randomly combine two styles in one because they do not have enough understanding of the ancient craft of gem engraving or they add some details which do not appear in the glyptic of the times but are taken from other sources like relief (nos 161–162).[120] On the other hand, crude and careless engraving produces simple or even primitive style, which is often erroneously discarded as non-ancient. Ancient gems in various moments of glyptics development were cut in simple styles like the *Imperial Incoherent Grooves Style*, which are popular on 2nd and especially 3rd century AD Roman gems.[121] The key is to observe if the analysed object fits a more general stylistic repertoire, whether it belongs to a wider,

111 Teissier 1984, 110; Jaffé 1993, 108; Plantzos 1999, 3.

112 Porada 1968, 144–145.

113 On this problem, see: Collon 2005, 96.

114 Rudoe 1993, 26; Plantzos 1999, 3.

115 The fundamental contribution to this matter was made by Furtwängler in 1900. The most recent evaluation of various styles for each class of ancient gems has been presented by Zwierlein-Diehl (2007), who also lists abundant literature to every period imaginable. Regarding application of stylistic criteria for establishment of chronology of Roman gems see: Henig 1988; Platz-Horster 1994, 33–40; Spier 2007, 12–13.

116 Collon 2005, 94.

117 Porada 1968, 147–148. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Count Tyszkiewicz, see: Tyszkiewicz 1898, 168–169.

118 Teissier 1984, 109; Feingold 2014, 78.

119 Collon 2005, 96.

120 Teissier 1984, 110; Feingold 2014, 77.

121 Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 326.

securely datable group or is an effect of an incompetent work of a modern or contemporary forger.

It is generally accepted that post-classical gems, no matter if cameos or intaglios, were cut in more decorative even pictorial styles than ancient ones reflecting the perfect beauty that was the value sought by their makers and commissioners. Usually, the compositions of modern gems are more complex and symmetrical. Besides that, they involve more figures and have richer detailing that even takes calligraphic character (nos 102, 105 and 136).[122] The figures of ancient deities and heroes are often idealised according to the new aesthetic canons. The reason for this was the fact that most of them were meant to be used for decoration rather than any utilitarian (sealing) purpose.[123] Within specific classes, some peculiarities can be observed. For example, cameos with masks starting in the Baroque epoch are often depicted in three-quarter view while *en face* capture dominates on ancient gemstones.[124] The margins and unoccupied space is usually much bigger in the case of modern gems rather than ancient ones (cf. nos 103–104 and 108). The bulk of modern gems, especially those produced in the 16th and 17th century in Northern Italy in the so-called 'lapis lazuli workshop', exhibit completely different qualities (nos 88–89, 91–92 and 96). They have misunderstood compositions with little detailing and careless cutting typical for mass production.[125] Finally, it is very useful to search for sources of inspiration for modern engravers and forgers as often they copied designs from the early books illustrating ancient gems, plaster or sulphur impressions and genuine objects usually reversing the scenes or mixing parts of several motifs into one completely changing their meaning or depriving it (see discussion on no. 75).[126]

Inscriptions and signatures

Inscriptions on engraved gems are not extraordinarily frequent, but if bungled, they instantly raise alarm in the examiner as they are easy indicators of forgeries.[127] They usually refer to the artist's signature or the name of the gem's sitter unless cylinder seals are concerned where inscriptions are much more elaborate.[128] Sometimes also inscriptions are invocations, charms and spells enhancing amuletic and magical power of a gem.[129] Feingold argues that many cylinder seals' cutters were illiterate and transferred inscriptions from the tablets produced by scribes beforehand and they used to make mistakes because they sometimes did not know what they are actually copying.[130] This should be kept in mind while analysing a cylinder seal with an inscription and can serve as an explanation for an accidental mistake in spelling but not for long unintelligible passages. The inscriptions were based on simple visual signs after all that most of the engravers should have copied easily even if they did not precisely understand their meanings.

Since the Renaissance, signatures of famous carvers were frequently falsified and put on modern works to mislead the buyer and raise the value of the object.[131] In the case of the Prince Stanislas Poniatowski collection, this practice was pushed to the limits since he had commissioned more than 1700 intaglios with false signatures, many times of artists who never existed.[132] A popular practice was also to add a fake signature to an ancient gem in order to raise its value on the market. This poses serious problems with identification of these and often leads to questioning of the genuineness of the whole object. Zwierlein-Diehl explains in a very detailed way how to tackle this problem. The key seems to be that in case of a newly appearing signed gem by a well-known artist, one should be instantly alarmed because most of their works, even the lost ones, are already known from originals, photographs or impressions and they are not numerous. In the case of unknown names, these are more problematic but sometimes a profound linguistic analysis helps to spot incorrect spelling or conjugation caused by insufficient knowledge and skills of the forger.[133]

122 Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, 281; Plantzos 1999, 3.

123 Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, 281 and 362; Platz-Horster 2012, 37.

124 Platz-Horster 2012, 37.

125 For a detailed study of this class of gems, see: Tassinari 2010.

126 Collon 2005, 94; Gołyźniak 2016.

127 Porada 1968, 144.

128 On the signatures on gems, see: Zwierlein-Diehl 2005 (with further bibliography).

129 Aubry 2009.

130 Feingold 2014, 84–87.

131 Jaffé 1993, 109–111, Berthold 2009.

132 Rambach 2014.

133 Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 298–300.

Most of the forgers do not understand the inscriptions and single signs found on original cylinder seals and gems, thus, sometimes they produce pseudo-writing. This is particularly common for cylinder seals (especially from the Kassite period) and some types of magical gems because they bear long, complex and crammed inscriptions that often cannot be entirely and properly read. The forgers expect their clients to pay insufficient attention to such a matter and many times they succeed in selling their products as ancient.[134]

In the collection presented here, there are no gems bearing false signatures, however, the inscription on no. 157 is problematic since the text is written in two columns directed in opposite ways. As a result, one column appears reversed on the impression, which is possible for provincial and late seals cut by unskilled craftsmen, but, according to Collon, sometimes this is an indication that a seal is a forgery as well.[135] Even if one follows Feingold's idea that engravers made mistakes while inscribing their products and as she proves distorted orientation sometimes happens on seals,[136] careful reading of the inscription sign by sign on cylinder no. 157 reveals it to be meaningless and therefore one of the indicators of forgery. Another difficult case is no. 38 featuring *lupa Romana* with ROMA inscribed in a rough, suspicious manner. It does match the motif, but in such a way that would be expected from a modern if not contemporary maker. Nevertheless, letters cut in similar manner appear on undoubtedly ancient intaglio presenting a calf suckling a cow from the collection of the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi.[137] Sometimes though, inscriptions help to prove authenticity of a gem like in the case of no. 42 where an unusual variant of an otherwise popular subject is accompanied with a three-lettered inscription, which is perfectly alright and if read as on actual stone, would be written in Latin and possibly stood for the abbreviated name of the gem's sitter (*tria nomina*: I(---) V(---) H(---)), but if read as on gem's impression, would be Greek HΛI which might stand for an invocation or a charm. In this case, all the features: stone, subject-matter, iconography, composition, style and inscription match each other, proving the object to be an ancient work.

Settings (rings and mounts)

Regarding settings of engraved gems, which usually have the ring form but could have been also earrings and pendants, they might help to prove the authenticity of a gem and date it more precisely.[138] This is the case of nos 40, 51 and 61 which all are mounted in ancient rings and the gems themselves appear to be perfectly ancient (Roman) works. In those cases, the rings are just other proof confirming the authenticity of the gems since their forms and workmanship are clearly Roman. Moreover, those several objects are generally dated to the 2nd and 3rd century AD, that is to the period when Georgia was under the strong influence of the Roman Empire. This furthermore suggests that the majority of genuine ancient gems in the collection originate from local finds later delivered to the market in Tbilisi. They are likewise important for establishing a sort of chronological framework for unprovenanced material. The gold ring is especially appealing for its material and elaborated form (no. 40). It holds a red jasper intaglio of purely Roman subject and style. One imagines the ring to be used by a high-ranking officer in the Roman army as the subject of enthroned Jupiter crowned by Victory is particularly plausible for such a person to carry. Jupiter as the chief Roman god was a protector of the Roman army and this is the role he played on this intaglio. The ring with Caracalla's portrait has already been evoked (no. 51). Here, I would like to notice an interesting practice of silver-plating of a bronze ring, a fact combined with a glass intaglio, although of considerable quality, still betrays that the commissioner of this piece of jewellery had limited financial means. As one can see, most of the rings and gems can be connected with Roman legionaries and it is possible that some of the other Roman Republican and Roman Imperial gems in the collection should have been imported to Georgia in antiquity along with the visits of the Roman army.

As it can be seen, the settings usually help to prove the authenticity of engraved gems. However, Middleton informs us that he had seen a contemporary (19th century) artist, who having access to a genuine ring with an intaglio inside it, prepared another one by himself with the female head image copied from an ancient Syracusan coin removing all

134 Feingold 2014, 77.

135 Collon 2005, 105.

136 Feingold 2014, 84.

137 Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. I, no. 27.

138 Spier 2007, 12.

the features of modern engraving and replacing it with the original ancient gem in that ancient ring he possessed in his studio.[139] One can imagine that this practice was and probably is still often used by forgers. With this in mind, no. 174 becomes suspicious because the iconography and style the gem is engraved in do not entirely match ordinary Roman work even though the ring, the object is set, appears to be Roman. It might be an effect of the same practice as described by Middleton. Unfortunately, even the fact that the gem seems to be in original antique ring-setting is no absolute security against fraud.

History, documentation and structure of the collection

Finally, the last step one may take in order to investigate whether a glyptic object (or a collection of such) under examination is ancient or not is a profound research for its every documentary trace. Since the Renaissance gems were not only collected but also studied, described and inventoried. If a mention is found about an object in old documents or manuscripts, this helps to establish *terminus ante quem* for the object.[140] It is also advisable to search within vast collections of gem impressions and casts called *dactyliothecae* produced in the 18th century and later and used by collectors to show their interest in ancient craft and culture and by artists to exhibit their works.[141] These are invaluable sets of images where one may find a reproduction of their own gem. Unfortunately, I was unable to identify any intaglio or cameo from this collection in the most important *dactyliothecae* such as Tassie, Cades etc. and none of the gems analysed is mentioned in early books and treatises on engraved gems.[142] This is certainly a problem, especially for well-cut cameos. According to Count Tyszkiewicz: 'When it is a case of a cameo whose history is unknown, I should side with sceptics'.[143] However, if the collection originates from poorly researched areas like Georgia here, discoveries of new masterpieces are more likely to occur.

It should be noted that sometimes forgers use scholarly books as sources of their inspiration. Regarding cylinder seals, such a source was and still is the Frankfort's *Cylinder Seals* published in 1939 in London.[144] As evidenced in the commentary to no. 75, old (in this particular case 16th century) illustrations and drawings of intaglios and cameos were used to produce counterfeits too. The process is quite ancient, and each suspicious cylinder or gem should be put into a test for its potential source of inspiration.

Analysis of the history of the collections and information deriving mostly from dealers and collectors indicated in the sale catalogues and other publications is often helpful to determine where the object comes from and whether it may be ancient or not.[145] Reliability of the stories told by collectors, dealers and other people involved in the trade and collecting of engraved gems must be treated with caution and if possible tested.[146] If one deals with a collection, not a single object, usually the material structure it includes confirms or denies the information one is given. For instance, having been told that the collection under investigation here started to be formed around the late 1910s, it is possible that some copies of the gems from the Hermitage (nos 102–106 and 111), as well as those possibly manufactured after the works produced in the Russian Imperial gem workshops active in the Ural Mountains region and surroundings of St. Petersburg (nos 128, 130, 132–133 and 139–143), were delivered to the Tbilisi art market by Russian aristocracy fleeing from St. Petersburg and Moscow with their collections because of the Bolshevik Revolution. Most of them follow ancient works, which is best illustrated in the case of no. 103 as the composition and positioning of the figure is exactly the same as on the ancient original from the Hermitage. This piece was meant to deceive since its shape is very distinctive for Augustan glyptics so not only the iconography, but also other aspects were taken into account by the forger. On the other hand, no. 105 is another faithful copy of the head

139 Middleton 1891, 101.

140 Jaffé 1993, 112–113.

141 For more detailed information on dactyliothecae, see: Kockel, Gräpler (eds) 2006; Knüppel 2009.

142 Tassie, Raspe 1791. Regarding Tommaso Cades (1772 or 1775 – after 1850), he was an Italian gem engraver commissioned to create gem impressions for the newly founded German Institute in Rome. The Institute eventually purchased 78 'volumes' of his impressions which can be browsed at: https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/gems/cades/cades.htm [retrieved on 6 June 2018].

143 Tyszkiewicz 1898, 28.

144 Frankfort 1939; Collon 2005, 94 and 96; Feingold 2014, 77.

145 Spier 2007, 13.

146 Psychological aspects of collecting and examination of collections of antiquities by scholars on the requests of private owners have been precisely described by Wakeling, see: Wakeling 1912, 2–10.

of Neptune deriving from an intaglio by Edward Burch (ca. 1730–1814),[147] of which Charles Brown (1749–1795) made two copies and one of them is reproduced on our intaglio. One imagines that the best place to produce those copies was St. Petersburg itself where production of cameos and intaglios is well attested already in the 19th century or even slightly earlier if imperial workshops are taken into account.[148]

Furthermore, the cabinet was created by the engineer Konstantine Natsvlishvili (1918–1993) who is said to have acquired gems from the art market in Tbilisi, but his stays in Kutaisi or Odessa and closeness of Tbilisi to Mtskheta makes one wonder if many of the ancient gems presented in this book originate from those locations and neighbouring areas. The gems could have been delivered to the art market in Tbilisi freely since due to political reasons nobody controlled the process of looting and uncontrolled excavations until the 1990s. This might be the reason why the collection is such a mixture of all kinds of gems imaginable. Georgia was a land under strong influence of all major civilisations of antiquity (Greece, Rome, Sassanian Empire, etc.) and had itself a strong position in production of luxury goods, especially if gold is concerned. Furthermore, genuine antiquities from neighbouring countries like Syria or Iran were imported to Tbilisi, especially shortly after the end of the Second World War because there was no more attractive market for antiquities in the area those days. Therefore, the collection includes groups of Near Eastern cylinder seals, Greek, Roman Republican, Roman Imperial, magical and Sassanian gems. Naturally, fakes came alongside the genuine ancient works during that process and that is why the cabinet includes all types: genuine ancient gems as well as modern works and contemporary fakes.

147 Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 2532

148 Around the middle of the 19th century there was a good number of goldsmiths, gem engravers and other artists who traded with engraved gems and most likely produced them (including fakes) quite freely as evidenced from a list of contractors of a prominent Polish dealer and collector of intaglios and cameos, Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński, see: Gołyźniak 2017, 35–37. On the Russian Imperial workshops producing carved gems, especially cameos, see: Kagan 1990; 1994; 2003.

Collection's assessment

The structure of the collection in question mirrors well the abundance of both ancient and post-classical gems available on the art market between ca. the 1910s and 1960s in Tbilisi. It also offers some insight into the fake gems produced in the late 19th and early 20th century as well as relatively recently in the post-war Near East. These facts help to understand that while most of the material classified as ancient was probably bought in Tbilisi from local collectors, dealers and individuals, the post-classical gems were most likely brought to Tbilisi from Russia (St. Petersburg?) since that place experienced more developed trade in Italian, German and Bohemian or Polish glyptic products of the 16th–19th centuries.[149] Regarding objects identified as contemporary imitations of the Near Eastern, Egyptian and Roman gems, one supposes they were produced in the Near East, most likely in Syria as there is evidence for workshops specialising in these kinds of objects operating there (cf. pp. 14–15 above). An important question one may ask is whether the creator of this cabinet ordered forgeries to be made for his collection or not? The eclecticism of his assemblage, his primary interest into the gemstones from mineralogical rather than historical point of view and the fact that individual fakes make their appearance rather accidentally in all categories (cylinder seals, stamp seals, intaglios, cameos and amulets) suggest a negative answer. Ancient objects are intertwined with forgeries like the lapis lazuli amulet (no. 1), which is a perfectly fine ancient object, while the ram's head fragment (no. 154) is a clear forgery. There are several fake cylinder seals (nos 156–162) while others are genuine ancient objects (nos 3–11) presenting interesting interconnections of ancient Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations with western ones located in Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and Cyprus. It is rather unlikely that all those objects together reached Georgia in ancient times since the farthest regions they are found are Anatolia, Syria and northern Iran.[150] Most likely, they were imported and later purchased in Tbilisi at the art market. The iconographical and stylistic analyses support this view and the cylinders are only a few that had not been sent further west to Europe or the USA. The genuine ones were probably unearthed during uncontrolled excavations and expeditions (note their soiling, cf. p. 18) and as such delivered to the attractive market after the Second World War as many other antiquities from those regions. Along with this import, fakes joined truly ancient objects and became difficult to distinguish. The same applies to the Egyptian part of the collection (nos 17–23, 151–153 and 163–165) as well as the Graeco-Hellenistic, Roman and Sassanian ones (nos 166–196). As far as one can judge, objects accounting as Egyptian or Egyptianising may have been incorporated to it from other cabinets because scarabs and amulets were popular collectables and there are no archaeological finds of those recorded in Georgia. The same applies to the only Greek Bronze Age seal (no. 24) that probably reached the hands of the collector through the purchase of another cabinet of gems.

Concerning Graeco-Persian, Hellenistic and Roman gems, they seem more native to Georgia. It is tempting to suggest that the Graeco-Persian gems travelled from Anatolia to the Georgian art market and were purchased in Tbilisi (or acquired in Odessa?), although, these kinds of artefacts have been found on the territory of Georgia itself too.[151] The undoubtedly Hellenistic intaglio with Victory flying to the sky (no. 28) is a neat and well accomplished study of the 1st century BC when such small compositions were the preferred engravings on highly convex stones in the Levantine

149 Gołyźniak 2017, 35–37.

150 Collon 2005.

151 Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. III, nos 44–51 (including some ancient local imitations); vol. IV, no. 1.

workshops.[152] The head of Zeus-Sol on no. 29 is another intriguing Hellenistic study, even though the material is uncommon for the period. The rather considerable dimensions of the piece, its style and circular shape make it comparable to the Hellenistic portrait studies so popular in the period.[153] Yet, it is a depiction of a deity, not a deified mortal figure for sure. Generally speaking, Hellenistic gems could have been sent to local rulers or aristocrats in antiquity since intaglios and cameos were often used by the Ptolemies and other Hellenistic dynasts as diplomatic gifts.[154]

Regarding Roman Republican and Roman Imperial gems as well as the fakes imitating them, it should be stressed that one of the reasons for publishing this collection was to make people aware of the possible local Georgian and neighbouring regional production of engraved gems as well as the imports coming alongside the Roman army visiting the area. Some evidence for that has been already presented in several publications by Lordkipanidze, Maksimova and Javakhishvili,[155] and Mtskheta might be a plausible location for a local gem workshop.[156] Nevertheless, as Lordkipanidze and Tassinari conclude, scholars still feel like on uncharted waters while describing gems from the area.[157] There is no corpus that would amass and analyse the bulk of engraved gems and finger rings excavated or obtained in other ways and now housed in various museums throughout Georgia, which remains largely unpublished.[158] I have tried to set those dozens of intaglios and cameos into a sort of wider context, but this proved to be a difficult task as there is little reference material published not only from the territories of Georgia but also those of such a great importance for glyptic studies as Anatolia, Syria, Israel and Jordan.[159] As Lordkipanidze states, there was a well-developed local production of engraved gem s in Georgia (especially in Mtskheta, where the major goldsmith workshops were located), which produced decorative and engraved gems from the 1st century BC onwards with subjects unparalleled or strange to the Roman glyptics in peculiar, mostly simple linear styles.[160] These products are barely researched, which complicates their identification in the unprovenanced private collection like the Natsvlishvili Family cabinet (possibly nos 41, 46, 53–54 and 62). Yet, it is noteworthy that the iconography and styles presented on many of the genuine Roman intaglios and cameos in the collection are generally comparable to those from the eastern part of the Mediterranean basin and they are usually connected to the places where the Roman army stationed. Objects from the publications listed in the notes 156 and 157 above clearly dominate among the parallels listed to each piece in our collection (cf. especially nos 31, 34–36, 38–43, 45–47, 49, 51, 53–54, 56–57, 59–63, 69, 77, 79 and 81). This is promising and somewhat helpful for proving the authenticity of those gems and perhaps even tempting to suggest that they were found in Georgia or its neighbourhood. On the other hand, I have found quite similar objects to the fakes identified here (cf. nos 170–176, 179–180 and 194) in already published, mostly private collections, which is worrying and alarming because it all becomes clear that the phenomenon of forgeries production in the Near East,

152 Plantzos 1999, 35 and 90–91.

153 Plantzos 1999, 35.

154 On the use of gems as diplomatic gifts, see: Plantzos 1999, 111–112; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 16–17.

155 Maksimova 1950; Lordkipanidze 1954–1967; 1971; Javakhishvili 1972.

156 Maksimova 1950; Lordkipanidze 1971, 105.

157 Lordkipanidze 1971; Tassinari 2008, 295–296.

158 The only summary assessment of the Georgian glyptic production and imports is a brief article by Lordkipanidze (1971) and only a selection of the rich collection of intaglios and cameos housed in the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi has been published so far (Lordkipanidze 1954–1967; Javakhishvili 1972). The rich collections of engraved gems and finger rings dated from the 3rd millennium BC to the Late Antiquity have been reported to us in various locations throughout the country by the Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation. The institution is interested in embarking on a research project devoted to them and indeed there is a great need for publication of this material since it would help to understand glyptic art on the outskirts of the Roman Empire and local production as well as to anchor collections like the Natsvlishvili Family one in a much better way.

159 There is only very few catalogues and other studies presenting material from those regions and most of it is in private hands, see: Ridder de 1911; Hamburger 1968; Henig, Whiting 1987; Amorai-Stark 1993; Konuk, Arslan 2000; Middleton 2001; Wagner, Boardman 2003; Amorai-Stark, Hershkovitz 2016. The best illustration so far of the disproportion between studies of the Roman gems produced and used in the western part of the Roman Empire has been presented by Tassinari who draws our attention to the fact that the east-Mediterranean is still a largely neglected area, see: Tassinari 2008, 261–301.

160 Lordkipanidze 1971, 105.

in fact, has a much wider scope. This was the second reason for publication of the collection and the essay on forgery detection. Georgian authorities decided to support the fight against frauds so that the true, undistorted image of ancient glyptics in the Near Eastern region could be revealed.

Overall, the first thing to take note of is that Roman gems constitute the most numerous group within the collection which stays in accordance with general trends observed in the cabinets of gems preserved in Georgian museums.[161] Most of those gems were likely unearthed in Georgia. The second important observation is the striking discrepancy between Roman Republican and Roman Imperial glyptics represented in the cabinet. There are only ten intaglios that should be dated to the second half of the 1st century BC (nos 30–39). This situation may be due to two reasons: Roman Republican gems were less available than Roman Imperial ones in the East European and Georgian art markets. If they were once parts of older collections, they could be brought to either St. Petersburg or Tbilisi by other collectors from Western Europe. However, in all cases, the dates do not start before ca. the mid-1st century BC, which cannot be just a coincidence and suggests they were found locally in the area of Georgia and neighbouring countries. The appearance of the first examples of Roman Republican gems on Georgian soil relates to the intensification of Romano-Iberian relationships from the second half of the 1st century BC onwards. Pompey the Great had campaigned in Georgia in 65 BC bringing about close contacts with the Roman world in political, economic and cultural terms. According to Maksimova, a small number of Roman Republican intaglios have been found in Georgia, especially in the Kartli Region and some examples can be found in the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi.[162] Furthermore, the stylistic analysis proves that many Roman Republican gems in the Natsvlishvili Family collection were manufactured in the workshops possibly located in Asia Minor and Syria. As Maaskant-Kleibrink remarks, the wheel technique is more typical for the eastern provinces, especially Asia Minor and she supposes that some local workshops were active there at the time.[163] This observation seems crucial because indeed, among Roman Republican gems presented in the cabinet, the wheel technique totally dominates, and many parallel gems can be found among the collections originating from the east-Mediterranean.

When it comes to the subjects represented on those gems, these are casual motifs for the period with some particularly interesting studies of Cupid with a bow (no. 30) and Vulcan working on a shield for Achilles (no. 31). The head of Apollo is a very popular subject in Roman Republican glyptics in general and this is the case here too (nos 32–34).[164] The other gems in this category are busts of Bacchus or Liber and Jupiter (nos 35–36). Isis appears on one stone (no. 37), which is not surprising due to her cult being widespread in the east-Mediterranean. There is one very peculiar study presenting *lupa Romana* suckling the twins with a rather carelessly cut inscription ROMA, which might have been added later (no. 38). If the stone is ancient, one imagines that this banded agate intaglio was worn by a Roman soldier who carried a substitute or glimpse of his homeland cut upon his personal ring, which uplifted him while he was far from Italy. The gems were used not only for sealing purposes and as amulets, but they were also tokens of national or regional pride and this piece might have served to fulfil that need. Lastly, animal studies were another popular motif on Roman Republican gems and our collection includes one example testifying that (no. 39). It seems that all the genuine Roman Republican gems amassed here are imports that had been transported to the region by Roman soldiers.

The most numerous group of gems in the Natsvlishvili Family assemblage are Roman Imperial intaglios and cameos. Regarding their iconography, there are both figural studies of various deities, mythological figures and others (Apollo, Harpocrates, Jupiter, Mercury, Athena, Fortuna, Nemesis, Venus, Victory and so on – nos 40–47) as well as their busts and heads (nos 48–50). Five intaglios present human busts (nos 51–55) and among them there is a wonderful bust of emperor Caracalla in glass and set in a bronze and silver-plated ring (no. 51). This peculiar gem must have been used

161 Lordkipanidze 1954–1967; Javakhishvili 1972; Ramishvili 1979.

162 Maksimova 1950, 225. See also the proportions of material published by Lordkipanidze (1954–1967) and Javakhishvili (1972) which confirms that Roman Imperial gems clearly dominate over the Republican ones. Regarding Roman Republican gems, see: Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. I, nos 1 and 27; vol. II, nos 13 and 19; vol. III, nos 4, 6–9, 33 and 43; vol. IV, no. 22; Javakhishvili 1972, nos 9, 16, 37, 43, 79, 104–105 and 131–134.

163 Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 154–155.

164 On this issue, see: Gołyźniak 2017, nos 72–79.

by one of the high-ranking officers in the Roman army that took a part in the military expedition of the emperor against Parthians in 216–217 AD.[165] It is a propaganda piece probably made specifically on that occasion and it could have been gifted to him for long and loyal service to the emperor. Alternatively, one imagines a situation when the officer commissioned an intaglio with a portrait of his emperor to manifest his loyalty to him. Overall, it is interesting to observe that many Roman gems in the assemblage bear subjects suitable for legionaries (nos 38, 40, 47, 50–51, 53–54, 57 and 68–70). The deities are those who might have encouraged the soldiers during the battle and out of the battlefield. This may be due to the constant fight between Rome and Parthia and later the Sassanian Empire to control the Kingdom of Armenia, which ruled territories of the present-day Georgia at the time. Again then, the gems could influx to the region of Georgia alongside the Roman soldiers. However, this trend is also observed in other eastern Roman provinces like Judea.[166] On the other hand, female goddesses are usually those who guaranteed fertility and good luck, which were basic amuletic values. Those were surely used by women seeking them and this is typical for other parts of the east-Mediterranean region (nos 41–42 and 46).[167] Compositions involving two deities are also common in the Roman part of the Natsvlishvili Family cabinet of gems (nos 40–42). Such gems were particularly popular in Georgia.[168] In any case, it is interesting to notice that everyday life subjects were popular too as were playful images combining various elements such as masks, animals and objects (nos 56 and 58–63).

Based on the iconography and techniques of engraving, it is clear that there is a far greater uniformity between the Roman Imperial gems in this collection and those from other parts of the Roman Empire, compared to the Roman Republican period. However, local peculiarities probably exist too and cannot be ignored. These are highly difficult to explain basing only on a random selection of a few dozen gems that I have at my disposal here, but when put into a wider context, they fit some general patterns. Single gems bear unusual iconography, especially when it comes to female deities or portraits which are often tricky as they do not frequently follow standard styles but are approached individually (cf. nos 53–54). However, similar objects are found in catalogues of gems originating from the east-Mediterranean. Regarding the stylistic peculiarities, based on the Roman Imperial gems published by Lordkipanidze, Maksimova and Javakhishvili, it can be said that generally, Roman Imperial gems found in Georgia are of inferior quality to the regular intaglios produced in other parts of the Roman Empire. The figures are usually not well proportioned, their shapes are distorted, detailing is limited, and robes and attributes suggested only by some schematic grooves.[169] Lordkipanidze suggests that local gem engravers (active mostly in the Iberia region) often imitated or had been inspired by Roman works those days.[170] This is not necessarily a local phenomenon, but rather a regional one since similar observations have been made by scholars who studied gems found in the area of Turkey, Syria, Israel and Jordan.[171] Gems of this kind can also be found occasionally in West-European collections.[172] In the collection researched here certainly one deals with such products (cf. nos 53–54 and 62). Nevertheless, given the fact that local production is poorly researched,[173] there is a threat that some gems appearing or aspiring to be local products in the Natsvlishvili Family collection are in fact contemporary forgeries only intended to be taken as such. Thus, their identification is highly problematic. One should analyse the whole structure of the collection rather than individual pieces on their own. Then, it turns out that separate, distinctive workshops can be identified and this also helps to establish more or less convincing argumentation proving their dubious dates.

165 See also another example of an intaglio presenting Caracalla's bust from Georgia that might be related to the mentioned military campaign published by Javakhishvili (Javakhishvili 1972, no. 102).

166 Peleg-Barkat 2011; Tassinari 2011, 405–406.

167 Compare for instance: Hamburger 1968, 2–5; Konuk, Arslan 2000.

168 The high number of such compositions is noticeable in the following: Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. I, nos 14 and 19; vol. III, nos 2, 17 and 32; vol. IV, nos 51–56; Javakhishvili 1972, no. 41.

169 See the Roman Imperial gems published in the following: Maksimova 1950; Lordkipanidze 1954–1967 (especially 1961, no. 2; 1967, no. 67); Lordkipanidze 1971; Javakhishvili 1972. See also a commentary on this issue by Lordkipanidze (Lordkipanidze 1971, 105).

170 Lordkipanidze 1971, 106.

171 Henig, Whiting 1987, nos 93–94 and 96–100; Konuk, Arslan 2000, no. 102; Middleton 2001, no. 22.

172 For instance: Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, nos 627, 634 and 663; Gesztelyi 2001, no. 16.

173 Lordkipanidze 1971, 105.

Not to be groundless, the first problematic workshop belongs to an artist who preferred to engrave his gems in red jasper since nos 170–172, 175–180, 185 and 194–195 are all products of his hand or at least belong to one workshop. Having more faith, one may have considered classifying all these intaglios as products of modern glyptics rather than contemporary fakes because of the material, techniques of engraving and some inconsistencies in the iconography that do not entirely follow casual Roman depictions of Fortuna and other deities and figures. However, there is no parallel material among the post-classical intaglios.[174] The idea that those gems might actually belong to the poorly researched local or regional, in fact, ancient material, like for instance the crudely cut gems from Britannia, which are found purely in that province and were local products,[175] is improbable given the fact that the gems discussed here were clearly cut according to a well-thought procedure mixing various ancient traditions all together. Besides, if compared to the material published, for instance, from the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi,[176] or the one from Gandhāra,[177] they quickly turn out to be forgeries.

It is evident that the maker of these intaglios was well trained in his art and possessed some knowledge in glyptics. It is particularly intriguing to see that he specialised in one material only and trained himself in a peculiar combination of linear and globular styles, which is a compromise between Imperial Cap-With-Rim Style and Imperial Chin-Mouth-Nose one.[178] Even more surprising is the wide range of subjects he put upon his intaglios: from deities to animals. These observations lead us to another conclusion about the ways ancient engraved gems were copied by contemporary forgers.

As mentioned above, from a technical point of view, there is little change in cutting gems over time, but also organisation of a workshop seems to change little. For in ancient times, single engravers probably had their preferable material which they exploited for a wide spectrum of subject-matters. In terms of technology, the case we encounter in this collection may be compared to the famous discovery of the Snettisham hoard including 126 intaglios exclusively cut in carnelian in one workshop by three artists. They also focused on one material only but produced a wide range of devices on their gems.[179] Similar cases are the numerous nicolo gems that Cravinho regards as local products of a workshop possibly located in Ammaia, Portugal,[180] and the gems from Cesarea Maritima and its surroundings.[181]

Another interesting fact concerning the 'red jasper workshop' is that some of the gems exhibit a combination of Roman and Eastern elements (likely of Parthian origins). This is the best portrayed on no. 194 where the eagle stands with spread wings on a palm branch. The subject itself is a popular one in Roman glyptics, however, the way it is approached here resembles the eagles known from Parthian and later Sassanian gems (cf. analogies in the catalogue entry).[182] Also, a notable fact is that Mercury on the intaglio no. 185 wears an eastern *kausia* instead of a regular *petazus*. The series of female deities (nos 175–180) includes examples holding unusual attributes or atypical combinations of those too, however, their robes and the way they are textured are odd, although comparable to some gems from Turkey, Syria, Israel and Jordan, as well as those published ones from Georgia.[183] For all these reasons, I believe that those gems were manufactured in a workshop specialising in fake antiquities, located somewhere in the Middle East, possibly Syria after the Second World War. They were probably dispersed outside as some of their products have been identified within other, mostly private collections (cf. pp. 32–33 above).

The second problematic workshop producing specific intaglios that might have aspired to be taken as ancient local products belonged to an artist who

174 The only to some way comparable post-classical objects are those published in: Weber 2001, nos 338–342.

175 Henig 2007, nos 539–584.

176 Javakhishvili 1972, especially nos 44–50. However, see also Javakhishvili 1972, no. 67, which seems stylistically close to our group, but possibly also a forgery?

177 Callieri 1997, nos 7.6–7.10; Rahman, Falk 2011, nos 06.05.05–06.05.09.

178 On these two ancient Roman Imperial styles, see: Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 294 and 302 respectively.

179 Henig 1997a; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1997.

180 Cravinho 2010.

181 Amorai-Stark, Hershkovitz 2016, 483–489.

182 For similar hybrids of iconographical elements and stylistic features, see: AGDS I.3, no. 2826; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 881; Vitellozzi 2010, no. 442.

183 See parallels to individual pieces in the catalogue part and examples given in the footnotes 152 and 156 above.

preferred to work in carnelian and he cut mainly heads and busts of deities (nos 181–182, 184 and 186). His style is essentially linear in character, but again, a mixture of Roman and Eastern approaches to the subject-matter and style can be observed. The deviations from the original Roman busts of Apollo or Maenad are caused by misunderstanding of ancient iconography by a forger rather than an effect of a provincial, imperfect interpretation performed by a local gem engraver in antiquity. The depictions of deities and related figures from this workshop have big, abstract heads and broad necks, while treatment of their hair or folds of garment are rendered with very thin, parallel strokes, often crossing each other. In addition, all the stones produced are highly polished. These features are worrying and indicate that the gems in question are fakes. Carnelian was the most popular gemstone type used by ancient gem engravers, including those operating in Georgia.[184] This makes recognition between the originals and fakes more challenging. It might be that those gems are imitations of local products and therefore of a bit eastern character and style since similar portrait gems sometimes inscribed with owners' names are found around Mtskheta or even further east if heads of deities are concerned.[185]

Coming back to the Roman gems in the Natsvlishvili Family collection, there is limited evidence for ancient workshops to be distinguished. Perhaps nos 49 and 55 were cut by the same hand as may be judged from the gems' forms, material used (red-brown jasper), subject-matter and to some degree the techniques. Nevertheless, no. 55 is an unfinished piece which makes its style difficult to judge.

From the mineralogical point of view, it is interesting to observe that a considerable portion of the material assembled here are gems made of carnelian (nos 41–44, 46–47, 53–54, 58–60 and 62). Another popular gemstone type is jasper (in many variations: red, yellow, red-brown, mottled, black: nos 40, 48–50 and 55–57). This is consistent with our knowledge of the material sources since eastern Roman provinces were abundant in these kinds of gemstones. There are single intaglios made of the following minerals: rock crystal (no. 52) and green chalcedony or chrysoprase (no. 63) which seem to be quite popular in Georgia and surroundings.[186] A few objects are made also in glass (nos 51 and 61). Actually, the proportions in the materials used suggest that many of the Roman Imperial gems in the collection may be local or regional products excavated at some point in time in Georgia, Anatolia and northern Syria, and delivered to the local art market centre in Tbilisi where they found their new fate as a part of the Natsvlishvili Family collection. This is suggested by the fact that one finds similar proportions in other collections originating from eastern Roman provinces.[187]

The last conclusion on Roman Imperial intaglios is that on the stylistic grounds proximity to Parthian and Sassanian glyptics is visible as has been suggested for no. 48. The lion walking on a gem no. 59 is an interesting example too where the universal Roman/Sassanian motif is engraved in the eastern manner. Further peculiarities of the imitation of eastern styles on Roman Imperial gems in the collection are observable in the way the robes are worn by female deities are shown on nos 41 and 47 – very close to those known from magical gems which were produced in Egypt (Alexandria) and perhaps some other locations along the east coast of the Mediterranean basin (cf. nos 72–75). However, one must be wary while judging such qualities because there are intaglios with obscure iconography like no. 192 – the subject was probably intended to be taken as Roman, but all the three figures are wearing eastern robes and the scene is unparalleled in ancient (Roman or Sassanian) glyptics. The exaggerated size and artificial rubbing of the surface to imitate the weathered effect suggest the piece to be a forgery.

Turning to Roman cameos, they are small in number within the collection. All of them present busts or heads of deities (no. 64 – Athena/Minerva) as well as mortal figures (nos 65–67) and fantastical creatures (nos 68–70 – Medusa). The cameo with Athena/Minerva is very small and crudely cut so it is very likely that it was set in a ring and carried by a Roman soldier to protect him against evil and inspire him on the battlefield. Quite exceptional are next three objects which bear human heads and busts (nos 65–67). No. 65 is a rare third-century male portrait probably belonging to the

184 Lordkipanidze 1971, 107.

185 Lordkipanidze 1971, 105. Compare also Javakhishvili 1972, no. 66; Rahman, Falk 2011, no. 06.01.02.

186 Tassinari 2008, 295–296.

187 Please take a look at the following collections and the structure of materials they offer: Hamburger 1968; Henig, Whiting 1987; Amorai-Stark 1993; Konuk, Arslan 2000; Middleton 2001.

Roman emperor Severus Alexander (222–235 AD). If the identification is correct, it is tempting to link this cameo with the military campaign against the Sassanians from the years 232–233 AD when one of the Roman armies invaded Media passing through the mountains of Armenia. It could have been cut for propaganda purposes and gifted to one of the legionaries or rather high-ranking officers in that army. No. 66 is an exceptional case as it is possibly executed in a very rare material for Roman cameos. It is minutely engraved with a portrait study of a lady that according to her hairdo and facial features should be identified with Antonia Minor (36 BC – AD 37), the younger of two daughters of Mark Antony and Octavia Minor and a niece of the Emperor Augustus (27 BC – AD 14). She was such an independent and highly influential woman that after her death she served as a sort of a link to her successors legitimising their connections to Augustus and thus, she often appears on cameos.[188] This seems to be the reason for our cameo production, which, according to its style, should be regarded as a product of Imperial Court workshop. No. 67 is interesting due to its difficult identification with a specific historical figure and iconography. In all likelihood, this cameo presents a draped frontal bust of a woman in the type of empress Domitia Longina (53–130 AD), wife of emperor Domitian (81–90 AD). This is supposed on the basis of the coiffure she wears and her facial features but the two wings on the top of her head are unprecedented and probably once belonged to an eagle which was put behind her head but has been broken away. Finally, in the collection there are three cameos, one of glass, the second made of sardonyx and third of lapis lazuli that presents the heads of Medusa – typical objects utilised by Roman soldiers to avert all kinds of evil and peril (nos 68–70). These types are common throughout the whole Roman Empire and it may be debated that some of them play a role of *phalerae*.[189] Nevertheless, the objects in the collection are small, and they were surely set in rings and carried upon fingers. The quality of those three cameos is low and one wonders if they are proceeding with local or regional products in the cabinet.

In the Natsvlishvili Family collection there is a small but interesting group of four magical gems (nos 72–75). They were used as amulets protecting their owners against evil and various types of diseases. Each piece exhibits rare iconography, which makes them important contributions to the studies of the whole phenomenon of magical gems and amulets. Nothing certain is known about their provenance alas but having been purchased at the art market in Tbilisi, they might have been found in Georgia or the Middle East, which is plausible owing to the fact that magical gems were widely distributed throughout the whole Roman Empire, but the centres for their production were possibly Egypt and Levant. On the other hand, some iconographical inconsistencies and specific style involving extensive use of linear technique in the case of nos 72–73 may be signs of contemporary forgery and no. 75 is highly problematic and might be a modern creation, however, rather not a contemporary fake.

In the Hellenistic period, in the territories controlled by Ptolemies and Seleucids, artists and craftsmen developed specific techniques to produce the so-called gold glass. It was a luxury form of glass where a decorative design in gold leaf is fused between two layers of glass. In the Late Roman Imperial period, there was a considerable revival of this phenomenon and no. 76 might be a part of it. It is a problematic piece since a majority of the medallions from the period bear religious subjects and portraits of Christians and only very few are captured in profile.[190] The iconographical peculiarities of this item make its genuineness doubtful, but other archaeological observations indicate it to be an ancient work. The identification of the portrayed person is uncertain, but he must be a member of the Constantinian dynasty.[191] If indeed of ancient date, the object could have been produced on the imperial commission and gifted to one of the emperor's officials governing one of the eastern provinces. Hanging down his neck, it was surely a great propaganda object manifesting loyalty to the emperor as well as raising status of the owner as it was clear he is supported by the Imperial family. Unfortunately, the archaeological context of this medallion is lost but having been purchased at the art market in Tbilisi, it might originate from Georgia or its southern surroundings.

The last category of gems in the collection related to ancient glyptics is Sassanian intaglios and stamp seals and their forgeries (nos 77–82 and 196). Within this group both figural scenes, as

188 Megow 1987, nos D2–D12.

189 For a discussion, see: Feugère 1989; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 724.

190 See a list of similar medallions with portrait studies in: Morey, Ferrari 1959.

191 For some comparable portraits, however, in glyptics, see: Spier 2007, nos 4–7 and 9.

well as portraits and especially animal studies exist. Portraits constitute an important category (nos 79–80) as they might represent members of aristocratic families in the Sassanian Empire, although, no. 196 is not ancient. They are not rulers since none is accompanied with an inscription suggesting that. Actually, only one ringstone is inscribed with Pahlavi letters (no. 81). Regarding types of stones used, these are typical for Sassanian gems from other collections. It seems reasonable to think that all these gems found their way to the cabinet through acquisitions made at the local art market in Tbilisi. They were possibly delivered there from various parts of Georgia and surroundings since quite a large number of Sassanian gems have been excavated in Mtskheta, Samtavro, Armazis Khevi, Zhinvali, Urbnisi and other territories. They are not local products but imports from the Sassanian Persia.[192]

As it goes with post-classical glyptics (16th–19th century), both clear copies and imitations of ancient engraved gems and amulets can be found (nos 84–86, 90, 96, 102, 106–107, 111, 127, 129–130, 146 and 148) as well as intaglios and cameos that were manufactured in modern times due to increasing interest of collectors in these kinds of artworks as well as ordinary tourists travelling to Italy and wishing to come back home with a sort of a souvenir (nos 83, 88–89, 91–95, 97–99, 108–110, 112–122, 128 and 131–149). Two things should be singled out at the very beginning, namely that among post-classical intaglios and cameos some pieces copy the famous ancient and modern gems housed in the State Hermitage Museum (nos 102–106, 111, 127 and 129). Secondly, some objects, especially cameos, were possibly manufactured in Russia (St. Petersburg) as a result of increasing popularity of glyptic art due to the activities of Russian Imperial workshops active in the late 18th and first half of the 19th century (nos 128, 130, 133–135 and 139–143).[193]

Essentially, there are two iconographical types among modern intaglios and cameos: figural scenes and portraits. This first feature shows a clear difference between ancient and modern glyptics, for the subject-matter variety is much greater in the case of the former. Actually, the collection described here is a perfect, although difficult, example to show the basic reasons how one distinguishes ancient pieces from their modern counterparts. Many post-classical intaglios are products of the so-called 'lapis lazuli workshop' (nos 88–89, 91–92 and 96) which was active in the 16th and the 17th century in northern Italy, possibly in Milan and Venice.[194] Apart from those, there is a good number of 18th century intaglios, which was the peak of production of portrait gems presenting famous ancient philosophers like Socrates (nos 117–118) and Roman emperors and their wives (nos 112–116 and 120–121). Some of these figures cannot be identified without doubts and we do not know even if they were intended to present specific historical figures at all.

However, it must be stressed that post-classical glyptics is not all about copies and forgeries since intaglios of outstanding quality were also produced and, in their cases, ancient art was just a source of inspiration rather than a subject to be directly copied. For instance, the rare big citrine intaglio featuring a scene involving Victory holding two palm branches and laurel wreath among four horses (no. 102) is an exceptional piece in the collection. It presents a well-known motif deriving from the ancient painting by Nicomachus of Thebes (4th century BC) that was extremely popular in ancient glyptics and coinage.[195] This gem was very likely cut by one of the leading artists in Rome, or more broadly Italy, at the beginning of the 19th century. From the same period there are two more extraordinary intaglios (nos 105–106) presenting the bust of Neptune and Zeus, respectively. The first copies an important work by Charles Brown (1749–1795), while the second is a marvellous copy of the famous ancient intaglio, probably cut by Hyllos, housed in the State Hermitage Museum. The dynamic compositions and ageless beauty highlighted on those stones are the highest points of the neo-classical period. Among modern intaglios amassed in the Natsvlishvili Family collection, several specific workshops or even artists can be distinguished, for instance, nos 89, 91 and 96 form a group carved in one workshop. Due to the stylistic and material analysis, we can put them together but nothing more can be said about their makers.

192 Ramishvili 1979, 21–56.

193 For more information on these, see: Kagan 1994; 2003.

194 Tassinari 2010.

195 For the gems, see: Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, no. 214; Neverov 1976, no. 111; Zwierlein-Diehl 1986, no. 337. The motif also exists on Roman Republican coins, see: RRC, nos 453/1a–e – denarii of L. Plautius Plancus, 47 BC.

Regarding cameos, there are a few works from the Renaissance period, as well as examples carved in the more mannerist way of the 17th century. A sort of the highlight here is the Hermaphrodite lying under a tree probably inspired by the discovery of the famous ancient statue (no. 97). Many objects are standard 18th and 19th century products testifying a high level of interest in portraiture of ancient famous figures (especially Roman emperors). Nevertheless, there are pieces deserving a bit more attention. For instance, no. 133 presents a frontal bust of a lady cut in malachite, which was most likely cut in the workshops located in the Ural Mountains area in Russia. The utterly extraordinary is sardonyx cameo presenting laureate bust of Zeus with a fragment of *aegis* on his left shoulder (no. 134). It is a modern work inspired by the famous 'Zulian Cameo' produced in Western Europe rather than in the East. Even if 'just' an imitation, it is a tribute to artistic virtuosity and taste since every single detail has been executed so perfectly here. The vigorous treatment of the bushy beard and long curly hair is captivating and so is the carefulness for facial elements. The face of the most powerful god is full of dignity and might. There are only a few parallels of the same quality to this stone imitating so well the organic treatment for the body and hair as well as for the wreath on the deity's head as it is present on truly Hellenistic cameos. There is also a whole series of portraits of the Romans, some of them possibly presenting one of the assassins of Julius Caesar – Marcus Iunius Brutus (85–42 BC) – nos 139–141. Furthermore, there is a particularly well accomplished mid-19th century shell-cameo presenting bust of Michelangelo (1475–1564) which, according to the inscription on the back side, was a gift to a beloved person (no. 145). A stone combining cameo and intaglio techniques together is notable (no. 136) with an inscription on the intaglio side written in Polish. This piece belongs to a workshop active in Bohemia or Krakow in the early 18th century. It is interesting to observe that Polish gem engravers achieved some recognition well before Jan Regulski (ca. 1760–1807), the most famous Polish gem engraver and medallist employed by the last king of Poland Stanislas August Poniatowski (1764–1795).[196] Most likely the post-classical works were purchased and included in the collection from the older cabinets brought to Tbilisi by Russian aristocracy shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution and the Second World War.

Finally, there are two intriguing Islamic intaglios; one bears a fragment of The Quran sura 17, verse 84 (no. 124) and served as an amulet, while the second a personal name and date 1277 AH / AD 1860 (no. 125).

A separate section includes objects that have been identified as 20th century forgeries (nos 154–196). Some of them are recognised as products of the same workshops imitating local Roman gems and already discussed above (cf. pp. 34–36). One can add to this another group which includes specimens all cut in carnelian in a very primitive technique and style (nos 167–169 and 187–191). Apart from these, there are representatives of almost each glyptic class imaginable: fake Near Eastern amulets, cylinder seals, Egyptian scarabs and amulets as well as Hellenistic, Roman and Sassanian intaglios.

It must be remembered that the dates proposed in this book are not definite ones. Boundaries between ancient and post-classical/modern gems as well as contemporary fakes are affected by personal experience, taste and perception which makes them sometimes both arbitrary and artificial. Perhaps several more objects could be added to the categories of modern gems and contemporary fakes but, having found insufficient arguments, I have restrained myself from doing that, but wherever possible, uncertainties have been expressed. It is expected that the publication of the collection will stimulate discussion on the problem of distinction between ancient and post-classical/modern gems, as well as, identification of the contemporary forgeries in the future.

Overall, the Natsvlishvili Family collection of engraved gems is a highly diversified cabinet including both, ancient and post-classical glyptics. It is believed that this publication is just a start, and it is the intention of the Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation to support research on the rich glyptic collections the country and its citizens possess. Hopefully, this book will contribute to our understanding of Roman provincial glyptic production as there is little material published from the eastern provinces of the Empire, as well as to the iconographical and stylistic differences that sometimes make it unparalleled to the products of the western part. Furthermore, the iconographical and stylistic combinations of both Roman and Parthian/Sassanian are unprecedent-

196 For Jan Regulski, see: Bulanda 1914–1915; Laska 1986, 18–22; 1994, 280. For other Polish gem cutters of the 18th and 19th century, see: Laska 1986, 29.

ed and testify to the interconnections between artists working on the territories of ancient Georgia, Syria and Iran (cf. nos 48, 53–55 and 59). Subsequently, the chapter on modern glyptics informs us about peculiar glyptic production occurring not only in the well-known west European workshops but also those less known located in Bohemia or Poland, the Ural Mountains area and Russia in general. The information gathered in the brief section on the history of the assemblage as well as in individual entries contributes to wider recognition of Tbilisi as an art trade centre in the second half of the 19th and 20th century. Finally and most importantly, the essay on the detection of forgeries and section presenting them is hoped to present all difficulties regarding this problem in the studies of glyptic art. On the whole, this book is a conclusion of a great interest in glyptics of a prominent Georgian family. It describes and illustrates the virtually unknown history of the art market in this part of the world, which is both surprising and fascinating as well as the whole history of glyptic art.

Guidelines to the catalogue

All the gems are described according to the standardised scheme. Every entry begins with the physical description of the gemstone along with the information of type of object it is (a cylinder or stamp seal, ringstone, cameo etc.). In the case of intaglios, additional information on their forms is provided as well, which refers to the table illustrated on the next page. After that, dimensions are given in millimetres, and length, width and thickness of the individual objects are normally put in that order. Regarding the objects mounted in rings, their settings are fully described with references to the forms' typology created by Guiraud.[197]

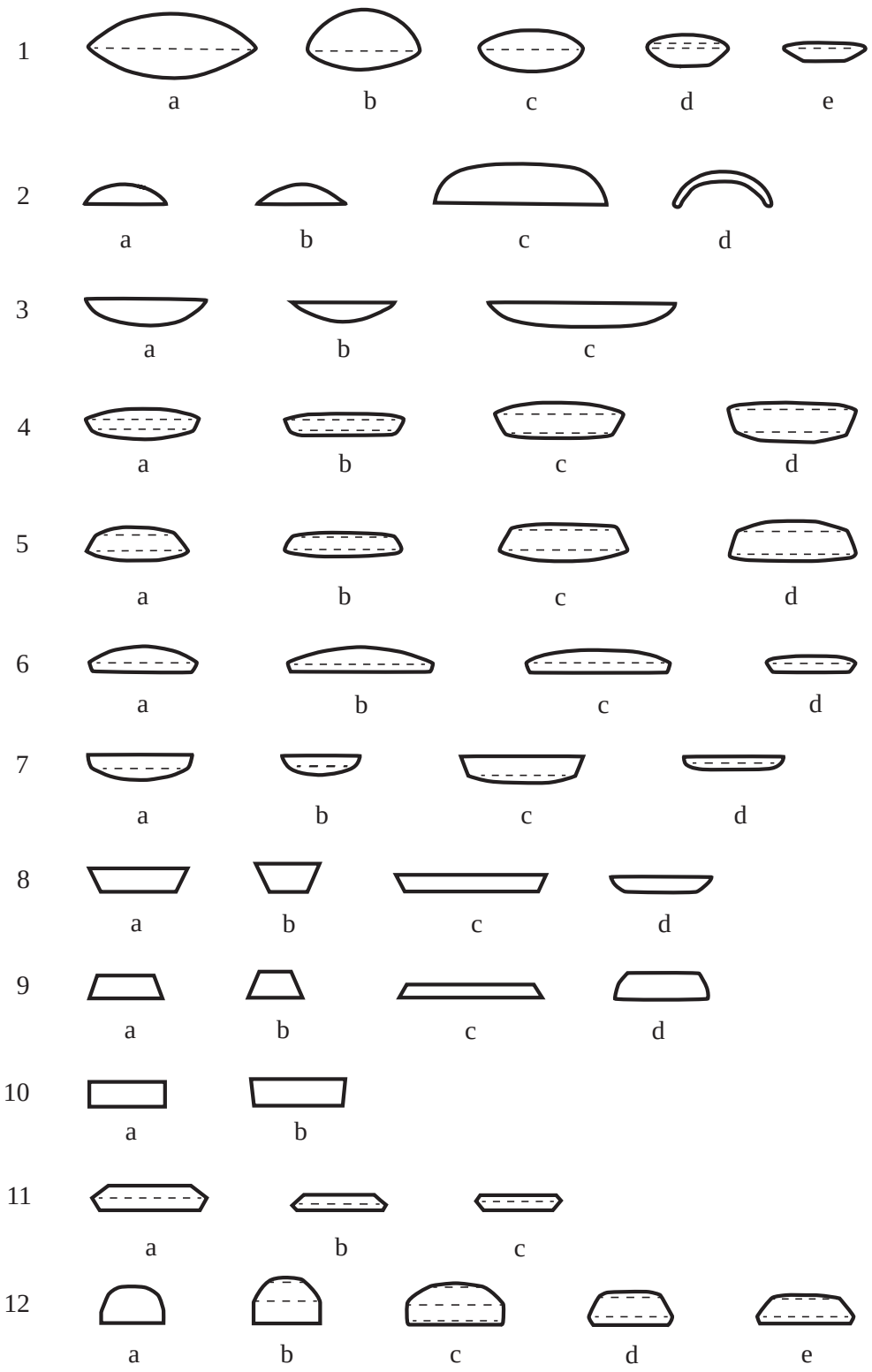
The description of the device engraved on the object is the next step. The devices on the intaglios are described as they appear on the stones and only if necessary from the impression (for instance, if there is an inscription added or if the depiction would not be readable due to discoloured surface of the stone or any other reason). After this, a commentary follows sometimes including attributions to the historical figures as well as judgments of the techniques of engraving and styles. All the parallel objects are listed within this section too.

After the commentary, the date of the object is put forth. The dates are based firstly on scrupulous analysis of gems' types and forms. Further, the style of engraving and techniques are accounted. Next, the analysis of the devices engraved, and particular properties of the specimens is made. This is combined with comparisons of similar objects unearthed during regular archaeological excavations, those set in ancient rings and mounts as well as those from previously described and published private and public collections. Comparisons with other works of ancient art and craftsmanship (especially coins) were of great help as well. Nevertheless, dating engraved gems is always affected, to some degree, by personal experience, taste and intuition. Here another problem is the lack of any archaeological and very little historical context for the objects. Therefore, the dates given are just proposals and the boundaries between the groups remain both arbitrary and artificial. Because in some cases it is challenging to ascertain whether the object is a genuine ancient work or a post-classical copy, both possible dates are indicated.

There are several degrees of gem divisions in the catalogue. The first one is a simple division of intaglios (which are listed first) and cameos. Next, all the specimens are divided according to the cultural and chronological order. Within the groups, a further division is made according to the subject-matter.

The catalogue ends with indices that basically cover names of gem engravers, subject-matters and materials used. All the smaller objects are illustrated 4:1, while bigger ones 3:1.

197 Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, 77–81.



Curved and flat forms of intaglios occurring in the catalogue (after Weiß 1996, 40, fig. 8, with some modifications)

Catalogue:
ancient and possibly ancient objects

Near Eastern cylinder and stamp seals, amulets and related objects

No. 1

Lapis lazuli pendant-amulet

15 × 13 × 5.8 mm

Bull's head shaped pendant-amulet with a hanger.

In Mesopotamia and more broadly the Middle East, jewellery was both worn and offered in temples as gifts to the gods. Its purpose was often more functional than ornamental; pendants like this one here were worn on the body and served as talismans to ward off evil and to increase the wearer's power. The amulets usually depict a large range of animals native to the Middle East, here illustrated by a bull's head. A similar object is to be found in the collection of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels and is linked to the Halaf Culture, which flourished in the 6th millennium BC in the territories of northern Mesopotamia and Syria (see: Homès-Fredericq 1970, no. 254).

• 6th millennium BC ◀

No. 2

Dark grey-green chlorite spindle whorl

23 × 12.2 mm

Iranian spindle whorl probably depicting a hunting scene arranged in steppe on its basis and decorated with geometric pattern on the sides.

Throughout history, the spindle whorl has been a symbol of domesticity and femininity, a metaphor for female contribution to society. The spindle whorl was used to weight the wool as it is being spun into thread. Spinning was considered a worthy activity even for women of noble birth. Similar objects were usually made of clay and decorated by an impression from an engraved gem, finger ring or a stamp seal (Davidson 1952, 152). This one, however, was probably decorated by the gem engraver or another cutter in the same technique as stamp and cylinder seals. The decoration resembles hunting motifs found on stamp seals produced in western Iran in the 4th millennium BC. The iconography combining figural and geometric elements shallowly cut in a simple style is typical for the period. See, some examples: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. nos M.76.174.522 and M.76.174.553; von der Osten 1934, no. 2; Amiet 1980, no. 44; Buchanan 1981, no. 105.

• 4th millennium BC

◀

No. 3

Lapis lazuli cylinder seal

15 × 6 mm

Mesopotamian cylinder seal decorated with a procession scene engaging two female figures dressed in long robes approaching an altar to the right.

Mesopotamia was the land where cylinder seals appeared for the first time around 3600 BC. Individuals and administrative bodies used seals like this one to denote ownership of items and to authenticate documents they issued. One typically carried his seal on a twine tight on one of his wrists for easy access, which is why the seals were pierced. Wearing a seal also became recognised as a method of protection and good fortune. For more information on these matters, see: Jakob-Rost, Gerlach 1997, 11–21. Seals were usually impressed onto clay tablets, bullets, boxes or door-strings as well as pottery jar caps. In the latter case, they were great for overseers as they could be used to avoid skimming from the top (Porada 1993; Meijer 2017). Technological knowledge required to create cylinder seals was considerable as the carved scenes were normally highly elaborate and refined. They indicate that only special class of artists and craftsmen could produce them (Collon 1989; Gorelick, Gwinnett 1989; Tunca 1989). The cylinder described here belongs to one of the earliest Mesopotamian objects of this kind. The scene engraved is presumably a sacrificial procession testifying that cylinders sometimes also played the role of amulets and religious objects rather than purely administrative tools. They could be carried as pendants on the neck protecting their wearers from evil and dark forces. The surface of this cylinder is considerably worn and erased but it seems that it was partially recut in antiquity in order to make the image more visible. This is especially noticeable in the contours of the first figure in front of the altar whose dress and body are clearer than the one behind it (on this problem, see: Feingold 2014, 41–50).

• Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2650–2400 BC) / recut in antiquity ◀

No. 4

Dark grey hematite cylinder seal

18.5 × 9.1 mm

Contest or hunting scene.

The cylinder shows a contest or hunting scene involving a naked hero throwing his javelin. In the field, there is a recumbent antelope, a hound or panther, winged demon, star and fish in the sky. Single line limits the cylinder field in the upper and bottom parts. The style of engraving and the subject-matter point to the Mitanni civilisation. There is considerable use of rounded cutting-wheels and drills producing figures of simplistic shapes and very little detailing is suggested. This is the so-called Syro-Mitannian Style (Teissier 1984, 93). The style and the material used point to the later phase of the development of Mitanni culture (Collon 2005, 65). For some similar compositions, see: Buchanan 1966, nos 914–917; Teissier 1984, nos 602, 610 and 630.

•Mitanni/Cypriote, ca. 1400–1300 BC ◀

No. 5

Green with black inclusions chalcedony cylinder seal

17 × 8.5 mm

Banquet scene.

The seal shows a bearded male figure seated on a throne with his right hand akimbo and the left one outstretched towards the table with a standard; behind his head there is a star and a recumbent goat at his foot. He is wearing a simple head-dress. In front of him there is a three-legged, high pedestal surmounted with a goat in a fan put there by another bearded male figure (possibly an attendant) carrying a head-dress too and standing to the side. Above his head there is a star and he is carrying a standard over his left shoulder. This piece was produced in the early first millennium BC and shows a very common motif for the Near Eastern cylinder seals – a banquet scene. The stars and standards accompanying the figures suggest similar status for both and they may be a pair of deities or a king celebrating a New Year banquet with a deity (Teissier 1984, 36–37). Although some iconographical elements can be easily connected to the earlier Mesopotamian prototypes, there is a new character of composition involving more elements (e.g. animals, astral signs and so on) playing the role of fillers, as well as stylistic novelties such as heavily fringed robes. Stylistically though, this seal is much inferior for instance to the Post-Akkadian and Old Babylonian works; the cutting-wheel is crude, while drilling is almost absent, but this is typical for the early phase of the period (Collon 2005, 77). Green chalcedony is an extremely rare material for cylinder seals and it was perhaps imported from Anatolia where it was mined. For similar scenes on the early Neo-Babylonian cylinder seals, see: Buchanan 1966, no. 592; Teissier 1984, nos 205 and 208.

• Neo-Babylonian Period (9th century BC) ◀

No. 6

Pale grey chalcedony cylinder seal

22.2 × 12.9 mm

Contest scene.

This well-cut cylinder seal presents a three-figured contest scene in which a young, bearded hero dressed in a short kilt struggles with two ostriches holding them by their long necks. The birds are standing on one leg and kicking out at the hero with the other. The hero puts his right leg on a quadruped victim.

The following elements are noteworthy: the kilt dress that remains plain but cut so that it forms oblique lines on the chest, the coiffure of the figure, who is probably wearing a diadem, and the fact that he puts his leg on the victim. Those features are suggestive of Babylonian character of the scene (Collon 2001, 154–155). Nevertheless, the three-figured composition is an Assyrian borrowing that had penetrated Babylonian glyptics. Thus, one deals here with a hybrid that was surely created towards the late 8th century BC (Collon 2001, 165). The contest between the hero and ostriches is a rare subject and most likely illustrates capturing the birds which were found in the Syrian desert quite often those days (Collon 2001, 156). The size of the birds suggests them to be adult and fast, therefore, the seal apart from utilitarian functions could serve as a form of auto-presentation of its owner. Surely, he identified with the divine hero whose physical prowess has been highlighted here. Sometimes in similar contest scenes kings are represented like on the seal in the late Professor Henri Seyrig collection, now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (inv. no. Seyrig.1980.292.14). Noblemen surely followed this practice, but they hesitate to depict themselves, thus, employed the mentioned mythical hero figure. See some similar examples in: Collon 2001, nos 302, 334 and 379.

• Neo-Babylonian Period (late 8th century BC) ◀

No. 7

Pale grey chalcedony cylinder seal

20 × 12.3 mm

Contest scene.

This is another example of a Neo-Babylonian cylinder seal presenting a three-figured contest scene. Here, the antithetical group consists of a hero in the centre facing left, who grasps rearing lions by one of their forepaws on either side. The hero has relatively long hair tied with a diadem on the back of the head in a bun and is wearing an open kilt over which is belted open skirt uncovering his right leg that he is putting forward. The small anatomical elements of the animals have been suggested with tiny pellets. Similarly to the piece discussed above, this seal is also a mixture of Neo-Babylonian and Assyrian glyptics reflected in both, composition and style. See a very close parallel where the hero fights with a bull and lion and less close one where he struggles with griffins, both in the British Museum collection (Collon 2001, nos 330 and 351, respectively).

• Neo-Babylonian Period (late 8th – early 7th century BC) ◀

No. 8

Black with green inclusions chlorite cylinder seal

35 × 11.1 mm

Daily life scene.

This seal is engraved with a scene presenting two women tending a goat or antelope identified by its long, curved horns. One of the women is seated on a chair and is stroking the animal's head, while the second is standing behind it putting her hand on its rump. There is a branch in the field suggesting the scene to be arranged in a wild environment. The style of engraving is essentially a combination of Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid styles reflected by the use of simple linear manner and the globular one, which is typical for 7th century BC products (cf. Collon 2001, nos 135–137 and 246), however, its roots reach the early 9th century BC (Collon 2005, 77). The surface of the cylinder is considerably worn, thus the single elements seem blunt.

• Neo-Babylonian Period (7th century BC) ◀

No. 9

Dark grey-green chlorite octagonal conoid seal

23.3 × 13.2 mm

Offering scene.

The object is engraved with a figure of a worshipper with outstretched hands sprinkling incense onto a burning altar. Behind him there is a plant and a crescent in the top right corner whose presence may suggest an offer made to the moon god Nanna or Sin. This is one of the most common subjects on Neo-Babylonian stamp seals from the 7th–6th century BC. The theme continues down to the Achaemenid Period. The style of these seals is typical as the figure is cut in a simplified manner with a thick wheel bit, while his head, corpus and hands with a globular one. For similar compositions executed in a comparable style, see: Delaporte 1923, no. A.743; Jakob-Rost, Gerlach 1997, no. 255. Chalcedony is the most popular material used, but chlorite examples like the one described here exist too, although seldom. The seal is pierced in the upper part which suggest it was meant to be worn on a string attached to a wrist or as a pendant around the neck.

• Neo-Babylonian Period (7th–6th century BC) ◀

No. 10

Milky-white-yellowish chalcedony cylinder seal

21.1 × 10.8 mm

Banquet scene.

This seal shows a beardless man on the left with his right hand outstretched and a bowl or cup over a table. On the right side there is another male figure standing beside the table and holding a potted plant in his right hand. Behind him there is a crescent and sphinx seated on its hind legs. Both men are wearing fringed Assyrian robes and there are two stars between them in the field.

The cylinder should be classified as a Neo-Assyrian object and dated to the turn of the 8th and 7th century BC. It presents a widely popular theme and its style is linear in character, but Urartian influence, that was introduced shortly after Sargon's successful Eight Campaign in 714 BC, is noticeable here (Collon 2005, 79–80 and 86). For cylinders executed in similar style, see: Collon 2001, nos 82 and 176.

- Neo-Assyrian Period (late 8th – early 7th century BC)

◀

No. 11

Reddish-orange carnelian cylinder seal

20 × 13.2 mm

Offering scene?

The cylinder seal presents the sun god Shamash in the form of a winged solar-disc placed above a pole ('pillar of heaven') that is standing behind a bearded male figure dressed in a belted kilt and short tunic holding a standard in his right hand and another object in the left one (regarding the standard type, see: von der Osten 1934, 139–140). He is confronted with a young, beardless male figure wearing a belted kilt and long open skirt uncovering his left leg. The figure is holding a sceptre in his left hand and a cross-shaped object in the right one. This scene belongs to a highly popular category of subjects related to the sun god Shamash (Collon 2001, 79–81). The solar-disc here is a simple version with horizontal feathers which occurs on the seals cut in the drilled and cut-style, the one observed here. These features are typical for the late 8th–7th century BC Neo-Assyrian cylinders (Collon 2001, 82). The tree type is also cut in a very simplistic manner as a sort of trunk with several blobs vertically grooved as tree-sections, nevertheless, no branches are marked. Overall, it escapes the typology proposed by Collon and should be therefore included in the last group he distinguishes (Collon 2001, 83). The trees in this group are usually of simple form like the one presented on our cylinder and cut in a combination of drilled and cut-style. Most of them exist on 7th century BC seals so perhaps we should date ours to this century as well, although, the tree form, the way how the robes the figures wear are approached and the overall style raises some doubts about genuinessnes of this cylinder seal.

- Perhaps Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC) or 20th century? ◀

No. 12

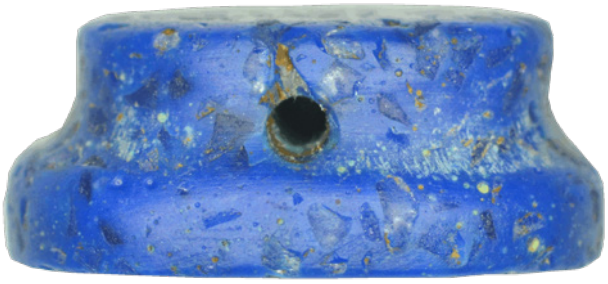
Blue with gold inclusions
lapis lazuli stamp seal

20.8 × 14 × 8.9 mm

Two ibexes or antelopes heraldically, grazing by a bush, clump of grass or a tulip.

The antelope species and ibexes were a popular motif in Middle Eastern glyptics mostly due to their significance in hunting. They constituted a common prey. Starting in the 8th century BC stamp seals started to supersede cylinders, especially in the Syrian-Palestine region, but they flourished in the 7th century BC and expanded to the neighbouring areas (Collon 2005, 83). The style of engraving here is based on bigger and smaller drills clearly corresponding with the one present first on the Neo-Assyrian cylinders (Collon 2005, 77). For some similar objects, see: Mitchell, Searight 2007, nos 39, 55, 66, 78 and 123.

• Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC) ◀



No. 13

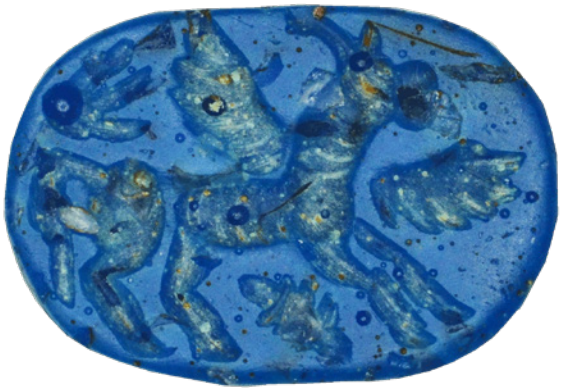
Blue with gold inclusions
lapis lazuli stamp seal

15 × 10.4 × 7.3 mm

Winged quadruped (possibly a horse) in profile to the right, a solar disc behind it and a branch under its belly. No ground line.

One of the most popular motifs on Neo-Assyrian stamp seals and art in general. This seal is cut in the same manner as the preceding object and possibly comes from the same workshop. Noteworthy is the fact that the iconography and style changed little over the next centuries as even in the Hellenistic times, very close representations occur, see: Mitchell, Searight 2007, nos 649, 670, 679, 681, 684, 688–690, 711, 715–716, 725 and 730.

• Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC)



No. 14

Orange glass ringstone, bubbled (F9A)

18.2 × 13.8 × 3 mm

The same subject as above but represented on an intaglio.

• Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC) ◀

No. 15

Blue with gold inclusions lapis lazuli head seal

14.6 × 12 × 9 mm

Upper-relief side: old, bald male, head to the front. Flat side: male figure wearing a dress and cap standing on a boat. He has an unidentified object in his outstretched hand.

Head seals are rare and appears for the first time in the Neo-Assyrian period. The face type originates from Egypt where it started to be used during the 12th dynasty (ca. 1825–1785) but experienced a kind of revival in the 8th and the 7th century BC – the moment when it also expanded first to Syrian-Palestine region and later beyond it. See some very close examples: Nunn 1999, nos 350–351. The figure in the boat is probably a deity (perhaps Egyptian Osiris travelling on the Nile boat?) and occurs on regular Neo-Assyrian stamp seals too, see: Mitchell, Searight 2007, nos 266A and 273.

• Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC) ◀

No. 16

Yellowish-white limestone head seal

13 × 9.7 × 8.2 mm

Bearded male head facing forward. His head is decorated with a crown or diadem with a gem at the top.

This object presents another type of Middle Eastern male head used for head seals of the Neo-Assyrian Period. It is noteworthy that it is not Egyptian, but purely Assyrian representation probably based on the royal image. The flat side is damaged; thus, it cannot be determined if the object served as a seal or, like the previous one, was purposed for personal adornment.

• Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC?)

◀

Egyptian scarabs, scaraboids and amulets

No. 17

White-grey slate scarab

14.2 × 10.9 × 7.1 mm

The beetle part is well-cut but slightly chipped on the side. *Clupeus* is clearly modelled and detailed, *pronotum* indicated by a single line and *elytra* marked though no winglets on the sides, three pairs of legs on the base: one in the front part and two on the back. Pierced longitudinally for suspension. On the flat side there is a seated Amun on the left with hieroglyphic signs, all enclosed by an oval frame. *The shape of the object (V notches on the back/triangles at the corners of the wing-cases) is clearly New Kingdom and it should be labelled as a Menkheperre-type scarab (Type A3 in Hall's typology [Hall 1913, XXXII]). It bears the praenomen of Ramses II with an epithet (wsr-M3ᶜt-Rᶜ sfp.n-Rᶜ) (see: Beckerath 1999, 154–155: T9). The signs below the seated figure of Amun should probably been read as an additional epithet. For similar scarabs, see: Hall 1913, nos 2125–2128; Gallottini (ed.) 2012, nos 80–81; Śliwa 2015, nos 24–25.*

• New Kingdom (19th dynasty – ca. 1292–1189 BC)

◀

No. 18

Dark violet amethyst scarab

27 × 18 × 10.3 mm

The beetle part is crudely and relatively shallowly cut. *Clupeus* is only generally formed and its details suggested with a few short cuts, *pronotum* indicated by a single line going across the body and *elytra* modelled with four short grooves imitating winglets on the sides, legs are poorly carved. Overall, very schematic workmanship. No device was engraved on the flat side and no piercing.

This, as well as, the two next scarabs are typical products of Egyptian glyptics in the reign of the 11th, 12th and 13th dynasty. Amethyst scarabs were particularly popular during the reign of the 12th dynasty when other hard gemstones like green feldspar, jasper and obsidian were also frequently employed. Most of them are crudely cut due to the hard material used and serial production. They were fashionable amulets since scarab symbolised a spontaneous continuation of the life cycle. Sometimes they were pierced longitudinally in order to set them in swivel rings, but most of them were set in gold pendants and necklaces which did not require piercing. They were scarcely inscribed since their bases were covered with a golden foil on which texts were incised (Hall 1913, XXVI). On the one hand, such items were used for personal adornment, but on the other hand, they were set together with other scarabs or amulets due to their talismanic properties to give protection against all manner of malign influences. This might be the case here and in the next two examples. All three have considerably worn surfaces without the freshness of the relatively recent cutting. The wheels have blunt edges and the scarabs' contours are irregular and chipped, which all make them look fairly ancient. For a similar object, see: Andrews 1981, no. 551.

• Middle Kingdom (ca. 2010–1750 BC)

No. 19

Intensive violet amethyst scarab

21.2 × 15 × 8.9 mm

The beetle part is correctly formed. *Clupeus* is modelled relatively well and its details suggested with some short wheels, *pronotum* indicated by two broad lines and *elytra* scarcely indicated, no winglets on the sides, four pairs of legs on the base. No device on the flat side and no piercing. *For a commentary, see no. 18.*

•Middle Kingdom (ca. 2010–1750 BC) ◀

No. 20

Pale violet to white amethyst scarab

26.3 × 18.5 × 10.2 mm

The beetle part is schematically carved. *Clupeus* barely distinguished with very few details, *pronotum* indicated by a single line and *elytra* marked with winglets on the sides, two pairs of legs on the basis. No device on the flat side and no piercing.

For a commentary, see no. 18.

•Middle Kingdom (ca. 2010–1750 BC) ◀

No. 21

Red-dark grey porphyry amulet

25.8 × 8 × 19.4 mm

A recumbent sphinx-shaped amulet with a base engraved with a single line. Pierced for suspension.

The amulet is of simple even crude workmanship and its purpose was to ward off the wearer of all kinds of evil. Besides, in Egyptian mythology sphinx was associated with the sun and recalled power smiting the enemies due to its lion body.

- Middle Kingdom – Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1981–1550 BC)?

No. 22

Grey and yellow chalcedony-agate amulet

18 × 10 × 7.5 mm

A frog-shaped amulet pierced for suspension.

In ancient Egypt, frogs were thought to spontaneously generate, and, as such, became a symbol of regeneration and fertility. The frog (Rana mascareniensis) stood for the great frog headed goddess Heqt who signified the great qualities of rebirth and resurrection. Additionally, the frog was the symbolic animal of the Upper Egypt. Amulets like this one were carried as pendants or sometimes set in rings and bracelets and had highly personal meaning. They were particularly popular in the New Kingdom Period (see more: Andrews 1994, 63).

• New Kingdom (1550–1077 BC)?

No. 23

Greyish-green and glazed (green) faience scaraboid?

25 × 19 × 12.5 mm

This object is probably a poorly preserved frog-shaped scaraboid with a plain base, no hieroglyphs visible.

With the Third Intermediate Period there was an explosion in the quantity of Egyptian amulets and scaraboids and many were produced from cheap materials, especially faience. They were usually glazed (some traces of this practice survived in this example) in order to raise their value. For a similar object, see: Hornung, Staehelin 1976, nos 364, 621 and 762; Gallottini (ed.) 2012, no. 84.

• Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1070–664 BC) ◀

Greek Bronze Age seal

No. 24

Pale green glass lentoid seal

19.6 × 19.6 × 6 mm

A spider-scorpion-like creature with three pairs of front, four pairs of hind legs and a pointy tail. Two circles marked on the sides.

The object features a fairly common motif in Minoan-Mycenaean glyptics. Gems like this one were primarily used as seals and tied with twine on a wrist (for more information, see: Boardman 2001, 36–46 and 62–65). However, here the technique is close to the 'talismanic style', which was primarily used for the production of series of cheap seals engraved with simple but popular motifs, giving those objects apotropaic functions. They mostly served as personal amulets averting evil and diseases and only few were also employed for administrative purposes as casual seals for making impressions, thus had multiple meanings (Krzyszkowska 2005, 133–137). The spider-scorpion-like creature on the gem certainly served to amuletic purpose warding off evil, while the three circles were used here as fillers. See some similar objects, many have been found in Heraklion: CMS I, no. 464; CMS II.1, no. 111a; CMS II.2, no. 285a; CMS II.5, nos 312–313; CMS III, nos 185c, 289–290 and 308; CMS IV, no. 57; CMS VI, no. 31c; CMS IX, no. 198.

• Middle Minoan Period (18th–17th century BC)

Graeco-Persian gems

No. 25

Greyish-blue chalcedony
ringstone or recut scaraboid?

20.5 × 15.1 × 4.5 mm

A lioness walking to the right with head turned to the front. No ground line.

This is a Graeco-Persian ringstone or a recut scaraboid with slightly convex frontside and flat backside produced under the rule of Achaemenid dynasty. It presents a typical subject-matter for 4th century BC glyptic art related to the native animal for the Middle East and the engraving exhibits a considerable Greek influence. The ringstone form for a graeco-Persian gem is unusual, although possible (cf. Wagner, Boardman 2017, no. 65 and the following example). Chalcedony was the primary material used for the seals of this period and it is quite probable that the gem in question was produced in Anatolia where this material was easily obtainable. This is also suggested by the generic subject-matter taken from everyday life. It does not follow strict rules of the Imperial Court art in contrary to the next stone and thus, should be added to the Greek Style in Boardman's classification (Boardman 2001, 309–312). The object could be used as a seal or enjoyed just as mounted in a finger ring by a member of Achaemenid administration or an aristocrat. In the collection of the Jean Paul Getty Museum there is a very similar study of a lion (Spier 1992, no. 110) and another one is a panther in Munich (AGDS I.1, no. 293 with further literature).

• 4th century BC

◀

No. 26

Intensive green chalcedony ringstone

14.2 × 12 × 4.8 mm

A Persian lion-griffin with a horned lion's head, protruding tongue and forepart with curved wings. Its tail is that of a bird (ostrich) – short and upturned. No ground line.

This is a Graeco-Persian ringstone but executed in the Court Style (Boardman 2001, 305–309). The stone type is quite unusual for the period since green (chromian) chalcedony gems were popular in the 1st century BC/AD but it was sometimes employed for scarabs, cameos and ringstones earlier as well. According to Platz-Horster's study, most of ancient green chalcedony originate from central Anatolia (Platz-Horster 2010, 195–197) so the one examined here could be a local Achaemenid product. The subject itself is a popular one, the monster with ostrich avian tail is borrowed from Mesopotamian art and often appears in Persian Imperial art. The style of this piece is mannered and meticulous. The facture of the wings and bigger body parts is treated with short strokes, while the joints of legs and small details of the head and horns are drilled in a highly decorative way. The body shapes of the creature are rounded, and the overall impression is a more formal representation in comparison, for example, to the previous stone. This ringstone could have served to a highly important personality, possibly a satrap or influential nobleman at the Achaemenid court. For similar ringstones and scaraboids, see: Babelon 1899, no. 37; AGDS II, no. 203; Boardman 2001, pl. 840; Weiß 2012, no. 36; Wagner, Boardman 2017, no. 64.

• 4th century BC

◀

No. 27

Red carnelian cylinder seal

30 × 9.6 mm

Procession scene.

The composition of this cylinder seal is arranged in two registers. The upper one bears three figures cladded in long, sleeveless robes approaching a crescent surmounted on a long staff that on the one hand resembles Greek thymiaterion, but on the other hand is close to the crutch with crescent of Sin (Ward 1910, 413). The two figures are grasping sceptres in their right hands and a short staff in the left ones, while the third one, that is the closest to the altar, is using only a short staff. In the lower register there are three ibexes or goats. Broken in the upper part and restored.

The combination of humans and animals suggests shepherds and may refer to this kind of activity that was a major food source for ancient civilisations in the Middle East. However, the figures are engaged in a religious ritual since the staff with a crescent is an emblem of some unidentified Middle Eastern deities (von der Osten 1934, 139–140). The subject of a procession combined with animal studies was quite popular in the Neo-Assyrian Period (Teissier 1984, no. 232). Nevertheless, the object is not a regular cylinder but has a barrel shape which rarely, but still, occurred among Graeco-Persian gems (Collon 2005, 93). Boardman notices a specific group of provincial Achaemenid style gems that were found in South Russia and Georgia (Tiflis), most of them being glass tabloids with Achaemenid subjects, which have not been properly researched yet (Boardman 2001, 322). The elongated bodies dressed in long, richly textured garments cut in essentially simplistic linear style are typical for this class of gems. It is likely that our barrel-shaped cylinder is a part of the same phenomenon and the local production was not limited to the tabloids only. It is noteworthy that the heads of the figures depicted on the seal in question have globular form and the same can be said about the corpuses of the ibexes/goats, which verges on the peculiar a globolo style. Little can be said about the origins of this technique in the east, but it suggests dating the object on the verge of the Hellenistic period since the manner seems to be a continuation of the main Graeco-Persian series that had a long influence in the east (Boardman 2001, 322). Overall then, the cylinder seal seems to be a rare local product being a stylistic hybrid.

• Late 4th – early 3rd century BC?

Hellenistic gems

No. 28

Red carnelian ringstone (F2A)

15.1 × 12 × 3.9 mm

Nike flying in the air to the left shouldering a palm branch and extending a laurel wreath in her hands.

This is a particularly well-accomplished simple design cut upon a very limited field on the top of a highly convex and polished gemstone. The composition is placed in the very centre, while most of the stone remains clear. The form and style are distinctive for the 1st century BC and essentially Hellenistic (Plantzos 1999, 35 and 90–91). The gem was surely produced in an Egyptian or Levantine workshop. For an individual, Nike on an intaglio symbolised good luck and would serve as an amulet. However, it could also stand for a personal or military victory. This type of Nike was the most popular one, especially later in Roman glyptics, and derived from sculpture of the early Hellenistic date (for the origins and evolution of Nike/Victory's representations, see: LIMC VI [1992], 896–899 and 902–904, s.v. 'Nike' [A. Moustaka, A. Goulaki-Voutira, U. Grote]; LIMC VII [1994], 268, s.v. 'Victoria' [R. Vollkommer]). For parallel pieces, see: Gesztelyi 2000, no. 3, and unpublished sard in the British Museum collection inv. no. 1987.0212.225.

• 1st century BC

◀

No. 29

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

23.2 × 22.8 × 2.8 mm

Bust of Zeus-Sol wearing a radiate crown on the head, garment suggested in the bottom part and there is an arrow in front of him.

This intaglio is a Hellenistic creation, which is suggested by the big circular stone, flat on both sides, and especially the iconography: the head is upturned with a slightly open mouth. There are some baroque elements here like the bushy beard, big eye with eyelids and pupil incised, and prominent nose. Nevertheless, the overall style seems sketchy and linear in character. The hair is braided around the head and arranged in four corkscrew locks resembling the so-called Libyan ones – typical for Egyptian art and Apollo-Sol representations. The crown and the cloak are suggested with a few thin grooves, scarcely detailed. The type of the stone used is rare for the period. The arrow is an attribute of Apollo-Sol merged here with Zeus into a syncretic deity (cf. Casal Garcia 1990, no. 173). The style of engraving is suggestive for a relatively late date. Similar head type is applied for other deities like Asclepios, Helios or simply Zeus, see: Mandel-Elzinga 1985, no. 8 (similar style and stone from Alexandria); Plantzos 1999, nos 354–355; Furtwängler, Lehmann (eds) 2013, no. 24; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 25, though usually in a better style. Perhaps our gem was executed in one of the provincial workshops operating in Egypt or Levant?

• Late 2nd – early 1st century BC ◀

Roman Republican gems

No. 30

Black and white banded agate ringstone (F8A)

15 × 10 × 3 mm

Cupid standing to the left and pulling a bow and arrow. He is naked, has a pair of wings and cloak on his left arm and a quiver with arrows at his foot.

This is a fine work executed in the Fine Republican Wheel Style in the most preferred material for the period and the old-fashioned long oval, flat form. The cutting is based on a bigger, blunted round drill used for the main body parts, combined with disc drill applied to render the details (short, parallel grooves in the head section, wings and foot). In this technique, the hair forms a sort of a roll around the head, stylised and looking like a hat with a rim, which is perfectly observable on our gem (for more information on that style, see: Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 154–155). Themes involving Cupid were extremely popular in the Roman Republican glyptics, especially in the 1st century BC, and the subject on this intaglio is consistent with the style of engraving. Republican Wheel workshops preferred Dionysian subjects to which Cupid studies account, see some similar examples: Casal Garcia 1990, nos 36 and 109–118; Tamma 1991, no. 55; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 212; Bollati, Messina 2009, no. 142; Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, nos 253–254. Most of the gems in this style are believed to have been produced in northern Italy, possibly in Aquileia, which was a major glyptic centre in Roman times (Sena Chiesa 1966), however, as Maaskant-Kleibrink notices, some must have been cut in Asia Minor or by artists coming from this area (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 154). Our intaglio seems a piece of evidence for that hypothesis and was probably produced in Anatolia, northern Syria or their neighbourhood.

• Second half of the 1st century BC

◀

No. 31

Pale orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14 × 11.9 × 3 mm

Vulcan or a craftsman working on a round shield with his hammer. Ground line.

This intaglio was cut in the Thick Republican Wheel Style. It exhibits a very similar treatment in the engraving of the body to the previous gem, but details are produced here with a thicker, probably flat bouterolle bit. Noteworthy is the stripping of the garment covering lower part of the figure's body – typical for workshops operating in this style. Like the previous object, this one was possibly cut in a workshop located in Anatolia or northern Syria and there are some gems presenting the same subject originating from that region, see: Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 300; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 397. Intaglios with Vulcan may refer to the armour produced by the god on the commission of Thetis, mother of Achilles and thus, indirectly to the hero himself. However, Vulcan might have represented hard labour and skilfulness that his job required. The owner of the stone might have identified with these qualities and the intaglio should be regarded as an act of his self-presentation. For a detailed study of this motif in ancient and modern glyptics, see: Tassinari 1994. The motif is a popular one in glyptics, see some parallels: Sena Chiesa 1966, no. 972; AGDS I.2, no. 746; AGDS III Kassel, no. 27; AGDS IV Hamburg, no. 429; Vollenweider 1972, no. 10; Tomaselli 1993, no. 207; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 144; Spier 2001, no. 13.

• Second half of the 1st century BC ◀

No. 32

Brown sard ringstone (F8A)

11.5 × 9.2 × 3.4 mm

Diademed bust of Apollo to the left.

This type of Apollo's image may be based on the famous statue executed by Skopas around 370 BC or even an earlier prototype (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1989–1993, 200–201). The gem is engraved in the Fine Republican Wheel Style and the extensive use of disc bit is observable for the facture of the hair and garment fastened on the shoulder. It seems that diadem was more common for the products of east-Mediterranean glyptic workshops like this one, while the laurel wreath was frequently applied in Italy (cf. Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 220; Gołyźniak 2017, nos 72–79).

• Second half of the 1st century BC ◀

No. 33

Veined black agate ringstone (F8A)

11.1 × 8.3 × 3.2 mm

Diademed bust of Apollo to the left.

The same type and very similar style to the preceding.

• Second half of the 1st century BC ◀

No. 34

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

16.5 × 13.1 × 2.1 mm

Bust of Apollo to the right with laurel branch in front of him.

This is the same type of image of Apollo as on previous stones, although he is not wearing a laurel wreath or diadem. Instead, his hair is braided around his head and some locks are falling down his neck. A garment is suggested in the bottom part. The laurel was sacred to Apollo and used in the oracle practices in his sanctuary in Delphi, therefore, it appears here as god's emblem. It is noteworthy that the same type of image of Apollo executed in a comparable style exists on gems from collections originating from Anatolia, Syria and Palestine, see: Hamburger 1968, no. 16; Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 41; Konuk, Arslan 2000, no. 5; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 195. For further similar studies, see: Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 290; Mandrioli Bizzarri 1987, no. 249; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 72 (with further literature). Perhaps this gem was executed by the same hand as the next one because their style and material are strikingly close. It is cut in the Fine Republican Wheel Style and the artist enjoyed very much using a thin disc bit with which he produced the neatly combed hair, beard and folds of the garment (cf. also the next intaglio) as numerous parallel grooves.

• Second half of the 1st century BC ◀

No. 35

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14.7 × 12 × 3 mm

Bearded and draped bust of Dionysus/Bacchus/Liber to the left.

This is an unusual version of a common type of Dionysus/Bacchus/Liber image on 1st century BC gems. The subject origins from Hellenistic creations, which is indicated by the open mouth suggesting a state of ecstasy, the head's position and facial expression (Spier 1992, no. 21). Two corkscrew locks hanging down the neck are another very typical feature of this representation, however, here the head is bearded, while usually the type involves no beard. Furthermore, there is no ivy wreath on the head, though the hair is rolled around it. All these observations drive us to the conclusion that the gem is a combination of the mentioned type with an older archaising design of Dionysus/Bacchus bust, often taking the form of a herm (cf. Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 247; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 627; unpublished carnelian in the British Museum collection, inv. no. 1987.0212.39). Similarly to the previous object, this one is executed in the Fine Republican Wheel Style and possibly by the same hand. See some close, though usually beardless examples: Furtwängler 1896, no. 4739; Henig 1975, no. 339; Casal Garcia 1990, no. 162; Gołyźniak 2017, nos 82–83 (with further literature).

• Second half of the 1st century BC

◀

No. 36

Veined orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.1 × 2.6 mm

Laureate, draped and bearded bust of Zeus/Jupiter to the right.

The gem presents a common motif for Late Roman Republican and Imperial glyptics. The subject is ancient and well-known from Greek coins starting in the 5th century BC (see a detailed discussion in Pannuti 1983, no. 5). This is another work in the Fine Republican Wheel Style. The engraver was skilful in operating with thin disc drills. Actually, this example shows considerable stylistic differences between Italic and east-Mediterranean works of this style. For example, the treatment of details is more energetic here and the structure of the beard is freer, even chaotic, while most of the Italic gems exhibit nicely arranged, though schematic locks (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, no. 88). Our gem is also somehow close to the Hellenistic works. This is clearly visible in the facial expression (slightly open mouth, prominent cheekbones etc.) and the hair upturned above the forehead. Nevertheless, it cannot be taken for a one (cf. no. 29 here and Plantzos 1999, nos 354–361). The object is a stylistic hybrid or rather simply a local Anatolian or Syrian (?) product filling the gap between Hellenistic and Roman glyptics of the 1st century BC. For similar gems, see: Furtwängler 1900, pl. XLI.1; Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, nos 403–404; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 300; Spier 1992, no. 267; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 171; Middleton 1998, no. 35; Spier 2001, no. 32.

• Second half of the 1st century BC ◀

No. 37

Pale green chalcedony or chrysoprase ringstone (F8A)

15.8 × 12.6 × 3.5 mm

Head of Isis to the right.

The image of the Egyptian goddess Isis was a popular one in the Roman Republican period. On this intaglio not only the three corkscrew Libyan locks suggest Egyptian origins, but also three short strokes attached to her diadem, which symbolise the atef crown. Many Ptolemaic queens identified themselves with Isis and depicted in her guise, but it was Cleopatra VII who prevailed (Plantzos 1999, 52–54, 69 and 82–83). For this reason, many heads or busts of Isis on intaglios and cameos are suspected to be portraits. This is not the case of the gem in question, for we do not find any individual features and the workmanship is rather average. The popularity of Isis' likeness on Roman gems could be due to her maternal aid and healing skills as well as to the fact that according to Pliny the Elder, in his times there was a general trend among the Romans to engage in cults of Egyptian deities through putting their images upon finger rings (Pliny, NH, XXXVII 41). The intaglio is probably ancient (however, see a discussion on p. 20) and cut in the Fine Republican Wheel Style, exhibiting the use of a thick rounded bit for the main part of the head and a very thin disc drill producing numerous parallel lines of the hair and face details. This might be another gem produced in an Anatolian or even Egyptian workshop. For similar gems, see: Furtwängler 1896, nos 1836 and 4849; Berry 1968, no. 109; AGDS I.2, no. 1035; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 199; Spier 1992, no. 208; Martin, Höhne 2005, nos 35–37.

- Most likely second half of the 1st century BC – early 1st century AD or perhaps 20th century?

◀

No. 38

Black, white and grey banded agate ringstone (F5D)

14.3 × 11 × 4 mm

Lupa Romana suckling twins. Ground line. Inscription: ROMA.

This intaglio is completely different from all the previously described Roman Republican gems in the collection and it might be a fake. At the first glance it seems to be an Italic work in A Globolo-like Style, which is indicated by both the form of the gem with highly convex face and the style based on large round drills, while the detailing was done using short wheel grooves. It is not known where exactly gems of this type were produced as there is some evidence for both central and northern Italy (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 105). However, the subject seems unpopular on A Globolo-like Style gems since they usually bear more simple designs and they are generally not inscribed. Perhaps the inscription appearing on our stone might be a later addition? Though, letters cut in similar manner appear on undoubtedly ancient intaglio presenting a calf suckling a cow from the collection of the National Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi (Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. I, no. 27). If by any chance the piece is ancient, it is tempting to propose that it reflected a particular bound of its wearer with his homeland and maybe to suggest that it travelled to Georgia or neighbouring area with one of the Roman soldiers during the military campaign led by Pompey the Great in 65 BC as a consequence of the Mithridatic War or any other Roman eastern quest. The subject of lupa Romana is a fairly ancient one in Roman glyptics, see a detailed study: Dardenay 2009. Gems presenting similar stylistic features can also be found, see: AGDS I.2, no. 1452; AGDS III Göttingen, no. 342; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 474; Spier 1992, no. 198 (a bull, but in a very similar style and position); Vitellozzi 2010, no. 323.

- Late 2nd – early 1st century BC with modern inscription? ◀

No. 39

Rock crystal ringstone (F6A)

13 × 12 × 3.6 mm

Hound shown in profile with his head turned back and tail upturned. Ground line.

Hounds represented on a gem may have various meanings. It symbolised faithfulness – a virtue which the intaglio's owner was particularly proud of. If so, this would account for an auto-presentation, which can be further developed as the hound may stand for exceptional skills in hunting. However, the animal was a companion of Diana during her hunts and in fact may stand for the goddess here. If this is the case, the gem would serve as an amulet bringing her blessing and good luck in chase to the gem's sitter. The intaglio is cut in a relatively rare material in the Republican Extinguishing Pellet Style and the use of bouterolle drill for cutting details such as the eye, joints of the legs and paws as little blobs is noteworthy. This feature and almost circular shape of the intaglio allow us to date the piece to the late Roman Republican period. For parallels, see: Furtwängler 1900, pl. XLV.39; Fossing 1929, no. 1412; AGDS I.2, nos 2005–2014; Javakhishvili 1972, nos 8 and 26; Krug 1981, no. 415; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 199.

• Second half of the 1st century BC

Roman Imperial gems

No. 40

Red jasper ringstone (F6D)

17.6 × 14 mm

Roman gold ring (type 3c), bezel: 21 × 18.4 mm, hoop: 19.2 × 18 mm

Jupiter seated on a stool, cladded in a *himation* covering the lower part of his body and thrown over his right arm in which he is holding a sceptre. He has his left hand outstretched towards Victory, dressed in *peplos*, standing in front of him with a palm branch on her shoulder and a laurel wreath with which she is about to crown the god. Between the deities there is an eagle. Ground line.

A popular subject on Roman Imperial gems suitable for legionaries serving in the Roman army. Jupiter was the chief god and protector of legions, sometimes aiding them in their military actions like it is represented on the famous Trajan's Column. Victory upon a ring was a symbol of good luck and victories either those accomplished or desired. This ring was certainly used by one of the high-ranking officers in the Roman army who sought protection from Jupiter while fighting on the battlefield and wished for victories for himself and his troops, which could be guaranteed by Victory. The intaglio is cut in the material typical for the 2nd century AD and it stylistically falls into Imperial Plain Grooves Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 311). The bodies are elaborated with use of round wheel grooves while the small elements and details such as garments' folds, hair, etc., with a very thin disc bit. However, the ring type suggests that the object be dated to the early 3rd century AD. For a similar subject on intaglios, see: Hamburger 1968, no. 68; Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, no. 1195; Dembski 2005, no. 45; Denizhanoğllari, Önal, Altinok 2007, no. 066; Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, no. 379, and for objects close in terms of iconography and style, see: Berry 1968, no. 106; Casal Garcia 1990, no. 159; López de la Orden 1992, no. 38.

• Early 3rd century AD ◀

No. 41

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15.8 × 12 × 3 mm

Victory dressed in a *peplos* shouldering a palm branch and crowning Fortuna, who is wearing a long *chiton* and short *himation*, and holding a rudder and cornucopia with a laurel wreath. Ground line.

This gem presents an interesting combination of two incredibly popular motifs in Roman Imperial glyptic art. Victory was often engraved as she symbolised good luck. The type represented here derives from Greek art and was adopted by the Romans as early as in the 3rd century BC (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 234). In the Roman Imperial times her image was often given propagandistic value – she represented Victoria Augusti – the power by which the empire was governed (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 440). The image of Fortuna shown here derives from Greek statuary prototype of the 4th century BC, and when engraved upon a gem in the Roman Imperial period, she ensured good fortune, abundance and wealth. Most likely then this intaglio was used as a sort of amulet bringing good luck and prosperity to its owner. The engraving is typical of the Imperial Chin-Mouth-Nose Style, whose particular feature is the use of three short horizontal strokes to mark details of the face (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 294). The way the folds of Fortuna robes are rendered, in the upper part in the broad, curved volumes, while in the lower one as numerous parallel lines, is typical for the east-Mediterranean workshops. For some similar gems, see: Furtwängler 1896, no. 2571; Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. I, nos 14 and 19; Richter 1956, no. 360; Sena Chiesa 1966, no. 630; Hamburger 1968, no. 65; AGDS I.3, no. 2919; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 676; Dimitrova-Milčeva 1981, no. 82; Spier 1992, no. 370.

• 2nd century AD ◀

No. 42

Orange carnelian ringstone (F4C)

14.6 × 10.5 × 4.1 mm

Venus-Nemesis and Cupid. Inscription: IVH. Ground line.

The intaglio presents a rather unusual pair of deities. The winged female goddess is dressed in a long peplos and her hair is braided around her head. She is wearing a diadem and holding the hand of little winged Cupid who is jumping on one leg. Usually, it is Venus who plays with her son (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, nos 448–450). Sometimes Cupid helps his mother put on her armour (cf. Furtwängler 1896, no. 6340; Gesztelyi 2000, no. 114) or fasten her sandal (cf. Middleton 1991, no. 165). The James Tassie collection of gem impressions offers an array of other scenes involving Cupid and Venus (cf. Tassie, Raspe 1791, nos 6310–6390) Nevertheless, the robe and wings are typical of Nemesis and perhaps a syncretic female deity Venus-Nemesis was meant here. This playful image is accompanied with a three-lettered inscription which if read as on actual stone, would be written in Latin and possibly stood for the abbreviated name of the gem's sitter (tria nomina: I(---) V(---) H(---)), but if read as on the gem's impression, would be Greek ΗΛΙ like on an intaglio in Vienna (cf. Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, no. 305 – suggested to be a number sign of 131?). The cutting is firm, based on the use of rounded drill and extensive application of a very thin disc one for the pattern on the robes. This is essentially Imperial Chin-Mouth-Nose Style, where the particular feature is use of three or more short horizontal strokes to mark facial details that we observe in the case of both the female deity and Cupid (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 294). For some more parallels, see: Walters 1926, no. 1455; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, nos 525 and 528. For Nemesis on a gem found in Georgia, see: Javakhishvili 1972, fig. V.75.

• 2nd century AD

◀

No. 43

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

12.1 × 10.8 × 2.2 mm

Apollo Citharoedus, short ground line.

The gem presents a popular image of Apollo that was transferred to glyptics from sculpture. It is believed that the prototype was a lost masterpiece by Skopas (4th century BC) or another statue by Timarchides from the 2nd century BC (LIMC II [1986], 322–323, s.v. 'Apollo' [G. Kokkoru-Alewras]). These two were frequently copied in Roman Imperial times so that gem engravers had many sources for inspiration (for instance, a colossal statue from the 2nd century AD found in 1774 near Tivoli and now preserved in the Museo Pio-Clementino of the Vatican Museums, inv. no. 310). On this intaglio, Apollo is naked and walking gracefully holding his cithara in the right arm while his head is turned backwards, and his left hand thrown back too. The cutting is bold and accomplished with round drills of various sizes. Even though the detailing is scarce, the pose of the god and capture of the scene are typical for Imperial Classicising Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 196–198). For some similar gems, see: AGDS I.2, no. 1014; Gramatopol 1974, no. 143; Krug 1981, no. 103; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 198.

• Late 1st – early 2nd century AD ◀

No. 44

Orange carnelian ringstone (F6A)

16 × 12.3 × 4.1 mm

Harpocrates holding cornucopia in his left arm. He is completely naked with his body to the front, but head turned to the left. His hair rolled around the head. Ground line.

Similarly to other Egyptian deities, Harpocrates became popular on Roman gems over the course of the 1st century AD. According to Pliny the Elder, this was a general trend in glyptics not only in the eastern but also western provinces (NH, XXXVII 41). Usually, Harpocrates was understood by the Romans as the god of silence and secrecy due to his typical gesture of putting his fingertip to his lips, which was also considered apotropaic and because of that he was a suitable subject for a seal (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 456). Nevertheless, here, he is not making this gesture but holding a cornucopia, which suggests his fertility. This gem exhibits the very same Imperial Classicising manner of engraving as the previous one. The main body parts are cut firmly with round drills, while the hair is rendered as several parallel oblique lines. For similar studies, see: Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 397; Furtwängler 1896, no. 6483; Berry 1968, no. 138; Dimitrova-Milčeva 1981, no. 103; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 382; Spier 1992, no. 277; Pannuti 1994, no. 140; Wagner, Boardman 2017, no. 188.

• Late 1st – early 2nd century AD ◀

No. 45

Greyish-brown and pink agate ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.2 × 3.7 mm

Mercury standing with his cloak wrapped around his left hand in which he is holding the caduceus, while in the right one his purse. Short ground line.

Extremely popular subject in Roman Imperial glyptics that derives from a statue of the 5th or 4th century BC, perhaps the Polykletian one (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 390). There were many reasons for Mercury to appear on engraved gems as he was a patron god to merchants and travellers as well as supported people with wealth and prosperity (Henig 2007, 28–29). However, on this intaglio he is positioned left, which implies the gem was meant for sealing. As the messenger of the gods, Mercury was supposed to keep their secrets safe, hence, his image was a perfect choice for a seal. Although the figure is cut rather carelessly on this intaglio, the composition adheres to the basic principles like contrapposto. This is a work in the Imperial Classicising Style but at its final stage. For some similar studies, see: Hamburger 1968, no. 23; Javakhishvili 1972, no. 31; Gramatopol 1974, no. 237; Dimitrova-Milčeva 1981, no. 69; Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 81; Dembski 2005, no. 193; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 390.

• Late 1st – early 2nd century AD ◀

No. 46

Red carnelian ringstone (F11C)

10.8 × 7.9 × 4.1 mm

Aphrodite/Venus Anadyomene standing in three-quarter view with her hands raised. She wears a long robe and her hair is rolled around her head. Ground line.

The subject of this intaglio came to glyptic art from the famous painting by Apelles that according to Pliny was brought to Rome (NH, XXXV 91). The goddess is performing the typical gesture of wringing out her hair. The gem could serve as a love amulet since the motif frequently appears on intaglios with magical inscriptions (Gołyźniak 2017, no. App.I.1) and it is difficult to imagine that it would serve as a seal with such a summarily engraved device. This piece exhibits very careless workmanship based on the use of only one rounded bit – Imperial Incoherent Grooves Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 326). For some similar intaglios, see: Berry 1968, nos 118 and 207; Hamburger 1968, no. 44; AGDS I.3, no. 2497; Javakhishvili 1972, no. 98; Konuk, Arslan 2000, no. 1; Dembski 2005, no. 244; Bagot 2012, no. 228.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 47

Pale red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14.5 × 11.5 × 3.5 mm

Helmeted female goddess, possibly Roma or Athena, in profile to the left examining a shield that she is holding in her hands. Another shield leaning against the tree trunk is in front of her. She is wearing only a *himation* thrown over her shoulder and hanging down her back. The upper part of her body remains uncovered. Ground line.

This is a well-accomplished study of the goddess who might be Athena or Roma. The second was popular on gems because she personified the city of Rome and, more broadly, the Roman state. However, she would be engaged in an unusual activity for her, therefore, Athena comes to mind, and she is depicted similarly on several intaglios and cameos, always in exceptionally good workmanship like here (Berry 1968, no. 222; Hamburger 1968, no. 38; Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 148; Spier 2001, no. 33; Berges 2002, no. 181; Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, nos 156–157). Actually, an interesting explanation for the motif has been proposed by Weiß regarding a carnelian intaglio in the Helmut Hansmann collection – a similar goddess is taken there as a representation of Imperial victory in connection with the paludamentum she is wearing. The stars she is incising on the shields may stand for Gaius and Lucius Caesars as Dioscuri (Wünsche, Steinhart [eds] 2010, no. 66). Our object is certainly of a slightly later date and it cannot be linked with any specific historical event. The subject itself derives from Victoria inscribing a shield (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, no. 437). Both Athena and Roma cut upon an intaglio were suitable subjects for a legionary. The gem is engraved in the Imperial Classicising-Stripy Style with a considerable attention to details (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 247). The rendering of the robe suggests the object has been produced in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, like almost all Roman gems in the collection.

• 1st century AD ◀

No. 48

Mottled brown-red-green jasper ringstone (F8A)
14.7 × 11 × 3.8 mm
Bust of bearded Sarapis-Sol to the right wearing a *kalathos* and a radiate crown on the head. Drapery suggested around his arms.
This gem is particularly interesting for the rare mottled gemstone type employed and an intriguing combination of Graeco-Roman subject-matter with Parthian/Sassanian style. Such a combination may suggest that Roman or, more likely, east-Mediterranean gem engravers sometimes migrated to the further east (Mesopotamia, Iran etc.) where they transferred not only their techniques, but also religious beliefs and iconography related to them. The gem presents a simple but effective engraving based on relatively small rounded drills and a small wheel bit for details which can be linked to the Imperial Small Grooves Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 251–252). For similar gems, see: Veymiers 2009, nos VI.CA.15 and VI.EAD.1; Lang, Cain (eds) 2015, no. I.51.
• 2nd – early 3rd century AD ◀

No. 49

Yellowish-brown jasper ringstone (F7B)
14 × 11.8 × 3 mm
Veiled head of Hera/Juno to the right.
The gem presents a rare subject for Roman Imperial glyptics – head of the goddess Hera, spouse of Zeus. Her Roman equivalent was Juno. Both were considered patronesses of fertility and helpers during the childbirth. Because of that, intaglios with their likenesses could have been used as amulets. The gem is exceptionally interesting due to its subject-matter, technique of engraving and material used. Yellow jasper was the stone type used mostly in the 3rd century AD in Roman glyptics, which corresponds with the engraving presented on this stone. It is correct but not particularly detailed and may be accounted to the Imperial Small Grooves Style. See some parallel intaglios: Kibaltchitch 1910, no. 230; Richter 1956, no. 468; Hamburger 1968, no. 138; Dimitrova-Milčeva 1981, no. 18; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1986, no. 162; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 516.
• 2nd–3rd century AD ◀

No. 50

Yellow and grey jasper-chalcedony ringstone (F8A)

16.8 × 14.1 × 4.2 mm

Laureate head of a clean-shaven young hero to the right. He has bull's skin fastened around his neck.

The head presumably belongs to the Greek hero Theseus as it is young and clean-shaven. He captured the Marathon bull on his way to Athens, which he later sacrificed to Athena. The laurel wreath on his head possibly illustrates this success or his defeat of the Minotaur in the Labyrinth created by Daedalus. Although heads and busts of Theseus are relatively rare on intaglios (cf. Tassie, Raspe 1791, nos 8648–8652; Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, no. 662; Neverov 1976, no. 122; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 26), this gem may point to some recognition of the hero in the area of Georgia since he was in conflict with Medea, daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis. Alternatively, young Heracles was also sometimes depicted in a similar way, see for instance an unpublished glass gem in the British Museum collection (inv. no. 1814.0704.1902). The object is nicely engraved in the Imperial Small Grooves Style and the material used suggests it should be dated to the late Roman Imperial period.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 51

Yellow glass ringstone (F9D)

15.1 × 11.8 mm

Roman bronze and silver-plated ring (type 2d), bezel: 16 × 14 mm,
hoop: 20.5 × 17.6 mm

Laureate and bearded portrait bust of emperor Caracalla (211–217 AD) wearing a *cuirass* and *paludamentum* to the left.

This is an exceptionally well executed portrait gem with a powerful propaganda message encoded and one of the highlights in the cabinet. In 216 AD, Caracalla conducted a series of aggressive campaigns against Parthia intended to bring more territory under direct Roman control. Although he succeeded in some first battles in 217 AD, he started a new invasion from Edessa but was murdered by one of his soldiers on the way. However, before that in 213 AD, Caracalla was in the east with his legions and in the following years he intervened to overthrown rulers in client kingdoms adjoining Parthia. In 216 AD, he involved Rome into a civil conflict between Khosrov I of Armenia and his sons, which did not finish before his death. It is difficult to point a specific date for our ring, but it is possible that it was related to these events. Most likely it was worn by a Roman legionary or a high-ranking officer serving in Caracalla's army during his military campaigns in the east. Gems with portraits of Caracalla are found on the Georgian territory (see: Javakhishvili 1972, no. 102). The portrait should be accounted for as the fifth type of Caracalla's images ('Alleinherrscher'), which is characterised by a rather rectangular face and block-like cranium, along with a sharp turn of the head, usually to the left,

and exaggerated musculature of the forehead combined with pronounced naso-labial folds. All of this creates a rather determined look. The gaze from beneath the shadow of his prominent brow adds to his intense concentration, as does the firmly drawn mouth and the tight jaw. The hair is arranged in short, tight curls on the emperor's large round skull. This image is an expression of both the prince's psychology and his politics and testifies to the importance of the military side of political life in the early 3rd century AD. This is also highlighted by the cuirass and paludamentum he is wearing (Wiggers, Wegner 1971, 28–35). Portraits of Caracalla are common in glyptics, see, for example: Walters 1926, nos 2024–2026; Berry 1968, no. 101; AGDS IV Hannover, nos 1600–1601; Neverov 1976, no. 140; Vollenweider 1979, no. 263; 1984, no. 313; Zwierlein-Diehl 1986, nos 782–783; 1991, no. 1728; 1998, no. 262; Vollenweider, Avisseau-Broustet 2003, nos 230 and 232; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 436; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 302; Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016a, nos 212 and 214; 2016b, no. 138. Coins minted in the years 213–217 AD (RIC IV.1, nos 206, 210, 257, 268 etc.) are close to the portrait on the intaglios in question. The fact that the gem is made of glass, a cheaper material than gemstone, suggests it was a propaganda piece, probably produced on a massive scale. It could be gifted to a meritorious figure in the army as a form of recognition of his loyalty to the emperor or executed on soldier's own initiative who wished to manifest his allegiance to Caracalla.

•213–217 AD

◀

No. 52

Rock crystal ringstone (F9B)

11.8 × 9.2 × 4.8 mm

Bust of Epicurus to the left.

The intaglio presents a portrait bust of Greek philosopher Epicurus (ca. 342–270 BC). He is recognised here for his prominent nose, short, thick curly hair and bushy beard. His image is popular on both cameos and intaglios, especially in the Roman Imperial times. The type represented on this gem is consistent with sculptural type Geneva-Hannover (for more information, see: Lang 2012, 57–58). It is noteworthy that the beard and hair are elaborated as short, thick curls in the way resembling portraits of the Antonines, especially Marcus Aurelius, who was famous for his philosophical interests and writings. Portraits of philosophers were often put on finger rings and personal gems to manifest one's philosophical beliefs or allegiance to a specific school (Lang 2012, 105–106; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 17). For gems bearing the same portrait, see: Lang 2012, nos GEp.27–28 and GEp.30)

• 2nd century AD ◀

No. 53

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14.1 × 11.1 × 3 mm

Bearded bust of a man to the left, his hair braided around his head and arranged above it in the form of regular cross-hatches. He is wearing a chlamys fastened around his shoulder.

This stone most likely bears a private portrait of an individual (a local Iberian dignitary?), which is suggested by his distinctive coiffure. A significant degree of individualisation is observable here in both facial expression and the beard suggested as numerous individual locks. His cloak may be a paludamentum or an imitation that was worn only by military commanders. The style of the gem is Imperial Classicising-Stripy in character. The stone is partially discoloured, which might suggest that it was burnt on a funeral pyre and buried with its sitter. The peculiar subject and style of engraving are most likely due to the fact that the gem was cut by a local gem engraver. Similar gems are found on Georgian territory, particularly in the Iberia region (Lordkipanidze 1971, 105 and 107) and further east in the area of Azerbaijan and western Pakistan (Rahman, Falk 2011, no. 06.01.02). For portraits and heads executed in a similar manner, see: Furtwängler 1896, no. 4823; Walters 1926, no. 2039; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 401; Konuk, Arslan 2000, no. 89.

• 1st century AD ◀

No. 54

Red-brown carnelian ringstone (F8A)

19 × 11.6 × 3.8 mm

Bearded bust of a man to the left, his hair braided around the head in several volumes. He wears a *cuirass* and *paludamentum* fastened around his shoulder.

This is another gem presenting most likely a private portrait of a local, Iberian dignitary who could be a military commander. Such an identification is proposed on the basis of the cuirass suggested on his left shoulder in the form of numerous crossed grooves and the cloak is he wearing. The gem is neatly engraved in the Imperial Classicising-Stripy Style but not executed by the same artist, who produced no. 53 above. Nevertheless, the peculiar subject and style of engraving suggest him to be a local gem cutter who was inspired by Roman imperial gems slowly infiltrating this part of the world in the 1st century AD. Similar gems are found on Georgian territory, particularly in the Iberia region (Lordkipanidze 1971, 105 and 107). For the gems sharing stylistic features, mainly originating from the eastern collections, see: Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 276; Finogenova 1993, no. 82 (as Serapis); Middleton 1998, no. 43; Konuk, Arslan 2000, no. 89.

• 1st century AD ◀

No. 55

Yellowish-brown jasper ringstone (F8A)

13.2 × 10.2 × 3.2 mm

Head of a bearded man to the left.

Most likely this intaglio was meant to depict a male portrait, possibly of a deity (Zeus/Jupiter?). Even though an unfinished work, it depicts that the cutter combined the bouterolle technique of engraving for the beard with the application of rounded bits. This seems unusual for the period, but the style cannot be judged entirely accurately since the piece is unfinished. The final product would have looked completely different. For some similar gems, see: Berry 1968, no. 145 (also unfinished); Dimitrova-Milčeva 1981, no. 244.

• 2nd–3rd century AD ◀

No. 56

Yellow jasper ringstone (F10A)

15.1 × 13.1 × 4.3 mm

Helmeted and bearded auriga riding a biga. His cloak is flying behind him and he is hastening the horses with a whip. Ground line.

This gem is a nice and detailed work in the Imperial Small Grooves Style. The stone type suggests dating it to the 3rd century AD. Riders of biga or quadriga were popular on gems due to the fact that chariot races were one of the most popular forms of entertainment throughout the Roman Empire. Sometimes, complex scenes of chariot races in circuses are presented on gems clearly suggesting their sport character. Most of them are cut in jasper of various colour (for a more detailed study, see: Weiß, Aubry 2009). In all likelihood, our stone belonged to the owner of the race club or a rider and was meant to bring him good luck during the races or indicated his profession. The last would be related to a frequent issue of auto-presentation through gems. Sport subjects were preferable for young people wishing to highlight their physical prowess and this might be the case here as well. For gems with similar iconography, see: Hamburger 1968, no. 147; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, nos 913 and 959; Vollenweider 1984, no. 183; Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 283; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 561; Zwierlein-Diehl 1998, no. 255.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 57

Black jasper ringstone (F6A)

16.1 × 12 × 5.6 mm

Eagle to the front with head turned left fighting two serpents: it is holding one in the beak and the second in its claws. Ground line.

The eagle was widely represented on gems, mostly those used by legionaries, since it was a symbol of the Roman Empire and imperial power (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 188). However, if engaged in a fight with a serpent or two, it became an allegory of the contest between good and evil. The eagle represented good forces averting evil and, for this reason, it is often employed on intaglios presenting motifs of baskania (Weiß 2017). This intaglio could have been worn as a protective amulet. It is engraved in the Imperial Small Grooves Style, whose engravers seemed to particularly favour representations of eagles. The body is shaped with the use of a round drill while the feathers' facture is marked with short, parallel grooves produced by a disc bit. Jet as a material used here is uncommon in the West, but maybe not so much in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. For similar eagle studies, see: Javakhishvili 1972, no. 118; Gołyźniak 2017, nos 593–594 and 606 (with further literature).

• 1st century AD ◀

No. 58

Orange-white agate scaraboid

15.1 × 11.2 × 9.3 mm

Parrot or eagle riding a chariot drawn by a pair of ants. No ground line.

The scaraboid form is unusual for the Roman period, but maybe this is reminiscent of much more ancient glyptic tradition in the east-Mediterranean than west (Plantzos 1999, 35) or is it a recut bead? The gem is precisely cut in the Imperial Classicising Style. The bird might be a parrot, which was regarded as a symbol of luxury in Rome since not everybody could afford to have one as a pet. However, when engaged in a scene like this one, it brings to mind the Bacchus Indian triumph. It is raising one of its wings in a triumphal gesture. On the other hand, it may be an eagle, which had auspicious character, and, due to this, often appeared on baskania gems like this one (Weiß 2017). The ant was usually represented on gems as a symbol of diligence much appreciated for its organisational skills. Here, its ability to carry or pull objects much heavier than itself has been employed for the gem. Weiß suspects that compositions like the one presented here were meant to mock serious sport games - circus races (Wünsche, Steinhart [eds] 2010, no. 89). Regarding the gem category to which this intaglio belongs, it is far more popular if a mouse drives the chariot (cf. Berry 1968, nos 156–157; Vollenweider 1984, no. 340; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 347), but other combinations are also possible (cf. Furtwängler 1896, no. 7905; Casal Garcia 1990, no. 442). For similar studies to ours, see: Furtwängler 1896, no. 8573; Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 1783.

• 1st century AD ◀

No. 59

Pale orange to white carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.6 × 3.1 mm

Lion walking to the left. Ground line.

The lion was a perfect subject for a seal since the animal was considered to be a guardian and may have assisted the seal in guarding the wearer as well as his documents and rooms (Henig 1997b). It also expressed power and strength, thus, it was applied in glyptics as a form of auto-presentation symbolising a gem owner's physical prowess. Finally, it was a symbol of the zodiacal sign Leo, but if that is the case, it is accompanied with celestial symbols such as a star or crescent. This gem combines Roman subject with Parthian/Sassanian style. The engraving hints at the eastern character of the gem that must have been produced in Georgia, Armenia, northern Syria or Iran. The cutting is close to the Imperial Small Grooves Style. For parallels, see: Henig, Whiting 1987, nos 362–363; Gesztelyi 2000, no. 53; Dembski 2005, nos 819–820.

• 2nd–3rd century AD ◀

No. 60

Dark red carnelian ringstone (F9A)

17 × 13.6 × 4 mm

Lion in a jump and a tree on the left side. Short ground line.

It may be debated if the lion on this gem serves as a shortcut of the noble hunting activities practiced in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. The engraving is crude and schematic, typical for Imperial Incoherent Grooves Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 326). For parallels, see: Zazoff 1983, pl. 121.6; Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 360; Henig, MacGregor 2004, no. 9.7; Bagot 2012, no. 409.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 61

Red glass ringstone (F9B)

6.8 × 5 mm

Roman bronze ring (type 2a), bezel: 7 × 6 mm, hoop: diameter ca. 16 mm

Shrimp.

A highly popular subject on Roman Imperial gems. The shrimp had some connotations with Aphrodite/Venus, goddess of love. It was believed that if eaten it became an aphrodisiac. On the other hand, shrimps and other crustacea were common on intaglios due to their apotropaic properties. The intaglio was then used as a love or protective amulet. The engraving accounts to the Imperial Small Grooves Style and the ring type suggests dating the object to the late 1st or 2nd century AD. See some similar gems: Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 385; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 658 (with further literature).

• Late 1st – 2nd century AD ◀

No. 62

Red carnelian ringstone (F4D)

19.5 × 11.9 × 4.2 mm

Mask of a bearded man whose hair is rolled around his head confronted with a diademed mask of a young male whose hair is also rolled around his head.

A popular subject on Roman Imperial intaglios. The mask of the older man may belong to leukòs anér a heroic character in Greek tragedies, while the youthful one presents mélas anér (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 537). The gem is most likely cut in the Classicising-Stripy Style. The peculiar subject and style of engraving are most likely due to the fact that the gem was cut by a local gem engraver (Lordkipanidze 1971, 105). In this particular case, the cutter could have been inspired by a Roman intaglio and re-interpreted the subject in his own way.

• 1st century AD ◀

No. 63

Light green chalcedony or chrysoprase ringstone (F8A)

17 × 12.5 × 3.6 mm

Conjoined bust of helmeted Athena/Minerva wearing a sleeveless peplos with the bearded head of Silenus.

A popular subject existing already in the late Roman Republican period. A juxtaposition of Silenus' head – symbol of true wisdom hidden behind rough appearance and Athena/Minerva bust – the goddess of wisdom and strategy makes a perfect match on this intaglio (Henig 2007, 43). Images like this one may have been related to the actors, singers and musicians venerating Dionysus/Bacchus through their performances in the Temple of Minerva on the Aventine Hill (Wünsche, Steinhart [eds] 2010, no. 92). This is another example of an apotropaic amulet in our collection belonging to a wide class of baskania gems, although, this kind of iconography is sometimes employed for sealing as well (see: Denizhanoğllari, Önal, Altinok 2007, no. 173). The intaglio is probably ancient (however, see a discussion on p. 20) and engraved in the Imperial Classicising Style. For similar compositions, see: Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 1640; Fossing 1929, no. 465.

- Most likely 1st century AD or perhaps 20th century?

◀

Roman cameos and works in the round

No. 64

Sardonyx cameo, brown over greyish-white

8.9 × 7.4 × 3.6 mm

Head of Athena/Minerva wearing Corinthian helmet in profile to the left.

This exceptionally tiny cameo belongs to the Roman Imperial period and was surely set in a ring worn on a finger. It bears a common motif that was appreciated due to its apotropaic values. Furthermore, Athena/Minerva was the goddess of wisdom and strategy, thus it was suitable for legionaries. The cameo is cut correctly in flat, not undercut relief but the detailing of hair and helmet decoration is crude. It is evidently the product of a local, provincial workshop. For parallels, see: Babelon 1897, no. 30; Henig 1990, no. 134.

• 1st–2nd century AD ◀

No. 65

White chalcedony cameo

21 × 19 × 8 mm

Head of a man to the left. His hair is rolled around the head and marked there as crossed strokes, while above as parallel lines.

The cameo is a third-century portrait. The physiognomy resembles that of Severus Alexander (222–235 AD) known from coins (cf. RIC IV.2, no. 301) and cameos, which are not abundant (Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 81; Neverov 1988, no. 468; Henig 1990, no. 61; Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016b, no. 51). The man depicted on this cameo has a clearly delineated hairline at the front, which goes far to the bottom of the ear. He has no beard but for a moustache delicately incised above the upper lip, which would be acceptable for later portraits of Severus Alexander. He has no imperial attributes (laurel wreath or paludamentum), which suggests a more civic character of his depiction (cf. for instance a bust dressed in a formal civic dress in the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York collection: Zanker 2016, no. 29). Stylistically, the object is close to the Severian Renaissance, but the far-reaching stylisation of the coiffure,

thick lips, short nose and scanty moustache point to its end. This is also confirmed by the combination of the growing maturity and power with a still visible youthful delicacy reflected in this cameo-portrait. If the identification is correct, it is tempting to link this cameo with the military campaign against the Sassanians from the years 232–233 AD when one of the Roman armies invaded Media passing through the mountains of Armenia. It could have been cut for propaganda purposes and gifted to one of the legionaries or rather high-ranking officers in that army.

- First half of the 3rd century AD (possibly around 230–235 AD?) ◀

No. 66

Peridot (?) from green through gold/yellow to colourless

26.8 × 17 × 12.1 mm

Diademed head of a woman to the front with head slightly turned to the left. Her hair is precisely parted on the top of her head on both sides, curled in several rows of locks pulled back; one of them is hanging freely on the right side of the head and so is the band of the diadem.

This is an exceptionally well engraved decorative cameo produced by a skilful artist in high, not undercut relief. The style is beyond comparison to other Roman gems amassed in our collection. It exhibits both, precise and detailed engraving. The head has well-balanced proportions and idealised expression. The delicate facial features are highlighted by smooth cheeks, gently bent, thin eyebrows, big eyes with the pupils marked, quite long nose line and small lips (the upper one is slightly upturned) forming a sort of a delicate smile. This is probably a portrait of a Roman empress and both the physiognomy of the face and especially the coiffure point to Antonia Minor (36 BC – AD 37), the younger of two daughters of Mark Antony and Octavia Minor and a niece of the Emperor Augustus (27 BC – AD 14). In 16 BC, she married the Roman general and consul Nero Claudius Drusus (38–9 BC) who was the stepson of her uncle Augustus, second son of Livia Drusilla (58 BC – AD 29) and brother of future Emperor Tiberius (14–37 AD). They had several children, but only three survived: the famous general Germanicus (15 BC – AD 19), Livilla (13 BC – AD 31) and the Roman Emperor Claudius (41–54 AD). Portraits of Antonia Minor are popular on cameos and Megow collected a good number of similar objects to ours (Megow 1987, nos D2–D12). The diadem on Antonia's head may indicate to the empress identification with Venus, which was a common practice among the Julio-Claudian empresses starting from Livia Drusilla. Alter-

natively, she is represented here as a priestess of the cult of the deified Augustus. In the Jean Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, there is a chalcedony bust presenting Antonia Minor as such with a diadem decorated with a portrait of Augustus and veil (Spier 1992, no. 432). Gems like these were created after 14 AD, for the successors of Augustus worked hard to demonstrate their connection to him and hence their right to rule. This was especially the case of Claudius, son of Antonia Minor. Cameos such as the one described here were part of the production of commemorative luxury goods at the Roman imperial court. Stylistically, our object falls into the period of the Claudius reign. Even though there is a trend in male portraiture of the Claudius reign towards more naturalistic approach, the female one retains the ageless and classicising style so perfectly encapsulated here. The gemstone used for the cameo is problematic. Due to he limited devices for mineralogical examination, it could be only hypothetically concluded that it might be peridot. This stone was virtually unknown before the Hellenistic era and was constantly a rare material for engraved gems in antiquity. Some examples are known from the early Roman period and our cameo seems to account to this group. The Zabargad Island in the Red Sea was the place where peridot was mined (for more information and further literature, see: Thoresen 2017, 186–189). For portraits of Antonia Minor in other media, see: Wood 2000, 142–176.

• Mid-1st century AD ◀

No. 67

Sardonyx cameo, very dark brown over pale brown and greyish-white

23.2 × 16 × 8.4 mm

Frontal female bust with curly hair highly raised above the forehead and diadem above which once probably was an eagle, but his head has been broken and only wings are preserved. The woman is dressed in a sleeveless robe with v-shaped folds.

The bust is in the type of empress Domitia Longina (53–130 AD), wife of emperor Domitian (81–90 AD), see: Megow 1987, nos B29–B34. This can be judged from the woman's face which is totally without idealisation. In portraits of the Flavian individuality both of external appearance and character was particularly emphasised. This is observable here in somewhat chubby face that has a cold expression reflecting wilful and cruel character of the empress. The face is generalised, and the details treated graphically (no pupils in the eyes, eyebrows and nose line conjoined). Yet, the workmanship is of high level, the relief is high and not undercut. The coiffure is fashionable for the early 80s AD and consists of a mass of serpentine locks piled up highly on the top of the head, but the heavy diadem surmounts them there. Above the empress' head there was an eagle – a symbol of the Imperial power and the Roman State, but only his wings have been preserved, while the head has been broken off. This piece was a powerful propaganda tool communicating dignity and authority of the empress. It could have been a noble gift for the empress herself on the occasion of her receiving the title Augusta in 81 AD, or it was delivered to one of the officials supporting Domitian's reign for his loyal service.

• Last quarter of the 1st century AD, possibly early 80s AD ◀

No. 68

Glass cameo, bluish-green, bubbled and heavily rugged

15.1 × 12.1 × 3.9 mm

Head of winged Medusa to the front.

This is a very popular motif for Roman Republican and especially Imperial cameos. The Gorgoneion is an ancient motif believed to have apotropaic properties as it captured the Evil Eye's attention before its forces reached the wearer of the gem. Cameos of this type were popular amulets sometimes serving as phalerae for officers in the Roman army who used to decorate their breastplates with them (very much like heads of Cupid, on this issue, see: Feugère 1989). Our example is very small, which suggests it is to be mounted in a ring and possibly used by an ordinary soldier due to the fact that it was moulded in a cheap material – glass. It is worth noting that such small cameos were often set in earrings and pendants and gifted to the beloved ones, so apart from amuletic properties, the cameo could have some decorative values too (Neverov 1988, nos 331–350; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 724)

• 1st century BC – 1st century AD ◀

No. 69

Sardonyx cameo, pale brown over white and grey

14 × 11.8 × 8.6 mm

Head of Medusa to the front with wings on both sides of the top of the head.

The same variant as above but executed in the most preferable material for these kinds of objects; a piece possibly used by a regular legionary or citizen. For a piece executed in a similar workmanship in the Kibbutz Giv'at Oz collection, see: Peleg-Barkat, Tepper 2011, 101, pl. 5.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 70

Blue with gold inclusions lapis lazuli cameo

12.5 × 10 × 6.6 mm

Head of Medusa facing forward with wings on both sides of the top of the head.

The same subject and style as the preceding specimen but executed in a rare lapis lazuli stone.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 71

Colourless-grey-black smoky quartz amulet

19.5 × 10 × 11.2 mm

A frog-shaped amulet, not pierced.

The workmanship is superficial, detailing sparse and polishing deficient. Aside from being worn by living people for its magical powers against sickness, pain and suffering, in ancient Egypt frog amulets were placed over the body of the deceased, usually among a mummy's bandages in faith that his soul would receive the extraordinary powers of resurrection from the Heqt goddess and would enjoy a safe, healthy and productive afterlife. This faith was taken on by the Hellenistic Greeks and later also Romans who preferred to cut similar amulets in rock crystal and a variety of quartzes. Sometimes they reached considerable size and were worn as pendants, see some examples: Neverov 1988, no. 481; Platz-Horster 2012, nos 94–96 (with further literature).

• 1st century BC – 1st century AD ◀

Magical gems

No. 72

Red carnelian amulet (F6C)

22 × 16.7 × 3.1 mm

Female figure standing on a mouse or hare face forward with her left leg bent at the knee (*contrapposto*). She is dressed in a short-sleeved *chiton* and *himation* which she is lifting in her left arm. She is holding scales in her right hand. Her hair is rolled around her head and perhaps she wears a diadem. A scorpion is placed above her head. Ground line indicated with two strokes.

The figure represented on this gem should be identified as the syncretic deity Iusitita-Nemesis. Iustita was the Roman personification of justice and moral force. She was introduced to the Roman pantheon by emperor Augustus as one of virtues celebrated by him. However, her origins reach Egyptian goddesses Maat and Isis, while the Greek equivalent was Themis and Dike. Nemesis was a personification of vengeance and destiny and she decided about one's fortune. She appears on intaglios for various reasons including her apotropaic functions that make it here an attractive subject on magical terms (AGDS I.3, no. 2918; Mastrocinque 2014, no. 80; Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, 100; for Nemesis on a gem found in Georgia, see: Javakhishvili 1972, fig. V.75). On our intaglio the combination of the two may reflect a wish for good luck and protection. The scorpion symbolises the zodiac sign and was given some medical and magical properties (Michel 2004, 75), while the mouse or hare symbolises love and fertility, but the first has also some chthonic significance (Gołyźniak 2017, nos 618 and 635). Although without inscriptions, this intaglio might account to a wide and peculiar group of magical gems. They were popular in the Roman Imperial period, especially in its later phase. They were produced in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Anatolia, but Alexandria seems the most significant centre. They combine Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Coptic and Christian elements and are usually larger than ordinary ringstones, and not intended for sealing (Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 210–231 with further literature). These gems are distinguishable not only due to their complex, often vague iconography and inscriptions, but also peculiar style of engraving, which is, however, somewhat problematic here.

Our gem could be an amulet ensuring good luck, prosperity and divine protection to its owner, whose zodiac sign was a scorpion. The balance of Iustitia is sometimes borrowed by Aequitas, Isis and Zeus all also appearing on magical gems (Michel 2001b, nos 36, 225 and 582). Nevertheless, the fact that the goddess tramples a mouse or hare, while she should does so to a human body (see parallels given above) is apart from the style another worrying element or simply a misunderstanding perhaps of an uneducated engraver, but it might betray a forgery as well?

• 2nd–3rd century AD or 20th century?

◀

No. 73

Red carnelian amulet (F6C)

23.6 × 16.9 × 4.5 mm

Female figure standing on a table, under which is a scorpion. She is shown frontally with her left leg bent at the knee (*contrapposto*) and dressed in a short-sleeved *chiton* and *himation* that she is lifting by her left hand. She is holding a burning lamp or patera with fruits (?) in her right hand. Arrows and plants in bowls on each side. Ground line.

This is another problematic magical gem in our collection. It probably presents Nemesis – the personification of vengeance and destiny who decided about one's fortune. The object she is holding in her hand might be a patera of fruits symbolising abundance and prosperity? However, it is abnormal for a deity, but her identity is uncertain too. Heraldic compositions involving various plants, objects and animals like the one used here are common on magical gems (cf. for instance the Phoenix class in Bonner 1950, 60–61; Michel 2004, 75–76). The plant stalks or flowers in the pots may be represented on our gem to give the amulet some healing properties. They exist on other magical gems accompanied with inscriptions suggesting their help in ailments of the stomach (Bonner 1950, 51–52). The arrows may be astrological symbols (Michel 2004, 99–100). As has been said above, the scorpion was a popular symbol on magical gems due to its medical, magical and astrological properties, but here, it seems to be a personal horoscope and zodiac sign. This is deduced on the basis of another magical amulet in the British Museum collection where a similar table occurs but with a lion inside (Michel 2001b, no. 263). Overall, this gem was probably used as an amulet intended to bring good luck, prosperity and ensure good health and help with digestive and stomach problems to its owner. It is cut in a similar manner to the previous example, though not by the same hand. Still, the style appears controvertial and together with unclear iconography makes this piece a suspicious one.

• 2nd–3rd century AD or 20th century? ◀

No. 74

Orange carnelian amulet (F6D)

26.2 × 19 × 4.1 mm

Rectangular field divided with double line onto four main sections, the two upper ones are further divided into two more parts. Inside each, a device: a balance, dolphin, crab, scorpion, goat standing on its hind legs and a winged figure wearing a solar crown.

Magical gems with a similar iconography are rare. The only known two examples (Henig 1975, no. 244; Michel 2001b, no. 97) are similar in terms of composition, but all three, together with our amulet, vary in iconographical elements. Michel argues that the stone in the British Museum refers to the passage of the Berlin magical papyrus in which the Greek sun god Apollo, equated with Harpocrates, is evoked to be venerated in four different forms in the north, east, south and west symbolising the regions of Egypt where the cult of solar deity was promoted and the river Nile was the axis indicating the directions of the cult centres (Michel 2001b, no. 97). We notice that on our amulet a solar deity is represented as well. It is a syncretic figure of Harpocrates-Eros-Helios/Sol whom we identify due to the gesture of the hand raised towards the mouth, wings and radiate crown respectively. He used to be identified with the Agathos-Daimon-serpent creature and his cult was widespread throughout the whole Roman Empire mostly represented in the form of little terracotta and bronze figurines (Marcovich 1988, 41–43). Nevertheless, other elements seem unrelated to the passage mentioned by Michel. The goat may represent the goddess Ceres or Amalthea and was intended to be a symbol of plenty and abundance here. In the upper left corner, we have scales and a crab – both can be astrological symbols and on the right side there is a scorpion, possibly also a zodiac sign or a symbol of some medical powers, while the dolphin as a symbol had apotropaic functions and chthonic meaning as it represented the soul's journey over the sea to the Blessed Isles (Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 1072a). In conclusion, this gem was a powerful amulet supplying its owner with blessing, protection and good luck from Harpocrates-Eros-Helios/Sol, ensuring abundance and prosperity from Ceres, possibly being related to a personal horoscope, offering some help in medical (more precisely stomach) problems and even afterlife matters. All these magical powers were encapsulated on one small engraved gem.

• 3rd century AD ◀

No. 75

Red-orange carnelian amulet (F8A)

37 × 29.1 × 4.1 mm

Jackal-headed dimorph figure (possibly Cynocephalus) to the front standing on fallopian tubes between which is a flower (*uterus*?). His heads are directed to the left and right, between them a wig. He holds a torch in his right hand, while in the left one a scorpion. On his right side there is a female figure dressed in a long robe who is holding a *phiale* in her right hand. At the bottom there is a star (Sirius) and a corn ear star and torch. In front of the right head Greek letters EI and in front of the left one Z/N/H and Y/Ψ. Hatched border.

This stone bears a very rare iconography and the figure represented probably symbolises a combination of Egyptian deities of Anubis and Seth-Typhon or juxtaposition of Anubis and Hekate. The latter duo is suggested by the torch in the right hand – a typical attribute of the goddess who may be also identified with the female figure standing next to the dimorph? The connection between Hecate and jackals or dogs results from the fact that both were related to the Underworld. Moreover, Hekate was the goddess of the night and dogs were often sacrificed to her in religious rituals. In ancient magic, the dog was considered an unclean animal, which had some magical and chthonic significance. The dimorph form may have something to do with the preceded stage of Cerberus – Hades' dog living in the Underworld too. Both, Anubis and Cerberus are recorded in Egyptian magical papyri and called Agôgai and often addressed to Hekate with accompanying love charms. The love aspect on our amulet is also present by the fallopian tubes upon which the jackal-headed figure stands. The object was probably intended to bring divine blessing and increase fertility of the wearer, who must have been a woman. The fertility issue is also addressed by the corn ear in the bottom. A similar stone is preserved in the British Museum in London, see: Michel 2001b, no. 71. The letters, if not carved randomly by a modern gem artist, may stand for planets: E – Venus, I – Saturn, H – the Sun and Y – the Moon? (Michel 2001a, 134).

The form of the gem and style of engraving look genuine. However, for a similar gem Mas-

trocinque suggests it to be a post-classical forgery based on a drawing now in the Vatican Library first published by Athanasius Kircher in the second volume of his Oedipus Aegyptiacus (cf. Kircher 1653, 464, no. 9; Mastrocinque [ed.] 2003, no. 377). He also informs about another post-classical copy now in the Louvre Museum.[1] *Indeed, there are some similarities between our gem and the drawing from the Vatican Library as far as the general idea for the subject is concerned, but there are many different iconographical and compositional elements too, let alone the stylistic features. For instance, the unusual form of uterus on our gem looks completely different than the one on the drawing which presents a canonical type with the key that is absent on our gem. Moreover, the dimorph figure on our gem holds a torch and a scorpion, while the one from the drawing has its hands akimbo. Furthermore, it wears a tunic around the hips, while on our gem, the figure is completely naked with a phallus pointing downwards. Besides, on our gem there is only one additional figure whereas there are two on the drawing from Vatican and the whole composition is enclosed by hatched border not ouroboros. Finally, our gem exhibits purely ancient Graeco-Egyptian spirit since none of the figures and elements is presented according to modern (Christian) standards in contrary to the gem illustrated on the drawing in Vatican (Mastrocinque [ed.] 2003, no. 377). Taking all these differences into account, our gem cannot be considered as another modern copy inspired by the drawing published by Kircher in the mid-17th century. The gem from the Louvre Museum is clearly such a copy since it literary mirrors the composition in each detail. Mastrocinque is right that some elements like the hatched border are controversial and the subject itself is ambiguous. It remains an open question whether this is a genuine magical gem with a rare subject approached in an unparalleled manner or just a modern fabrication.*

• 3rd–4th century AD or 16th–17th century?

◀

1 I am grateful to Attilio Mastrocinque for a kind and fruitful e-mail communication on this peculiar object.

Late Antique Roman gold glass medallion

No. 76

Gold and bluish-green-
-transparent, bubbled glass medallion

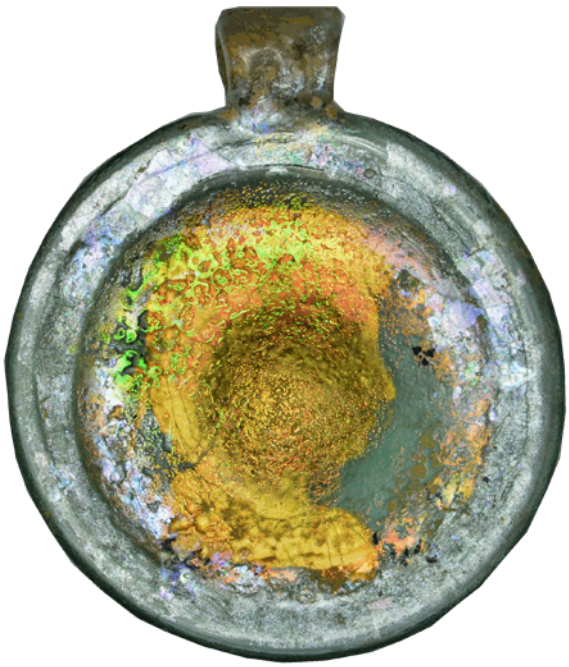
54.3 × 47.4 × 11.5 mm (with hanger)

Diademed and draped bust of a Roman emperor with head in profile to the right but body quarter-turned.

Gold glass was a luxury product invented in the Hellenistic times or even earlier in the Late Classical period, but the peak of its popularity falls in the late Roman Imperial period (Cesarin 2018). The manufacturing process for gold glass was difficult and required great skills. First, a glass disc was formed onto which a gold leaf was glued with Arabic gum. Next, the artist designed the image wished to be presented on the object, scraped away redundant parts of gold and stippled details with a needle point. When the design was ready, the second layer of glass was fused together with the first one so that it sealed the gold image forever. This technique was applied for making vessels, tesserae used in mosaics, beads and medallions alike. In the case of medallions, these were often made from matrix, but grave-makers sometimes signed their works in gold leaves. They were meant for display, but this accounts mostly to the early Christian examples that were cemented to the walls in catacombs. Most of them, however, were set into the base of bowls and dishes to commemorate a special occasion or present as a wedding gift. Rome as well as Rhineland are proposed as the centres for luxury Roman gold glass production (for more information and literature on Roman gold glass, see: Howells 2015). Our example clearly played the role of a pendant. It presents a portrait that belongs to a late Roman emperor who is wearing a decorated diadem and a robe or cloak (paludamentum), which has a decorative collar and its folds are marked in the bottom part of the bust. The man's hair is carefully combed on his head spreading from one point at the top. His face is long, clean-shaven and has a dignified expression. The forehead remains plain except for one horizontal wrinkle in the middle, the eye is wide open with the pupil incised. There is a clear separation of the nose from the forehead and it is prominent. Expression lines around the mouth were delicately suggested, and the upper lip is upturned, while the lower one is a bit receded leaving the mouth slightly open. The chin is clearly marked and so is the ear. The shape of the head is gently modelled with a curved line separating it from the short neck. All the features described here are indicative of a portrait from the Constantinian era. Perhaps this one belongs to the emperor Constantine the Great (306–337 AD) or his son and successor Constantine II (337–340 AD) or emperor Constans I (337–350) (cf. some marble heads, for instance: Zanker 2016, nos 31–32, and coins: Constantine II – RIC VII, nos 87 and 97, RIC VIII, no. 5; Constans I – RIC VIII, nos 31, 34 and 37). Similar portraits with jewelled and decorative diadems on the head exist on engraved gems produced in those days (Spier 2007, nos 4–7 and 9).

Constantine the Great had a desire to revive the many skilled arts which were in a state of decline in the early 4th century AD. In one of his edicts issued in 337 AD, he encouraged various kinds of artists (including glass makers) to practice their crafts and train successors (Spier 2007, 19). Our medallion probably is an effect of these initiatives although there are some worrying aspects and details. First of all, the state of preservation is remarkable with original patina and some soil-

ing adhering to the surface and inside the hanger that has not been removed because it would damage or remove the original surface. That is a rare feature since most of the gold glass medallions survived incomplete. Because of the soil still present in the hanger and on the surface here and there, one may conclude that the piece did not circulated at the art market for long unless this it was done recently in order deceive potential buyers. Among ca. 500 known pieces of Roman gold glass, no exact parallel preserved in a complete form as here is known and regarding portraits, they are usually cut off the vessels' bottoms (Morey, Ferrari 1959). The form then raises some doubts about genuineness. Secondly, the subject matter, e.g. imperial portrait, seems unusual as most of the figures depicted on gold glass medallions are saints and private individuals. The capture with the head in profile for a single figure is rare as the sole figures were usually presented facing to the front or in three-quarter view, but this is not impossible (see some representations of saints with heads in profile but bodies quarter-turned in: Howells 2015, nos 6–8, 10, 13, 15 and 17, however, usually when paired). These elements are alarming, but it must be stated that if compared to the known 18th and 19th century fakes and reproductions of antique gold glass medallions, our piece does not exhibit typical features of those products, that is the backing made of black resin rather than gold, imitation of the brushed technique or cold-painting decoration instead of the use of a gold leaf (Howells 2015, 17–19). The technique used for our piece is cut and incise – the most popular one for Late Antique gold glass products, which strengthens authenticity of the object. Nevertheless, among 108 provenanced Late Antique gold glass products mapped by Howells, none was recovered from the eastern part of the Roman Empire (Howells 2015, 153–154). This is another worrying fact. Naturally, it could have entered the collection through the market acquisition in St. Petersburg or Tbilisi where it was delivered from the Western Europe, but given the state of preservation, if indeed original, it would suggest having been found locally. Since it bears an imperial portrait and was considered a luxurious product, it may be assumed that it was gifted to a high-ranking officer or another important person from the imperial circle. It is known that engraved gems were delivered to such recipients and they were also exchanged as



diplomatic gifts in the Constantine epoch (Spier 2007, 20). A gold glass medallion as a luxury product could have been used for the same purpose. Once the capital of the Roman Empire was transferred to Constantinople in 330 AD, the medallion's sitter could have travelled with the emperor to the east. Alternatively, the object was gifted to the foreign envoy or diplomat and buried with him since the vast majority of the gold glass medallions have been found in catacombs and burials (Howells 2015, 155–162). This would explain how the piece found its way to the eastern provinces and why it might have been carried as far east as Georgia or its surroundings. However, without precise provenance information, these scenarios remain only in the sphere of more or less educated guesses. Noteworthy is that even though the medallion uses the golden leaf with a portrait sunk in the glass capsule, essentially, it recalls Late Antique glass pendants by its form and the type of glass used. *Within this class, busts in profiles are common, however, usually paired (see: Entwistle, Corby Finney 2013). Summing up, the authenticity of the piece cannot be fully proved. It does not seem to be an 18th or 19th century fake, but one cannot exclude contemporary production with more advanced techniques well-imitating ancient ones.*

- Perhaps second quarter of the 4th century AD or more likely 20th century? ◀

Sassanian gems

No. 77

Dark grey and brown serpentine stamp seal, pierced

17.9 × 17.2 × 12.3 mm

Horse rider in profile to the right holding a spear in his right, raised hand behind his head. He is surrounded with bucket-like items: one behind his head, another above it and two more beneath the horse.

The subject-matter is unclear. Similar depictions in comparable style occur on Sassanian seals with investiture scenes or the ones presenting Nimbate rider spearing hydra (Bivar 1969, nos BL.3–4), but here, lack of royal attributes, e.g. the diadem on the head as well as spear and monster suggest the rider to be a huntsman. On the other hand, a similar rider appears on some Kushan seals where he holds an unidentified square object in his hand (Callieri 1997, no. 7.16). Hunting scenes occur sparingly on Sassanian seals, although they are quite popular in other archaeological artefacts and this seems to be the most plausible explanation for iconography of the seal in question. As Brunner observes, this is due to aristocratic nature of the motif so that not everybody was eligible to use seals with such iconography (Brunner 1978, 74). The cutting is bold but with limited detailing. For similar studies, see: Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. I, no. 55; Borisov, Lukonin 1963, no. 131; AGDS III Braunschweig, no. 80; AGDS III Kassel, nos 209–210; Zazoff 1983, pl. 123.3; Gyselen 1993, nos 10.C1–C3; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 414; Guiraud, Schwarz 2001, nos 45–46.

• 5th century AD

◀

No. 78

Violet amethyst stamp seal of lentoid shape, pierced

16 × 16 × 9 mm

Bearded priest wearing a long robe making a sacrifice on a burning altar. Tree in the field behind him. Ground line.

A fairly popular scene in Sassanian glyptics. The man is identified as a priest or magus due to his dress as well as the gesture of raising ritual bundle of sticks (barsom) toward the altar. The gem possibly presents the most important sacrificial rite, the yasna. The figure is the celebrant (zōd) performing a recitation. The plant in the field can be either the flourishing plant life or the actual one used during the sacrificial practices (hōm). For gems with similar scenes, see: Bivar 1969, no. BD.4; Brunner 1978, no. 125; Zazoff 1983, pl. 121.4; Kaim-Małecka 1993, no. 51; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, nos 895–897.

• 5th century AD ◀

No. 79

Black-red-orange-white sardonyx ringstone (F2C)

20.2 × 15.1 × 5.9 mm

Bust of a bearded, middle-aged man with diadem on his head and hair rolled around it to the left. He is wearing a military dress suggested on the chest.

This type of male portrait is a common one in Sassanian glyptics. Some peculiar features are the pointy beard suggested only with vertical striations, the hair rolled around the head so that a bunch of curls is gathered in back. This seal presents a quite early example of a hairstyle much more common in the next centuries. The portrait belongs to a Sassanian nobleman. Sometimes similar depictions include some jewellery (mostly earrings and necklaces) indicating high social status, see: Borisov, Lukonin 1963, nos 36 and 66; Bivar 1969, no. AA.6; Brunner 1978, no. 32; Ramishvili 1979, nos 1 and 22; Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, nos 2294–2297; Gyselen 1993, no. 20.D27; Kaim-Małecka 1993, nos 57 and 60; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 400; Bollati, Messina 2009, nos 8 and 10; Gołyźniak 2017, no. App.II.4.

• 4th century AD ◀

No. 80

Yellow carnelian ringstone (F9C)

27 × 20 × 3.8 mm

Bust of a bearded, old man to the left. He has long hair and is wearing a helmet on his head surmounted with a crest.

A simplified version of a bust type developed in the 5th century AD with a much stronger emphasis put on the military character of the person depicted. He is a Sassanian nobleman and a high-ranking officer in one. The cutting is based on a round drill combined with a considerable use of a very thin disc bit used for the structure of the breastplate, beard and hair. For some similar busts, see: Delaporte 1923, no. A.1450; Bivar 1969, nos AE.6 and ZA.5; AGDS IV Hamburg, no. 90; Gyselen 1993, no. 20.F15; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 882.

• 5th century AD ◀

No. 81

Red carnelian ringstone (F2A)

10 × 8.1 × 6.3 mm

Pheasant to the left, a crescent in front of him and Pahlavi inscription above the bird and under its legs.

This seal presents a classical type of pheasant on Sassanian gems, that is with tufted head and smooth tail feathers. It was a very popular motif due to the fact that the bird was one of the savory fowls mentioned in Xusraw ud rēdag 25. For some close parallels, see: Borisov, Lukonin 1963, no. 556; Bivar 1969, nos HA.1-2 and 6-10; Javakhishvili 1972, no. 125; Brunner 1978, no. 29; AGDS IV Hamburg, no. 123; AGDS IV Hannover, no. 1730; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, nos 451 and 983; Gesztelyi 2000, no. 290; Bollati, Messina 2009, no. 20.

• 5th century AD ◀

No. 82

Dark grey and pale brown serpentine stamp seal

12.9 × 13.2 × 9.3 mm

Scorpion.

The scorpion appears in several roles on Sassanian seals. If paired with some celestial symbols (crescent, star etc.), it is a zodiac sign and personal horoscope of the gem's sitter. It also sometimes becomes an orthodox Zoroastrian demon-created vermin, but the most frequent reason for its appearance is the fact that it was a symbol of good luck and provided the owner of the gem with various benefits. Hence, it may be concluded that our gem was an amulet. The motif was fairly popular, see: Bivar 1969, no. KA.7; Brunner 1978, no. 86; Kaim-Małecka 1993, no. 93; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 988; Bagot 2012, no. 36; Gołyźniak 2017, no. App.II.14.

• 5th–6th century AD

Catalogue:
modern gems

16TH–17TH-CENTURY INTAGLIOS

No. 83

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

19.5 × 12.6 × 3 mm

Heracles Farnese. Ground line.

The gem copies the famous Lysippian statue of the hero that has been preserved only as a Roman copy – the so-called Heracles Farnese sculpted by Glykos (for more information on this issue, see: Platz-Horster 1970, 91–100, pl. XX.3–4; Pannuti 1983, 94–95). The statue was discovered in the 1540s and starting then was a major source of inspiration for gem engravers and other artists (Haskel, Penny 1981, no. 46). The shallow and summarily engraving belongs to the Baroque epoch. For a similar subject and style, see: Bollati, Messina 2009, no. 147.

• 17th century? ◀

No. 84

Veined red and white carnelian ringstone (F8A)

21 × 16.5 × 2.9 mm

Bust of Apollo to the left. His hair is rolled around his head and four corkscrew locks are hanging down from the temple. He is wearing a robe and the folds are crossed on the shoulder.

The intaglio was supposed to copy an archaising image of Apollo, which was particularly popular in the 1st century BC (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, nos 80–81 with further literature).

• 16th–17th century ◀

No. 85

Yellow and white agate ringstone (F5C)

21.8 × 17.5 × 3.1 mm

Bust of Apollo to the left. He wears a diadem and his hair is rolled around the head. Drapery suggested on his arms.

The gem was supposed to copy a well-known ancient image of Apollo, which is to be observed on our nos 32–33.

• 16th–17th century

The same subject as above but represented on an intaglio.

• Neo-Assyrian Period (7th century BC) ◀

No. 86

White chalcedony ringstone (F6D)

13.9 × 11.9 × 3 mm

Bust of Ammon-Sol to the right wearing a radiate crown and ram's horn, and possibly a robe suggested on the shoulder.

The gem copies the ancient image of a syncretic deity Ammon-Sol (cf. Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, nos 1263–1264 with further literature). The stone type was mostly preferred in the 17th century and the engraving with minutely elaborated coiffure supports this date. For a comparable piece, see: Casal Garcia 1990, no. 96.

• 17th century ◀

No. 87

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 11,7 × 3 mm

Bust of Apollo-Sol to the right. He is wearing a radiate crown and drapery around his arms. Three corkscrew locks are hanging from the temple to the back of the head.

The locks are an archaisation and belong to a well-established image of Apollo that was widely popular in the 1st century BC (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, nos 80–81 with further literature). However, this feature is abnormal for the Roman Imperial period and the style of engraving is also problematic here, possibly the one applied in the 'lapis lazuli workshops' of 16th–17th centuries (cf. Tassinari 2010, pl. XLV.h). Compare with ancient specimens: Tamma 1991, no. 86; Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 2764; Weiß 1996, no. 116; Bagot 2012, no. 272, and unpublished carnelian in the British Museum collection, inv. no. 1987.0212.90.

• 16th–17th century? ◀

No. 88

Bluish-white chalcedony ringstone (F8A)

15.3 × 11.4 × 4.1 mm

Bust of Sol wearing a radiate crown on the head and a robe uncovering his arm.

This is a product of the 'lapis lazuli workshop'. The radiated heads, which can be identified either as busts of solar deities, e.g. Helios or Sol and late Roman emperors, constitute one of the most popular categories among intaglios executed by artists working there, see: Tassinari 2010, 111–120. The colour of this chalcedony ringstone is unusual and most likely has been artificially enhanced. For a parallel, see: Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 665, with references to similar intaglios set in 16th century rings.

• 16th–17th century ◀

No. 89

Red-orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

18 × 14 × 3 mm

Bust of Artemis to the left. Her hair is rolled around her head and she is wearing a garment arranged in several folds on the bust and falling off the left shoulder. A bow above her right shoulder.

The gem copies the ancient motif of a Graeco-Roman goddess of hunt. This intaglio was cut by the same hand as nos 91 and 96.

• 17th century ◀

No. 90

Milky-white and yellowish chalcedony ringstone (F8A)

13.8 × 11.2 × 3 mm

Laureate and bearded head of Heracles to the left.

This gem presents a highly popular type of Heracles head (for ancient examples, see: Gołyźniak 2017, nos 116–121), which was most likely borrowed from the famous Lysippian statue of the hero that has been preserved only as a Roman copy – the so-called Heracles Farnese sculpted by Glykos (for more information on this issue, see: Platz-Horster 1970, 91–100, pl. XX.3–4; Pannuti 1983, 94–95). The discovery of the statue in the 1540s triggered production of various objects of art inspired by this great artwork. Our intaglio accounts to this trend and judging the style it should be dated to the 17th century.

• 17th century ◀

No. 91

Red-orange-pale yellow carnelian ringstone (F8A)

16 × 12 × 3 mm

Diademed and draped bust of a young man with a large shield in his arm with a boss in the centre.

Perhaps the intaglio features a popular generalised image of the Trojan hero Paris. According to Kagan, it was later enriched with some attributes by Charles Brown (1749–1795) whose work was also frequently copied down to the 19th century (Kagan 2010, no. 147). The object in question was engraved by the same hand as nos 89 and 96.

• 16th–17th century ◀

No. 92

Violet amethyst ringstone (F10B)

16 × 12 × 2.8 mm

Laureate bust of a Roman emperor to the left. His hair is hanging down his neck and he is wearing *paludamentum* fastened with a fibulae on the shoulder.

Unidentified historical figure. For similar studies, see: Gennaioli 2007, no. 736; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 216.

• 17th century? ◀

No. 93

Black, white and grey banded agate ringstone (F8A)

17.2 × 14.1 × 4 mm

Diademed bust of Socrates.

The intaglio shows a common portrait of the Greek philosopher Socrates. He can be recognised by the facial features, especially the short and upturned nose as well as the beard type, which is relatively short but bushy. The image of Socrates was highly popular in ancient glyptics and in the modern period it continued to be carved on intaglios and cameos since it was one of the key symbols of Classical Graeco-Roman culture. The diadem is unusual for the philosopher, the style of engraving is suggestive of the modern period and it is clear that the owner used the gem as his personal seal because the image is clearly visible only on the impression.

• 17th century ◀

No. 94

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14.3 × 12 × 3 mm

Draped bust of a young man. His hair is rendered with short strokes and arranged in three rows on his head.

Unidentifiable person, but see similar heads: Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 609; Weber 1995, no. 284.

• 17th century ◀

No. 95

Red and pink
carnelian ringstone (F12B)

13 × 10.5 × 4.6 mm

Bust of a young man to the left. He wears a diadem on his head and his hair seems to be rolled around his head. Drapery around his arms.

This portrait could be taken for a copy of the ancient image of youthful Apollo (cf. nos 32–33), however, sometimes this head type occurs with a club above the shoulder, which suggests he is a young Heracles, see: Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 714. For more analogies, see: Kagan, Neverov 2000, no. 12/2.

• 17th century ◀

No. 96

Red-orange-yellow
carnelian ringstone (F5D)

15.6 × 13 × 3 mm

Diademed bust of a woman with hair rolled around her head and tied in a bun in the back. Garment suggested in the lower part of the bust and a pearl necklace on her neck?

The image belongs to a series of similar stones most likely produced in the 'lapis lazuli workshop' in the 16th or 17th century (Vollenweider 1984, no. 470; Tamma 1991, nos 157–161). Perhaps, those gems were supposed to copy ancient images of the goddess Selene or Luna (cf. Weiß 2007, nos 220–221). The intaglio was engraved by the same artist as nos 89 and 91.

• 16th–17th century ◀

16TH–17TH-CENTURY CAMEOS

No. 97

Orange-white chalcedony cameo

35.8 × 23.7 × 8.8 mm

Hermaphrodite or Maenad lying on the outspread robe on the ground holding a conical cup. The figure is captured from behind with his head in profile to the left. A tree and a burning altar are in the field. Severely chipped on the back side.

The subject was common in antiquity, especially in the late Roman Republican and early Imperial periods (cf. Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, no. 223; Neverov 1988, nos 146–147 and 380; Tondo, Vanni 1990, nos 38–41; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 02.277) but it enjoyed great popularity in the Renaissance period as well. According to Ovid, Hermaphrodite was a remarkably handsome boy born to Aphrodite and Hermes with whom the water nymph Salmacis fell in love and prayed to be united forever. In answer to her prayer, she was merged and transformed with him into an androgynous form (Ovid, Met., IV 274–388). Because Hermaphrodite was one of the Erotes, he is very often presented on cameos together with Bacchus, Ariadne and other members of the thiasos (cf. Lippold 1922, pls XVIII.4 and CXII.2; Weber 1992, no. 44; 2001, no. 106; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 2007, t. I, c. 7, no. 460; Platz-Horster 2012, nos 415–418), but single representations also exist, although usually the figure is shown frontally (Boardman et al. 2009, no. 475; Berges 2011, no. 93). The motif of a reclining figure was sometimes applied to other figures like the goddess Venus, Cleopatra VII (69–30 BC) and Maenad whose representations on Renaissance gems were very common and inspired by an ancient statue (Bober, Rubinstein, Woodford 1986, no. 79; Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016a, nos 8, 13 and 20). The theme was approached by both, famous workshops, for instance the Miseroni or Masnago (Weber 1992, no. 113 [ca. 1600]; Platz-Horster 2012, no. 380), as well as the less prominent ones. Regarding the reclining or sleeping Hermaphrodite, it continued to be a popular subject for intaglios and cameos even up to the classical and neo-classical periods, mostly due to the ancient statue that was found in the early 17th century and displayed in the Villa Borghese in Rome (Haskel, Penny 1981, no. 48). It became a source of inspiration for many, including Giovanni Pichler (1734–1791) (Tassinari 2012, no. I.10). Our cameo is cut in a relatively flat relief. The technique and style of engraving as well as the completely naked body forms and fillers in the background still have some Renaissance essence but seem to be of more mannerist character. The cloak outspread on the ground resembles the one from the mentioned Villa Borghese statue of reclining Hermaphrodite, possibly indicating source of inspiration. Compare, for instance, a stylistically close cameo in: Boardman et al. 2009, no. 476.

• Late 16th – early 17th century ◀

No. 98

White over brown agate cameo

36 × 28.6 × 10.4 mm

Bust of a Bacchus to the front. He is wearing an ivy wreath on the head and a robe uncovering his right arm.

The subject was known in Roman times (Neverov 1988, no. 421; Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 82), but was copied frequently since the Renaissance alongside to similar busts of Maenads and Bacchantes (cf. Dalton 1915, no. 716; Gennaioli 2007, nos 138 and 216; Boardman, Aschengreen Piacenti 2008, no. 163; Gallottini [ed.] 2012, no. 387; Platz-Horster 2012, no. 128). Our example belongs to the latter category and the style points to the Renaissance or slightly later times.

• Late 16th – early 17th century ◀

No. 99

Blue with gold inclusions lapis lazuli cameo

18.3 × 16.1 × 6.8 mm

Bust of a bearded man to the left.

Cameos with male portraits carved in lapis lazuli are rare even for the post-classical period (cf. Platz-Horster 2012, nos 644 and 838–839). The man presented on this piece cannot be easily identified. The beard and haircut suggest a Roman emperor, perhaps Lucius Verus (161–169 AD) or Marcus Aurelius (161–180 AD).

• 17th century ◀

No. 100

White over grey and dark brown, three-layered sardonyx cameo

14 × 10 × 5 mm

Diademed head of a woman to the right, her hair is intricately plaited and coiled at the back of her head with a band.

Female portraits, usually busts with one breast left bare, having elaborated coiffures of this sort as on our cameo were fashionable decorative stones produced in Italy in the Renaissance period. The haircut is distinctive for the 16th century and so is the style of engraving. For some similar objects, see: Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 683; Weber 2001, no. 19; Boardman, Aschengreen Piacenti 2008, no. 146.

• 16th century ◀

No. 101

Yellow over white and orange, three-layered sardonyx cameo

15.7 × 12 × 4 mm

Head of a woman to the left. She has long, wavy hair tied high with a band.

This small cameo is of unusual shape and female portraits with long, loose curly hair are rare. As suggested by Boardman and Aschengreen Piacenti, a similar hairstyle occurs in the 17th century for some prominent women such as Vittoria della Rovere, later Grand Duchess of Tuscany (1622–1694) and Christina of Sweden (1626–1689) (Boardman, Aschengreen Piacenti 2008, no. 154). Although in the case of our gem part of the hair is tied, still their treatment is the same – long curly locks loosely hanging down on the shoulders, but the face is not distinctive enough to propose any reasonable identification. For similar head types belonging to other personalities, see: Babelon 1897, no. 444; Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 665; Weber 1992, nos 192–193.

• 17th century ◀

18TH–19TH-CENTURY INTAGLIOS

No. 102

Yellow citrine intaglio (F1C)

21 × 17 × 8.1 mm

Victory with two palm branches and laurel wreath harnessing four horses. She is wearing a robe covering only the lower part of her body. No ground line.

This large citrine intaglio is one of the most beautiful stones in the collection. It bears a popular subject for Roman glyptics, which was based on a painting by a famous Greek painter Nicomachus of Thebes (4th century BC) that was transferred to Rome (Pliny, NH, XXXV 108). The most famous ancient gemstone bearing this subject was a cameo signed by Rufus (Vollenweider 1966, 28–29, pl. 19.1–2; Kagan, Neverov 2000, no. 88/38), but it was frequently copied already in the 1st century BC (Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, no. 214; Neverov 1976, no. 111; Zwierlein-Diehl 1986, no. 337). The motif also exists on Roman Republican coins (RRC, nos 453/1a–e – denarii of L. Plautius Plancus, 47 BC). In the post-classical era, among the famous artists, it was Luigi Pichler (1773–1854) who approached this subject on one of his intaglios (Lippold 1922, pl. CXXX.5). and his work could be based on another ancient piece (Lippold 1922, pl. XXXII.11). Most likely in the case of our intaglio the same situation occurs, and the stone quite faithfully copies the reversed Rufus' cameo from the State Hermitage Museum. The engraving on the highly polished stone's surface is well accomplished and deep. The composition is dynamic and vivid, the body shapes of Victory and horses are nicely formed, and detailing is rich. Overall, the workmanship is at a high level and stylistically the piece falls into the 19th century. The size of the gem excludes the possibility for it to be set in a ring. Thus, it must have been a collective or decorative object. See some similar gems: Dalton 1915, no. 769; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 2013, t. V, c. 5, nos 375 and 530.

• First half of the 19th century ◀

No. 103

Red carnelian ringstone (F9C)

16 × 12 × 2.9 mm

Bathing woman, naked, crouching and lifting her dress over her head. A vessel in front of her. Ground line suggested with double stroke.

Fake intaglio purposed to be taken as a product of Augustan glyptics. The gem presents a classical motif occurring on engraved gems as early as the 5th/4th century BC (Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, no. 23; Boardman, Vollenweider 1978, no. 105; Zwierlein-Diehl 1986, nos 24–25; Boardman 2001, figs 594 and 638). The woman is traditionally interpreted as Aphrodite Anadyomene, but some examples suggest the motif to be obscure as two women bathing at a basin are presented too (Boardman 2001, fig. 1043). The subject was frequently copied in the 2nd and 1st century BC (cf. Tassie, Raspe 1791, nos 6254–6263; Walters 1926, no. 1283; Fossing 1929, no. 896; Callieri 1997, no. U 1.6; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 278; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 648; Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, no. 905). The rectangular-like shape intaglios were fashionable in the Augustan Era, but the piece in question cannot be taken even for an ancient copy of a much earlier gem. The details of the iconography are suspicious like the double ground line and the composition, which is not in the centre of the stone, but nearly touches the right edge. Moreover, the style of engraving, even though correct for the body shapes, is not so for the garment raised above the head. In addition, there is high polishing and the intaglio looks untouched and freshly cut. Modern fakes presenting this motif exist (see, for instance: Berges 2011, nos 82–83), and after a close examination it becomes clear that this gem is another one in the collection possibly carved after the intaglio from the Hermitage cabinet (Neverov 1976, no. 35)?

• 19th century ◀

No. 104

Red-violet, bubbled glass ringstone (F10B)

14 × 10.9 × 3.3 mm

Aphrodite/Venus (?) in a squat, looking into a mirror she is holding in her left hand while grasping a band in the right one. Very short ground line.

This is another modern fake intaglio in the collection. It also bears a classical motif that enjoyed renewing popularity in the 1st century BC (Furtwängler 1900, pls XIII.10 and XXXIII.43; Boardman 2001, fig. 593). Boardman interprets similar figures as girls at a bath or other activities, but here, the woman should be identified with Aphrodite/Venus due to the typical attribute for her – a mirror, suggesting her unparalleled beauty among mortals and gods. She is often presented with Cupid raising a mirror to her, a scene which suggests her victory in the Paris contest (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 450 with further literature). Similarly to the previous object, genuineness here is highly questionable. The style of engraving is inappropriate to the subject and overall quality that would be expected from the 1st century BC work. Besides, the glass composition differs from that used by ancient gem makers. In the Hermitage collection there are two Classical Greek carnelian intaglios that might have served as prototypes, see: Neverov 1976, no. 34; Arsentyeva, Gorskaya 2019, no. 15. It is worth noting that the glass used here has the same red colour as the gem in the Hermitage and the composition as well as detailing are copied.

• 19th century ◀

No. 105

Pale orange and yellow carnelian intaglio (F3A)

30 × 25 × 6 mm

Bust of Neptune to the front with head turned to the right. His hair is rolled around his head, but some locks have escaped and are strewn above the forehead and flowing behind it. The god also has a long, bushy beard. He is holding a trident in his left hand. A garment is suggested in the lower part of the bust.

According to Kagan (Kagan 2010, no. 135), this *head of Neptune derives from an intaglio by Edward Burch (ca. 1730–1814) (Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 2532), of which Charles Brown (1749–1795) produced two free copies (Tassie, Raspe 1791, nos 2529 and 2535) and one intaglio by him signed C. BROWN. INV is now in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 2538). It seems quite probable that our gem is a faithful copy of Brown's work, however, after a plaster impression and omitting his signature. The style is comparable to the original work and almost all the details including a complicated coiffure have been repeated here. Moreover, the stone type and its colour seem purposefully selected to match the original. Actually, there are more copies of Charles Brown's work listed in the Tassie and Raspe catalogue (cf. 2539 and 15178). Some of them can be identified with the following engravers: William Fraser (?–?) and Wise (?–?) (Tassie and Raspe 1791, nos 15179 and 15180 respectively) while the others, including our gem's maker, remain anonymous. Nevertheless, the extraordinary workmanship, dynamic composition and attention to detail allow us to place the intaglio in question among top quality works of the early 19th century.*

• Early 19th century ◀

No. 106

Red carnelian intaglio (F5D)

30 × 21 × 6.8 mm

Bust of Zeus to the right. His hair is rolled around his head, but two corkscrew locks are hanging down his neck. He is wearing an oak wreath on his head and a garment is suggested on his arm.

An extremely well accomplished and faithful copy of a famous ancient intaglio preserved in the State Hermitage Museum (Kagan, Neverov 2000, no. 20/1). It depicts the head of Zeus modelled on the famous chryselephantine statue of Zeus of Olympia by Pheidias executed around 435 BC. The Russian researchers attribute the intaglio to one of the leading ancient gem engravers Hyllos, or at least to his workshop, and so did Vollenweider (Vollenweider 1966, 72, pl. 83.1 and 4). The subject was frequently used for both, ancient and modern intaglios (Tassie, Raspe 1791, nos 10148–10178). In the case of our specimen, the artist must have been top level and his work was well-thought out since not only are all the details are perfectly imitated but also the stone quality in terms of its size, colour and type matches the original. Another copy very much like our own is housed in the Bibliothéque national de Paris (Richter 1971, no. 731). Perhaps our gem was cut in Russia. Among the bulk of cameos produced in the workshop located in the Ural Mountains area there is a cameo also copying the ancient original in a very fine style, see: Kagan 1994, no. 137. Kagan reports about three more locations of the Imperial gem-cutting workshops in Petergof, Yekaterinburg and Kolyvan and they might be even more suitable proposals here (Kagan 2003).

• First half of the 19th century

No. 107

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

20 × 15 × 3 mm

Bust of Artemis/Diana to the left. Her hair is rolled around her head and tied in a top-knot at the top of it. She is wearing a sleeveless peplos.

The gem copies the ancient image of the goddess Artemis/Diana (cf. Neverov 1976, no. 86 and no. 85 for Victory with a similar coiffure; Neverov 1988, nos 114–118 – cameos). Classicising and elaborated style of the 18th century.

• 18th century ◀

No. 108

Yellowish-white chalcedony intaglio (F6A)

34.5 × 26 × 7.2 mm

Head of Athena/Minerva to the left wearing a crested helmet. Three corkscrew locks protruding from the casque.

A nicely modelled study in a deep engraving and classical style. The stone is extremely large, thus was surely intended as a souvenir, collecting or decorative piece.

• 18th century ◀

No. 109

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15.6 × 13 × 3 mm

Bust of a young man to the left with a bull's scalp (?) on his head or a cap coming down behind ears, drapery around his arms.

If the headdress is indeed a bull's scalp, most likely the gem presents the Greek hero Theseus who captured Marathon bull and defeated Minotaur. A comparable ancient intaglio in terms of the subject, though with a clearer scalp on the head, is in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, no. 662). If the man is wearing a cap, he could be Paris as on the unpublished 18th century carnelian in the British Museum collection (inv. no. 1867.0507.712). The cutting is bold and well accomplished with the use of round bits and recognised as a modern work.

• 18th century ◀

No. 110

Red carnelian ringstone (F11A)

16.3 × 12 × 3 mm

Bust of Perseus to the right wearing a Phrygian cap decorated with a wing.

A popular motif on neo-classical intaglios. In 1801, Antonio Canova (1757–1822) presented his statue of Perseus Triumphant commissioned by tribune Onorato Duveyriez and freely modelled after Apollo Belvedere and Medusa Rondanini. During his Italian campaign in 1796, Napoleon I took the Apollo Belvedere statue to Paris and in its absence Pope Pius VII acquired Canova's masterpiece (Vatican Museums, inv. no. 969). It quickly became one of the most admired neo-classical sculptures and source of inspiration for various artists including gem engravers (Canova also executed a replica commissioned by Count Jan and Countess Valeria Tarnowski, which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York – inv. no. 67.110.1). A remarkable intaglio with just the head of Perseus inspired by Canova's work was engraved by Luigi Pichler (1773–1854) (Lippold 1922, pl. CXLV.1). It was frequently copied by others sometimes even together with his signature in both cameos and intaglios (Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 603; Platz-Horster 2012, no. 803; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 2013, t. V, c. 5, no. 555). Our gem is another 19th century creation also inspired by the work of Canova or directly Luigi Pichler's intaglio.

• First half of the 19th century ◀

No. 111

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

17.2 × 14 × 2.7 mm

Laureate and draped bust of Cassandra to the right.

The intaglio copies an ancient image of Cassandra who used to be presented with a laurel wreath on her head due to her relation to Apollo, with shoulder-length hair and in a similarly textured garment around her arms (Spier 1992, no. 222 with further parallels and for a detailed study of Kassandra on ancient engraved gems, see: Maaskant-Kleibrink 2017). The finest ancient work known today is the carnelian intaglio housed in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (Neverov 1976, no. 116, attributed to the workshop of Solon, see: Vollenweider 1966, 55) and it cannot be excluded that it was the source of inspiration for the gem described here. The style of engraving is essentially classicising but not very skilful.

• 18th–19th century ◀

No. 112

Intensive to light green chrysoprase ringstone (F1C)

20.3 × 13.3 × 6 mm

Laureate bust of a Roman emperor to the right. His torso is naked and shoulder bare.

The face and haircut suggest Trajan (98–117 AD), compare for istance with Boardman et al. 2009, no. 461/16.

• 18th century ◀

No. 113

Black jet ringstone (F8A)

14 × 11 × 3.2 mm

Laureate bust of a bearded Roman emperor to the left.

Most likely the head presented here belongs to Roman emperor Hadrian (117–138 AD) as it may be deduced from the full face covered with a short beard (cf. RIC III, nos 51, 76 and 88). The technique of engraving is somewhat like the so-called 'lapis lazuli workshop' but the gem might be later. For similar gems, see: Tamma 1991, no. 105; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 2007, t. III, c. 1, no. 16.

• 18th century ◀

No. 114

Very dark brown sard ringstone (F8A)

16 × 12 × 3 mm

Draped male bust to the right. He has curly hair and is wearing a pointy beard. A drapery is suggested above his left shoulder.

Most likely, the intaglio depicts Roman emperor Lucius Verus (161–169 AD) (cf. RIC III, nos 192, 205 and 255). The discovery of his marble bust in Villa Borghese in Rome and another one at the Acqua Traversa near Rome (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) in the 18th century resulted in numerous copies of those images on intaglios and cameos (see, for instance: Gennaioli 2010, no. 170; Berges 2011, no. 7; Platz-Horster 2012, no. 840). One of the most famous and surely influential works was the intaglio by Giovanni Pichler (Tassinari 2012, no. I.15). Our gem is a casual product of a much inferior workshop.

• Second half of the 18th century ◀

No. 115

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.5 × 3.2 mm

Laureate bust of a bearded Roman emperor to the left.

This intaglio most likely afeatures a portrait of Roman emperor Commodus (180–192 AD) as it might be deduced from the beard, haircut and especially facial expression (cf. RIC III, nos 282 and 291). For a similar gem, see: Weber 1995, no. 475. The style is classicising but the engraving of rather average level.

• 18th century ◀

No. 116

Orange-yellow carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12 × 2.9 mm

Laureate bust of a Roman emperor to the right. He is wearing a *paludamentum*.

Neither the facial features nor the coiffure is distinctive enough to make any certain identification of the person depicted. The subject was extremely popular in modern times and the work is a casual one. For a comparable piece, see: Tamma 1991, no. 195.

• 18th century ◀

No. 117

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.7 × 3.1 mm

Bust of Socrates to the left. He is wearing a diadem on his head and a robe is suggested on his shoulders.

In the modern era, Socrates was one of the most popular figures to appear on intaglios and cameos. The engraving here is neat, and all the characteristics of Socrates' portrait are well rendered, although the diadem is unusual for him. See some similar gems with his likeness: Weber 1995, no. 232; Weber 2001, nos 454 and 505.

• 18th century ◀

No. 118

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14.8 × 12 × 3 mm

Bust of a bearded man, diadem on his head and a fragment of a drapery above his right shoulder.

Perhaps another study of Socrates' portrait, but less skilfully executed. Compare: Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 595.

• 18th century ◀

No. 119

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.8 × 3 mm

Bust of a young man to the left. He is wearing a diadem on his head and a garment is suggested around his shoulders.

Unidentifiable portrait. For similar intaglios, see: Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 599; Weber 2001, no. 453.

• 18th century ◀

No. 120

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14.2 × 11.5 × 3 mm

Female bust to the right with hair tied high at the top back part of the head and a garment around the arms.

The very scrupulous elaboration of the coiffure, which resembles to some degree the 'wasp nest' and the facial expression, especially the long, straight nose may point to Roman empress Faustina the Elder (110/115–140/141 AD), wife of Antoninus Pius (138–161 AD) (cf. Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, fig. 665; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 510 – with further literature including coins and sculpture). Portraits of Roman emperors and their wives constituted one of the most popular subjects in modern glyptics, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries because they were suitable souvenirs for a Grand Tourist visiting Italian cities, especially Rome (on this issue, see: Wagner 2017, 117–118).

• 18th century ◀

No. 121

Pale green chrysoprase ringstone (F1D)

14 × 10 × 5.4 mm

Bust of a woman to the right. Her hair is delicately suggested with numerous wavy strokes and rolled around her head. Robe around her arms.

The bust is unidentifiable, but the workmanship is of post-classical date.

• 19th century ◀

No. 122

Red carnelian ringstone (F8C)

19.5 × 14.5 × 3.6 mm

Two bearded males with heads conjoined so that the beard of one is the hair of another.

Imitation of ancient mask/heads hybrid like no. 63 here. A popular subject for late 18th and 19th century intaglios and cameos.

• Early 19th century ◀

No. 123

Colourless rock crystal ringstone (F1D)

18.2 × 13.1 × 3.2 mm

Coat of arms consisting of a sword in a richly decorated scabbard and two cannons (?) linked with a rope in the bottom part.

• 19th century ◀

No. 124

Pale orange carnelian ringstone (F9C)

34.2 × 20.3 × 2.1 mm

Islamic inscription and other characters enclosed by a single line.

This intaglio bears a fragment of The Qur'ān sura 17, verse 84, which reads as follows: 'Everyone acts according to his own disposition: But your Lord knows best who it is that is best guided on the Way'.[1] *This object served as a positive amulet (see more on this issue in: Porter 2017, 132). Its exact date is difficult to establish but the cursive script style and simple floral decoration suggest possibly the first half of the 19th century. See parallel pieces in the British Museum collection with very similar script style, though slightly more refined decoration (Porter 2017, nos A.42–43).*

• First half of the 19th century? ◀

1 I am grateful to Arianna D'Ottone-Rambach for her kind help in reading the inscription on this and the following gem.

No. 125

Pale orange carnelian ringstone (F10B)

13.6 × 12.5 × 5 mm

Arabic inscription and other characters (including floral scrolls) enclosed by a single line.

The seal is engraved with a personal name (line 1: Aqā(---) / line 2: ʻAbduhu) and a date 1277 AH / AD 1860. This intaglio served as a personal seal. Regarding the names on Arabic gems, see: Porter 2017, 16–17. A parallel intaglio is in the British Museum collection, see: Porter 2017, no. 496.

• 1860 AD ◀

No. 126

Black basalt stele amulet

71 × 52 × 13 mm

In the upper part: a naked, bearded man sitting on the ground in front of a bush, a *himation* wrapped around his arm. Below a zone decorated with crosses and circular signs. In the central part an erotic scene presenting a young male leaning himself next to a tree approached by another man from behind. On the right side two columns with signs. In the bottom part another zone decorated with a pattern consisting of crosses and dots.

The revival of glyptic art in the Renaissance resulted not only in production of masterpieces but also forgeries that were deliberately created to mislead serious collectors and more casual clients. This process was continued well down to the 19th century, but discoveries made by amateur archaeologists and more organised missions such as the one organised by Napoleon Bonaparte brought to light many new objects on the art market. Among them were magical gems that started to be widely copied in the 18th century. This stele amulet seems to be a part of this process. Although its form clearly alludes to Egyptian artefacts, its iconography and style of engraving completely escapes ancient standards. Erotic scenes do not appear on magical scenes and the pseudo-inscription has no reasonable meaning whatsoever. The religious or magical character of the gem is actually absent here. For other forgeries of magical gems, see: Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, nos 2697–2703; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, nos 812–813; Śliwa 2014, nos 103–112.

• 18th century? ◀

18TH–19TH-CENTURY CAMEOS

No. 127

Red, pink and white carnelian-onyx cameo

30.5 × 21.2 × 6.1 mm

Victory with a palm branch harnessing four horses. She is wearing a sleeveless peplos belted at her waist.

The same subject as on no. 102 but crudely cut in a very simplistic manner.

• 19th century ◀

No. 128

Yellow over grey, two-layered chalcedony cameo

9 × 8 × 5 mm

Head of a young man wearing a diadem on his head directed to the left.

Most likely meant for the god Apollo, but might be a Hellenistic king? Schematic work of classical or neo-classical period. For a similar subject, see: Platz-Horster 2012, no. 704.

• 18th – early 19th century ◀

No. 129

Red and dark brown chalcedony cameo

30.2 × 22.2 × 8 mm

Bust of a Maenad to the left. She is wearing an ivy wreath on her head and a robe is suggested on her right shoulder, while the left one remains bare.

This cameo copies a popular ancient motif of a head belonging to Ariadne or Maenad (cf. Neverov 1988, no. 27; Giuliano, Micheli 1989, no. 74; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 483), which was frequently copied starting in the Renaissance onwards (Tassie, Raspe 1791, nos 4248 and 4925; Dalton 1915, no. 135; López de la Orden 1992, no. 248). Both the material used, and style of engraving are indicative of the neoclassical period.

• 19th century ◀

No. 130

White over black two-layered onyx cameo

16.7 × 13 × 3.4 mm

Head of a Maenad to the right, her hair widely spread like in a mad dance.

A source of inspiration for this cameo could be a fairly ancient neo-attic motif of a Maenad in an ecstasy dance that belongs to a slightly wider repertoire of Hellenistic dancing figures (cf. Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 1164; Plantzos 1999, nos 424–428; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 148; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 232 [with further literature]). The engraver decided to cut only her head. The cameo might have been executed in a gem workshop located in the Ural Mountains area in Russia, whose prolific production was often inspired by ancient works. Compare, for instance: Kagan 1994, no. 47.

• First half of the 19th century ◀

No. 131

White over brown and green, two-layered glass cameo

12 × 9.2 × 2.2 mm

Bust of a woman to the right, her long hair is swept back, and the head is lowered.

Perhaps the object features the bust of a Nymph? For glass cameos of late Hellenistic date in that could be inspirational, see: Platz-Horster 2012, nos 155–159.

• 19th century ◀

No. 132

Red carnelian cameo

32.3 × 26.2 × 6 mm

Bust of Roma or a young person to the left. The figure is wearing a Roman casque, *cuirass* and cloak.

Long hair suggests Roma. The composition is similar to no. 136, that is the image is placed in the centre with a rather exceeding margin, but the engraving differs from the work of the anonymous Polish engraver. The cutting is bold, however detailing superficial. The style is essentially neo-classicising and for some similar studies of Roma on modern gems, see: Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 7278; Babelon 1897, no. 455; Weber 1995, no. 123.

• Late 18th – early 19th century ◀

No. 133

Dark and pale green malachite cameo

19.5 × 12.2 × 7.3 mm

Frontal bust of Venus wearing a diadem on her head, which is turned slightly to the right. There is a fragment of garment over her left shoulder. *Cameos made of malachite are generally rare (cf. Berges 2011, no. 57; Platz-Horster 2012, no. 772) and unknown in ancient glyptics. Starting at the beginning of the 18th century, malachite was mined in the southern part of the Ural Mountains region in Russia and the discoveries of new sources of this material made ca. 1835 around Chelyabinsk resulted in its greater availability for various kinds of arts. It is noteworthy that an Imperial cameo-carvers workshop operated in this area from the end of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century, although most of its products were carved in onyx and other variations of chalcedony group (Kagan 1994). Kagan reports about three more locations of Imperial gem-cutting workshops in Petergof, Yekaterinburg and Kolyvan, and they might also be suitable proposals for the origins of this piece (Kagan 2003).*

• First half of the 19th century

◀

No. 134

Sardonyx cameo, white and yellowish-pink-brown

41.5 × 29.1 × 13.5 mm

Laureate bust of Zeus facing to the front and wearing *aegis* (*Zeus aegiochus*).

This is one of the masterpieces of the collection and a highly problematic object at the same time. The torso of the god is formed in a nicely rounded shape and the aegis is shown only on a small fragment of the right shoulder; it has minutely carved scaly feathers. The face is slightly turned to the left and exhibits the highlight of gem engraving in a gently modelled, slightly bowed nose, detailed eyes with eyelids and pupils indicated and symmetrically marked eyebrows above. The mouth with relatively thick lips remains open. The hair and beard are vigorously cut in the baroque manner with brilliant naturalism of the curls arranged in a sort of chaotic way on top of the head, where they are raised through falling cascades, down to the carefully arranged bottom part of the beard. They cover the ears and each single lock is approached with individualism. The laurel wreath goes from the middle part of the head on both sides up to the top and its leaves are cut in entirely organic manner with the veins and hyphae indicated. There is no strong undercut, the relief emerges from the background, which is slightly convex on the back side. The bare elements of the face (forehead, nose, cheeks) and body are smoothly polished enhancing naturalism of the whole composition.

This wonderful cameo possibly belongs to a series of copies of the famous 'Zulian Cameo' housed in the Correr Museum in Venice (Furtwängler 1900, vol. III, pl. LIX.8, Sperti 1993). The type itself first appeared in the Classical period (cf. gold stater of Lampsacus in Mysia, ca. 360–340 BC, SNG France 5, no. 1136, and another gold stater but minted in Gortyn in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, no. 314). Busts of Zeus aegiochus were popular on Hellenistic cameos and they usually present a variant which involves aegis draped only on

one shoulder, which actually was a Hellenistic invention. It is believed that most of the Hellenistic examples with this motif were produced in a workshop located in Alexandria, in Ptolemaic Egypt in the 2nd or 1st century BC (cf. two cameos in Vienna (Eichler, Kris 1927, nos 30–31) another one in Venice (Nardelli 1999, no. 3), the fragmentary preserved piece in the British Royal Collection at the Windsor Castle (Boardman, Aschengreen Piacenti 2008, no. 2) as well as a rare coral cameo that recently appeared on the art market (Christie's, Antiquities, 5 July 2017, lot 85) and one more published by Plantzos (Plantzos 1999, pl. 87.8 [in profile]). The subject continued later in the Roman period (see, for instance: Walters 1926, no. 3420) and experienced phenomenal revival in the neo-classical times due to the discovery of the so-called 'Zulian Cameo' in the 18th century. The fame it quickly acquired resulted in a considerable number of copies produced in both cameos and intaglios in the late 18th and throughout the 19th century (some examples: Dalton 1915, no. 53; Kris 1932, no. 97; Dorigato 1974, no. 134; Weber 1995, nos 158 and 174; Gallottini [ed.] 2012, nos 470–471; Vitellozzi 2017, no. 48). The links between the cameo presented here and the 'Zulian Cameo' are obvious in the compositional and iconographical terms. The style of engraving closely imitates Hellenistic manner especially where the hair style, treatment of the body and face expression are concerned. This was achieved by the gem cutters working at turn of the 18th and 19th century. The taste for gems among collectors and dealers reached a peak in those days and many outstanding contemporary gem engravers like Nathaniel Marchant (1739–1816) or Benedetto Pistrucci (1783–1855) worked for dealers creating perfect imitations of ancient originals (Seidmann 1987; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 1989 and 2017). The cameo in question is a product of this class and point in time, yet it cannot be attributed to any specific artist.

• Late 18th – early 19th century

No. 135

Red carnelian cameo

19.5 × 14 × 5 mm

Head of a man to the left.

Perhaps the cameo copies an ancient image of a Julio-Claudian prince, see the subject for comparison: Boardman et al. 2009, no. 59 (Germanicus). Stylistically very close is a cameo produced in one of the Russian Imperial workshops active in the early 19th century, though it depicts a different person, see: Kagan 1994, no. 18.

• Early 19th century ◀

No. 136

Pale red-orange carnelian cameo/intaglio

32 × 28 × 5 mm

Side A: Laureate bust of a bearded Roman emperor wearing a *paludamentum* to the left.

Side B: Woman, wearing a long dress and hat on the head, ties a lion. Next to her are her spear and shield. The scene is arranged in an elaborate landscape including a large tree, rocks and grass in a field. Ground line under which inscription in Polish: 'Łagodny i Straszny' ('Gentle and Fearful').

The object is unusual for the combination of cameo and intaglio forms in one. The head presented on Side A probably belongs to a Roman emperor from the Antonine dynasty of the 2nd century AD. The simplistic style of engraving does not help to make any certain identification but see a cameo with a similar subject in the Guy Ladriére collection and the head attributed to emperor Hadrian (Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016b, no. 40). The scene engraved on Side B is a lion hunting but probably has some allegorical meaning as it is suggested by the female figure engaged and playful inscription. However, it remains obscure.

The inscription on the Side B suggests the engraver to be of Polish nationality. Among Polish gem engravers only Jan Regulski (ca. 1760–1807), also a medallist, employed by the last king of Poland Stanislas August Poniatowski (1764–1795) reached considerable recognition and fame. After the final partition of the Polish Kingdom in 1795, he emigrated to Berlin where he was appointed a curator of the royal art collections by Frederick William II of Prussia. However, in 1798, he was called off by Frederick William III of Prussia and came back to Warsaw where he continued his career as an artist and dealer of antiquities (Bulanda 1914–1915; Laska 1986, 18–22; Laska 1994, 280). Apparently, we know that in the 18th century

Poland and after its disappearance in the 19th century, there were several other active gem carvers, for instance Ascher Schachn (a Jew working in Krakow) and S.G. Ejchel (active in Warsaw), but most of them cut only ringstones for aristocratic signets (Laska 1986, 29). Because there is very scanty documentation of their activities and they did not sign their works, we know virtually nothing about them and cannot attribute any work, including this one, to a specific artist. Nevertheless, it should be observed that in the early 18th century there was a workshop specialising in similar compositions, e.g. horizontally oriented hunting scenes, and it used carnelian of the same type as in the case of our gem. The style it applies is simple, even childish, however, with rich texturing of the figures' robes and natural elements such as grass, trees, and the stones used are imperfect (with flecks). Two products of this workshop are known to us, one in Munich (Weber 1992, no. 422) and second in Berlin (Platz-Horster 2012, no. 851). According to its shape, the latter example once decorated a snuffbox and in all likelihood our gem was also cut for decorative purposes. Weber suggests the workshop to be located in Bohemia and dates its activity to the 17th century, while Platz-Horster suggests early 18th century. The location suggested by Weber is possible, but Krakow also should be taken into account and we believe the date proposed by Platz-Horster is more suitable.

• Early 18th century ◀

No. 137

Pale blue turquoise cameo

19 × 14 × 7.2 mm

Head of a bearded man to the left. He is wearing a diadem on his head.

Most likely meant for a Roman emperor, possibly Hadrian (117–138 AD), compare with no. 113. However, other identifications are also possible since the pierced diadem is an unusual attribute and shows a clear misunderstanding of ancient iconography. If the former is the case, the person depicted could be Euripides (?) (compare: Platz-Horster 2012, nos 810–811). Interestingly, the ear is also pierced three times, which makes one wonder if the diadem and the ear were set with other little decorative gemstones? The turquoise is a rare material, but it raises the value of the piece as cameos in this material were extremely rare in both antiquity and the modern period (see, for example: Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016b, no. 44). For similar studies, see: Kris 1932, no. 48; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 82.

• 18th century ◀

No. 138

Brown and white flecked chalcedony cameo

20 × 15 × 6 mm

Bust of a man to the left wearing a cloak fastened with a fibula on his left shoulder.

Although the person depicted is not wearing a laurel wreath, the cloak seems to be a Roman paludamentum and the chubby, even fat, face probably belongs to the Roman emperor Otho (69 AD) or Vitelius (69 AD). For a similar portrait, see: Berges 2011, no. 215.

• Late 18th – early 19th century ◀

No. 139

White, olive and brown chalcedony cameo

17 × 15.5 × 5 mm

Head of a Roman to the left.

The cameo surely presents one of the prominent politicians of the Late Roman Republic and possibly copies an ancient piece. The face is somewhat similar to that of Marcus Iunius Brutus (85–42 BC), although is a bit older (cf. Vollenweider 1984, no. 288). For a cameo with a similar subject, see: Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 657. The object belongs to a series of comparable gems within the collection, see nos 140–141. Interestingly, illustrious Roman figures were cut upon cameos in the Russian Imperial workshops operating in the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries (for instance: Kagan 1994, no. 144). Yet, objects of similar quality were manufactured throughout Europe and it is difficult to point to exactly where this one comes from.

• Late 18th – early 19th century ◀

No. 140

White and brown chalcedony cameo

18 × 15 × 7 mm

Head of a Roman to the left.

The same subject as on the preceding cameo (no. 139) possibly executed in the same workshop. For similar objects, see: Gramatopol 1974, no. 913; Kagan 1994, no. 85; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 569.

• Late 18th – early 19th century ◀

No. 141

White and dark brown chalcedony cameo

17 × 15.3 × 7 mm

Head of a Roman to the left.

The same subject as on preceding cameos (nos 139–140) possibly executed in the same workshop.

• Late 18th – early 19th century ◀

No. 142

Yellow chalcedony cameo

20.5 × 19.5 × 6 mm

Head of a Roman to the left.

Unidentified historical figure and workshop. Stylistically the gem belongs to the classical period.

• 18th century ◀

No. 143

Red-orange carnelian cameo

18.5 × 13.7 × 7 mm

Head of a man to the left.

For a similar subject, see: Eichler, Kris 1927, no. 504, a classicising work.

• 18th century ◀

No. 144

Brown over greyish-white and yellow, two-layered chalcedony cameo

28 × 22 × 9.5 mm

Head of a bearded and partially bald old man to the left.

Probably intended to depict a Greek philosopher Socrates (cf. Gramatopol 1974, no. 896; Berges 2011, nos 166 and 170) or more likely the physician Hippocrates (cf. Nicholls 1983, no. 218) who had a similar nose-line. For other similar cameos, see: Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 622. Portraits of prominent ancient Greek figures were popular subjects for intaglios and cameos in modern ear, especially in the classical times due to the revival of classical culture.

• 18th century ◀

No. 145

White and orange shell cameo

53 × 44 × 5 mm

Bust of Michelangelo (1483–1520) to the right.

Similar cameos were produced in the 19th century Rome as souvenirs for Grand Tourists visiting the city. The subject is a popular one since Michelangelo was one of the most recognisable figures and symbols of the Italian Renaissance. His image often appears within a series of prominent Italian personalities, the so-called cycle of Uomini Illustri (Tassinari 2009, 95–104). Leading gem engravers cut intaglios and cameos with Michelangelo's image, for instance Antonio Berini (1770–1861) (Tassinari 2009, fig. 11), Giovanni Antonio Santarelli (1769–1826) or Giovanni Settari (1773–1833?) (Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 2007, t. VI, c. 2, nos 77 and 314, t. VII, c. 2, no. 53). Although not signed, this cameo must have been executed by a very skilful engraver since the style is of top quality and all the advantages of the material have been successfully exploited. Shell cameos were carved throughout the 19th century but they dominated glyptic production around the middle of that century. On the back side of our gem there is a French inscription in two parts: the one in the upper section of the cameo consist of unreadable letters (perhaps a name?) and another part is in the bottom: cher afini meaning 'my dear'. Surely it was meant to indicate the object as a gift to a beloved person and according to its character, it was added later with the use of some sharp object rather than by engraver himself.

• Mid-19th century ◀

No. 146

Brown, yellow and white chalcedony cameo

28 × 26 × 8 mm

Head of a woman to the right. She is wearing a sort of veil on the top of the head, and her hair is rolled around her head and knotted in a bun at the back. Diadem is visible above her forehead.

The facial features, coiffure, diadem and veil suggest that this cameo was intended to depict a Ptolemaic queen, perhaps one of the Berenikes (cf. Plantzos 1999, nos 39–42). Most likely a copy after an ancient cameo or intaglio in a classicising manner.

• 18th – first half of the 19th century ◀

No. 147

Pale green chalcedony cameo

19.6 × 17 × 6 mm

Bust of a woman to the left with long, wavy hair, partially rolled around the head.

Unidentified person, perhaps intended for a Hellenistic queen?

• 19th century ◀

No. 148

Creamy-white chalcedony cameo

28.5 × 22.7 × 12.8 mm

Frontal bust of a woman. She has long, wavy hair parted at the top of the head on two sides. She is wearing a robe, which is suggested in the bottom part.

Probably intended for a Roman empress, most likely Agrippina the Elder (15 BC – AD 33) since both the facial features and coiffure resemble her (cf. Wood 2000, 203–237 with many illustrations). A stylised work of average workmanship. For a subject, see: Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016b, no. 72.

• 19th century ◀

No. 149

White over black,
two-layered onyx cameo

18.2 × 15 × 5 mm

Diademed bust of a woman to the left. A robe suggested in the bottom part by several parallel grooves.

Unidentified person.

• 19th century ◀

No. 150

Red carnelian cameo

20 × 14 × 5.3 mm

Vera Icon. The head of Christ shown frontally with long hair and a beard.

The image of Christ appears to represent the so-called Volto Santo or Vera Icon found on the cloth of St. Veronica. Gems with similar iconography were carved as early as medieval times but gained great popularity in the 17th century (cf. Weber 1992, no. 115; Weber 2001, no. 176; Gennaioli 2007, no. 435; Boardman, Aschengreen Piacenti 2008, no. 124; Boardman et al. 2009, no. 435). However, due to the material used and style of engraving, our example seems to be a later version of this theme.

• 18th–19th century ◀

18TH–19TH-CENTURY EGYPTIAN SCARAB IMITATIONS

No. 151

Yellowish-brown and white agate scarab

22.1 × 13.8 × 10.6 mm

The beetle part is summarily cut, and the frontal part of the beetle is chipped on both sides. *Clupeus* is clearly modelled with three spikes suggesting the mouth, *pronotum* indicated by three single lines creating two thick volumes in this part and *elytra* marked with a thick wheel-cut going across the body, though no winglets on the sides. The front legs have been chipped, but there are two pairs of legs on the base suggested in the back. No piercing for suspension. On the flat side a pair of gazelles or caprides with long horns are engraved.

Although animal studies exist on Egyptian scarabs and plaques, and gazelles, ibexes or caprides often appear on them, usually singly and as astrological signs (cf. Hall 1913, no. 1652; Śliwa 2015, no. 145), this scarab is a modern forgery due to the material used, crude engraving exhibiting relatively fresh workmanship with sharp contours visible on the beetle part and iconographical inconsistencies. The style is primitive, the bodies of the animals too long. Although the stone's surface seems to be considerably worn, the numerous scratches might have been added artificially by rubbing the surface with dirt, sand and oil (Wakeling 1912, 83–84).

• Probably modern (late 18th – 19th century?) ◀

No. 152

Green with black inclusions feldspar scarab

18 × 12.5 × 7.9 mm

The beetle part is crudely formed, *clupeus* is modelled with three spikes suggesting the mouth, *pronotum* is separated with a single line, while its structure is modelled with two single wavy lines and *elytra* marked with a thick wheel-cut going across the body and the winglets are suggested on the sides as two pairs of short strokes. The base is undercut to separate it from the top body, a pair of front legs is cut on it and two more are in the back part. Pierced longitudinally for suspension. On the flat side there is a geometrical pattern encircled with a thick, single line.

This scarab is a fake and was purposed to be taken as an example of a popular class of Egyptian scarabs decorated with geometrical patterns dated to the Late Period (664–332 BC), see: Gallottini (ed.) 2012, nos 86–90; Śliwa 2015, nos 151–171. The uncommon stone type used – green feldspar was in fact popular during the reign of the 13th dynasty when other hard gemstones like amethyst, jasper and obsidian were frequently employed in Egyptian glyptics (Hall 1913, XXVI). Most of the genuine scarabs made of this material were unengraved on the base since they were primarily used as amulets and for decoration. The form of the beetle and the style of engraving make this piece particularly suspicious, but it is probably not a contemporary forgery. Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt between 1798 and 1801 resulted not only in great discoveries and publications (for instance: Voyage dans la Haute et la Basse Égypte by Vivant Denon published in 1802 and the volumes of the Descriptions de l'Égypte, written by the scientists who participated in the Napoleonic campaign between 1809 and 1829) that revived public interest in ancient Egypt during the first quarter of the 19th century, but also creation of the market for imitations of Egyptian antiquities. Scarabs like this and the next one are probably a part of this phenomenon.

• Modern (late 18th – 19th century?) ◀

No. 153

White-beige-yellowish agate scarab

18.8 × 12.9 × 8.5 mm

The beetle part is extremely schematic, *clupeus* is modelled into three spikes suggesting the mouth, *pronotum* is separated with a single line and shaped with two pairs of curved lines terminating in *elytra* part, which is marked with a thick wheel-cut going across the body and the winglets are formed on the sides with three pairs of short, irregular strokes. The base is undercut to separate it from the top body, a pair of front legs is cut on it and two more are in the back part. Pierced longitudinally for suspension. On the flat side there is a geometrical pattern meant to be encircled with a thick, single line, but clumsily formed from four curved strokes.

Similarly to the previous object, this one is a fake Egyptian scarab decorated with geometrical patterns. The workmanship suggests it to be of modern date, probably a 19th century imitation.

• Modern (late 18th – 19th century?)

Catalogue:
contemporary forgeries

Near Eastern cylinder seals and amulets imitations

No. 154

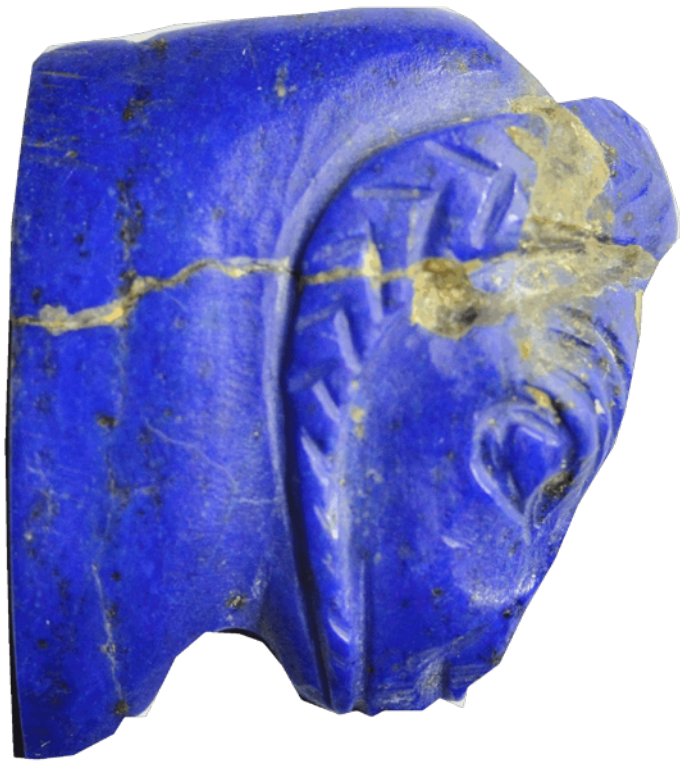
Greyish stone (painted in blue) amulet, stamp seal or figurine

20 × 18.2 × 4.2 mm

Fragment of a fake amulet, stamp seal or figurine in the form of a ram.

This nicely and precisely cut head of a ram has been shaped to appear as a fragment of a larger piece, possibly an amulet, stamp seal or a small figurine representing a recumbent animal. Such objects were often found in ancient city of Ur in Mesopotamia, see: Searight, Reade, Finkel (eds) 2008, no. 625; Woolley (ed.) 1934, 525, pl. 142, and probably one of them served to the forger as a source of inspiration. The very early Syrian stamp seals also had their back formed in the shape of a recumbent ram, see: Nunn 1999, nos 73–74. The material is a soft, greyish, grainy stone that has been painted in a marine blue colour to imitate lapis lazuli. It has been broken and restored but the cracks reveal the true nature of the stone and on the backside brush traces are noticeable. The cutting is still crisp and fresh. The piece was clearly made to deceive and should be regarded as a contemporary forgery.

• 20th century ◀



No. 155

White-grey steatite painted in blue amulet

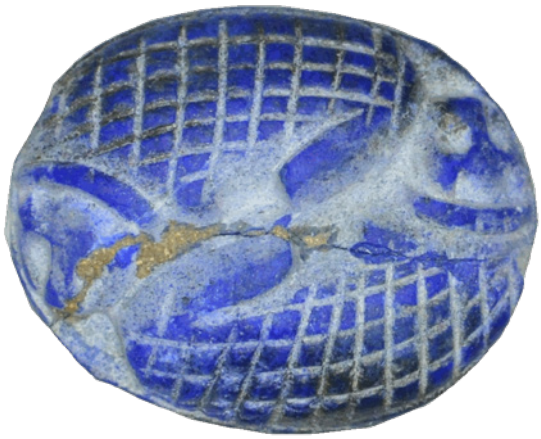
21 × 17 × 6.9 mm

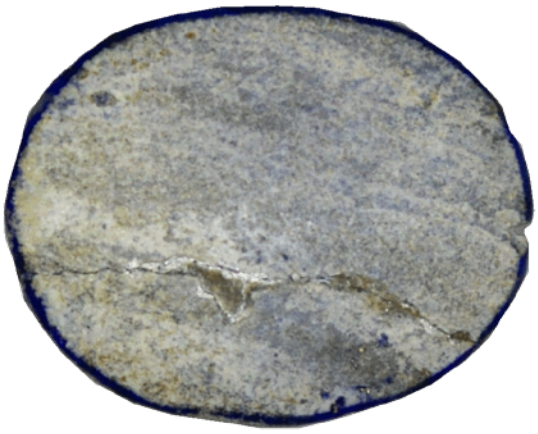
Two dogs sleeping curled up.

Pierced longitudinally.

The object is a modern forgery that was meant to be taken as lapis lazuli animal-shaped Near Eastern amulet. Both the motif as well as the style of carving are unusual for ancient times and the paint that has already been partially removed testifies to that as much as the very regular piercing does.

• 20th century





No. 156

Yellowish-white limestone cylinder seal

18.4 × 19.5 mm

Fake Uruk cylinder seal presenting a hound (or panther), fish and a palm tree.

This cylinder seal is one of the clever forgeries within the collection. The simple iconography is cut in correct linear style. Each element may stand for a different source of food in the ancient Near East: the hound (or panther) symbolises hunting, fish the fishing industry and the palm tree the gathering or picking of fruits and plants. According to Brandes, each type of iconography on early Sumerian seals represents a certain branch of administration (after Collon 2005, 15). In our case, the cylinder's owner would be a male of quite high rank administrative status, as he would presumably supervise animal husbandry or hunting, fishing or irrigation and agricultural activities, perhaps cultivation of palm trees, all practiced within his city-state. Genuine seals of this type are relatively small but thick and the forgery in question imitates that precisely. They originate, first of all, from Uruk and Susa. The seals themselves and their impressions are found in western Iran, Mesopotamia, Syria or even Anatolia, clearly testifying to long-distance trade contacts between Sumer and those lands. They are some of the oldest cylinder seals in existence (Collon 2005, 14–15). It is very likely that the object discussed here was made after an ancient prototype or impression. An almost identical piece is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. no. M.76.174.318, and for similar style, see: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. no. M.76.174.326; Amiet 1980, no. 363; Teissier 1984, no. 3; Møller 1992, no. 46. However, the composition is wrong. Triads similar to the one depicted on the object are common, but they usually reflect just one administrative occupation, not three at the same time. Furthermore, the fish at an angle is unacceptable and those elements help to identify the work of a contemporary forgery.

• 20th century ◀

No. 157

Black and brown serpentine cylinder seal

38.4 × 24.8 mm

Fake Post-Akkadian cylinder seal engraved with a presentation scene and inscription.

This detailed and minutely cut cylinder seal presents a male deity or a deified king wearing a horned headdress and kaunakes, with his torso left bare, seated on a panelled throne and holding a cup in his left hand. She is receiving a beardless and shaven-headed mortal wearing a stripped dress and carrying a child in his arms as an offering. The worshipper is being introduced to the chief god or king beneath a crescent moon by a suppliant deity that is male, bearded and wearing a horned headdress and striped robe. He is leading the worshipper holding him by his hand. The precession is closed by another lesser male-bearded-deity wearing a double horned headdress under a solar symbol. He is holding a sacrificial knife or a sickle sword in his hands (if the latter is the case, is he then the weather god?). Behind the enthroned god or king there is an inscription.

The piece is another forgery in the collection. It presents a very common scene in Post-Akkadian glyptics (Collon 2005, 36–38). Judging by the particularly good style of engraving and vast number of details suggested, the cylinder was purposed to imitate an object from the early phase of the epoch. However, only the style is well mirrored from genuine ancient seals of this type. The first problem is the material used. Almost 50% of cylinder seals produced in the

Akkadian period were made of serpentine, but in the Post-Akkadian times this ratio slumped (Collon 1989, 14). Next, the iconography is problematic. The seal orientation is wrong because the enthroned deity is usually depicted facing left, not right on the impression as it is here. This fact suggests that the forger used one or several impressions as sources of inspiration for production of this fake seal, from which he borrowed elements separately. There are several other compositional problems as well, for instance, the chief god is beardless and wearing a horned headdress. This element could have indicated a local style, or a deified king like on a seal from Paris (see: Delaporte 1923, no. A.164), but giving other oddities, it seems to be just another mistake. For similar subjects on genuine ancient seals, see: Legrain 1911, nos 25–26; Delaporte 1923, no. A.167; Borowski 1947, nos 37–38; Parrot 1954, nos 123–125; Porada (ed.) 1980, figs II.4 and II.23; Buchanan 1981, no. 472; Middleton 1998, no. 9. Finally, it is the inscription which betrays the forger's work the most. Feingold argues that many cylinder seal cutters were illiterate and transferred inscriptions from the tablets produced by scribes beforehand and they used to make mistakes because they sometimes did not know what they are actually copying (Feingold 2014, 84–87). However, this applies only to accidental mistakes not to cases such as the one here since the inscription is incised in two columns, one oriented upside down to another, which is almost unimaginable on genuine seals, and the characters do not make any sense when read together.

• 20th century ◀

No. 158

Dark grey hematite cylinder seal

22 × 12 mm

Animals study.

The seal presents a herd of four springing ibexes. Lumps of grass have been suggested in the bottom part by three curved lines here and there, while in the top part of the cylinder there is a sun disc indicated in the left corner and crescent in the central part. Several dots may suggest stars? This seal is engraved in a schematic and simple manner. It was meant to belong to the same tradition and period as no. 4, but the style and technique here betray the work of a forger. Compare similar cylinder seals that have been found in Cyprus (Ward 1910, 345 and 347, fig. 1169; CMS VII, no. 173, excavated in Golgoi, district of Larnaka) which exhibit Syro-Hittite inspirations.

• 20th century ◀

No. 159

Milky-white and grey calcite cylinder seal

25.6 × 10.1 mm

Inscription arranged in five vertical lines, two clearly separated from others of Assyrian cuneiform, written in positive to be read on the actual cylinder.

Kassite cylinder seals were often wholly covered with inscriptions in the form of a wish list or a prayer (Collon 2005, 61). However, this example is an obvious forgery since the inscription does not make any sense. Only one phrase is fully legible and can be transliterated as 'son of Ibni-ilum', while others are random words like the god's name 'Nanna' or series of unconnected signs compiled together. It seems the inscription was copied from several other Kassite seals like, for instance: Collon 2001, no. 401.

• 20th century

No. 160

White and orange chalcedony-carnelian cylinder seal

17.5 × 8 mm

The seal probably presents a female figure dressed in a long robe holding a tree or rather a palm branch in her right arm and outstretching her left hand towards a gazelle standing in front of her with its head turned back. Behind the animal there is a plant in a pot or a tree.

The linear style of cutting dominates here as only the eye of the gazelle is drilled. The composition is essentially good, but detailing is sparse. This cylinder is a fake as it stylistically combines two Neo-Assyrian traditions and its iconography is odd for the period it was meant to be accounted for. It seems that the forger attempted to produce a sort of local style, which resembles the manner of engraving applied for cutting of Syrian and Palestinian cylinder seals under Assyrian control (Collon 2005, 83–85). Even though these are usually decorated with simple designs, the figures depicted on them have nicely shaped clothes and the folds of their robes are rendered. The seal under discussion lacks those elements and the form of the tree is another odd element. Additionally, the meaning of the motif remains totally obscure and alien to Neo-Assyrian (even local Syrian or Palestinian) iconographic repertoire.

• 20th century ◀

No. 161

Reddish-orange carnelian cylinder seal

26.5 × 8 mm

Presentation scene.

This is another fake seal in the collection. Here, the Syrian Goddess, shown frontally wearing a cap with streamers and a long robe, presents a female worshipper or rather a lesser deity, who is kneeling on her left knee handing over an offering to the bearded, male god wearing a horned mitre and a short kilt. He is holding a rod surmounted with a solar symbol as his standard (von der Osten 1934, 139–140; Collon 2001, 16). Behind the deity there is a priestess carrying a censer or a vessel and a small female figure. The scene is in the middle of a single line at the top and bottom of the seal.

The object is a fake hybrid combining Old Babylonian iconographical elements with Neo-Assyrian cutting style imitation. Perhaps, the initial idea was to portray interchangeable influences of Mesopotamian, Syrian, Anatolian and even Egyptian religious ideas. One of the most striking iconographical elements here is the presence of the so-called Syrian Goddess, who is a Syrian invention, but represented in a totally Mesopotamian way (frontally). On genuine seals, this resulted from a manifestation of the intimate ties between the lands in the period ruled by a dynasty originating from western Syria but adopting Mesopotamian religious practices and other things to peacefully rule the Empire (Meijer 2017, 82). The concept occurred in the second millennium BC but is totally alien for Neo-Assyrian seals. The cutting is still fresh and crisp, the edges of the drilled parts exhibit very small degree of wear. The manner of engraving imitates Neo-Assyrian early drilled style much in use in the late 9th-early 8th century BC (Collon 2001, 65–67), however, it lacks precision and skilfulness which is especially clear when one analyses elements like heads, beards, coiffures and headdresses. Such a mixture is unacceptable and betrays the work of a forger.

• 20th century

No. 162

Orange carnelian cylinder seal

25.4 × 8 mm

Offering or investiture scene.

The cylinder seal is engraved with a scene of a naked male hero with a long beard and wearing a headdress surmounted with a tassel on the top and streamers to the sides, who is kneeling, but his torso is captured in three-quarter view and head turned to the front. He has his right hand outstretched to another bearded male figure, possibly a king due to the simple cap he is wearing, standing in profile and wearing a short tunic or skirt under a long garment open in front so that his outstretched left leg remains uncovered. The king is raising his right hand. Behind the kneeling figure there is a plant in a pot. A crescent with a sun disc and a star in the field above the kneeling figure. A single line limits its cylinder's field in the top and bottom sections. This is another product of the forger who cut no. 161 described above. Both cylinders exhibit considerable stylistic similarities and here the subject, although unparalleled, matches the style of engraving, which is based on cutting and drilling typical for the early Neo-Assyrian period (early drilled style: late 9th – early 8th century BC). Still, the headdresses and beards are cut wrongly (cf. genuine seal no. 10 here). Attention to detail is inferior if compared to no. 161 though.

• 20th century

Egyptian scarab and amulet imitations

No. 163

Wood

13.4 × 9.8 × 6.1 mm

Imitation of an Egyptian scarab incised with two parallel lines on the flat side.

As Hall specifies, wood was one of the first materials used for production of seals in ancient Egypt, however, no scarabs made of wood are known. This is mostly due to little value of such a material that has also no religious or healing/amuletic significance (Hall 1913, XXVIII–XXIX). Therefore, this example is an obvious forgery.

• 20th century ◀

No. 164

Carnelian bead

17.9 × 13.2 × 2.8 mm

Bird shaped (duck?) bead?

This item was probably meant to imitate one of the beads and pendants in the forms of various animals made of carnelian which were popular in Egypt, especially during the New Kingdom period (1550–1077 BC). They usually composed large necklaces made of dozens of identically cut objects, usually in a simplistic style. Nevertheless, the form of the animal on this object is too primitive with the detailing basically coming down to only wings suggested by several short strokes. It does not follow the typical form of an Egyptian sleeping duck amulet neither. All of this points to a contemporary fake.

• 20th century ◀

No. 165

Greyish-green faience amulet

26 × 26 × 15.8 mm

A frog-shaped amulet with a base decorated with hieroglyphs.

The form, faience composition and condition, hieroglyphs – all elements of this amulet point to a relatively contemporary forgery.

• 20th century ◀

Hellenistic gem imitation

No. 166

Red jasper ringstone (F8C)

29.6 × 21.5 × 3 mm

Portrait head, perhaps of the Parthian king Mithridates I (ca. 171–138 BC) wearing a diadem, a chlamys fastened at the shoulder.

This is another problematic gem in the collection executed in a rare material for the period, yet probably well-accessible in Anatolia in the Hellenistic times. The portrait should be attributed to king Mithridates I on the basis of the comparison to his coins minted around 150 BC. The simplistic treatment of the hair is notable, which is carved on the intaglio as relatively thick grooves, neatly combed under the broad diadem and in a more freely manner above it. The pointy beard and long moustache are also typical for this king. One observes here the same as on the coins wide-open eye surrounded with eyelids under a massive brow and big, slightly bowed in the central part nose, prominent cheekbones and small lips (cf. BMC Parthia, 12–15, nos 48–61, pl. 3.7–13; Sellwood 1982, type 12.1–2). The particular similarity of the portrait on the gem in question to the ones known from the mentioned coins is both worrying and suspicious. This combined with unusual stone type, some iconographical inaccuracies like the lack of ear, strangely humped nose and bust shape, and the style of engraving make the piece doubtful. Gems in somewhat similar style were cut in the Hellenistic times (see: Plantzos 1999, nos 95, 105, 123 and 153) but this is still not enough to prove authenticity of the gem. The intaglio is quite big, but in the Hellenistic period glyptic objects of extraordinary size were produced more for decorative rather than utilitarian (sealing) purposes. There are known four portrait intaglios with Mithridates I's image, all cut in carnelian (Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, nos 33–34; Overbeck, Overbeck 2005, fig. 13; Gołyźniak 2017, no. 27). Actually, it is reasonable to think that Mithridates I promoted himself not only through coins but also gems establishing a gem workshop at his court (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 27). It is debated if gem engravers were occasionally responsible for making coin dies too and thus such a close relationship between coins and the described intaglio potentially could take place due to this reason, but giving the arguments listed above, it seems more likely that the piece is a clever contemporary imitation based on ancient coin.

• 20th century ◀

Roman gems imitations

No. 167

Very dark brown sard ringstone (F9D)

19.5 × 12 × 3.5 mm

Female goddess standing next to the column on which she is resting her left hand, dressed in a *chiton* and *himation*, holding a serpent in her right hand. She is probably wearing a diadem and her hair is tied in a bun at the back of her head. No ground line.

The figure may be identified as Hygieia, a Roman personification of health. On ancient gems she is usually represented as feeding and watering the sacred serpent belonging to her father Asclepius (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, no. 375 with further literature). The forger must have been acquainted with Roman glyptics or at least Roman mythology, however, the way how he approached the subect is totally misunderstood and the style of engraving is very primitive.

• 20th century ◀

No. 168

Orange carnelian ringstone (F9D)

21.2 × 11.8 × 3 mm

Mars standing to the front with head turned to the left. He is wearing *cuirass* with *pteryges* and helmet on his head. In his left hand he is holding a spear, while the right one is resting on the rim of his shield decorated with a cross. No ground line.

The image copies the immensely popular ancient motif of Mars Ultor (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, nos 382–384 with further literature). This is another product of the forger who executed intaglios nos 167, 169 and 190-191 above in a very poor technique and little detailing. For some parallels, see: Casal Garcia 1990, no. 135; Middleton 2001, no. 49; Bollati, Messina 2009, no. 138.

• 20th century ◀

No. 169

Red carnelian ringstone (F9D)

17 × 11 × 3 mm

Mercury standing to the front but with his head turned to the left. He is holding a purse (*marsupium*) in his right outstretched hand and a spear or cloak in the left one. There is a caduceus over his right shoulder and a cock is standing next to him. No ground line.

A copy of another extremely popular motif in ancient glyptics (cf. Gołyźniak 2017, nos 393–394). The composition is misunderstood and the spear (if indeed intended) is abnormal for this god. The style of engraving suggests the same hand as in the case of nos 167–168 and 190–191.

• 20th century

◀

No. 170

Red jasper ringstone (F1C)

12.6 × 12.6 × 6 mm

Investiture scene. Roman general, soldier or victor kneeling on the right knee and on the shoulders possibly a legionary standard or a palm branch in front of Spes who is raising the hem of her robe. Ground line.

This gem is a contemporary fake. It belongs to our 'red jasper workshop' and was cut by the same hand as nos 171–172, 175–180, 185 and 194–195. The scene is unusual for Roman Imperial glyptics and could be inspired either by a genuine ancient gem or coin. Its iconography might be based on a much more popular motif where a figure (usually a male one) kneels in front of Tyche/Fortuna (cf. Walters 1926, no. 1750; Sena Chiesa 1966, no. 628; Berry 1968, no. 136; AGDS I.3, nos 2601–2602 [with further literature]; AGDS IV Hamburg, no. 1518; Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, nos 1531–1532; Bollati, Messina 2009, no. 55). Actually, two gems presenting Tyche/Fortuna are quite close to our intaglio (cf. LIMC VIII [1997], 8 and 88, s.v. 'Tyche' [L. Vouillard]). Yet, the female figure on our intaglio should be identified with Spes, the Roman personification of hope, due to her typical gesture. Spes was frequently employed on Roman intaglios and sometimes paired with other deities (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 445). Here, however, she is engaged in an unusual act for her of investiture that she receives from a Roman soldier, general or simply a victor. Sometimes she appears in such a role in coinage, for instance, on the billion antoninianus of Emperor Saloninus (258–260 AD) struck in Antioch in 256 AD (cf. RIC V.1, no. 36). Regarding coinage, it is noteworthy that similar composition is applied to emperors receiving personifications of defeated provinces (cf. LIMC I [1981], 2, s.v. 'Achaia' [S. Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann]; LIMC I [1981], 34, s.v. 'Africa' [M. Le Glay]; LIMC III [1986], 7–8, s.v. 'Bithynia' [S. Grunauer – von Hoerschelmann]; LIMC VII [1994], 7, s.v. 'Phrygia' [R. Vollkommer]). Not only the arrangement of the figures and iconography suggest the gem to be a fake but also the style of engraving. The figures were cut with semi-spherical and broad rounded bits and detailing is sparse and cut with a disc bit. There are some mistakes in the composition too like the double ground line. Furthermore, intaglios of circular shape and biconvex form were fashionable in the late 1st century BC and early 1st century AD, which is completely impossible for this piece.

• 20th century ◀

No. 171

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

13.8 × 12.7 × 3.1 mm

Dioscurus leading his horse. The naked figure is presented to the front with the leg bent (*contrapposto*) and his head turned back. Dioscurus is holding his cloak in his right hand, while in the left one the reins. The horse is presented in profile with the head thrown back and with one of its front legs raised. Ground line.

The theme of Dioscuri, either represented as single figures or together with their horses is common on Roman Imperial gems (Walters 1926, no. 2109; Sena Chiesa 1966, no. 502; Krug 1981, no. 178; Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 233; Mandrioli Bizzarri 1987, no. 679; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 405; Zwierlein-Diehl 1991, no. 1712; Vitellozzi 2010, no. 317, and for more information on the type, see especially: Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, 115–116). Here, the scene is well approached and both the Dioscurus and the horse appear to be attracted by something on the right side. Sometimes Cupid instead of Dioscurus is engaged in a similar activity (Zwierlein-Diehl 1998, no. 84) and one can suppose that some of the figures represent victorious athletes with their horses if the figure is holding a palm branch (Henig 1975, no. 204). Nevertheless, this gem cannot be accepted as a genuine ancient work. It belongs to our 'red jasper workshop' and was cut by the same hand as the nos 170, 172, 175–180, 185 and 194–195. This engraver possessed considerable knowledge regarding composition, which is quite correct here, although, a Roman horse would be depicted in a slightly different way with his head lowered. Moreover, he seems to have operated with limited range of drills, mainly semi-spherical and broad rounded ones. His detailing is scarce, for instance, while the horse's body is well modelled in round volumes, its mane is simply cut as a series of short, thick grooves. This manner resembles to some degree Maaskant-Kleibrink's Imperial Cap-With-Rim Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 302) which suggests that the artist had access to genuine gems that he probably used as source of inspiration. Although the form of this intaglio would be suitable for the 2nd century AD as the material used would, given the fact that other products of this forger have completely different, unacceptable forms for the period they were purposed to be taken for, it is evident that he randomly chose them without actual knowledge of Roman gem, ring and mount styles and tastes.

• 20th century ◀

No. 172

Red jasper ringstone (F6B)

13 × 13 × 2.7 mm

Jupiter Capitolinus seated on a stool (*diphros*) clad in a *himation* covering the lower part of his body and thrown over his left arm in which he is holding a sceptre. He is also holding a Victoriola in his right, outstretched hand. Ground line.

One of the most popular subjects in Roman Imperial glyptics that derives from sculpture (Gołyźniak 2017, no. 377). The image involving Victoriola suggests here Jupiter Victor – the one who led Roman legions to victory. This gem also belongs to our 'red jasper workshop' and was cut by the same hand as the nos 170–171, 175–180, 185 and 194–195. Basically, the composition is correct here, but the detailing is limited to only few short grooves for nose and mouth. Again, the manner of cutting only imitates Maaskant-Kleibrink's Imperial Cap-With-Rim Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 302). The circular shape of the gem and its biconvex form is unacceptable. In fact, it may suggest that the subject was copied from a coin rather than a gem (on this matter, see: Gołyźniak 2017, no. 379). In antiquity the motif was vigorously used in both media, gems and coins alike which resulted sometimes in considerable simplification of the motif in casual local and regional workshops, see some examples: Sena Chiesa 1966, no. 6; Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. IV, no. 24; AGDS I.3, no. 2456; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 819; Dembski 2005, nos 17–19; Henig 2007, no. 1. Nevertheless, this piece cannot be accounted to that group due to the mentioned reasons, the quality of the stone used, as well as overall workmanship suggest otherwise too.

• 20th century

◀

No. 173

Red carnelian ringstone (F8A)

17.1 × 12 × 2.9 mm

Female deity standing to the front with head turned to the left. Her hair is braided around her head and tied in a bun at its nape. She is wearing a short *chiton* and *himation* wrapped around her left arm. She is holding a sword in a sheath in her right hand, while the left one is grasping a sceptre decorated with *taeniae* and a large shield is standing next to her. Ground line.

The gem perhaps presents an unusual variant of Athena/Minerva. Another possibility is Hera/Juno since a cameo from Israel presents a comparable design and the sceptre may belong to her (Amorai-Stark 1993, no. 92). It should be also noted that Andromache tended to be depicted in a similar way in glyptics too (LIMC I [1981], 2, s.v. 'Andromache I' [O. Touchefeu-Meynier]) and Venus is also represented holding a sword in a sheath (Zwierlein-Diehl 1973, no. 427). The manner of engraving resembles the Imperial Chin-Mouth-Nose Style a great deal, whose particular feature is the use of three short horizontal strokes to mark facial details and the feet are unwieldily marked. The gem seems to be cut in a typical eastern way, which is indicated by the way the robe is approached – its folds are rendered as broad volumes falling down in three cascades, while the lower part is textured as numerous parallel lines. For similar studies on ancient stones, see: Sena Chiesa 1966, nos 993–995; AGDS IV Hamburg, no. 253. Nevertheless, the form of the shield seems misunderstood and the upper part of the robe looks abnormal. This combined with unusual application of the sceptre raise doubts about genuineness of this piece, which is a contemporary forgery.

• 20th century ◀

No. 174

Red carnelian ringstone (F10A?)

14 × 10.5 mm

Roman bronze ring (type 1b),
bezel: 17,1 × 14,1 mm, hoop: 18 × 17 mm

Female deity wearing a short *chiton* and *himation* thrown over her left shoulder. She is holding a spear and shield in her left hand, and there are two burning torches on her right side. Ground line.

This gem presents a particularly intriguing example of a possibly contemporary fake intaglio mounted in an original, ancient ring. This was certainly done to enhance the intaglio's credibility. It presents a female goddess whom one may identify with Athena/Minerva due to the attributes accompanying her (shield and spear). However, the torches are unusual elements for this goddess. It is noteworthy that on genuine Roman engraved gemstones Ceres sometimes appears with torches (Berges 2002, no. 198) and so does Fides (LIMC IV [1988], 2 and 4, s.v. 'Fides' [D.E.M. Nash]). Artemis of Ephesus also uses torches on some gems, even those found in Georgia (Maksimova 1950, fig. I.38; Javakhishvili 1972, nos 7 and 36). Nevertheless, their appearance here indicates a clear misconception and lack of sufficient knowledge about Roman glyptics of the forger. The engraving techniques are also misunderstood since the figure is wearing a strangely folded robe with the 'himation' wrongly indicated. Generally, the surface of the stone is highly polished, but in some parts, this is done carelessly, especially above the head, left arm and in spaces between the items and the figure where the stone remains dull. For some similar, but undoubtedly genuine, ancient works to compare, see: Furtwängler 1896, no. 3532; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 492; Dembski 2005, no. 78.

- 1st century AD for the ring and 20th century for the gem

◀

No. 175

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

19.9 × 12.8 × 3 mm

Female deity standing to the front with head turned to the right. She is wearing a short-sleeved *chiton* and *himation*, holding a *phiale* in her right hand and a spear in the left one. Her hair is rolled around the head and tied in a bun at the nape. Ground line.

This is another fake gem belonging to our 'red jasper workshop', which was cut by the same hand as nos 170–172, 176–180, 191 and 194–195. Most likely, it was meant to present a variant of Athena Parthenos image, but with phiale instead of Victory on the hand (for more information on the type, see: Gołyźniak 2017, no. 317). The motif was widely popular in Roman Imperial glyptics, however, here the goddess is misunderstood, for instance, she does not have a helmet on her head. Alternatively, it could be Juno for she appears in a similar way on Roman coins (LIMC V [1990], 89–104, s.v. 'Juno' [E. La Rocca]) or even Hera (Amorai-Stark, Hershkovitz 2016, no. 46). Compare also several undoubtedly genuine gems featuring a similar female deity: Tassie, Raspe 1791, no. 1135; Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. III, no. 14; AGDS I.3, nos 2466–2467; Sena Chiesa, Magni, Tassinari 2009, no. 647. Summing up, it is difficult to say whether the forger took inspiration from ancient intaglio or coin, but it is evident that the iconographical inconsistencies, incorrect style of engraving which attempted to imitate Maaskant-Kleibrink's Imperial Cap-With-Rim Style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 302) and the imperfect quality of the stone selected with many veins and flecks point to a forgery rather than a product of a local, provincial workshop located in the east-Mediterranean.

• 20th century

No. 176

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

17.1 × 12 × 3 mm

Female deity standing to the front with head turned to the right. She is wearing a short-sleeved *chiton* and *himation* and holding bunches of grapes in her both hands. Her hair is rolled around her head and tied in a bun at the back. Ground line.

The gem is carved by the same forger as nos 170–172, 175, 177–180, 191 and 194–195, whose works resemble the Imperial Cap-With-Rim Style. The subject is a contemporary invention since no such motif exists in Roman glyptics. Middleton suggests that some unusual female deities might represent Tychai of the cities located in Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine (Middleton 2001, no. 25), but bunches of grapes suggest a relationship with Bacchus and perhaps a Maenad? For a somewhat close motif, see: Mandrioli Bizzarri 1987, no. 204. Like in the previous case, the quality of stone, iconography and stylistic oddity all point to the forgery.

• 20th century

◀

No. 177

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

16.1 × 11.9 × 2.8 mm

Juno standing to the front with head turned to the right, her left leg bent at the knee (*contrapposto*). She is wearing a belted *peplos*, leaving her left leg bare. She is holding a vertical sceptre with three bars across in her right hand, while the left one is left behind her. Her hair is tied in a bun at the back of her head. Ground line.

This gem presents Juno, an ancient Roman goddess of marriage and childbirth and the protector and special counsellor of the state. The former aspect of her cult made gems presenting her amulets attractive for pregnant women (see some genuine ancient intaglio presenting her: Walters 1926, no. 1260; Fossing 1929, no. 596; Sena Chiesa 1966, no. 123; AGDS I.3, nos 2466–2467; Henig 2007, nos 222–224). The second aspect of Juno was equally important and because of that she enjoyed some popularity on Roman coins too, especially in the 2nd century AD, which is due to its promotion by Roman empresses, see: RIC II, no. 403 (denarius of Sabina); RIC III, nos 331, 338 and 344 (aurei and denarii of Faustina the Elder, 138–141 AD). The intaglio is engraved by the same hand as nos 170–172, 175–176, 178–180, 191 and 194–195 and it is a forgery. Even though in this case the iconography is not a complete invention, the way Juno's robe is elaborated is strange, especially in the waist part. It is difficult to say whether the source of inspiration was an antique gem or coin. The engraving seems a compromise between the Imperial Cap-With-Rim Style and Imperial Chin-Mouth-Nose. The attempt of the forger to give the piece a much-worn look is noteworthy since the surface of the intaglio is artificially rubbed, while the edges present perfect polishing.

• 20th century

No. 178

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

28 × 17.6 × 3.1 mm

Female deity, standing to the front with head turned to the right. She is wearing a short-sleeved *chiton* and *himation*, and she is holding a rudder in her right hand and thyrsus decorated with *taeniae* in the left one. Her hair is rolled around the head and tied in a bun at its back. Ground line.

This is the next intaglio cut in our 'red jasper workshop' (cf. nos 170–172, 175–177, 179–180, 191 and 194–195). It presents an unusual hybrid or maybe was intended to depict a syncretic female deity. The rudder belongs to Fortuna, while the thyrsus to a Maenad, a female follower of Bacchus who was sometimes presented in a similar image on truly ancient gems, see: Sena Chiesa 1966, nos 444–445. Nevertheless, in this case, the sort of the 'hybrid' is an effect of forger's imaginary rather than any local invention or transformation of a popular motif. The quality of the red jasper used is like in case of other products of the mentioned workshop. The engraving involves more use of bouterolle bits for hair, head, breasts and small details, which is totally unacceptable for the period it was probably meant to be taken for (2nd century AD). Additionally, the way the robe is approached with a particularly strange upper part is another indication that this piece is a contemporary fake.

• 20th century ◀

No. 179

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

15.5 × 11.8 × 3 mm

Fortuna standing to the front with one leg bent (*contrapposto*) carrying a cornucopia in her left arm and sprinkling incense onto a burning round altar. Ground line.

The subject of Fortuna was one of the most preferable ones during the Roman Imperial period. Because Fortuna on a ring provided with good fortune and prosperity, she was a suitable subject for everyone (for more information, see: Gołyźniak 2017, no. 358). Here, however, she is represented during an unusual activity – sprinkling incense on the burning altar. The gem belongs to the 'red jasper workshop' and clumsily combines Imperial Chin-Mouth-Nose and Imperial Cap-With-Rim Styles (cf. nos 170–172, 175–178, 180, 191 and 194–195). A quick look at some genuine ancient gems presenting similar iconography (Henig 1975, no. 94; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1986, nos 105–106; Konuk, Arslan 2000, nos 77–79 and 83; Berges 2002, no. 206; Henig 2007, nos 104–105 and 337) makes it possible to detect even more misconceptions here. For instance, the robe is strangely formed in the upper part in a sort of a rectangular frame. The patterning of the cornucopia is also unusual. Taking all these arguments into account, the piece is another contemporary fake for which inspirational could have been a genuine ancient intaglio.

• 20th century

◀

No. 180

Red jasper ringstone (F8A)

17 × 12 × 3.1 mm

A pantheistic female deity often called Fortuna Panthea standing in three-quarter view with her head turned to the left. She is winged and wearing a diadem on her head. Her hair is rolled around her head and tied in a bun at the back. She is holding a rudder in her right hand. Ground line.

The subject was extremely popular in Roman Imperial glyptics. The combination of various deities encapsulated in one figure was probably purposed to increase amuletic value of the piece, which was usually meant to bring good luck and other qualities to the intaglio's owner (for more information, see: Gołyźniak 2017, no. 369). Gems with such iconography were popular within the whole Roman Empire, including Georgia, see some examples: Kibaltchitch 1910, no. 125; Fossing 1929, no. 1722; Lordkipanidze 1954–1967, vol. III, no. 13; vol. IV, no. 25; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 837; Dimitrova-Milčeva 1981, nos 90, 92 and 94; Henig, Whiting 1987, nos 111–113; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 210; Finogenova 1993, no. 101; Konuk, Arslan 2000, nos 77–79 and 83; Henig, MacGregor 2004, no. 4.60; Henig 2007, no. 314. However, the example presented here also accounts to our 'red jasper workshop' (cf. nos 170–172, 175–179, 191 and 194–195). The manner of engraving is exactly the same as on the previous example and it cannot be accepted as a genuine Roman work.

• 20th century

No. 181

Red-orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

17.4 × 12.8 × 4 mm

Diademed bust of Apollo to the left.

This image of Apollo is a common type on gems in the Augustan period, but was continued down to the 1st century AD. It was based on the statue of the god installed in the Temple of Apollo on Palatine Hill, which probably derived from the 4th century BC original Greek work (Zwierlein-Diehl 2013, 262). Some famous gem engravers cut gems with this image, for instance Hyllos, which only contributed to the popularity of the motif (Vollenweider 1966, 71). This piece belongs to a series of other carnelians (cf. nos 182, 184 and 186) most likely produced by the same artist or at least workshop. What is notable is his skill regarding the use of a very thin wheel bit for texture of the hair and garment that is suggested in the bottom part of the bust. Sometimes they cross each other in a very individual manner, like on the bun here. However, this texturing combined with the highly polished surface is suspicious. Interestingly the engraver was able to produce calm, idealised and delicate facial features imitating those typical for the late Hellenistic or Augustan times and Imperial Classicising-Stripy Style. He specialised in heads and busts with big heads positioned on a thick neck. For similar gems, see: Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 41; Middleton 1991, no. 53. According to the discussion on pp. 34–36, this as well as other gems from this workshop are not ancient local Georgian products perhaps originating from the Iberia (Mtskheta?) region but most likely fakes. In this particular case, the forger likely copied a Roman image of Apollo from another gem and reinterpreted it in his own way, but stylistically he was unsuccessful which betrays his works as contemporary fakes.

• 20th century ◀

No. 182

Red-orange carnelian ringstone (F6D)

16 × 12.1 × 4.3 mm

Diademed bust of Apollo to the left.

The same type as discussed above executed by the same artist or workshop. Again, strange treatment of the robe's folds indicates a forgery.

• 20th century ◀

No. 183

Orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14 × 11 × 2.8 mm

Bust of Athena/Minerva to the left wearing a crested Corinthian helmet on the head and *aegis* on her breasts. A sword or dagger in front of her.

Similar intaglios were produced in the 'lapis lazuli workshop' (Tamma 1991, nos 138–139), and further analogies have been published by Middleton (2001, nos 58–59), although they usually present male heads. The latter was acquired in Syria and it is probably rightly assumed that they are forgeries of ancient intaglios produced in this area in the 19th or 20th century. On our stone, the cutting has nothing in common with ancient techniques and it is very likely it is another fake relatively recently produced in the Near Eastern workshops.

• 20th century ◀

No. 184

Red-orange carnelian ringstone (F8C)

24 × 19.5 × 3.6 mm

Female bust (Maenad?) with widely arranged hair on the head turned to the left. Her bust is draped and captured to the front.

This intaglio probably presents the bust of a Maenad due to her coiffure, although she wears no ivy wreath. The piece might be engraved by the same hand as nos 181, 182 and 186 as they share the same materials used, also in terms of its quality, as well as engraving techniques: larger parts of the composition (neck and head) are cut with a thick, round bit while the detailing is rich and textured with a thin disc bit. The stone is nicely polished. According to the discussion on no. 181, this as well as other gems from this workshop are not ancient local Georgian products perhaps originating from the Iberia (Mtskheta?) region but fakes. In this particular case, the gem engraver could copy a Roman image of a Maenad from another gem and reinterpreted it in his own way, but the coiffure and the way how the robe is arranged at the bottom of the bust betrays his forgery. The size of the gem is also exaggerated for a regular Roman intaglio.

• 20th century ◀

No. 185

Red jasper ringstone (F1C)

14.5 × 10 × 5 mm

Bust of Mercury seen from behind, with head in profile to the right. He is wearing a *kausia* on his head and a *chlamys* over his left arm.

This type of Mercury bust is already known in Roman Republican glyptics (cf. AGDS I.2, nos 1219–1223; Berry 1968, no. 220), but the gem in question is just an imitation of such intaglios. It is another product of our 'red jasper workshop' (cf. nos 170–172, 175–180 and 194–195) and it seems the forger erroneously employed the kausia hat, which was used as a protection against the sun by the poorer classes in Rome, instead of the traditional petazus. The other misunderstandings are poorly elaborated hair and strangely formed folds of a chlamys running through both the right and left arm. Interestingly, the forger applied more elaborate techniques of engraving in the case of this gem when compared to his other products, which was dictated by the subject itself. Still, from a typological point of view, the style of engraving, the subject and the type of the gemstone used do not match the biconvex form of the intaglio and this is another indicator of a forgery.

• 20th century

No. 186

Pale orange carnelian ringstone (F4A)

15 × 11.5 × 2.8 mm

Bust of a woman to the left, her hair tied in a bun at the back of her head and a garment suggested around her arms.

The manner of engraving appears to be the same as on nos 181–182 and 184 and its simplistic character betrays a forgery. The artist who cut all these stones shaped the main body parts (head and neck) in big volumes with a rounded bit, while the detailing like the folds of the robe and hair locks are cut with a thin disc bit. In the case of this intaglio, it was done in a chaotic way, without precision. Identification of the woman is also problematic; she does not resemble a deity as is the case in other works of this engraver and she also cannot be identified with a specific historical figure. Perhaps this was meant to be taken as a private portrait?

• 20th century ◀

No. 187

Orange carnelian ringstone (F9D)

13.6 × 11 × 3 mm

Bust of Omphale to the left with a lionskin on the head.

The gem copies a highly popular ancient motif (AGDS I.3, no. 2332 – with further literature). Very cursory work, the cutting is shallow and schematic, most likely another product of the forger who cut nos 167–169 and 188–191.

• 20th century ◀

No. 188

Red-orange carnelian ringstone (F8A)

14 × 10.2 × 3.8 mm

Erotic scene: a kneeling woman is holding a tree trunk or a branch, while a man approaches her from behind. A tree branch in the field. Ground line.

This kind of iconography existed in ancient glyptics, especially on ancient love amulets whose intention was to enhance potency and desire of the partner (Fossing 1929, nos 991–993; Berry 1968, no. 173; Guiraud 1988–2008, vol. I, no. 631; Spier 1992, no. 118; Amorai-Stark, Hershkovitz 2016, no. 108 [a satyr and Maenad copulating]). However, erotic scenes were very popular on intaglios and cameos in the Renaissance time and they remain popular among contemporary forgeries. The figures on this intaglio are cut in a simple manner and the whole composition is stiff yet includes floral fillers. Judging by the style and techniques, this as well as the next stone were cut by the same hand as nos 167–169, 187 and 189–191.

• 20th century ◀

No. 189

Red-orange carnelian ringstone (F9D)

16 × 9.1 × 4.3 mm

Erotic scene: a standing woman holding a tree trunk or a branch and bends, while a man approaches her from behind. A tree or a bush in the field. Ground line.

This gem presents the same subject as the preceding one and was cut by the same hand.

• 20th century ◀

No. 190

Dark red carnelian ringstone (F5B)

22.5 × 16.9 × 4.1 mm

Erotic scene: a woman standing in three-quarter view with head turned back to her partner who approaches her from behind. She is putting one of her hands on a column on her side. No ground line.

This and the next intaglio exhibit the same subject as two preceding objects and the further similarities are clearly noticeable in style and composition. The figures are approached with far-reaching schematism and there is no detailing and fillers, even a ground line is lacking. Overall, this and the next gem should be classified among the mass-produced fake intaglios cut together with nos 167–169, 187–189 and 191 by the same forger.

• 20th century ◀

No. 191

Dark red carnelian ringstone (F6A)

22 × 13 × 2.8 mm

Erotic scene: a woman holding a tree or a branch approached by a man from behind.

The same style and date as the preceding gem.

• 20th century ◀

No. 192

Red carnelian ringstone (F9C)

32 × 22.1 × 4.2 mm

Male figure sitting on a sort of altar which another figure is approaching for audition with his son. The adult man is holding a laurel branch across his back and so is the child. All three are wearing military dresses, boots and laurel wreaths on their heads. No ground line.

The scene is unparalleled and would make sense if understood as the Roman Imperial family celebrating a victory. However, the trios consisting of an Emperor and usually his two sons or similar entourages are generally depicted on engraved gems as three busts set together, see: Zwierlein-Diehl 1986, no. 787; Pannuti 1994, no. 214; Kagan, Neverov 2000, no. 26/7. Moreover, the military dresses and laurel wreaths are of unusual types and the altar or throne is of a strange form for Roman glyptics. The style of engraving cannot be securely attributed to any existing typology. Finally, the extraordinarily large size and the fact that the surface of the stone seems artificially rubbed for the much-worn effect suggest the intaglio to be a contemporary fake.

• 20th century ◀

No. 193

Dark blue over black, two-layered nicolo ringstone (F8A)

15 × 12.6 × 3.2 mm

Diademed female bust to the right with garment suggested in the bottom part.

The object is an unfinished work since only three rows of curls have been cut while the rest of the head remains plain. The identity of the person depicted cannot be established. The intaglio is a contemporary fake. Its form is atypical for the stone type if it would have been used in the Roman Imperial period. The cutting is fresh and inappropriate for ancient times.

• 20th century ◀

No. 194

Red jasper ringstone (F6D)

13.8 × 13.8 × 2.7 mm

Eagle with spread wings standing on a palm branch, shown in profile. No ground line.

This is another product of our 'red jasper workshop' (cf. nos 170–172, 175–180, 191 and 195) and a contemporary fake. The style combines rounded, disc and bouterolle drills used to carve the bird's elements. The way the animal is approached is unusual although not impossible (see similar depictions: de Ridder 1911, no. 3307; AGDS I.3, no. 3407; Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, no. 1160; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, no. 231; Krug 1995, no. 5; Henig 2007, nos 823–824). The inspiration for this peculiar intaglio could have been a genuine ancient gem. There are known examples combining Roman subject-matter with Parthian style where the eagle's head, body and pose are more typical for the eastern glyptics (cf. Henig, Whiting 1987, no. 341; Wagner, Boardman 2003, no. 511; Scarisbrick, Wagner, Boardman 2016b, no. 175). The intaglio in question was surely meant to be taken as a Romano-Parthian hybrid, but the strange iconography, unusual style, form and shape of the piece and stone type used do not match each other as in case of other products of the 'red jasper workshop'. The eagle standing on a palm branch symbolised victory over evil or the one wished by a Roman legionary, hence, the subject was widely popular in Roman Imperial glyptics. Most likely the forger hoped his work to be more credible if bearing a popular subject as also in the case of several other his gems.

• 20th century

◀

No. 195

Red jasper ringstone (F1C)

13.1 × 10 × 4.6 mm

Head of a chubby boy, perhaps a young satyr with his hair raised up.

This type of childish head usually occurs in a combination with an elder, bearded male mask/head if turned upside down and belongs to a wide class of gems bearing themes related to baskania, formerly often called grylloi or 'combination/hybrid gems' (Lapatin 2011; Gołyźniak 2013; Weiß 2017). This group of objects includes gems bearing various fantastic combinations of conjoined heads (human, animal and of the mythological figures) sometimes standing on the legs of birds (usually of a rooster – the so-called 'hippalektryon type'). They reached the peak of popularity in the 1st–2nd century AD and red jasper was the most frequently used material. Presumably, the 'combination/hybrid gems' were rarely employed for sealing purposes. Due to their apotropaic functions, they were much more frequently worn as amulets – they were intended to protect the owners against evil, bad luck, and dark forces. They also provided the sitters with divine help and protection. Those gems often bear subjects somehow related to Bacchus and this would be the case here if the iconography was not misunderstood, and thus incomplete as mentioned above. The head has no pointy ears, so it cannot be a young satyr often paired with head of Bacchus on the mentioned baskania gems (Gołyźniak 2013). This fact combined with inaccurate form of the intaglio and style suggest it to be another product of our 'red jasper workshop' (cf. nos 170–172, 175–180, 191 and 194) and essentially a contemporary fake.

• 20th century

◀

Sassanian seal imitation

No. 196

Pale green chrysoprase ringstone (F8A)

15.8 × 11.8 × 2.8 mm

Diademed bust of a young, clean-shaven man to the right. He is wearing a robe forming a v-shaped décolletage.

The intaglio belongs to the small group of chrysoprase fake gems bearing common Roman and Sassanian subjects quite well approached, but distinctive for the uncommon material used, peculiar forms and style of engraving. This piece presents a portrait belonging to unpopular class of Sassanian young noblemen who sometimes wear jewellery to highlight their high social status (compare some genuine seals: Kibaltchitch 1910, no. 188; Delaporte 1923, no. A.1444; Bivar 1969, no. AB.11; Brunner 1978, no. 34; Henig, Scarisbrick, Whiting 1994, nos 401–403; Zwierlein-Diehl 1998, no. 284; Gołyźniak 2017, no. App.II.3). However, the stylistic features of this intaglio, especially the way hair is approached, and the bust shape are disturbingly far from what is known from traditional Sassanian gems.

• 20th century

◀

Indices

The numbers refer to catalogue numbers of relevant objects unless stated otherwise.

A. Names of gem engravers

B. Subject-matters

Deities and personifications

Heroes and mythological figures

Historical and human figures

C. Materials

Abbreviations

ActaArchLov	*Acta Archaeologica Lovaniensia*
AGDS I.1	Brandt E. 1968 *Antiken Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen*, vol. I: *Staatliche Münzsammlung München*, part 1: *Griechische Gemmen von minoischer Zeit bis zum späten Hellenismus*, Munich.
AGDS I.2	Brandt E., Schmidt E. 1970 *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen*, vol. I: *Staatliche Münzsammlung München*, part 2: *Italische Gemmen etruskisch bis römisch-republikanisch. Italische Glaspasten vorkaiserzeitlich*, Munich.
AGDS I.3	Brandt E., Gercke W., Krug A., Schmidt E. 1972 *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen*, vol. I: *Staatliche Münzsammlung München*, part 3: *Gemmen und Glaspasten der römischen Kaiserzeit sowie Nachträge*, Munich.
AGDS II	Zwierlein-Diehl E. 1969 *Antiken Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen*, vol. II: *Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Antikenabteilung Berlin*, Munich.
AGDS III Braunschweig/ Göttingen/Kassel	Schref P., Gercke P., Zazoff P. 1970 *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen*, vol. III: *Braunschweig, Göttingen, Kassel*, Wiesbaden.
AGDS IV Hannover/ Hamburg	Schlüter M., Platz-Horster G., Zazoff P. 1975 *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlugen*, vol. IV: *Kestner-Museum Hannover, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*, Wiesbaden.
AJN	*American Journal of Numismatics*
AnnPisa	*Annali della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa*
AquilNostr	*Aquileia nostra*
ArtB	*The Art Bulletin*
ASJH	*American Society of Jewelry Historians*
BAR BS	British Archaeological Reports British Series
BAR IS	British Archeological Reports International Series
BerRGK	Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission
BJb	*Bonner Jahrbücher*
BMC Parthia	Worth W. 1903 *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, vol. XXIII: *Parthia*, London.

CHR	*The Catholic Historical Review*
CMS I	Sakellariou A. 1964 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. I: *Die minoischen und mykenischen Siegel des Nationalmuseums in Athen*, Berlin.
CMS II.1	Platon N. 1969 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. II: *Iraklion, Archäologisches Museum*, part 1: *Die Siegel der Vorpalastzeit*, Berlin.
CMS II.2	Platon N., Ingo P., Hellenkemper Salies G. with a contribution from Dessenne A. 1977 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. II: *Iraklion, Archäologisches Museum*, part 2: *Die Siegel der Altpalastzeit*, Berlin.
CMS II.5	Pini I. 1970 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. II: *Iraklion, Archäologisches Museum*, part 5: *Die Siegelabdrücke von Phästos*, Berlin.
CMS III	Müller W., Ingo P., Sakellariou A. 2007 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. III: *Iraklion, Archäologisches Museum. Sammlung Giamalakis*, Mainz am Rhein.
CMS IV	Sakellarakis J.A., Kenna V.E.G. 1969 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. IV: *Iraklion. Sammlung Metaxas*, Berlin.
CMS VI	Hughes-Brock H., Boardman J. 2009 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. VI: *Oxford. The Ashmolean Museum*, Mainz am Rhein.
CMS VII	Kenna V. 1967 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. VII: *Die englischen Museen II*, Berlin.
CMS IX	Effenterre van H., Effenterre van M. 1972 *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, vol. IX: *Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque Nationale Paris*, Berlin.
CollLatomus	Collection Latomus
JNG	*Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
KölnJb	*Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*
LIMC I–VIII	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich – Munich – Düsseldorf 1981–1997.
MAR	Monumenta Artis Romanae
MusHelv	*Museum Helveticum*
NumAntCl	*Numismatica e antichità classiche: Quaderni ticinesi*
PACT	*Journal of the European Study Group on Physical, Chemical and Mathematical Techniques Applied to Archaeology*
PALMA	Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities
RdA	*Rivista di archeologia*
RIC II	Mattingly H., Syndeham E.A. 1926 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. II: *Vespasian to Hadrian*, London.

RIC III	Mattingly H., Syndeham E.A. 1930 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. III: *Antoninus Pius to Commodus*, London.
RIC IV.1	Mattingly H., Sutherland C.H.V., Syndeham E.A. 1936 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. IV.1: *Pertinax to Geta*, London.
RIC IV.2	Mattingly H., Sutherland C.H.V., Syndeham E.A. 1938 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. IV.2: *Macrinus to Pupienus*, London.
RIC V.1	Mattingly H., Syndeham E.A., Webb P.H. 1968 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. V.1: *Valerian to Florian*, London.
RIC VII	Carson R.A.G., Sutherland C.H.V. 1966 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. VII: *Constantine and Licinius A.D. 313–337*, London.
RIC VIII	Carson R.A.G., Kent J.P.C., Sutherland C.H.V. 1981 *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. VIII: *The Family of Constantine I A.D. 337–364*, London.
RRC	Crawford M.H. 1974 *Roman Republican Coinage*, vols I–II, Cambridge.
SNG France 5	Levante E. (ed.) 2001 *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. France, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles*, vol. V: *Mysia*, Paris – Zürich.
ZfK	*Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*

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