

THE CENTURY OF THE BRAVE & STOLJEĆE HRABRIH

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ROMAN CONQUEST AND
INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE
IN ILLYRICUM DURING
THE TIME OF AUGUSTUS
AND HIS HEIRS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
HELD IN ZAGREB
22-26.9.2014.



RIMSKO OSVAJANJE I
OTPOR STAROSJEDILACA
U ILIRIKU ZA VRIJEME
AUGUSTA I NJGOVIH
NASLJEDNIKA

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Kip cara Augusta iz Nina (*Aenona*), Arheološki muzej u Zadru, fotografirao Ivo Pervan
Statue of the emperor Augustus from Nin (*Aenona*), Archaeological museum in Zadar, photo by Ivo Pervan

THE CENTURY OF THE BRAVE

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STOLJEĆE HRABRIH

Edited by

Marina Milićević Bradač

Dino Demicheli

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ENGRAVED GEMS AS PART OF THE AUGUSTAN PROPAGANDA. SOME EXAMPLES FROM CROATIA

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Engraved gems in the time of Augustus were used as means of propaganda, with diverse and well-known motives that can be linked to his political program. Glyptic collections which are kept in Croatian museums are not fully published. However, among the published material, some engraved gems belonging to this group can be singled out, such as gems depicting capricorn, a zodiac sign of Augustus, or a famous glass cameo with Livia's bust.

Keywords: *intaglios, engraved gems, glass intaglios, cameos, glass cameos, political propaganda, Augustus, Late Roman Republican Period, Early Roman Imperial Period, Croatia*

The last decades of the Roman Republic were a turbulent period, marked by civil wars and struggles for political power, which created severe crisis and political instability in Rome, which would consequently lead to the downfall of the Roman Republic.¹ In order to gain power and take over the political arena, various means were chosen. Amongst them, the use of propaganda proved to be a particularly helpful tool in achieving political dominance. The main protagonists of the given events, which took place in the 1st century BC, from Sulla through Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, Lepidus and Mark Antony to Octavian Augustus, were all well aware of the power of images used for political supremacy (Guiraud 1996: 128). The idea behind was that carefully chosen images and motives would work as visual triggers, instantly connecting images with political and military leaders involved in those political frictions (Sena Chiesa 2002: 396).² Obviously, the propa-

ganda message of images and motives used was largely understood and easily recognized by a wide range of people (Sena Chiesa 2002: 397; Cicu 2009: 341; Sena Chiesa 2012: 256). These images had by then entered both the public and official sphere of life as well as the private one (Sena Chiesa 2002: 397).

It was the coins that were especially suitable for propaganda images, because they could circulate easily (Guiraud 1996: 130; Sena Chiesa 2002: 397-398).³ The engraved gems were another medium chosen for spreading the political messages.

Engraved gems were used primarily as seals, and a personalized seal was a principal sign of one's identity and a kind of a personal signature, especially in times when most people couldn't read or write (Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 9-16). Except in the case of inheritance, people chose motives on the engraved gems that personally mattered to them, per-

¹ For the basic introduction into the political, military and social history of the Late Roman Republic, see Crawford 1993 and Tatum 2010.

² For images as means of propaganda by Augustus, see Zanker 1988. For references on the subject, see Sena Chiesa 2002: 397, n. 5.

³ For general overview of the Republican coinage, see Pobjoy 2010. For the Republican coin propaganda, see Morawiecki 1983. For references on the subject, see Kopij 2015: 32, n. 2, 6.

ceiving such motives as an expression of their own personality.⁴

But during the Late Republic, engraved gems acquired yet another role - they became a convenient tool for spreading the propaganda messages on a large scale. Along with gemstones, glass gems were also widely used, as they were easily produced in great quantities, thus perfectly fulfilling the propaganda needs.⁵ Glass gems were especially used by Caesar, and later his adopted son and legal successor Octavian, who both realized the far-reaching propaganda opportunities which glass gems could provide (Sena Chiesa 2002: 398, 407). Propaganda gems, similarly as the coins, were diffused among political supporters, Roman soldiers, magistrates, public functionaries and merchants in order to spread desired messages (Guiraud 1996: 128; Kopyj 2015: 33).

Intended for various groups and social classes of people, propaganda gems were targeting different audience. They ranked from great state cameos (like *Gemma Augustea*), through gemstones bearing portraits of political leaders and their family members, to gems with various groups of symbols.

Among the engraved gems that can be linked with the political propaganda by Caesar and later Octavian Augustus, we will limit ourselves only to the examples kept in Croatian museum collections, which have already been published. It is important to note that this is only a selection because none of the glyptic collections from the Croatian archaeological museums in Zagreb, Split, Zadar, Osijek and Pula have been entirely published.⁶

GROUPS OF SYMBOLS

Engraved gems ornate with combination of symbols alluding to the political leadership came into fashion during

the last decades of the Roman Republic.⁷ Amongst the gems produced from 40's BC till after the battle of Actium in 31 BC, a great number of gems with various symbols points to Caesar's political achievements (Sena Chiesa 2012: 259). Many of the symbols found on the engraved gems, such as symbols of *pontifex maximus*, *dextrarum iunctio*, caduceus, globe and sceptre were derived from the images on coins (Vollenweider 1970; Vollenweider 1979; Sena Chiesa 2002: 399-406). On the other hand, many symbolical motives engraved on gems, such as zodiacal signs or different animals, were never depicted on the coins (Sena Chiesa 2002: 407).



Fig. 1. Benko Horvat Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, carnelian, inv. no. S49, from Rome (Photo Archive, Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb)

⁴ Pliny (*NH* 37, 10) illustrated that well: reportedly Sulla wore a ring carved with the scene of Jugurtha's surrender. Augustus himself was very much concerned with the images that his personal seals bore. Pliny (*NH* 37, 8-9) and Suetonius (*Aug.*50) as well inform us of him having not one, but four seal rings during his lifetime. The first two, almost identical, he inherited from his mother, and they bore the motive of Sphinx. Then Augustus wore signet ring with the image of Alexander the Great, until he finally chose for a signet ring a gemstone with his own portrait, carved by famous Greek engraver Dioscurides.

⁵ For the production of glass gems, see Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 311-312, 326-329.

⁶ For published gems from museum collections in Croatia, see Nardelli 2011: 16, n. 4. As for the private collections of gems in Croatia, only the engraved gems from the Benko Horvat collection, now kept in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, have been published (Koščević 2000: 13-16, 62-92).

⁷ For detailed survey on the motives and symbols used in political propaganda of the Late Republic period, see Vollenweider 1979.

Octavian continued to use many of Caesar's symbols, connected with the good government, such as cornucopiae, the globe, the sceptre and the rudder (Vollenweider 1970; Sena Chiesa 2012: 412-414).

On the carnelian⁸ from Rome, now in the Benko Horvat collection in Zagreb Museum of Contemporary art, a bust of a young man above the two cornucopiae is depicted (Fig. 1). In the young man we can recognize a portrait of Octavian, associated with two horns of plenty, as popular evocations of prosperity under his governance.

On one carnelian⁹ from Salona a head of Mercury in profile facing left with winged petasos is depicted (Fig. 2), together with the caduceus, cornucopia, globe, ear of corn and clasped hands. Our intaglio belongs to a larger group of intaglios on which a young Octavian is assimilated with Mercury, wearing a petasos and caduceus which symbolized not only a good fortune but also peace (Sena Chiesa 2002: 408-409; Sena Chiesa 2012: 262). The globe was the symbol of universe reflecting Octavian's politics and overall power, while the clasped hands as sign of concord also refer to the Second Triumvirate (Vollenweider 1970: 55; Vollenweider 1979: no. 179; Guiraud 1996: 128, Sena Chiesa 2002: 408, 412-414). These symbols were used on Caesar's coinage from which they were transferred on the engraved gems for means of propaganda, and were continued to be used by Octavian as Caesar's adopted heir (Vollenweider 1970: 51; Sena Chiesa 2002: 407).

On the nicolo¹⁰ from Sisak (*Siscia*) (Fig. 3) and the intaglio¹¹ of glass imitating the nicolo from Gardun (legionary fortress of *Tilurium*) (Fig. 4) we find another motive that alludes to the prosperity under Augustus' rule. The nicolo shows a modius with a poppy head and two corn-ears, and one cornucopia on each side of the modius, while on the glass intaglio from Tilurium a basket instead of modius is shown. It is yet another variant of symbols of abundance grouped around the modius, as a symbol of *annona*, and allusion to the corn supply and peaceful life in the countryside (Vollenweider 1979: 406, no. 458; Guiraud 1996: 130-131).



Fig. 2. Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. I 136, from Salona (photo: T. Seser)



Fig. 3. Sisak City Museum, nicolo, inv. no. 20257, from Sisak (*Siscia*) (photo: I. Kaić)

⁸ Benko Horvat Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, carnelian, inv. no. 549, 10,5 x 8,5 x 3 mm, from Rome (Koščević 2000: 78, no. 79)

⁹ Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. I 136, 11,8 x 8 x 3,5 mm, from Salona (Nardelli 2002: 208, no. 10)

¹⁰ Sisak City Museum, nicolo, inv. no. 20257, 12 x 10 x 2,2 mm, from Sisak (*Siscia*), 1st century AD (Kaić 2016: 19-20, 29, no. 8)

¹¹ Museum of the Cetinska Krajina Region, glass intaglio as imitation of nicolo, inv. no. MCK-AZ 283, 13 x 10 x 3 mm, from Gardun (*Tilurium*), 1st-2nd century AD (Kaić 2010: 123, no. 4)



Fig. 4. Museum of the Cetinska Krajina Region, intaglio of glass imitating nicolo, inv. no. MCK-AZ 283, from Gardun (Tilurium) (photo: I. Kaić)



Fig. 5. Museum of Croatian National Monuments, chalcedony, inv. no. 6852, from Burnum (photo: Z. Alajbeg)



Fig. 6. Archaeological Museum Dubrovnik, chalcedony, inv. no. DUM AM 369, from Cavtat (Epidaurum) (photo: B. Gjukić, Dubrovnik Museums)

Another symbol closely related to Augustus is that of a capricorn, a creature with a goat protome and tail of a fish. Suetonius (*Aug.* 94, 12) notes that Augustus was born in the astrological sign of a capricorn. Since astrologer Theogenes predicted him a great future by being born in that zodiac sign, Augustus issued a silver coin with the image of capri-

corn (Suet. *Aug.* 94, 12). Not only Augustus, but also the later emperors used the image of capricorn on coins, thus showing the lasting association of capricorn with Augustus' imperial legacy (Barton 1995: 47, n. 94-98). When being engraved alone on gems, a motive of capricorn can refer to the astrological sign itself (Coueret Guiraud 1980: 30; Sena Chiesa 2012: 265).¹² Combined with other symbols like rudder and the globe, it turns into an important political symbol of Augustus (Coeuret, Guiraud 1980: 30). On the chalcedony¹³ (Fig. 5) from legionary fortress of *Burnum*, a capricorn swimming left with a cornucopia is depicted, thus associating a capricorn with the prosperity. Another chalcedony¹⁴ (Fig. 6), found at the wider area of Cavtat (*Epidaurum*), depicts a capricorn swimming to the left, with one cornucopia and a rudder, linking the capricorn with the symbols of good governance and abundance.

A carnelian¹⁵ (Fig. 7) from Stari Grad (*Pharia*) is showing a somewhat different motive of capricorn swimming to the left above a warship, with a trident in front of him. The motif may be connected with the Octavian's victory over Sextus Pompey's fleets (Suet. *Aug.* 16), won by his admiral Agrippa in Naulochus in 36 BC (Sena Chiesa 2002: 409).

¹² For capricorn on the engraved gems, see Sena Chiesa 1966: 376, no. 1230 and Vollenweider 1979: 512, no. 577.

¹³ Museum of Croatian National Monuments, chalcedony, inv. no. 6852, 8 x 9 x 3 mm, from Burnum, 1st century AD (Šeparović, Uroda 2009: 125, no. 297)

¹⁴ Dubrovnik Archaeological Museum, chalcedony, inv. no. 369, 11 x 18 mm, from Cavtat (Michl 2010: 146, no. 8)

¹⁵ Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. I 1585, 12 x 19 mm, from *Stari Grad* (*Pharia*) (Kirigin 1976: 212, 216, no. 16)



Fig. 7. Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. I 1585, from Stari Grad (Pharia) (photo – T. Seser)

Sextus Pompey associated himself with god Neptune (*Dio* 48, 48.5), whose symbol is a trident.

From Stari Grad comes another engraved gem, bearing military motives. On a sard¹⁶ (Fig. 8) a group of three symbols is shown. To the left a military signum with 7 round phalerae of different sizes is depicted, in the middle there is a sword, and to the right a dolphin. According to the Sheila Hoey-Middleton (1991: 44, no. 25), military signum along with dolphin may be connected with the *Legio X Fretensis*, founded by Octavian in 41-40 BC. The Tenth legion participated in the naval battle at Naulochus, earning the name *Fretensis*, and later in the battle of Actium in 31 BC, after which it adopted dolphin as its symbol (Hoey-Middleton 1991: 1991: 44, no. 25; Dabrowa 1993: 11).

In the grave 27 from the Roman necropolis of Lora in Split, an iron ring was found, still attached to the deceased's finger. A carnelian¹⁷ (Fig. 9) shows a warship sailing to the left, with the dolphin, cornucopia, half-moon and a globe above the ship. These symbols can also refer to the naval victory, prosperity and the ultimate peace of Augustus' government.

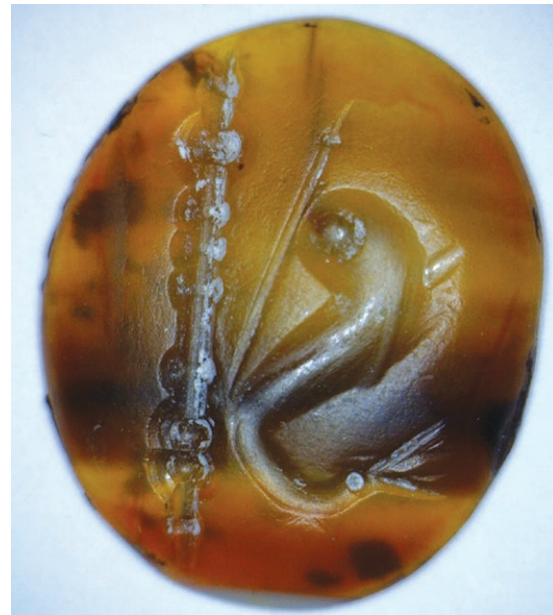


Fig. 8. Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, sard, inv. no. A-16179, 16 x 13 x 3 mm, from Stari Grad (Pharia) (photo – I. Kaić)

¹⁶ Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, sard, inv. no. A-16179, 16 x 13 x 3 mm, from Stari Grad, 1st century BC (Maixner 1881: 111, no. 49; Rendić-Miočević, Kirigin 1995: 131, no. 8; Kaić 2013: 257, no. 282)

¹⁷ Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. AMS-41843, 10 x 12 mm, from Split - Lora necropolis, grave no. 27 (Buljević 2010: 181-182, Fig. 71). In the grave, apart from the ring, a small bronze hoop, perhaps a ring, was also found (Buljević 2010: 180-182, pl. 19) The Lora necropolis consisted of some 40 incineration burials, dated from the half of the 1st century AD to the 3rd century AD (Buljević 2010: 186-187).



Fig. 9. Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian mounted in the iron ring, inv. no. AMS-41843, from Split - Lora necropolis, grave no. 27 (photo – A. Verzotti)

PORTRAIT GEMS

Apart from the symbol gems, another group of gems with portraits of political leaders, or the emperor and his family, had an important role in political propaganda. Apart from the best-known gems belonging to this group, the so-called “state cameos”, engraved portrait gems, modest in size and quality, were also produced and widely distributed.¹⁸ A carnelian¹⁹ (Fig. 10) from Split Archaeological Museum is engraved with profile head of young man facing left, whose facial features resemble those of young Octavian.²⁰

As an example of modern engraved gem copying an antique motive, we can present the agate²¹ from the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, with three male busts depicted (Fig. 11). To the left a bust of man with head in profile to

the right is shown, with *lituus* behind him. On the right side of the intaglio, two male busts with heads in profile to the left are depicted, with a jug behind them. According to the numismatic evidence, in these busts portraits of Triumvirs - Octavian, Lepidus and most notably that of Mark Antony - can be identified, paired with *lituus* and jug as symbols of pontifical and augural authority.²² On the basis of iconographic analysis, intaglio was initially dated to the 2nd half of the 1st century AD (Rendić-Miočević 1987a: 141, no. 37). However, although representing a Republican-period imagery, this intaglio was engraved in modern period, as a very fine work performed by meticulous copying of antique coins. It should also be noted that the edge of the intaglio is faceted, which was not a Roman practice, since faceting came in use during the Renaissance period and later (Cradock 2009: 416).

¹⁸ Cameos of exceptional quality and dimensions, known as “state cameos”, depicting emperors and their family circle, were produced in court’s workshops and were carved by famous Greek engravers. For the state cameos, see Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 146-180 and Zwierlein-Diehl 2009. For portrait gems in the Republican period, see Vollenweider 1972-1974.

¹⁹ Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. I 2598, 13,8 x 10 mm, early 1st century AD, find-place unknown (Žanić-Protić 1987a: 161, no. 73).

²⁰ For this portrait type of Octavian on engraved gems, see Sena Chiesa 2012: 261, n. 18, 19, Fig. 5, 6.

²¹ Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, agate, inv. no. 15907, 20 x 26 mm, find-place unknown (Rendić-Miočević 1987a: 141, no. 37).

²² For Republican coins with the jug and *lituus*, see Stewart 1997.



Fig. 10. Archaeological Museum Split, carnelian, inv. no. I 2598, from Salona (photo: T. Seser)

In Archaeological museum in Split a chalcedony²³ depicting a female bust with diadem and a head veil is kept (Fig. 12). In the women's physiognomy the empress Livia can be recognized. Again, a find-place and context of the find are not known. When published, it was attributed to the 1st century AD (Žanić-Protić 1987b: 161, no. 75), but it was actually engraved in the 18th century, as can be seen on the examples from Vienna (AGWien I: 167-18, no. 550) and the Cades Collection. Portraits of the Roman emperors and empresses continued to be a well-liked subject in modern glyptics, executed by repeating and copying the same traits as on the antique engraved gems.²⁴

Apart from the intaglios, cameos were even more popular in representing imperial portraits. Among the glass cameos from Croatia, a blue and white glass cameo²⁵ from Narona with Livia's portrait should be mentioned, with Livia wearing the nodus hairstyle of the Late Republic era (Fig. 13). The cameo was found during the archaeological excavations of the western postament of the *Augusteum* in Narona



Fig. 11. Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, agate, inv. no. 15907, find-place unknown (photo: I. Kaić)



Fig. 12. Archaeological Museum Split, chalcedony, inv. no. I 2596, find-place unknown (photo: T. Seser)

(Buljević 2004: 51; Buljević 2005: 96).²⁶ It was dated in the second or third decade of the 1st century AD, in the time of Tiberius' reign, and attributed to workshops in Rome (Buljević 2004: 156; Buljević 2005: 97).

²³ Archaeological Museum Split, chalcedony, inv. no. I 2596, 23 x 17 mm, find-place unknown (Žanić-Protić 1987b: 161, no. 75)

²⁴ For Ancient Greek and Roman iconography in modern glyptics, see Tassinari 2009.

²⁵ Narona Archaeological Museum, blue and white glass cameo, inv. no. 2087, 50,2 x 35,8, x 3,3-5,0 mm, from Narona (Buljević 2004).



Fig. 13. Archaeological museum Naronia, blue and white glass cameo, inv. no. 2087, from Naronia (photo – T. Seser).

Retaining our scope on the Julio-Claudian dynasty, we should also mention black and white glass cameo²⁷ from an unknown site in Dalmatia, now in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (Fig. 14). The cameo is preserved in a golden ring, and depicts one of the unidentified female members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (Rendić-Miočević 1987b; Nemeth-Ehrlich 1993b). A female is depicted from behind, with the head facing right, and wearing a hairstyle characteristic for the first decade of the 1st century AD (*ibid.*).

CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to present a brief overview of the published gems from museum collections in Croatia, that can be attributed to the category of engraved gems, that



Fig. 14. Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, black and white glass cameo in golden ring, inv. no. 15907, from Dalmatia (Photo Archive, Archaeological Museum in Zagreb).

were used as means of propaganda during the last decades of the Roman Republic and in the Augustan period. The rich iconographic repertoire of such gems, loaded with symbolism and political messages, is well presented on the gems from the Croatian collections, ranging from intaglios and glass gems with political symbols to glass cameos with imperial portraits. Apart from the intaglios and cameos here shown, glyptic collections from the museums in Croatia, being largely unpublished, contain even more diverse evidence of political propaganda of the Late Republic and Early Imperial period. Certainly, the future publications of glyptic material from Croatia will allow a further study of the engraved gems connected with the political propaganda of aforementioned period.*,**

²⁶ For the *Augusteum* of Naronia, see Marin 2003 and Marin 2016. Imperial cult in Naronia is attested already in the last decade of the 1st century BC (Marin 2016: 96).

²⁷ Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, glass cameo in golden ring, inv. no. 15907, 12 x 8 mm, from Dalmatia (Rendić Miočević 1987b; Nemeth-Ehrlich 1993b).

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GEME KAO DIO AUGUSTOVSKE PROPAGANDE. NEKI PRIMJERI IZ HRVATSKE

U augustovsko doba gema su korištene i u svrhu propagande, zahvaljujući različitim poznatim motivima koji se mogu povezati s Augustovim političkim djelovanjem. Gliptičke kolekcije u Hrvatskoj do danas nisu u cjelosti obrađene niti objavljene. Međutim, unutar objavljenog materijala možemo izdvojiti gema koje pripadaju grupi propagandnih gema, poput intaglija s prikazom kaprikorna, Augustovog zodijačkog znaka, ili pak kameje s poprsjem carice Livije.

Ključne riječi: intagliji, ugravirane gema, stakleni intagliji, kameje, staklene kameje, politička propaganda, August, Kasno republikansko doba, Rano carsko razdoblje, Hrvatska