

Three Greek Engraved Gold Finger Rings from the Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński Collection at the National Museum in Krakow¹

In 1886 the National Museum in Krakow came into possession of part of a magnificent set of engraved gems and other glyptic objects assembled by one of the most prominent nineteenth-century Polish collectors of *objets d'art*, Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński.² Originally, the share of the collection housed in Krakow comprised 2,517 pieces, 301 of which were set in various types of rings (both ancient and post-classical).³ Only some of the groups of objects have been profiled and published; the vast majority of them still await elaboration.⁴ Among the rings, there are examples of magnificent ancient craftsman-

¹ I am grateful to Gertrud Platz-Horster and Joachim Śliwa for reading the preliminary draft of this paper and for their valuable hints and commentaries, which enabled me to improve it considerably. I would like also to express my gratitude to the managing staff of the National Museum in Krakow for allowing me to publish the objects discussed here.

² Biographical information about the person of the collector may be found in: J. Śliwa, *Zur Geschichte der Gemmensammlungen im 19 Jh. Die Sammlung von Konstantin Schmidt-Ciążyński (1817–1889)*, [in:] *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Klassische Archäologie*, Berlin 1988, Mainz 1990, pp. 402–403, pl. 61: 3, 4 (in German); *idem*, *Badacze, kolekcjonerzy, podróżnicy. Studia z dziejów zainteresowań podróżniczych*, Kraków 2012 (Regiony, historia, kultura 7), pp. 301–321 (an updated biography, in Polish; in English: *idem*, *Magical Gems from the Collection of Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński and from other Polish Collections*, Kraków 2014, pp. 17–44).

³ This information is included in the list of gems compiled by Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński in 1886 on the occasion of the sale of the collection to the National Museum in Krakow. It is also confirmed in another source – the inventory of the museum's holdings written by the first director of the institution, see: W. Łuszczkiewicz, *Inwentarz dyr. Łuszczkiewicza, 1883–1900*, p. 84, at no. 490. Both documents are now preserved in the archives of the National Museum in Krakow. I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs Alicja Kiljańska, head of the Department of Decorative Art and Material Culture, who kindly allowed me to see these documents.

⁴ For an overall profile of the collection see: P. Gołyźniak [et al.], *A Nineteenth-Century Glyptic Collection in the National Museum in Krakow. The Cabinet of Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński*, „Journal of the History of Collections”, published online: doi:10.1093/jhc/fhu056 (7 November 2014, the hard-copy version is forthcoming). The gems with inscriptions of modern engravers were also described by M. Fredro-Boniecka, *Gemmy z podpisami artystów w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie. Cz.1: Gemmy Pilcherów*, „Wiadomości Numizmatyczno-Archeologiczne”, vol. 20, years 1938–39, 1939, pp. 278–292; *eadem*, *Gemmy z podpisami artystów w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie. Cz.2*, „Wiadomości Numizmatyczno-Archeologiczne”, vol. 21, years 1940–1948, 1949, pp. 53–84. The groups of Egyptian scarabs and magical gems were extensively elaborated and published by J. Śliwa, *Egyptian scarabs and magical gems*, Warszawa–Kraków 1989. The Mesopotamian, Iranian and Sasanian seals

ship, including three Greek engraved gold finger rings dated to different periods ranging from the fifth to the second centuries BC. The aim of this paper is to interpret the devices engraved upon them as well as to discuss and establish the dates, provenance and functions of the objects. Another purpose is to discuss their relationships with other works of ancient art and craftsmanship, in particular engraved gems and coins. The likelihood that engraved gems and coins were worked by the same artisans has been discussed by scholars for a long time.⁵ Engraved full-metal finger rings seem to be the best candidates for seeking close relationships between these two types of objects.

Two dolphins swimming in a circle.

- Dimensions: 13.3×8.2mm (bezel), 15.5×17.2mm (hoop)
- Weight: 2.31g
- Inv. no.: MNK-Ew-IV-Zł-2193/Z-73
- Illustration 1: bezel – scale 3:1, drawings – scale 1:1

Ring no. 1 is made of gold, with a long, flat, leaf-shaped bezel and stirrup-shaped, round-section hoop. The bezel and the hoop were made from two separate pieces of metal

were published by B. Kaim-Małecka, *Catalogue des Intailles Orientales des Musées Polonais*, „Acta Archaeologica Lovaniensia”, vol. 32, 1993, pp. 59–95. Moreover, some Byzantine specimens were published by M. Myśliński, *Sceny gonitw rydwanów na hipodromie w Konstantynopolu – dwie gemmy w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, [in:] W. Bułsza, L. Sadko (eds.), *Ars Graeca – Ars Latina. Studia dedykowane Profesor Annie Różyckiej Bryzek*, Wyd. UJ, Kraków 2001, pp. 49–54; *idem*, *Gemmy późnoantyczne i bizantyńskie w polskich kolekcjach muzealnych*, „Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, vol. 68, 2006, pp. 229–233. Recently, new studies on the Etruscan, Italic, Hellenistic and Roman gems from this collection have been launched. Hopefully, their outcome will be a catalogue of those objects. Simultaneously, studies on individual post-classical gems are being conducted; see, for instance: P. Gołyźniak, *A Problematic Cameo with a Portrait of Augustus from the Collection of Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński*, „Notae Numismaticae – Zapiski Numizmatyczne”, vol. 8, 2013, pp. 217–226.

⁵ See e.g.: A. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen. Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*, Giesecke & Devrient, Berlin & Lipsk 1900, vol. 3, pp. 126, 265, 275–276, 289; M.-L. Vollenweider, *Die Steinschneidekunst und ihre Künstler in spätrepublikanischer und augusteischer Zeit*, Bruno Grimm, Baden-Baden 1966, pl. 12ff.; G.M.A. Richter, *Engraved Gems of the Greeks and Etruscans*, Phaidon Press, London 1968, pp. 23–25; *eadem*, *Engraved Gems of the Romans*, Phaidon Press, London 1971, pp. 7–8; M.-L. Vollenweider, *Die Porträtgemmen der römischen Republik*, 2nd ed., Philipp von Zabern, Mainz a. Rh. 1974, pl. 1ff.; P. Zazoff, *Die antiken Gemmen*, C. H. Beck, München 1983, pp. 278–290; F.M. Vanni, *Alcune riproduzioni di rovesci monetari in gemme*, [in:] T. Hackens, G. Moucharte (eds.), *Technology and Analysis of Ancient Gemstones. Proceedings of the European Workshop held at Ravello, European University Centre for Cultural Heritage, November 13 – 16, 1987*, Rixensart 1989 (Revue du Groupe Européen d'Etudes pour les Techniques Physiques, Chimiques, Biologiques et Mathématiques Appliquées à l'Archéologie 23), pp. 301–312; T. Hackens, *Les relations entre graveurs de coins monétaires et graveurs de gemmes dans l'Antiquité grecque*, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 157–162; M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *The Microscope and Roman Republican Gem Engraving. Some Preliminary Remarks*, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 189–204; B. Gerring, *Sphragides. Die gravierten Fingerringe des Hellenismus*, Archaeopress, Oxford 2000 (BAR International Series 848), p. 129; J. Boardman, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings: Early Bronze Age to Late Classical*, Thames & Hudson, London 2001, pp. 158, 200 and 237–238; E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2007, pp. 78–80; H.C.L. Wiegandt, *Die griechischen Siegel der klassischen Zeit. Ikonographischer Vergleich*, Herbert Wiegandt, Frankfurt a. M. 2009, pp. 22–23, 37–39, 48–50, 60–62, 69–72, 83–87, 94–95, 98.

and then soldered together.⁶ The bezel is slightly convex in profile (see: Il. 1), made from a thin gold badge. Close examination of the device engraved on it reveals that it was incised like an intaglio. The many scratches around the flippers were caused by correction of the details. The heads of the animals are only delicately marked.

The ring is not easily classifiable into one of the exact types of similar specimens already known. According to the J. Boardman typology of Greek engraved finger rings, it should be associated with the group of Classical Light Rings. This group comprises two of the earliest types of Classical finger rings.⁷ Both of them derive from Archaic type N (according to Boardman's typology of Archaic Greek rings), and are thus alike and difficult to distinguish. The ring from Krakow seems to have more features in common with Type II of Boardman's typology, which dates from the middle to the end of the fifth century BC. The bezel is slightly convex and the hoop rounded, but its profile is more similar to that of type I, which dates from the beginning to the middle of the fifth century BC.⁸ In F.H. Marshall's typology of ancient rings, this specimen from Krakow fits Type X, which is characterized by a thin, slightly convex, pointed oval-shaped bezel and thin, rounded, upwardly tapering hoop. It has been dated to around the middle of the fifth century BC.⁹ As Boardman pointed out, in many instances it is almost impossible to distinguish between the two groups, not only in terms of rings but also with regard to other relevant objects, such as late Archaic and early Classical engraved gems.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the ring from the Krakow collection has an important detail which is helpful for ascertaining its chronology: on the bezel there is a pair of dolphins swimming in opposite directions. The work is precise but not very detailed. The dolphins have natural shapes and incised flippers, but their heads are only suggested. There are no more details. The borders of the bezel are decorated with regularly engraved pellets. Border decoration was particularly popular in the Archaic period. In Classical times it was not so common. Of course there are examples of rings with hatched borders dated even up to the end of the fourth century BC (for instance ring no. 2 in this article), but generally speaking, this kind of decoration may be interpreted as a form of archaization. This could indicate an earlier part of the Classical period, and as such, dating the Krakow ring to the second quarter of the fifth century BC seems to be the best proposal.

The provenance of the ring is even harder to ascertain than its chronology. It has only one close parallel among the all-metal rings, a gold ring found on Ibiza bearing two dolphins swimming in contrary directions in a tremolo (?) border.¹¹ It has been dated to

⁶ Soldering is a method of joining two pieces of metal by running between them a molten metal or alloy (the solder), the melting-point of which is lower than that of the metal to be joined (R. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, 2nd ed., Methuen, London 1980, pp. 31–33).

⁷ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, pp. 216–219.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 212–214.

⁹ F.H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman in the Departments of Antiquities British Museum*, The Trustees of the British Museum, London 1908, pp. xl–xli, nos. 44ff., 903f. and 1230ff.

¹⁰ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, p. 189.

¹¹ J. Boardman, *Classical Phoenician Scarabs: A catalogue and study*, Archaeopress, Oxford 2003 (BAR International Studies 1190; Studies in Gems and Jewellery 2), appendix, no. 41, p. 133 (= H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, Ep6, p. 118, pl. LXXXII).

the Classical period, to the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, because the place where it was found is associated with the Phoenicians, who had colonies on the island in those times. At first glance, the motif appears to be the same, and there is also a decorative pattern on the borders of the ring, but a comparison of this device with that on the Krakow piece reveals some differences. The dolphins depicted on the Krakow ring are set as seen from the side. They are similar to each other, and carved accurately, but their anatomy is depicted rather superficially. The dolphins on the ring from Ibiza, by contrast, are incised in a different perspective, not a straight lateral view but from slightly above. They are not as similar to each other, and their anatomy is more detailed, i.e. more features of these animals are engraved. Lastly, the border decoration of the two rings also differs. Given these facts, it may be concluded that the ring from Ibiza is younger than the ring from Krakow, on which the engraving of the iconography betrays some archaic features.

Engraved all-metal finger rings were used both in the western and eastern parts of the Mediterranean basin.¹² Hence, it is risky to compare the ring found on Ibiza with that from the Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński collection and to claim that it also should have come from this area. Britta Gerring, describing a Hellenistic ring featuring two dolphins swimming in opposite directions engraved on a bezel, pointed out that the iconography may be associated with the coins of Argos.¹³ However, the dolphins swimming in a circle show up on the staters of this city only after the formation of an alliance between Argos and Elis in 421 BC¹⁴ or in the early fourth century BC.¹⁵ Argos started to strike its first coins about 500 BC and for a long time its emblem was a wolf, a symbol of Apollo Lykios, who was worshipped in the city.¹⁶ Given that the ring from Krakow is dated to the second quarter of the fifth century, it probably cannot be related to Argos, but perhaps relevant objects such as gems and coins should be searched for potential information because the two dolphins device could be considered an official emblem of another city. From the Archaic period, the dolphin was one of the most popular animals depicted on finger rings and coins. This animal played a major role in Greek mythology. The dolphin was a messenger of Poseidon, the rescuer of Arion and Hesiod, and closely connected with Apollo and Aphrodite. Because of its intelligence, it was appreciated by the Greeks and known as 'the king of the fish'.¹⁷

There are known engraved gems dated to the Classical period bearing the motif of one or two dolphins swimming in opposite directions or side by side. For instance, a scaraboid made of chalcedony mottled with yellow jasper, preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, has a dolphin with all its anatomical details carefully engraved upon it. H.C.L. Wiegandt sees some relationship with the coins of Zankle/Messana and dates this object

¹² J. Boardman, *Classical Phoenician Scarabs...*, pp. 12–13.

¹³ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, no. cat. XIII/11, p. 164, abb. 106 (description and comparison with the coins of Argos – pp. 86–87).

¹⁴ P. Gardner, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, vol. 9: Peloponnesus (excluding Corinth)*, London 1887 (further quoted as: *BMC Peloponnesus*), p. liii.

¹⁵ P.R. Franke, M. Hirmer, *Die griechische Münze*, 2nd ed., Munich 1972, pl. 161, no. 517.

¹⁶ *BMC Peloponnesus*, p. lii.

¹⁷ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–52.

to the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries BC.¹⁸ Another example is an intaglio made of carnelian depicting a dolphin attacking a bird (a cormorant?), from Smyrna, and dated to the end of the fifth century BC.¹⁹ Lastly, a scaraboid housed in the British Museum bears two dolphins swimming side by side and is dated to the fourth century BC.²⁰ These are not close parallels to the ring described here, but they do show that this motif was quite popular on these types of objects also.

A category of objects of significance for the present study in terms of their iconography is that of coins. The motif of a dolphin, a pair of dolphins or even several dolphins as either a main symbol or one element of a more complex composition was very popular on Greek coins. In the Archaic period two dolphins swimming in opposite directions show up on the coins of Thera struck between 580 and 520 BC.²¹ It is possible to identify several regions where these animals were especially popular in the Classical period. The first of them is southern Italy and Sicily, where many Greek colonies were located. Dolphins were employed more frequently on the reverses of coins rather than the obverses, as in coins from Cosa, Larinum, Aurunca, Cume, Neapolis, Luceria, Salapia, Venusia, Brundisium, Sicilicus, Olce, Butuntum, Tarentum, Paestum and Thurium.²² Of these, the most interesting seem to be Venusia and Tarentum. The coins of Venusia feature a dolphin on both the obverse and the reverse.²³ In the case of Tarentum, there are some series with two dolphins swimming side by side on the reverse, as in the abovementioned intaglio.²⁴ There were also dolphins on coins from some of the cities of Sicily, e.g. Catana, Lipara, Messina

¹⁸ H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, Epa8, p. 118, pl. LXXXII.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, Epa9, p. 119, pl. LXXXII.

²⁰ G.M.A. Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems: Greek, Etruscan, and Roman (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)*, "L'ERMA" di Bretschneider, Rome 1956, no. 473, p. 122.

²¹ H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, p. 83, cf. 2.

²² Cosa – R.S. Poole (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, vol. 1: Italy*, Woodfall and Kinder, London 1873 (further quoted as: *BMC Italy*), p. 69, no. 3; Larinum – *ibidem*, p. 72, no. 10; Aurunca – *ibidem*, p. 75, no. 1; Cume – *ibidem*, p. 87, no. 8 and p. 89, no. 24; Neapolis – *ibidem*, p. 104, no. 99; Luceria – *ibidem*, p. 137, no. 10; p. 139, no. 40 and p. 141, no. 59; *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum – The Collection of the American Numismatic Society, part I: Etruria-Calabria*, New York 1969 (further quoted as *SNG Etruria-Calabria*), nos. 706–707, pl. 19; Salapia – *BMC Italy*, p. 144, nos. 4–7; Venusia – *ibidem*, p. 150, nos. 5–7; Brundisium – *ibidem*, p. 154, nos. 1–4 and p. 155, nos. 5–6; G. Förchner, *Die Münzen der Griechen in Italien und Sizilien*, Historisches Museum Frankfurt a. M., Frankfurt a. M. 1986, nos. 145–146, p. 59; *SNG Etruria-Calabria*, nos. 779–796, pl. 21; *ibidem*, nos. 825–1030, pl. 22–27 (many coins of Tarent from later periods also bear a dolphin employed variably in the iconography); Sicilicus – *BMC Italy*, p. 155, no. 7; Olce – *ibidem*, pp. 155–157, nos. 8–26; Butuntum – *ibidem*, p. 157, nos. 1–2; Tarentum – *ibidem*, p. 161, no. 9; p. 163, no. 19–20; pp. 165–201, nos. 34–52, 55, 60–65, 70–86, 97–307; pp. 209–214, nos. 381–383, 392–415, 430, 449–456; p. 219, nos. 479–481, 485 and p. 223, nos. 14–15; G. Förchner, *op. cit.*, nos. 147–165, pp. 59–63 and nos. 186–189, pp. 67–68; Paestum – *BMC Italy*, pp. 274–275, nos. 4–5, 12–27; p. 281, no. 70; G. Förchner, *op. cit.*, nos. 241–245, pp. 83–84; *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum – The Collection of the American Numismatic Society, part II: Lucania*, New York 1972 (further quoted as: *SNG Lucania*), nos. 740–749, pl. 20; Thurium – *BMC Italy*, pp. 297–298, nos. 111–112.

²³ *BMC Italy*, p. 150, nos. 5–7.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 219, no. 485; for the intaglio see footnote 20.

and Zankle, Motya, Hipana, and Syracuse.²⁵ Despite the fact that dolphins were popular in the coinage of this region, however, none of these cities can probably be directly associated with the motif depicted on the ring from Krakow.

Going further, the next region where dolphins occur in the coinage of the Classical period and later is the northern coast of the Black Sea. In Olbia the first means of payment were dolphin-shaped, though they are interpreted as coins, and are dated to ca. the fifth to the beginning of the fourth century BC.²⁶ In later periods dolphins were also present in the coinage of Olbia.²⁷ Other cities from this region whose coins bear dolphins are Abdera and Thasos.²⁸ The more interesting is the coinage of Thasos. Coins struck in the period 500–465 BC have a pair of dolphins facing in opposite directions and three pellets depicted on the obverse.²⁹ This motif resembles the depiction on the Krakow ring very closely and, also importantly, these coins may be relatively contemporary to the ring.

The last region where coins with two dolphins were struck during the Classical period is Lycia. Coins struck in Aperlae throughout the years ca. 480–460 BC bear two dolphins on the obverse, one on the right and the second on the left, below the human eye, and the whole composition is surrounded with pellets.³⁰ This motif seems also to be similar to the device engraved on the Krakow ring, though the presence of the human eye probably changes its meaning and it cannot therefore be associated with the motif from the ring. A similar composition is observed on the coins of Poseidion in Carpathus, in Lycia.³¹

²⁵ Catana – P. Gardner, B.V. Head, R.S. Poole, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, vol. 2: Sicily*, Printed by the order of Trustees, London 1876 (further quoted as: *BMC Sicily*), p. 51, no. 61; Lipara – *ibidem*, p. 258, no. 20 and p. 262. Nos. 70–72; Messina and Zankle – *ibidem*, p. 99, no. 33 and p. 102, nos. 1–8; Motya – *ibidem*, p. 115, no. 1; Hipana – *ibidem*, p. 239, no. 1; Syracuse – *ibidem*, p. 188, nos. 301–302, pl. VII.7; G. Förchner, *op. cit.*, nos. 506–516, pp. 167–169.

²⁶ J. Bodzek, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Poland, vol. VIII, The National Museum in Krakow, part 4: Sarmatia-Bosporus*, The Polish Academy of Arts and Science, Kraków 2006 (further quoted as: *SNG Poland VIII.4*), nos. 5–37, pp. 10–15; P. Gardner, B.V. Head, R.S. Poole, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, vol. 3: The Tauric Chersonese, Sarmatia, Dacia, Moesia, Thrace &c.*, Printed by the order of Trustees, London 1877 (further quoted as: *BMC The Tauric Chersonese, Sarmatia, Dacia, Moesia, Thrace &c.*), p. 13, no. 19.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 11, nos. 1–2; *SNG Poland VIII.4*, nos. 41–74, pp. 16–21.

²⁸ Abdera – *BMC The Tauric Chersonese, Sarmatia, Dacia, Moesia, Thrace &c.*, p. 71, no. 43; Thasos – *ibidem*, pp. 221–222, nos. 59–65.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 217, nos. 18–22 and p. 240, nos. 18a and 22a.

³⁰ G.F. Hill, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, vol. 19: Lycia, Pamphylia and Pisidia*, Printed by the order of Trustees, London 1897 (further quoted as: *BMC Lycia, Pamphylia and Pisidia*), p. 10, no. 47, pl. III.7 and p. 11, no. 51, pl. III.11; N. Vismara, *Monetazione arcaica della Lycia II. La collezione Winsemann Falghera*, Edizioni ennerre S.r.l., Milan 1989, nos. 84–85, pp. 160–163 (Aperlae?), nos. 86–88, pp. 164–165 (the author also mentions that the motif of a dolphin and a human eye occurs on the coins of Poseidion in Carpathos and Side in Pamphylia). Similar coins to those from Aperlae, though of uncertain provenance, have been recorded in: *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Deutschland, Sammlung v. Aulock, vol. II: Caria, Lydia, Phrygia, Lycia, Pamphylia*, nos. 2743–2744, pl. 87. The same collection contains coins originating from Lycia: nos. 4092–4094, 4114, pl. 135 and Aperlae?: nos. 4104–4107, pl. 135, nos. 4109, 4111–4113?

³¹ B.V. Head, *A Guide to the Principal Coins of the Greeks from circ. 700 B.C. to A.D. 270 based on the work of Barclay V. Head*, by order of the Trustees, London 1932, no. 38, p. 5, pl. 2.

To sum up all of these considerations, the finger ring under discussion from the Krakow collection, with two dolphins engraved on the bezel, was made in the early Classical period, probably in the second quarter of the fifth century BC. The ring's iconography may be related to coins, especially intriguing examples of which are those struck in Thasos in the years 500–465 BC. However, as shown above, this is a problematic issue. The motif of two dolphins swimming in opposite directions seems like an emblem, maybe one used as an official symbol of a particular community or *polis*. However, as pointed out, there are many regions where dolphins were depicted on coins, mainly Sicily and southern Italy, the Black Sea coast, and Lycia. Moreover, due to the fact that on Ibiza a similar ring has been found and dolphins were popular in the coinage of the region, Sicily and southern Italy may be as good a proposal for the hypothetical place of origin of the Krakow ring as the northern coast of the Black Sea.

Woman by a *thymiaterion*.

- Dimensions: 13.9 × 9.2 mm (bezel), 19 × 20 mm (hoop)
- Weight: 3.29 g
- Inv. no.: MNK-Ew-IV-Zł-2203/Z-72
- Illustration 2: bezel – scale 3:1

Ring no. 2 is made of gold, from two separate pieces of metal: a bezel in the form of a thin badge, and a hoop, which were soldered together once the depiction was engraved. The ring is very thin and delicate. Its shape is slightly deformed. It is unlikely that it was worn like a normal ring on a finger. The bezel is oval in shape, and its borders are decorated with a tremolo pattern. This kind of decoration was made by the rocking movement of a scorper cutting a zigzag of arcs in a band across the metal.³² The use of a tremolo pattern indicates that the area of its production was Western Greece (southern Italy and Sicily). In these territories this kind of decoration was used longer than on mainland Greece. The hoop is round and fits the finger, and the bezel is slightly raised outside its outer edge. The ring belongs to the second group of late Classical finger rings dated to the fourth century BC, originated in western Greece, and was made in the Common Style. This is type VIII according to Boardman's typology.³³ The form of the ring is another proof of its origin from this area. This particular shape was popular in Western Greece from the middle to the end of the fourth century BC.³⁴ According to Marshall's typology of ancient rings this is type XVI, dated to the latter part of the fourth century BC.³⁵

The ring bears one of the most common motifs for this period, a woman standing in three-quarter view near an incense-burner (*thymiaterion*). Her head is bent towards her outstretched right hand, and she is sprinkling incense into the altar. The woman has long waved hair knotted at the back of the head. She is wearing a *chiton* and a long *himation* draped over her left shoulder. The *thymiaterion* stands on three legs (only two are visible). This motif was especially popular on all-metal finger rings from the later fourth century

³² J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, p. 228.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 214.

³⁴ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.

³⁵ F.H. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. XLI, no. 74, pl. III.

onwards. The style of engraving is simple, even somewhat rough. There are few well-incised details. The drapery of the woman's dress is very schematic. The woman's face is almost blank; her nose and one eye are suggested, but there are no more details. Similarly, her coiffure is elaborated rather carelessly. The iconography of the Krakow ring reveals a Hellenistic influence. This style of woman's coiffure, known as the 'melon', was being introduced in the early Hellenistic period with the shift in female fashion.³⁶ The three-quarter view of the figure, more frontal than in previous times, the reduction of the details, and the schematic elaboration of the coat indicate that the object was executed at the turn of the Classical and Hellenistic eras, at the end of the fourth century BC.

This particular device was employed mainly on finger rings and in toreutics, and less on engraved gems.³⁷ There are many configurations, which can be divided into two main groups: standing and seated figures. The motif was employed for different kinds of figures, both gods and mortals, and can thus be interpreted variably, e.g. as Aphrodite with Eros pouring a libation on an altar,³⁸ Nike and the *thymiaterion*,³⁹ Eros by a *thymiaterion*.⁴⁰ However, the most numerous group consists of depictions of mortal women or priestesses dropping/sprinkling incense on a *thymiaterion*.⁴¹

Ring no. 2, because of the character of the device, may be associated unequivocally with religion. One of the most famous examples of a work of art in which a similar subject was used is the 'Ludovisi Throne'. This monument is slightly older than the Krakow ring, dated to ca. the second quarter of the fifth century BC. One of its sides is decorated with a depiction of a woman sitting in front of a *thymiaterion*.⁴² H. Boyd Hawes interpreted this depiction as a representation of a hierophant, more precisely Telete. She was a priestess who taught younger adepts how to make offerings. If we are to accept this, perhaps engraved rings bearing similar depictions should be interpreted as particularly private objects, once belonging to priests or priestesses – hierophants, the leaders of a sacral community? This would be quite a far-fetched assumption, besides the striking popularity of the motif, which suggests another explanation. Many rings bearing this iconography have been found in burial complexes. As Gerring pointed out, they were probably placed in

³⁶ H. Kyrieleis, *Bildnisse der Ptolemäer*, Gebr. Mann Verlag, Berlin 1975, pp. 89–90.

³⁷ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

³⁸ J. Boardman, D. Scarisbrick, *The Ralph Harari Collection of Finger Rings*, Themes and Hudson Ltd., London 1977, no. 11, p. 16–17 (= B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, no. IX/32, p. 143, abb. 39 = H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, Bba39, p. 42, pl. XXV).

³⁹ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, pl. 754 (= F.H. Marshall, *op. cit.*, no. 86, p. 18, pl. III = B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, no. XII/5, p. 161, abb. 94 = H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, Bba32, p. 41, pl. XXV); G. Guilhou, *Catalogue of the Superb Collection of Rings Formed by the Late Monsieur G. Guilhou, of Paris [...]*, London 1937, no. 126, p. 36, pl. VI.

⁴⁰ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, pl. 772 and pl. 782 (= H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, Aba70, p. 17, pl. IX and Aba71, p. 17, pl. IX).

⁴¹ J. Boardman, M.-L. Vollenweider, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems and Finger Rings in the Ashmolean Museum vol. 1: Greek and Etruscan*, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1978, no. 159, p. 37, pl. XXIX. The group of 21 rings bearing this motif was assembled and described in detail by B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–68.

⁴² H. Boyd Hawes, *A Gift of Themistocles: The "Ludovisi Throne" and the Boston Relief*, „American Journal of Archaeology”, vol. 26, no. 3 (Jul. – Sep., 1922), p. 297.

women's gravestones in connection with the cult of Aphrodite. The women depicted on the rings are dressed in an apogetic way and they are burning incense, which was one of the practices related to veneration of the goddess.⁴³ Therefore, they may be considered adorers of the goddess of love. As pointed out above, Aphrodite and her son Eros were also sometimes depicted in the course of the same activity. In addition, given that the ring is very thin, it is rather unlikely that it was worn like a normal ring on a finger. It is too delicate for such a purpose. It is more likely that it was meant to be a special, sepulchral gift and placed into the grave unused.

Portrait of a philosopher.

- Dimensions: 13.7 × 10.8 mm (bezel), 18 × 15.3 mm (hoop)
- Weight: 2.15g
- Inv. no.: MNK-Ew-IV-Zł-2562/Z-74
- Illustration 3: bezel – scale 3:1

Ring no. 3, like the previous pieces, is made of gold using the repoussé technique. A very thin golden badge was placed on a prepared die, and by pressing on the reverse side the artist decorated the bezel with a device in relief on the obverse. If the golden badge is thin enough, it can be modelled quite easily even without using a hammer. The device seems to be slightly sunk into the surface of the bezel, which means that the die was smaller than the bezel. The artisan left some reserve around the edges in order to facilitate its soldering to the hoop.

This is a chunky ring with a heavy, stirrup-shaped outline and an oval bezel (somewhat distorted). According to Boardman's typology of Classical engraved finger rings it should be classified as type XVII, dated to the Ptolemaic period.⁴⁴ Gerring narrowed the dating of this kind of object to between the beginning of the third to the middle of the second century BC.⁴⁵ The ring from Krakow is a lighter variant with a hollow hoop and the bezel soldered to it. In Marshall's typology of ancient rings there is no exact parallel, but type XXX-IV seems to be the most relevant and is also dated to the Hellenistic period.⁴⁶ The device depicts a portrait of an old, bald but bearded man on the right. Although the portrait is superficially carved and the surface of the bezel has been partially damaged, many details are still visible. The man has a big, flat nose noticeably separated from his forehead, which is rather flat. His eye is open and deeply set in its socket, and his eyelids are marked. His face has a sharp expression, akin to wrinkles. He has a short, curly beard and a big ear. His bald head is covered by short locks, but only on the lower part at the back. Above the head there is a strange rectangular-shaped object whose purpose is unclear. Perhaps it is related to the creative process. Behind the head there is an inscription, but unfortunately it was made with insufficient care, or impressed too poorly, and is thus now illegible. It may have been related to the person depicted, to the owner of the ring or possibly to the artist who made the ring.

⁴³ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁴⁴ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, p. 214.

⁴⁵ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁴⁶ F.H. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. XLIII, no. 97.

Such rings became increasingly popular at the turn of the fourth and third centuries BC, although individual portraits had been engraved upon gems and all-metal rings since the fifth century BC.⁴⁷ These early Ptolemaic rings tended to be made of bronze, and more seldom of other materials such as iron, silver or gold.⁴⁸ Ring no. 3 is an example of a portrait of a philosopher. The depiction of an old, bald or partially bald and bearded man is typical for portraits of Greek philosophers throughout all periods from the fifth century BC to the Hellenistic period. However, this kind of portrait was not particularly popular on finger rings during any of the periods, including the Hellenistic era.⁴⁹ Many more philosophers' portraits occur on engraved gems of those times.⁵⁰ Although the style is relatively superficial, the head has a lot of individualised features. The theme is approached without lyricism and there are no symptoms of idealisation. The face seems strongly characterized.

The finger ring from Krakow may depict a portrait of Chrysisippos (281/277–208/204 BC) of Soloi, the son of Apollonios⁵¹ or Apollonides.⁵² He was the third head of the Stoic school in Athens and a prolific writer. It was thanks to him that Stoicism spread throughout the Graeco-Roman world. According to literary sources, his appearance is said to have been insignificant.⁵³ Despite the great popularity of Chrysisippos, especially during the first century BC and first century AD, his portraits are unfortunately rather rare among all types of objects of ancient art. There are some examples of portraits in sculpture, but many

⁴⁷ Individual portraits of men are represented on engraved gems by several examples with the famous portrait of a man made by Dexamenos from Chios in the lead, see: E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Die Antiken Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen 2, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung Berlin*, Prestel Verlag, München 1969, no. 158, p. 74, pl. 36 (= J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...* pl. 471 = H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, no. Db8, p. 104, pl. LXXI = E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen...*, p. 50, Abb. 145, pl. 37); H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, nos. Db20–24, p. 106, pl. LXXII; Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen...*, pp. 49–50, Abb. 144–145, pl. 37 (= A. Furtwängler, *Die antiken Gemmen*, Berlin & Leipzig 1900, vol. 1: pl. XIV.3, vol. 2: p. 66). On engraved all-metal finger rings this theme also occurs, see: J.D. Beazley, *The Lewes House Collection of Ancient Gems*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pl. A.29 (= J. Boardman, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings*, London 2001, pl. 670 = H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, no. Db10, p. 105, pl. LXXI); A. Furtwängler, *Beschreibung der geschnittenen Steine im Antiquarium*, Verlag von W. Spemann, Berlin 1896, no. 287, p. 28, pl. 6 (= A. Ward, J. Cherry, Ch. Gere, B. Cartlidge, *The Ring from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, Thames and Hudson, London 1981, p. 31 = J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, pl. 220 = H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, no. Db11, p. 105, pl. LXXI [with more literature]); M.-L. Vollenweider, M. Avisseau-Broustet, *Camees et intailles tome I: Les portraits grecs du Cabinet des médailles*, Bibliothèque national de France, Paris 1995, no. 28, pp. 41–42, pl. 23 (= H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, no. Db13, p. 105, pl. LXXI [with more literature]); H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, nos. Db14–16, p. 105, pl. LXXI–LXXII.

⁴⁸ J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, p. 234.

⁴⁹ B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.

⁵⁰ Some examples can be found in: M.-L. Vollenweider, M. Avisseau-Broustet, *Camees et intailles*, Paris 1995, nos. 226–261, pp. 206–229; B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, no. Vr/33, p. 184, abb. 165; G.M. Bernheimer, *Ancient Gems from the Borowski Collection*, Verlag Franz Philipp Rutzen, Mainz 2007, no. CG-5, p. 43 (= H.C.L. Wiegandt, *op. cit.*, no. Db25, p. 106, pl. LXXII).

⁵¹ Diog. Laert. VII, 179.

⁵² Strabo XIV, 671.

⁵³ Diog. Laert. VII, 182.

of them have been preserved in poor condition and most of them are restored.⁵⁴ There are also few extant examples of the coins of Soloi on which the portrait of the philosopher appears.⁵⁵ There is an intaglio bearing a portrait of Chrysippos kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.⁵⁶ On the basis of these objects, the physiognomy of Chrysippos may be described as follows: an old man with a face marked by numerous wrinkles on his forehead as well as his face, bald on his forehead and skull, but with short locks covering the back of his head and temples. His beard is short, his eyes are deeply set, and his lips are clamped, which lends him a grim expression. This characterisation, compared with the portrait on the Krakow ring, leads us to the conclusion that many of the features are similar, and it may therefore be associated with Chrisippos. Unfortunately, the inscription is unreadable. It is probably impossible that the full name of the philosopher was engraved on it. There seem to be six engraved letters, and thus Χρῦσιππος is likely too long. If the inscription does not stand for the name of the person depicted, it may be the signature of the engraver or the possessor of the ring.

Given the form of the ring, the style of the engraving and the interpretation of the portrait, ring no. 3 should be dated to the first half of the second century BC. The object is highly distinctive, immediately associable with its owner. The engraved device may indicate a close connection of the possessor to a school of philosophy (maybe Stoic, if it is assumed that Chrisippos was depicted). It is a well-known fact that people sometimes carried rings with portraits of philosophers or other symbols related to schools of philosophy as a sign of their sympathy or loyalty to them or to show their affiliation. Some good examples are a painting from the Roman villa in Boscoreale depicting an adolescent identified with Antigonos II Gonatas (277/6–239 BC) and a philosopher identified with Menedemus of Eretria (345/4–261/0 BC), tutor of Antigonos. He wears a ring with the letter 'E' engraved upon it. On this basis it is believed that Menedemus identified himself as a student of Epicurus.⁵⁷ Rings with these depictions may simply have been a medium of expression of his philosophical and political views as well. This is recorded in some written sources as well as some works of art.⁵⁸ However, it must be stressed that the ring from Krakow is very thin and delicate. Although it is in good condition, it could not have been carried as a normal ring, because it would have deformed quickly. This fact makes determination of its function difficult. It may have been placed into the grave as a personal item, though the iconography suggests another purpose.

⁵⁴ G.M.A. Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, First edition, The Phaidon Press, London 1965, pp. 190–193.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 193.

⁵⁶ M.-L. Vollenweider, M. Avisseau-Broustet, *op. cit.*, no. 233, pp. 211–212, pl. 108.

⁵⁷ G. Picard, *Roman Painting*, London 1970, p. 53; M. Olszta-Bloch, *Pierścienie hellenistyczne. Z badań nad formą i funkcją biżuterii w kulturze hellenistycznej*, „Klio”, 10, 2008 [2009], p. 20.

⁵⁸ Cicero comments that he could never have forgotten the face of Epicurus, because the members of the Stoic society put the image of the philosopher not only on their drinking cups, but also on their rings – Cic. Fin. V, 1, 3; B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105; E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen...*, 2007, p. 17.

Conclusions:

The preciousness of all three rings is beyond any doubt. Aside from the value of the engraved gems they were probably considered one of their owners' most prized objects, all the more valuable because of their private character. It is more likely that they were appreciated for their decorative qualities rather than for their use as sealing rings.⁵⁹ The bronze rings, as one may assume from their forms, which were generally heavier and more solid than gold or silver ones, were used for sealing. Despite the fact that solid gold rings also existed and may have been used to make seals⁶⁰, in the case of all the three rings from the Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński collection this would have been impossible. Among the Greeks, gold rings were far more highly valued than those made of other metals and probably only a few individuals, such as rulers or noblemen, could have carried them.⁶¹ For these reasons, the rings from the National Museum in Krakow's collection appear to be unusual pieces of ancient jewellery and their decorative functions were probably the most important. Nevertheless, each one of the objects described here could have had a special purpose, though it cannot be ruled out that the rings were used for many other purposes simultaneously, as has been found for other objects of this kind.⁶²

Engraved gems, all-metal finger rings and coin dies have long been compared for a long time. Scholars are still seeking features and motives which could connect all these objects, but little proof has yet been collected. This issue is particularly complicated. As Boardman, Furtwängler, Hackens, Richter, Vanni, Wiegant, Zazoff, Zwierlein-Diehl and many others have pointed out, one may assume that gems, finger rings and coin dies may sometimes have been made by the same artists or craftsmen.⁶³ Nevertheless, the techniques of engraving in metal and in precious stones differ considerably. As shown above, two of the three finger rings from the Krakow's collection were carved, not struck or embossed. This is especially clearly visible in the case of ring no. 2. This ring also shows the differences between chisel and drill engraving. The carving is sharp, the drapery of the dress is irregular and incised without care, but the engraver evidently attempted to arrange it somehow. There are no rounded lines or dashes, no eyes or other facial features which could only have been made by using rounded, thin tools. The third ring was made using a completely different technique – repoussé, which is not similar to the striking of coins. But this is only a matter of technique or the skills of a particular artisan. It does not preclude the possibility that one person could have learnt different techniques of engraving, striking and mounting objects in order to make engraved gems, coin dies and all-metal finger rings, and have been a goldsmith at the same time.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ J. Boardman, D. Scarisbrick, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁰ J. Boardman, M.-L. Vollenweider, *op. cit.*, p. 29; B. Gerring, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–124.

⁶¹ F.H. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. XVIII–XIX; M. Olszta-Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁶² M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Classification of Ancient Engraved Gems. A Study based on the Collection in the Royal Coin Cabinet, the Hague, with a History of that Collection*, Leiden 1975, p. 7; J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, p. 13; M. Olszta-Bloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–29.

⁶³ See note 5.

⁶⁴ T. Hackens, *op. cit.*, p. 157–161; F.M. Vanni, *op. cit.*, pp. 301–312; J. Boardman, *Greek Gems...*, London 2001, p. 190; M. Olszta-Bloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–17.

Trzy złote greckie grawerowane pierścienie z kolekcji Konstantego Schmidta-Ciążyńskiego w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie

Streszczenie

Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie w 1886 r. weszło w posiadanie wyjątkowego zbioru gemm zakupionego od Konstantego Schmidta-Ciążyńskiego (1818–1889). Pierwotnie kolekcja liczyła 2517 obiektów. Wśród nich znajdowało się również 301 obiektów osadzonych w różnego rodzaju pierścieniach. Niezwykle interesującą grupę stanowią trzy złote greckie grawerowane pierścienie, które można datować od drugiej ćwierci V po pierwszą połowę II w. p.n.e. Jeden z obiektów należy do dość popularnej grupy pierścieni z przedstawieniem kobiety lub kapłanki sprawiającej ofiarę przy kadzielnicy, produkowanych na terenie Wielkiej Grecji w drugiej połowie IV w. p.n.e. Dwa pozostałe są rzadkimi okazami. Pierścień z przedstawieniem dwóch delfinów wydaje się emblematem jednej z greckich polis. Natomiast na trzecim obiekcie przedstawiony został portret filozofa (Chrysispos?) (281/277–208/204), opatrzony inskrypcją. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest analiza zabytków, określenie ich chronologii, proveniencji i funkcji oraz interpretacja motywów, które zostały na nich przedstawione. Jest to również studium przypadku, w którym podjęto próbę zbadania związków między grawerowanymi pierścieniami, gemmami i monekami. Przypuszcza się, że wszystkie wymienione kategorie zabytków mogły być niekiedy wykonywane przez te same osoby, jednak – jak pokazują uzyskane wyniki – wykazywanie podobieństw jest bardzo trudne, a sama hipoteza dyskusyjna.



1. Two dolphins swimming in a circle, 13.3×8.2 mm (bezel), 15.5×17.2 mm (hoop), weight 2.31 g, inv. no. MNK-Ew-IV-Zł-2193/Z-73, the bezel – scale 3:1, drawings – scale 1:1, in the collections of the National Museum in Krakow, photo by Photographic Studio of the National Museum in Krakow



2. A woman by *thymiaterion*, 13.9×9.2 mm (bezel), 19×20 mm (hoop), weight 3.29 g, inv. no. MNK-Ew-IV-Zł-2203/Z-72, the bezel – scale 3:1, drawings – scale 1:1, in the collections of the National Museum in Krakow, photo by Photographic Studio of the National Museum in Krakow



3. A portrait of a philosopher, 13.7×10.8 mm (bezel), 18×15.3 mm (hoop), weight 2.15 g, inv. no. MNK-Ew-IV-Zł-2562/Z-74, the bezel – scale 3:1, drawings – scale 1:1, in the collections of the National Museum in Krakow, photo by Photographic Studio of the National Museum in Krakow