

# GOLD RING WITH INTAGLIO OF AN EAGLE



This gold ring was discovered during excavations of a ship in the **eastern harbour of Alexandria**, close to the sunken island of Antirhodos, where stood the royal palaces and an Iseum. Setting and stone are perfectly preserved.

## Composition of gold and chalcedony

The ring is composed of three thick solid gold twisted threads, the third resting on the other two. Their tips are soldered to either side of the ring bezel, linked by two big granules.

An oval closed setting holds the intaglio. The gemmologist admirably used the tints of the chalcedony; inside a circle of dark blue.





The engraving over a white-bluish background brings out the silhouette of the eagle in midnight blue on a base line, its profile turned to the left, the wings half unfurled.

The raised head, facing right, holds the attachment of a leafy crown towards the right in its powerful beak, the two final leaves pointing symmetrically either side of the beak.



# The eagle – A sign of power and universal domination

The eagle of Zeus on lightning, a symbol of the celestial forces and of universal domination shown on the reverse side of the Ptolemy coins, had become the mark of the Lagid dynasty, and in Roman times the eagle is associated with Jupiter.

The crown adds a note of glory and victory to that of the absolute divine power carried by the image of the bird of prey, and the motif of the eagle holding a crown is much appreciated in the corpus of Greco-Roman gems.

**Object:** Gold and chalcedony, Diam. 2.7 cm. End of first century BC – first century AD, Great Library of Alexandria (SCA 84)

**Source:** Original description by Anne-Sophie von Bomhard in exhibition catalogue „Osiris – Egypt’s Sunken Mysteries“, Paris, 2015, re-ed 2018, exh. Egypt’s Sunken Cities, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis 4 November 2018 - 14 April 2019

**Photos:** Christoph Gerigk © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation