

THOMAS HENEAGE ART BOOKS

42 DUKE STREET ST JAMES'S LONDON SW1Y 6DJ

The Princes Charles Edward and Henry Benedict Stuart

Attributed to Ermenegildo Hamerani (1683-1756)

Rome, circa 1731

27 × 24 × 4 mm

Carnelian intaglio with conjoined profile portraits of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, 'The Young Pretender' (1720-88) and Prince Henry Benedict Stuart, Cardinal Duke of York (1725-1807). Charles wears armour with a lion's head pauldron, and over this a cloak and sash, Henry also wears armour with a sash. Inscription 'SACRA PROGENIES' ('Sacred Progeny').



This hitherto unrecorded portrait depicts the last two members of the Stuart dynasty

to retain a serious claim to the British throne. The Princes Charles and Henry were the sons of Prince James Francis Edward Stuart, 'The Old Pretender', King James III/VIII (1688-1766), and Princess Maria Clementina Sobieska (1702-35). Their grandfather was King James II/VII (1633-1701), who succeeded his brother Charles II on the thrones of England and Scotland in 1685, but whose overt Catholic faith quickly made him and his wife Mary of Modena deeply unpopular in Britain. The birth in 1688 of a potential Catholic male heir, James, brought the deepening crisis to a head. In the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, James II/VII was deposed and replaced as monarch by his daughter Queen Mary II, ruling along with her Dutch husband William III.

James II/VII and his family and followers were forced into exile, at first in France at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. On his death in 1701, the banner of the Stuart cause was taken up by his son, the 'Old Pretender', who eventually moved to Italy, in 1719 establishing his court in Rome, where he took up residence in the Palazzo del Re in the Piazza dei Santi Apostoli, close to the Quirinale. Traditional negative perceptions of the exiled Jacobites have been challenged by more recent research, which has demonstrated that the exiled Stuart court in Rome played a far more significant role in the diplomatic and social life of the city than has hitherto been recognised.¹ The Palazzo del Re was in fact visited by numerous British and Irish Grand Tourist visitors to Rome, helping the exiled Stuarts to keep in closer touch with their supporters in Britain. The heyday of the Stuart court in

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Rome came during the 1730s, when the present portrait was made, and the 1740s. It was in these years that the Palazzo del Re was at its most splendid and that the Stuarts were most engaged as artistic patrons.

Throughout the history of the Jacobite movement, from 1688 to defeat at Culloden in 1745, and onwards to the death of Cardinal Henry in 1807, portrait medals played an important propagandistic role.² Medals could be produced in large numbers as necessary and relatively cheaply. Their small size and portability made them ideal objects that supporters of the cause could buy or receive as gifts from the court in exile, and for circulation among supporters in Britain. From around 1731 until the failed 1745 Jacobite Rising, there was a renewed interest on the part of the exiled Stuart court in medals as a vehicle for propaganda.

The intaglio corresponds very closely to two medals commissioned by James III/VIII in Rome, made by members of the Hamerani dynasty, who dominated the production of coins and medals for nearly two hundred years, until well into the nineteenth century. The medals were made by Ottone Hamerani (1694-1768), appointed in 1720 as Engraver to James III/VIII, and his elder brother Ermenegildo Hamerani (1683-1756). The format of the conjoined portraits of the two boys echoes the conjoined portraits of their parents, in a medal made in 1719 to commemorate the wedding of James Stuart and the Polish princess Maria Clementina Sobieska (1702-35), and used again for a second medal celebrating the birth of their first son Charles, on 31 December 1720.³



Ottone Hamerani, *Medal for the Birth of Prince Charles Edward Stuart*, 1720

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The choice of a conjoined portrait was certainly deliberate. Echoing earlier Stuart royal portrait medals in Britain, for example one of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, its use emphasises the Jacobites' legitimist claims.

In 1731-32, probably to mark Prince Charles's eleventh birthday, a medal was commissioned depicting Prince Charles on one side and, on the other, his six year-old brother Prince Henry Benedict Stuart, born on 6 March 1725.⁴ The portraits for this medal, generally attributed to Ottone, are especially close to those in the intaglio.



Ottone Hamerani, *The Princes Charles and Henry Stuart, 1731-32*

The intaglio reproduces very closely the portraits and their dress in this medal, for Charles the cuirass with its prominent lion's head pauldron, and the curling hair, for Henry the tipped nose and the sash across his chest. The closeness of the portraits strongly suggest that the intaglio must have been made around the same time.

A further point of comparison between the intaglio and the medal is the legends. The legend on the 1731 medal, which features a star next to the prince in the manner of Roman coins of Julius Caesar, is translatable as 'He shines in the midst of all', suggesting that like Caesar, Prince Charles is divinely ordained to restore order to Britain. However, neither Charles nor Henry are directly named, although in the wax model for the portrait of Henry, now in the British Museum, he is named and with the title of Duke of York.⁵ It was in fact not uncommon for the names and titles of the sitters to be left out in medals depicting the direct claimants to the English and Scottish thrones, the legends instead

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more cryptic inscriptions relating to hopes for the cause. Such legends indicate that the medal was made for circulation among supporters of the cause in Britain, where the circulation of medals proclaiming a rival monarch would have been regarded as openly treasonous. The inscription on the gem, 'SACRA PROGENIES', likewise refers to the perceived divine origins of the two Princes and thus, obliquely, to the expectations that Charles, in particular, would rescue Britain and restore the nation to the right path.

It is probable therefore that, like the medals, the intaglio was originally made for a British supporter of the Jacobite cause, who would have been received at the court in the Palazzo del Re. There appear to be no records in the Stuart Papers in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle of payments by James for gems, so it would seem more probable that the intaglio was commissioned or otherwise acquired directly from the gem engraver, by a Jacobite supporter in Rome.

A short series of gems depicting the Old and the Young Pretenders is recorded in Tassie's catalogue, the images of James III/VIII attributed to Carlo Costanzi (1705-81). Carlo Costanzi was in fact commissioned in 1750 and in 1752 to make intaglios with the king's head, which must be the idealised *all'antica* portraits listed by Tassie (nos. 14024-28).⁶ The images of Prince Charles listed by Tassie (nos. 14029-33) are close to medallic portraits from his later years, such as the medal by Thomas Pingo commemorating the secret visit of Charles to London in 1752, so show a much older individual than the portrait in the present intaglio.

In the absence of documentary evidence for the commissioning of gems at the Stuart court in exile in Rome, it is necessary to look to stylistic and compositional comparisons for the intaglio. These suggest in fact an attribution to one of the Hamerani. The Hamerani dynasty is principally known as the leading makers of coins and medals in Rome,⁷ but the skills required for die engraving are hardly dissimilar to those used to carve hardstone gems, whilst there is documentary evidence to demonstrate that various members of the Hamerani family actively engaged in gem carving. Carved crystal and hardstone gems were in fact made by Alberto (1620-77), Giovanni Martino (1646-1705), Ermenegildo (1685-1756) and Ferdinando Hamerani (1730-89), as well as three female members of the dynasty – Anna Cecilia (c. 1642-c. 1670), Caterina (active c. 1670-74) and Beatrice (1677-1704).⁸ In fact the women of the family, both Anna Cecilia and Beatrice, specialised in the carving of hardstone gems.

Ottone Hamerani, to whom both the 1720 and 1731 medals are attributed, is not known to have engraved gems, however his elder brother Ermenegildo certainly did. This is demonstrated by an entry in the journal of the painter and gem collector Pier Leone Ghezzi, for 25 March 1731:

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‘Signor Paulo Buglielli, heir of Marcantonio Sabbatici - who bequeathed him his entire estate, and among the other things left to him was a hyacinth intaglio depicting the portrait of Pompey, and the same Marcantonio had paid 130 scudi for it, whilst the said signor Paolo sold it to the Polish count Jablonski, a very close relative of the reigning Queen of France [Maria Leszczyńska], who having paid 420 scudi for the said gem, has had it set and promised to wear it always as a ring and departs for Venice next Monday. The said stone was sold as ancient to Marcantonio, but it was in fact made by signor Ermenegildo Hamerani, master of the Papal mint and currently in the service of the Papal court. When he sold it, Ermenegildo claimed that he had found it in his vineyard, never mentioning that it was made by him, but it is in truth a correct and beautiful imitation of an ancient gem.’⁹

Ghezzi’s fascinating story, from around the time that the present intaglio was made, provides indubitable evidence of Ermenegildo as an expert carver of gems. It would seem probable, given the close association of the Hamerani with the exiled Stuart court, that the present intaglio was made by him. A further argument for an attribution to Ermenegildo Hamerani is the form of the lettering of the legend which, when allowance is made for the greater difficulty of carving lettering into hardstones, closely follows the lettering habitually used by the Hamerani for their medals. We know from the journal of the bibliophile Richard Rawlinson, who was in Rome in 1721, that Jacobite supporters such as Rawlinson sometimes had direct contact with the Hamerani.¹⁰

This spirited double portrait is a remarkable discovery. It is to the present writer’s knowledge the only carved hardstone that can currently be attributed to a member of the celebrated Hamerani dynasty. But it is also a rare portrait of the two young Stuart princes at a moment when, at least in Rome and among the many supporters of the cause in England and Scotland, there was a real sense of optimism that two healthy young male heirs, ‘Sacred Progeny’ indeed, might at last provide for the Stuart dynasty a realistic pathway back to the long-lost throne of the United Kingdom.

Jeremy Warren

September 2020

Condition

Very fine.

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¹ Edward Corp, *The Stuarts in Italy, 1719-1766. A Royal Court in Permanent Exile*, Cambridge 2011; Edward Corp, 'All Roads lead to Rome' in ed. David Forsyth, *Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites*, exh. cat., National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh 2017, pp. 59-77.

² For Jacobite medals, see Edward Hawkins, Augustus W. Franks and Herbert A. Grueber (eds.), *Medallic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland to the death of George II*, 2 vols., London 1885 (reprint London 1978); Noel Woolf, *The Medallic Record of the Jacobite Movement*, London 1988.

³ *Medallic Illustrations*, II, p. 446, no. 52 and p. 452, no. 60; Woolf, *Medallic Record*, nos. 37:2 and 38:1..

⁴ *Medallic Illustrations*, II, p. 492, no. 34; Woolf, *Medallic Record*, no. 43:1.

⁵ Jack Hinton, 'Forming Designs, Shaping Medals. A Collection of Wax Models by the Hamerani', *The Medal*, 41 (2002), pp. 3-57, pp. 30-31, no. 58.

⁶ Corp, *The Stuarts in Italy*, p. 302.

⁷ For the Hamerani, see F. Noack, 'Die Hamerans in Rom', *Archiv für Medaillen- und Plaketten-Kunde*, III (1921-22), 1, pp. 23-40; Hinton 2002 (see note 3); Neil Guthrie, 'Of Princes and Perukes. Jacobite Medals from 1731 to 1741', *The Medal*, 55 (2009), pp. 24-34.

⁸ S. Pennestrì, 'Il patrimonio della bottega Hamerani in due documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Roma', *Rivista italiana di numismatica e scienze affini*, CX (2009), pp. 437-78, p. 456.

⁹ Pennestrì, p. 456, with original Italian text. For the Hamerani and gems, see also Lucia Simonato, 'Giovanni Martino Hamerani: artista e collezionista' in Lucia Simonato, ed., *Le arti a dialogo. Medaglie e medaglisti tra Quattro e Settecento*, Pisa 2014, pp. 231-68, pp. 254 and 266, note 76.

¹⁰ Corp, *The Stuarts in Italy*, pp. 104-05.